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## ESSAY ON DIFFERENT MODALITIES OF LOSS

Erinç ASLANBOĞA\*

**Abstract:** This article, starting with the experience of the other's death, thinks about the questions and problems revealed by different modalities of loss. *Mourning and Melancholia*, the text written by Freud during the First World War and the critical rereading of this text by Derrida and Butler constitute the main axis of this article. Initially, the Freudian definition of mourning and melancholy, their distinctive features, their points of convergence and divergence, the relationship between so-called normal mourning and so-called pathological melancholy will be presented to show the ambiguity of their limits and their opposition. Secondly, one of the distinctive features of Freudian melancholy that is the transformation of the loss of the other into the loss of the self will be taken up and problematized in dialogue with Butler to bring out the place of the other as well as of its loss in the constitution of the self. This discussion makes it possible to expose how the loss of the other, which moves us from the question of detachment to that of attachment, reveals the non-identity of the self, altered by the other. The third part of this article, problematizing the finality of mourning, which is the substitution of the other, focuses on Derrida's thought that renew the approach to mourning and melancholy by introducing the concepts of "introjection" and "incorporation". Derrida's ethic of mourning, which aims to avoid the assimilation of the other to the same, is based on a double bind between the possibility and the impossibility of mourning. The article concludes with a brief review of the relationship between identity and alterity revealed by different modalities of loss to respond differently to the question: How to return to life after the experience of the other's death?

**Keywords:** Death, Mourning, Melancholy, Self, Other

## KAYBIN FARKLI KİPLERİ ÜZERİNE BİR DENEME

**Öz:** Bu makale, başkasının ölümüne tanık olma deneyiminden hareketle, farklı kayıp kiplerinin ortaya çıkardığı sorular ve sorunlar üzerine düşünmeyi hedefler. Makalenin ana eksenini, Freud'un Birinci Dünya Savaşı sırasında kaleme aldığı *Yas ve Melankoli* metni ve Derrida ile Butler'ın bu metne farklı açılardan yaklaşarak getirdikleri yorum ve eleştiriler oluşturur. İlk olarak, yas ve melankolinin Freud tarafından nasıl tanımlandığı, ayırt edici özellikleri, kesişme ve ayrışma noktaları, "normal" yas ile "patolojik" melankoli arasındaki ilişki, aralarındaki sınırın belirsizliğini göstermek ve söz konusu karşılığı sorgulamak gayesiyle ortaya konacaktır. İkinci olarak, melankolinin ayırt edici niteliklerinden biri olan başkasının kaybının benin kaybına dönüşmesi önermesi, başkasının varlığının ve kaybının benin meydana gelişindeki yerini göstermek amacıyla, Butler'ın düşüncesi ile diyalog halinde ele alınacak ve sorunsallaştırılacaktır. Bu tartışma, bağlanma ve ayrılma sorusu aracılığıyla,

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ötekinin kaybının benin kendine özdeş olmama durumunu nasıl açığa çıkardığını ortaya koymayı mümkün kılar. Üçüncü bölüm, yas çalışmasının yöneldiği ereği, başka bir deyişle, ötekinin ikame edilmesi gerekliliğini sorgularken, içeatım (introjection) ve içealım (incorporation) kavramlarını devreye sokarak yas ve melankoli tartışmasına farklı açılardan yaklaşan Derrida'nın düşüncesine odaklanır. Derrida'nın, başka olanın aynı olan tarafından asimile edilmesinden kaçınmayı hedefleyen yas etiği, yasin olanaklılığı ve olanaksızlığı arasında kalan çifte zorunluluk (double bind) üzerine kurulur. Sonuç bölümü, farklı kayıp kipleri tarafından ortaya çıkarılan özdeşlik/başkalık ilişkini kısaca gözden geçirerek makale boyunca yapılan tartışmalar ışığında ve yeniden şu soruyu sorar: Başkasının ölümüne tanık olma deneyiminden sonra hayata nasıl geri dönülür?

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ölüm, Yas, Melankoli, Ben, Öteki

## 1. Introduction

The shattering event of the pandemic has cast a harsh light on our mortal lives. This awakened the consciousness of death that the flow of modern life keeps lulling. Today, more than ever, we are confronted with the illusion of our immortality, with questions on bodily, psychic and relational vulnerability as well as with ethical and political problems linked to the modes of government of relations between the living and the dead. This harsh light that illuminates the dark and repressed sides of life can become an opportunity to think again questions death keeps asking to life. If it is necessary to make a selection among these many questions, within the framework of this article, the common thread that will guide us will be the other whose death exceeds and alters the self, living here and now. More specifically, we will focus on the impact of issues of loss, detachment, mourning and melancholy, on our ways of conceiving of identity and alterity.

As soon as we start to think about the question of death, we are faced with a difficulty or even an obstacle. The thinker can neither experience nor think about his own death. He/she can imagine the time and place of his/her death or he/she can imagine himself as dead, but that does not negate the reality that the experience of death escapes the first person singular. So, where do we get the idea of death? How is the consciousness of mortality manifested? Unlike our own death, which remains outside the scope of experience, we can bear witness to the death of another even if we cannot "die in the place of the other" (Derrida 1995, p. 320). Therefore, we can only become aware of our own mortality through the death of others. "I can have this experience of 'my own death' by relating to myself only in the impossible experience, the experience of the impossible mourning at the death of the other" (Derrida 1995, p. 321). This ultimate end, the idea of which comes to me from the other, brings us together as it separates us. It unites us not only because as living beings we are all mortal, but also because every relationship carries from the beginning, as Derrida said, this possibility that one of us passes away before the other (Derrida 2003, p. 20).

Therefore, the questions of loss and that of mourning and melancholy don't only arise after the other's death, but they emerge countless times throughout a lifetime. This observation will encourage us to think about the problems revealed by different modalities of loss, the roots of which grow up in relationships, in the attachments that precede detachments, in the processes of formation or constitution of the self and the other. With this objective, certain problematic arguments of *Mourning and Melancholia*, of this text written by Freud in the

middle of the First World War, will be taken up and thought out in dialogue with Derrida and Butler, who are themselves in critical dialogue with Freud.

## 2. The “Work of Mourning” and The “Enigma of Melancholy”

According to Freud, the loss of the other is the common starting point that triggers both mourning and melancholy. They are both defined as “the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction” (Freud 1957, p. 243). He mentions many points that bring them together; grief felt at the irreparable disappearance of the other, the “cessation of interest in the outside world”, “loss of the capacity to love” (Freud 1957, p. 244). Although they are similar in several aspects, the text in question establishes a division, from the first lines, between the so-called normal mourning and the so-called pathological melancholy. Any division implies rejection and establishes an exclusion mechanism necessary for the functioning of the division. What is rejected serves to define the boundaries of the field outside of which it is placed. Here, melancholy considered as pathological serves to define the field of mourning. In other words, melancholy is thought of as the limit or as the outside of the so-called normal reaction to loss.

Rather, this division indicates what must be done to “be successful”<sup>1</sup> in mourning. It sets out in order stages of the mourning process that begins with the loss and continues with the refusal to accept the reality that the other will not return. Following the laborious and painful work of reinvesting and disinvesting memories linked to the other, bereaved ends by accepting that the other is lost. What Freud calls the “work of mourning” indicates the course of so-called normal or ideal mourning, in other words fictitious (Freud 1957, p. 245). Because, the bereaved does not always take the same paths, does not go through the same stages to mourn or to refuse to mourn. Thus, the division between mourning and melancholy and the rejection of the latter outside the framework of so-called normal<sup>2</sup> behavior, attributes a norm to loss. It normalizes the relationship to detachment, regulates the behavior of the living to their dead. It regulates the reaction to loss by attributing a beginning and an end, successive stages, temporality<sup>3</sup> and finality. The goal of the mourning norm is to get over the loss after a certain amount of time. In other words, it is about substituting the other with a new object of love. This substitutable conception of the other will lead us later to the question of alterity. However, what is rejected keeps haunting the field that the act of division circumscribes. So, melancholy returns and haunts this so-called ideal or successful mourning, it poses riddles to it.

In Freud's text, melancholy presents two absent characteristics of mourning. First, it is about not knowing and not being able to explain what is lost with the dead person (Freud 1957, p. 245). The difference between mourning and melancholy is first a difference between an

<sup>1</sup> In the following parts of this article, we will return to the “success” and “failure” of mourning with reference to Derrida.

<sup>2</sup> Canguilhem questions the current definition of “normal” and “pathological” as well as their difference while showing the relationship between these concepts and that of “norm” and “normalization” (Canguilhem 1972, pp. 76-77).

<sup>3</sup> Derrida upsets this temporality, this time granted to mourning. First, mourning does not begin with the loss of the other; on the contrary, it is contemporaneous with a relationship, a friendship. It is present from the beginning of a relationship and not only after the loss. Second, mourning does not end when a socially organized lapse of time or deadline is reached. And then, it is not directed towards finality, a goal or an end point.

identified loss and an unknown loss, withdrawn from consciousness. Closely related to the first, second distinguishing feature of melancholy indicates confusion between loss concerning the other and loss concerning the self (Freud 1957, p. 247). Unlike the so-called normal mourning, in melancholy the other who is lost could not be replaced by a new object of love. According to Freud, it is this gesture of substitution that supposed to put an end to mourning. Instead, there is a regression to the narcissistic stage<sup>4</sup> of development where the psychic energy, “libido”<sup>5</sup> released by the loss of the other returns or withdraws into the self (Freud 1957, p. 250). Then, the self identifies with the other who is lost. Thus, the loss of the other is followed by the loss of the self. This is what Freud's famous phrase indicates: “The shadow of the object fell upon the ego” (Freud 1957, p. 249).

Melancholia, therefore, borrows some of its features from mourning, and the others from the process of regression from narcissistic object-choice to narcissism. It is on the one hand, like mourning, a reaction to the real loss of a loved object; but over and above this, it is marked by a determinant which is absent in normal mourning or which, if it is present, transforms the latter into pathological mourning. The loss of a love-object is an excellent opportunity for the ambivalence in love-relationships to make itself effective and come into the open (Freud 1957, pp. 250-251).

In this text, the cause of melancholy is found in a “pathological disposition” that is, in a conflicting relationship of hate and love between the self and the other (Freud 1957, p. 243). This relationship, which predates the loss of the other, prepares the melancholy. From this hypothesis advanced by Freud we can move forward in two different directions. First, Freud can be criticized for limiting melancholy to the realm of private life<sup>6</sup>. Social and political conditions, wars, sudden and unpredictable events of life can stir up melancholy in the absence of a conflictual relationship with the person who is lost. When the body of the deceased is lost or it is deprived of a burial, when the death of the other is unrecognized, mourning can turn into an infinite process and therefore into melancholy<sup>7</sup>. During the event of the latest pandemic, the loneliness of the dying and of the bereaved deprived of the opportunity to attend the last moments of loved ones or their funerals prompted conditions that can trigger melancholy. That said, the social and political dimension of mourning cannot be addressed, in all its magnitude, within the limits of this article.

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<sup>4</sup> “‘Primary narcissism’ denotes an early state in which the child cathects its own self with the whole of its libido. ‘Secondary narcissism’ denotes a turning round upon the ego of libido withdrawn from the objects which it has cathected hitherto. These terms are put to such varied uses in psycho-analytic literature – and even within Freud's own work – that it is impossible to give a more precise yet consistent definition than the one offered above” (Laplanche; Pontalis 1973, p. 301).

<sup>5</sup> “The libido is defined by Freud as the energy of the sexual drive conceived as a force that exerts a thrust. It can invest others as an external object, this is object libido. Conversely, the libido can take as its object the proper person, that is to say the subject himself; it is called in this case the libido of the ego or the narcissistic libido” (Dessuant 2004, p. 10).

<sup>6</sup> In the 6th chapter of the *Psychic Life of Power*, Butler offers a relevant reflection on the establishment of the relationship between the psychic and the social sphere around the theme of melancholy in Freud's text (Butler 1997, pp. 266-286).

<sup>7</sup> Butler has devoted several books – especially *Antigone's claim: kinship between life and death*; *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*; *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* – to this subject that we cannot develop in the context of this article (Butler 2000; 2004; 2009). Regarding the place of this subject in Greek tragedy, Loraux's book, *La voix endeuillée*, is enlightening (Loraux 1999).

To think about the relationships between the self and the other, revealed by the loss, we prefer to orient ourselves in the second direction, which will lead us to the question and modalities of the attachment that precedes the detachment.

### 3. The Question of Identity and Alterity from the Perspective of Loss

Unlike melancholy, in the “normal” mourning, the bereaved is supposed to know what he has lost with the other. Concerning mourning, this is what Freud puts it: “It is really only because we know so well how to explain it that this attitude does not seem to us pathological” (Freud 1957, p. 244). This lucidity and complete mastery of the situation that Freud attributes to mourning, unlike melancholy, is equivocal<sup>8</sup>. Because precisely, it is not so easy to answer such questions: What is lost with the death of the other? What do I lose by losing the other? This is precisely an enigma that affects not only melancholy but also different modalities of loss so it must be taken literally. Additionally, if with the loss of the other, detachment arises as a problem by inciting a painful and difficult process, it is because we are attached<sup>9</sup>, linked to others. In other words, if the detachment caused by the loss of the other is preceded by attachment, the questions we have just posed above must also involve the ties that unite the self and the other. How and by what ties are we attached to each other? What are the modalities, the “nature” of these attachments? Are these two separate entities that come together, that bind and unbind?

#### 3.1. Questioning the identity of the self through the loss of the other

In his different texts, Freud adopts various positions on this subject. The relationship between the self and the other is sometimes thought of as a relationship of exclusion, even of a struggle to the death, sometimes in a relationship of ambivalent constitution. For example, in *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*, also written in the middle of the First World War, speaking of people who have died and whom we have lost, Freud says: “these loved ones are on the one hand an inner possession, components of our own ego; but on the other hand they are partly strangers, even enemies” (Freud 1957, p. 298). In *Mourning and Melancholia*, the transformation of the loss of the other into the loss of the self was considered an exceptional sign, reserved for melancholy the origin of which is found in an ambivalent relationship of love and hate, in a conflicting attachment that precedes the death of the other. Unlike mourning, in melancholy, the libido released by the loss of the other withdraws into the self and the self identifies with the other. The conflicting attachment between the self and the other is transformed, after the loss, “into a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification” (Freud 1957, p. 249). In another text entitled *The Ego and the Id*, which was written later in 1923, Freud returns to his earlier arguments on melancholy and corrects them as follows:

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<sup>8</sup> Regarding the disturbing state in which mourning plunges us, Butler asks many questions in *Prekarious Life*: “One finds oneself fallen. One is exhausted but does not know why. Something is larger than one's own deliberate plan, one's own project, one's own knowing and choosing. Something takes hold of you: where does it come from? What sense does it make? What claims us at such moments, such that we are not the masters of ourselves? To what are we tied? And by what are we seized?” (Butler 2004, p. 21).

<sup>9</sup> What about the loss of others to whom we are not attached by personal ties? This question will be the subject of another article.

Since then we have come to understand that this kind of substitution has a great share in determining the form taken by the ego and that it makes an essential contribution toward building up what is called its “character” (Freud 1960, p. 23). [...] the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes and that it contains the history of those object-choices (Freud 1960, p. 24).

The Freudian conception of mourning, as indicated in *Mourning and Melancholia*, presupposes a self, which, despite the loss experienced, remains intact throughout this process. In other words, the self is supposed to remain identical to itself before and after the loss. It is the love object that is substituted by another through the withdrawal and displacement of libido. In this sense, libido’s mode of operation, similar to “bank transactions”, presupposes the free flow of psychic energy from one object to another (Dessuant 2004, p. 27). In contrast, in melancholy, the status of the self is not as clear as in mourning. In the last chapter of *The Psychic Life of Power*, Butler draws our attention to this inconstancy of the self in the description of melancholy.

According to the narrative of melancholia that Freud provides, the ego is said to “turn back upon itself” once love fails to find its object and instead takes itself as not only an object of love, but of aggression and hate as well. But what is this “self” that takes itself as its own object? Is the one who “takes” itself and the one who is “taken” the same? (Butler 1997, p. 168).

Following the questions posed by Butler, we can say that the self is redoubled and modified several times in this process that inaugurates melancholy (Butler 1997, p. 168). First, the self is redoubled into the subject and object of attachment when the libido withdraws into the self, following the disinvestment of the object. Then, the self is redoubled as the one who identifies himself with the abandoned object and as the one who is inaugurated by this identification. Finally, the self is redoubled “between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification” (Freud 1957, p. 249).

Contrary to *Mourning and Melancholia*, in *The Ego and The Id*, the constitution of the self by its identification with the lost and abandoned object is no longer limited to the domain of melancholy but it extends over the whole story of the self and becomes one of the major traits of the formation of his character. The character of the self is constituted by this double movement, both complementary and paradoxical, of identification with and renunciation of the other. Thus, from one text to another, we pass from the loss of the self to the constitution of the character of the self by successive losses. “To the extent that the ego is ‘the precipitate of its abandoned object-cathexes,’ it is the congealment of a history of loss, the sedimentation of relations of substitution over time, the resolution of a tropological function into the ontological effect of the self” (Butler 1997, p. 169). This conception of the self, constituted by the losses, “composed of its lost attachments” and of the “internalization of the loss along melancholic lines” allows Butler to take another direction and to develop the melancholia of gender<sup>10</sup> (Butler 1997, p. 193). However, within the scope of this article, the relationship between gender and melancholy cannot be addressed.

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<sup>10</sup> On this subject, see in particular the third part of the second chapter of *Gender Trouble* and the last chapter of *The Psychic Life of Power* (Butler 1999, pp. 73-84; 1997, pp. 167-198).

Considering these clarifications and to answer the questions we posed at the beginning of this chapter, certain conclusions can be drawn. First, the self does not remain intact or identical to itself throughout the process of loss. The identity of the self to itself is split from the start, if the self is the unfinished result of transformations, of losses undergone and experienced, if its character is, as Butler said referring to Freud, “the sedimentation of objects loved and lost, the archaeological remainder [...] of unresolved grief” (Butler 1997, p. 133). “[...] the fictive redoubling necessary to become a self rules out the possibility of strict identity” (Butler 1997, p. 198).

Secondly, the genesis of the self, understood in the sense of both formation and becoming, is inseparable from its relationship to the other. It is from the beginning crossed by alterity, by the loss of the other, or if not by the possibility of the latter. Therefore, the character of the self is not only made and unmade by its relation to the other, but also the other continues to be part of the self whose constitution involves both identification and renouncement.

Insofar as identification is the psychic preserve of the object and such identifications come to form the ego, the lost object continues to haunt and inhabit the ego as one of its constitutive identifications. The lost object is, in that sense, made coextensive with the ego itself (Butler 1997, p. 134).

In the next chapter, which is devoted to the problem of alterity, we will return to this problem of identification and renunciation as a paradoxical means of both preserving and expelling the other. Regarding the “nature” and modalities of attachment, it should be said that the parts that bind together are not exclusive entities, nor previously constituted and completed interiorities. In contrast, the self and the other participate, respectively, in the constitution of one and the other. It is about interiorities that are constantly being made and unmade, by the topological folding of exteriority, in the processes of attachment and detachment.

In *The Ego and The Id*, if Freud rectifies his arguments on melancholy, it is because he feels the need to recognize the crucial place of the other in the constitution of the self. However, he continues to give some priority to the unity and identity of the self, which are the constituent elements of the norm of the “normal”. In this context, the other participates in the formation of the self paradoxically. The character of the self is woven by abandonment, detachments, substitutions if not by identifications, which – as we will soon see with Derrida – come to the same thing. As we have tried to show above, if the other is constitutive of the self, if he is partially part of the self, we can no longer speak of the strict identity of the self with itself. Behind the effort to preserve this identity lies a hidden desire for purification and homogenization. The self-identity is preciously preserved and often to the detriment of the other’s alterity.

### 3.2. The Other's alterity and the ethics of mourning

To think about the relationship between alterity and the different modalities of loss, let us return, as we promised, to the finality of the work of mourning, which is the substitution of the other. This was proposed by Freud, in *Mourning and Melancholia*, as a condition for the possibility of ending mourning and finding life again (Freud 1957, p. 257).

The melancholic, unable to replace the other with a new object of love, remains in an intermediate state between life and death, between the loss of the self and that of the other. As we have already mentioned above, we find a struggle to the death between the self and the other in various texts by Freud. For example, toward the end of *Mourning and Melancholia*, thus he expresses the condition for the melancholic to come out of this intermediate state to return to life:

[...] it is not difficult to perceive an essential analogy between the work of melancholia and of mourning. Just as mourning impels the ego to give up the object by declaring the object to be dead and offering the ego the inducement of continuing to live, so does each single struggle of ambivalence loosen the fixation of the libido to the object by disparaging it, denigrating it and even as it were killing it (Freud 1957, p. 257).

The norm that is attributed to mourning and that is produced by the exclusion of melancholy from so-called “normal” behavior ends up circumscribing the latter. After a long detour, melancholy rejoins the finality of the work of mourning, which is the substitution of the other.

In *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*, the other is presented both as part of the self and as a stranger, so there is some recognition of the other's alterity in the constitution of the self. However, in this text, Freud uses the word “stranger” as a quasi-synonym for the “enemy” (Freud 1957, p. 298). The irreducible and unassimilable difference of the other is seen as a threat to the self. The self responds to this “threat” with a symbolic or a real gesture of murder. Certainly, this problematic description of the relation between the self and the other stems not only but also from the Freudian conception of “primary narcissism”<sup>11</sup> which was later criticized and partially overtaken by contemporary psychoanalytic thought (Jung 2015, p. 78). However, starting from there, we can ask a number of questions: Can we substitute the other? Is the other substitutable? Is it necessary to “kill the dead” a second time to return to life? (Rogozinski 2014, p. 22). To think about these questions, let's turn to Derrida.

“What, then is *true mourning*? [...] Can we *make it*?” (Derrida 1986, p. 31). In *Memories*, this question asked by Derrida in two senses: first, in the sense of capacity, of being able to mourn and then in the sense of right and duty. If the first takes us back to the ontological dimension of mourning, the second involves the ethical dimension of mourning. Moving forward in both directions, we plan to think about the questions we asked above.

In *Fors*, Derrida takes up the Freudian thought of mourning and melancholy and he suggests that we see them from another angle, in relation to the notions of “introjection” and “incorporation” reworked by two psychoanalysts, Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok

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<sup>11</sup> “On this point psycho-analytic theory is somewhat ambivalent. From the genetic point of view, the establishment of the ego can be conceived of as the formation of a psychical unit paralleling the constitution of the bodily schema. One may further suppose that this unification is precipitated by the subject's acquisition of an image of himself founded on the model furnished by the other person—this image being the ego itself. Narcissism then appears as the amorous captivation of the subject by this image. Jacques Lacan has related this first moment in the ego's formation to that fundamentally narcissistic experience which he calls the mirror stage. In this light, with the ego taking form by virtue of an identification with the other, narcissism – and even ‘primary narcissism’ – is no longer seen as a state independent of any inter-subjective relationship, but rather as the internalisation of a relationship” (Laplanche and Pontalis 1973, pp. 230-231). On this same topic see (Jung 2015, p. 78).

(Abraham and Torok 1976; 1987). The introjection that characterizes so-called “normal” mourning corresponds to the inclusion of the lost object and its characteristics in the self. According to Derrida, introjection goes hand in hand with the “internalization of memory” linked to the other and the “idealization” of the latter (Derrida 2003, pp. 73-74).

At first glance, introjection seems in contradiction with the substitution that supposes the expulsion of the other from the self and his replacement. However, a closer analysis will allow us to understand that the introjection and internalization of memories linked to the other precedes and prepares the substitution of the latter. Substitution is the gradual withdrawal of psychic energy from the loved object and the movement of the latter onto a new object. In the work of mourning, this substitution does not happen all immediately, it goes through the slow reappropriation of memories linked to the other, through their interiorization in the self. On this point, Derrida draws our attention to the mismatch between the irreducible singularity of the other and the memories internalized in the self. “The movement of interiorization keeps within us the life, thought, body, voice, look or soul of the other, but in the form of [...] signs or symbols, images or mnesic representations which are only lacunary fragments, detached and dispersed – only ‘parts’ of the departed other” (Derrida 1986, p. 37).

For Derrida, the other's alterity is irreducible to these internalized memory traces. Additionally, memories linked to each other can never be fully reconstructed because always residues escape reappropriation. In other words, the other can never be totally reappropriated or substituted. However, in mourning, the self selectively internalizes the other and partially identifies with some of these characteristics. “It entails a movement in which an interiorizing idealization takes in itself or upon itself the body and voice of the other, the other's visage and person, ideally *and* quasi literally devouring them” (Derrida 1986, p. 34).

Therefore, the “internalizing idealization” (Derrida 1986, p. 54) that characterizes the work of mourning is similar to the activity of “digestion” (Rogozinski 2014, p. 23). “Successful” mourning corresponds to the assimilation of the other to the same, to the reduction of the other's alterity to the identity of the self, consequently to the substitution of the other. In other words, it is about killing the dead, his/her singularity and his/her difference.

However, melancholy resists this assimilating gesture by refusing to mourn. According to Derrida, it must resist for the success of “normal” mourning to fail (Derrida 2003, p. 74). By this resistance, by this refusal to mourn, at first glance, melancholy seems to “keep the other as other (as a Stranger)” and therefore respect his alterity (Derrida 1976, p. 26). But simultaneously, “it also does the opposite” (Derrida 1976, p. 26). For, rather than introjecting the other into the self, melancholy incorporates the other and keeps him/her in a “crypt” within the self, part of which is identified with the other (Derrida 1976, pp. 9-11). Incorporation that characterizes melancholy “[...] leads to the paradox of a foreign body preserved as foreign but by the same token excluded from a self that thenceforth deals not with the other, but only with itself. The more the self keeps the foreign element as a foreigner inside itself, the more it excludes it” (Derrida 1976, p. 18).

In this sense, on the one hand, melancholy resists forgetting the other targeted by the work of mourning; on the other hand, it imitates the gesture of introjection that characterizes

mourning. In this sense, neither does melancholy manages to keep the other in the self as the other, that is to say, in his/her difference and his/her singularity. Thus, neither mourning nor melancholy guaranties fidelity to the other's alterity, neither escapes the loss of the other as other.

In Derrida, the experience of mourning manifests itself in the form of an "aporia" between fidelity and infidelity to the other, between the interiorization of the other in the self and the abandonment of the other to his/her exteriority (Derrida 1986, p. 35 ). Mourning corresponds to a certain form of fidelity because instead of abandoning the other, we prefer to keep him/her inside us. However, this is an "unfaithful fidelity" because as we have just exposed above around the introjection, the alterity of the other is not respected, it is assimilated to the same, therefore lost (Derrida 1995, p. 321). Conversely, not to mourn or refusing to mourn also involves some form of fidelity and infidelity to other.

According to Derrida, if the two postures correspond to "two forms of fidelity and infidelity" (Derrida 1995, p. 152), if full fidelity is impossible, if "there is no successful introjection, there is no pure and simple incorporation" in this case, the ethics of mourning which respect the other's alterity can only be situated in this double constraint that he calls : "ex-appropriation, appropriation caught in a double-bind: I must and I must not take the other into myself" (Derrida 1995, p. 321).

When I lose the other, I do not only lose a friend, a relative, a loved one but I lose, as Roland Barthes said all the long of his *Mourning Diary*, an irreplaceable, non-substitutable or non-interchangeable singularity (Barthes 2009). When I lose the other, I lose a part of me that lived in our world. Therefore, after the loss of the other, I cannot remain intact, as I was before, there can only be transformation. This is why it is "each time unique the end of the world"<sup>12</sup>, this world made up and woven of relationships in which we are both done and undone, constituted and we constituted ourselves.

#### 4. Conclusion

When we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do. On one level, I think I have lost "you" only to discover that "I" have gone missing as well. At another level, perhaps what I have lost "in" you, that for which I have no ready vocabulary, is a relationality that is composed neither exclusively of myself nor you, but is to be conceived as *the tie* by which those terms are differentiated and related (Butler 2004, p. 22).

The identity of the self to itself, the preservation of its unity and continuity over time is established by laborious work, similar perhaps to that of mourning, which requires a constant effort whose result is never guaranteed. Although consciousness is the faithful servant of this fictitious identity that it wants to protect at all costs, it sometimes fails to conduct this task that it cannot ensure indefinitely. Thus, during the moments of crisis and loss when the relations that distribute and differentiate the terms are upset not only does the

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<sup>12</sup> The name of the French edition of *Work of mourning*, a book composed of the tributes that Derrida wrote for his friends, writers, and thinkers.

order of things become disorganized but also weakens our familiarity with ourselves, this unity that we usually believe unshakable and immutable.

In *Precarious Life*, when Butler returns to Freud's main arguments on mourning and melancholy, instead of asking how and by what means the confusing situation created by the death of the other can be overcome, she rather lingers on the inability of the bereaved to know and control him/her self. "The disorientation of grief – 'Who have I become?' or, indeed, 'What is left of me?' 'What is it in the Other that I have lost?' – posits the 'I' in the mode of unknowingness" (Butler 2004, p. 30). According to Butler, this unknowingness, confusion and disorientation caused by the loss of the other reveals something fundamental about us. They are the telltale signs of the "ties we have to others" and which "constitute what we are" (Butler 2004, p. 22).

As we have tried to show in the previous parts, the unity of the self and its identity to itself are called into question by the loss, which reveals the constitution of the self in relation to the other. The attempt to recover this unity – which perhaps never existed – by substitution or by "internalizing idealization" is made to the detriment of the other's alterity (Derrida 1986, p. 54). This is where the Freudian solution of "killing" the dead, to put an end to mourning and return to life, comes from.

However, thinking about this subject in dialogue with Derrida and Butler allows us to see it differently. Rather than trying to find the absolute and therefore impossible unity of the self, it is a question of accepting to be altered by the loss of the other and consequently it is a question of assuming to be partially stranger to itself. Here, the return to life does not pass through the substitution of the other, nor through the identification, which assimilates the other to the same.

The desire to live is not the desire of the ego, but a desire that undoes the ego in the course of its emergence. The "mastery" of the ego would then be identified as the effect of the death drive, and life, in a Nietzschean sense, would break apart that mastery, initiating a lived mode of becoming that contests the stasis and defensive status of the ego (Butler 1997, pp. 193-194).

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