THE IDEA OF MELANCHOLIA IN THE THOUGHT OF JUDITH BUTLER: THE POLITICS OF (UN)MOURNING BETWEEN FORECLOSED ATTACHMENTS AND DISPOSSESSED LIVES

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

ÖZÜN AYÇA UMUCU

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

DECEMBER 2024

Approval of the thesis:

THE IDEA OF MELANCHOLIA IN THE THOUGHT OF JUDITH BUTLER: THE POLITICS OF (UN)MOURNING BETWEEN FORECLOSED ATTACHMENTS AND DISPOSSESSED LIVES

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ABSTRACT

THE IDEA OF MELANCHOLIA IN THE THOUGHT OF JUDITH BUTLER: THE POLITICS OF (UN)MOURNING BETWEEN FORECLOSED ATTACHMENTS AND DISPOSSESSED LIVES

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December 2024, 132 pages

This thesis focuses on the constitutive role of melancholia within the theories of Judith Butler's theoretical framework through the idea of the subject constructed through melancholia developed from Freud's interpretation of melancholic identification. In Butler's thought, the subject constructed through melancholia develops into the critical constituent in forming identity through the internalization of unmourned lost desires and attachments refused by socially constituted norms. While this internalization process shapes the subject, the traces left by lost objects play a central role in Butler's theoretical framework, which develops around gender, kinship, and vulnerability themes. The thesis argues that Butler's use of Freud's concept of melancholia serves as a structural cornerstone in her intellectual ground and that the theme of ‘melancholia-based subjectivity’ extends throughout her studies. On the other hand, it has been argued that Butler's theory of 'melancholia-based subjectivity' may limit the subject's political agency and lay the groundwork that could obscure Butler's theoretical framework. This thesis seeks to critically analyze Butler's interpretation of mourning and melancholia in connection with the

theoretical framework Butler has developed on the issues of gender, kinship, and vulnerability.

Keywords: Judith Butler, Melancholia, Mourning, Freud

ÖZ

JUDITH BUTLER'IN DÜŞÜNCESİNDE MELANKOLİ FİKRİ: DIŞLANMIŞ BAĞLILIKLAR VE MÜLKSÜZLEŞMİŞ YAŞAMLAR ARASINDA YAS (TUTAMAMA) SİYASETİ

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Aralık 2024, 132 sayfa

Bu tez, Judith Butler'ın teorik çerçevesinde, özellikle Freud'un melankolik özdeşleşme yorumundan geliştirilen melankoli düşüncesinin şekillendirdiği özne kavramı aracılığıyla melankolinin kurucu rolüne odaklanmaktadır. Butler'ın düşüncesinde, melankoli aracılığıyla inşa edilen özne, toplumsal normlar tarafından reddedilen ve yas tutulamayan arzuların ve kimliklerin içselleştirilmesi yoluyla kimlik oluşumunda önemli bir bileşen haline gelir. İçselleştirme süreci özneyi şekillendirirken, kaybedilen nesnelerin bıraktığı izler, Butler'ın cinsiyet, akrabalık ve yaralanabilirlik temaları etrafında şekillenen teorik çerçevesinde merkezi bir rol oynamaktadır. Tez, Butler'ın Freud'un melankoli kavramını kullanmasının, onun entelektüel düşüncesinde yapısal bir işlev gördüğünü ve 'melankoli temelli öznellik' temasının Butler'ın çalışmalarında merkezi bir rol oynadığını savunurken, öte yandan, Butler'ın 'melankoli temelli öznellik' anlayışının öznenin politik potansiyelini sınırlayabileceğini ve teorik çerçevesini belirsizleştirebilecek bir zemin yaratabileceğini de ileri sürmektedir. Bu çalışma, Butler'ın yas ve melankoliye ilişkin yorumlarını, cinsiyet, akrabalık ve yaralanabilirlik temaları etrafında

şekillenen teorik çerçevesiyle bağlantılı olarak eleştirel bir şekilde analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Judith Butler, Melankoli, Yas, Freud

To the fire-colored butterfly of life, Sedat Şimşek, and everyone who tries to live with his absence.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Necmi Erdoğan, who inspired me with his struggle in the world outside the academy and made it possible for me to complete my thesis, although the thesis topic changed many times. I would also like to thank one of the jury members, Kürşad Ertuğrul, for his contributions to the thesis' finalization.

I would like to thank Aykut Çelebi, who supported me by guiding me during an important period of my life, who was always a source of influence with his intellectual practices, and for the solutions and contributions he offered in bringing this thesis to its final form.

The literature I constructed for this thesis was possible by getting to know the literature of the *Political Psychology* course that I underwent in my undergraduate studies. The amazement I experienced at the poetic expression of this lecture played a major role in my interest in this literature. I would like to thank Özkan Agtaş, the narrator of this course, who inspired me to set up a meaningful connection with life with his equality-based approach.

As can be seen in the thesis, Selbin Yılmaz, whose thoughts undoubtedly influenced me and from whose non-hierarchical communication I received support, has perhaps unknowingly contributed greatly to the formation of this thesis. With thanks.

I would like to thank Mert Karbay for sharing his interest in melancholy; Erdem Çolak, Göze Orhon, Deniz Gürsoy, Halil Türker who supported me with their ideas on the previous thesis topic; Deniz Can Yılmazbaş, who helped access many of the resources in the thesis; Ceren Ülkü, with whom we share common challenges in graduate; Aylin Çelik and Ali Haydar Yıldız, who did not leave me alone on the jury day.

Getting to know you coincides with the same time and emotion as getting to know Ankara. My dear Buriksisters, Sıla Kurşun, Çağla Akdemir and, Ekin Aktarıcı, though we live different lives in other corners of the world, you made me feel we are together in the same life with your support—with thanks.

This thesis would not have been possible without Uğurcan Çelik. I would like to thank him for his friendship, encouraging ideas, and tireless support, and for guiding me from the day I decided to write my thesis until jury day, without waiting for me to ask for help. He is the author of this thesis as much as I am.

Hüseyin Ege Sarı, you taught me that people can be side by side in joy and sorrow. By understanding what I meant even in my silence, you calmed down my mind with the cheer and solutions you offered to the dilemmas of this thesis and life. Many thanks.

I would like to thank Fatma Umucu, who was my first contact with life and whom I see what love can do to a person; Hacı Umucu, Mr. Evolution Tree, who invited everyone he met to curiosity with his conversations; Ayhan Umucu, whose sparkle intelligence I admire; Belgin Torunoğlu Umucu, who has been easing the family's burden of this process; Dönsel Umucu, whose footprints I felt in the poems mentioned in the thesis; and Sedat Şimşek, whose joy has fascinated the world since he told me the story of our emergence from water to land, which is fantastical for a child but real for humanity when I was six, for their loves and efforts.

And of course, I am grateful to my best friend Kefir, who has been sleeping next to the table where I write my thesis and waking up in the same dream as me, for its love.

I hope I have not embarrassed these names by mentioning them.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Inspired by Traverso (2017), I tend to associate the rise of autobiographical narratives and the increasing interest in the study of emotions with melancholia[1]. This relationship encourages me to reveal a reason that led me to write a thesis on melancholia, that is, to present an autobiographical narrative about my own mourning that is "unspeakable" because it is still unacceptable—stemming from an internal reason, not from social norms for me. As the semester ended and I began the thesis process, a period began in which I could think of nothing but the multi-layered loss I had experienced. This process played a triggering role as my thesis took shape on melancholia, which is defined in the Freudian sense as prolonged mourning. What does a loss do to us? Is it something to be overcome, or is it an unclosable, encompassing openness that will transform us again and again throughout our lives? Is not melancholia, prolonged mourning—in the Freudian sense—a desire for a loving embrace towards the object, as described by Agamben? (2007, p. 260). For this very reason, I believe that the self embraces past losses and creates an internal structure with their traces, but that mourning never truly ends. Mourning resembles getting used to a garment that is occasionally taken off but worn again from time to time, and this habit, though it may appear to be healing, actually emerges as a result of that garment wrapping itself tightly around the person. In other words, learning to "cope with" mourning begins with accepting that mourning cannot be overcome.

[1] Throughout the thesis, "melancholia" and "melancholy" will be preferred over "melancholia". There are two main reasons for this preference. The first reason is the aim of providing conceptual unity in the thesis. Although many thinkers, such as Butler, have used both terms, "melancholia" has been preferred in this thesis in order to provide consistency. The second reason is that Freud's understanding of "melancholia" lies at the root of Butler's understanding of "melancholia". For this reason, the term "melancholia", which is the form Freud used, has been preferred. However, cases where the term "melancholy" is used in proper nouns and unique understandings will be exempted from this preference. Although "melancholia" and "melancholy" mean the same thing, the term "melancholia" has a different connotation in terms of referring to its ancient roots, meaning black bile.

Only by putting it on—like a garment—and accepting to exist with it can we learn to live with it. Indeed, while Rilke could not enjoy beauty because he thought it was doomed to perish, did not Freud conclude that transience is necessary to enjoy beauty and therefore that we should not overcome mourning mourning but learn to live with mourning? (Bergmann, 2009, p. 4). The desire to completely overcome grief and achieve an unscathed, lossless wholeness not only fosters an unrealistic illusion by disregarding human vulnerability but also nourishes a dangerous fantasy. On the other hand, the idea that grief is an incomplete notion can create the illusion that it will deepen over time and turn into a melancholic subjectivity that defines existence. Although these two ideas may seem to touch on the surface, there is no necessary connection between the impossibility of overcoming grief and its transformation into a destructive melancholia. The tension between these two ideas provides not only insight into the nature of grief but also an important perspective on how the allure of completion can become a trap. These two distinctions are kept in the background throughout the thesis, with the hope of developing a critical dimension that maintains a distanced stance toward both approaches. Just like this hope, I wish for the completion of this thesis to—symbolically—be a mourning work for me.

Throughout history, many human societies have believed that they were witnessing history, thinking that the social, political, and economic processes they went through were filled with unique challenges, insurmountable difficulties, and turbulent periods. As a being thrown into the world, humans tend to see the period they live in as difficult times within the framework of their conditions. Modernity, which is also seen as a desire to emphasize that the current moment is different from previous moments (Flayley, 2008, p.28-29) has made this tendency even more apparent and reinforced in modern times by causing the individual to perceive his or her own historical moment as separate and unique from others. In the preface of her book *Men in Dark Times*, Hannah Arendt states that although dark times throughout history have their own characteristics, they do not offer anything new in terms of phenomena such as hunger, chaos, massacre, hopelessness, vulnerability, and injustice (Arendt, as cited in Yılmaz, 2022, p. 1). Regardless of the period you look at, the existence of social and economic inequalities and violence reveals that the elements that feed melancholia are not specific to that period, but on the contrary,

they have been continuous throughout the ages. Therefore, the elements that feed melancholia have always existed throughout history. For this very reason, melancholia, which has been on the stage since Homer's epics, has undergone countless paradigmatic transformations throughout history, and the many different orientations it has have made melancholia an important reference point for art, science, philosophy, and politics.

Although melancholia has transformed through many paradigms throughout history, understandings from different periods have infiltrated the modern understanding of melancholia in various ways without completely excluding each other. Sigmund Freud's views on melancholia bear traces of these understandings. Freud was influenced by many thinkers, from Aristotle to Ibn Sina, one of the pioneers of Islamic medicine, to the neo-Platonist thinker Marsilio Ficino and Robert Burton, author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1989). The clinical picture Freud presented of melancholia is similar to the psychiatric definitions of Kraepelin and Meyer in many ways. Freud explained melancholia by making a comparison between mourning, which is a normal reaction to the loss of a loved object, and melancholia, which is defined as a seemingly "causeless" state of sadness. In this context, he addressed the causelessness of melancholia with an original interpretation and offered his own theoretical contribution to this understanding (Enderwitz, 2015). Freud's (1956a) originality lies in the fact that he first systematically elaborates on melancholia through the concept of "loss."[2] Freud's need for a point of comparison in his effort to make sense of the mourning process led him to reshape melancholia within the framework of "loss." Freud's examination of melancholia through the framework of "loss" has made it a point of reference for modern political thought on melancholia. Based on Freud's theory of "unspeakable loss" and "inexorable suffering," melancholia provides an important analytical lens to examine the psychoanalytic productions, conditions, and limits of marginalized subjectivities and to examine multi-layered social hierarchies. Thus, with modernism, melancholia gives a deep direction to the way we make sense of our subjectivities (Eng, 2000, pp. 1275-1276).

[2] Although melancholia has traditionally been thought of as a form of mourning addiction or mourning as a way of life, from ancient times until the 19th century the fundamental cause of melancholia was not considered to be an external loss (Luciano, 2003).

Although I try to maintain an implicit distance from this determinativeness of our subjectivities, one of the reasons why I wrote this thesis on melancholia after a loss is that melancholia guides the way I make sense of my subjectivity. Similarly, while my own melancholic experience is the main driving force of this study, I also approach Judith Butler's melancholic depth to identity theory and political understanding by placing melancholia at the center of understanding our subjectivities from a critical distance. Although this situation may seem like a paradox on the surface—which will be discussed in detail in this thesis—it constitutes a meaningful reflection of the specific ambivalence of melancholia in a simple personal experience.

This thesis seeks to answer the question of what role melancholia serves in Butler's theoretical framework and, based on this question, aims to examine how the concept of 'melancholia-based subjectivity' creates consistency in Judith Butler's ethical and political theories and how this continuity is related to Butler's theoretical transformations. It is argued that this concept of 'melancholia-based subjectivity' plays a central role in Butler's ethical and political theories, inspired by Freud's concept of melancholia. Therefore, the question of what it means for melancholia to be a central concept in Butler's theoretical framework also arises. Although the thesis claims that there is a theoretical continuity among Butler's works and that the basis of this continuity is the line of 'melancholia-based subjectivity,' it is also emphasized that despite this consistency, Butler's theoretical transformations contain thematic differences depending on the changes in her understanding of melancholia and unresolved mourning. These thematic differences range from gender to vulnerability[3]. In this context, the thesis aims to examine Butler's theories on gender, kinship, and vulnerability in terms of melancholia and its role in ethical-political approaches. Evaluating Butler within the framework of melancholia makes it possible to consider her theoretical foundations in this context and opens her theoretical framework to critical questioning. The reason and importance of considering Butler through melancholia emerges at this point. In addition, it is

[3] Throughout this thesis, the term "vulnerability" will be used instead of both concepts, due to the difference between the concepts of "precarity" and "precariousness" that Butler discussed in her work *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004).

argued that this critical questioning offers a new contribution to the continuous questioning of Butler's thought and intellectual position since the publication of *Gender Trouble* (1999). At this point, with the publication of *Gender Trouble* (1999), in which Butler effectively transformed feminism and LGBTI+ movements, Butler's thoughts not only reshaped the orientations and theoretical approaches of these fields but also became a fundamental reference source where post-structuralist thought could be discussed and criticized in depth. However, when we come to the present day, I would like to point out that Butler (2023) is concerned about everything being reduced to identity and has a statement that she thinks that identity is not a policy in itself.

Alyson Cole's oft-cited *All of Us Are Vulnerable, But Some Are More Vulnerable than Others: The Political Ambiguity of Vulnerability Studies, an Ambivalent Critique* (2017) argues that Butler expanded her political thinking on vulnerability to include the concept of the persecuted subject. Similarly, Mari Ruti's (2020) view that the centralization of the subject inevitably produces unacceptable sadism and cruelty reflects a similar understanding. In this thesis, the concept of 'melancholia-based subjectivity,' which is argued to be at the center of Butler's theoretical framework, differs from the concept of the persecuted subject that Cole and Ruti attribute to subjectivity. However, due to the existence of the persecutory nature in the original structure of melancholia, a commonality in meaning can be established between these two approaches. Despite this, this thesis argues that Cole (2017) constructed the subject as a 'melancholia-based subjectivity' even before Butler touched upon the theme of vulnerability and that this concept is continuous in her theories. The importance of this claim stems from the fact that it contributes to Sara Salih's (2002) view that Butler's works are generally not easily categorized, but all of her works pose fundamental questions about the formation of identity and subjectivity. Although it is accepted that Butler's works are not easily categorized, the fact that a melancholia-based subjectivity emerges as a common theme in these works makes the importance of the discussion even more apparent. At this point, it is necessary to elaborate on the meaning expressed by the term 'melancholia-based subjectivity.' Although Butler does not explicitly use this term, the inability to mourn desires repressed by social norms and lives that society does not deem worth living leads, in

the context of Freudian melancholia, to the internalization of the lost object within the self. This process initiates the construction of the subject through melancholia. In order to conceptualize Butler's ideas successfully, this study uses the term 'melancholia-based subjectivity,' borrowing from Freud's use of melancholic identification—here using the term melancholia instead of its synonyms to call up Freud's concept of melancholia.

David L Eng's (2000) argument that Freud's concept of melancholia provides a significant analytical lens for investigating multi-layered social hierarchies and that Butler draws upon this understanding aligns with this thesis' argument. This thesis argues that 'melancholia-based subjectivity,' inspired by Freud's concept of melancholia, plays a central role in Butler's ethical and political theories. In addition, focusing on the question of how melancholia shapes the politics in which melancholic subjects can engage, Moya Lloyd's (1998) treatment of Freud as a representative of the expressive gender theories criticized by Butler also parallels the defense of this thesis (pp. 25-26). However, when the historical context in which Eng's (2000) work emerged is taken into consideration, it is seen that he addresses this defense of Butler through themes that focus specifically on gender. However, this thesis is important in that it suggests that Butler was inspired by Freud's understanding of melancholia, not only in terms of gender but also in themes of kinship, mourning, and vulnerability. Similarly, the historical context of Lloyd's (2008) recent work focusing on Butler should also be considered. However, Unlike Lloyd, this thesis also examines Butler's *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (2009) and *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind* (2020). In this respect, the thesis has a special importance, as it differs from Eng and Lloyd in that Butler claims that until these studies she was nourished by Freud's understanding of melancholia.

To achieve the goals of this thesis, Freud's understanding of melancholia, which forms the basis of the concept of 'melancholia-based subjectivity,' which has a central place in Butler's ethical and political thought, is examined comprehensively in the third chapter of the thesis. In Eng's (2000) words, the theory of melancholia comes to the forefront in order to investigate the formation of other small group

identities that are mobilized by identity politics (p. 1276). The reason behind the importance of this theory is the association of a profound and shocking concept such as melancholia with loss. The association of melancholia with loss brings the themes of identity, memory, and loss of history to the forefront through their connections with otherness, sociality, and power relations.

Through Freud's analysis in *Mourning and Melancholia* (1957a), melancholia began to be discussed with a loss-centered approach. Therefore, in the third chapter devoted to Freud, the reasons why he approached melancholia within the framework of loss, which differed from the tradition that preceded him, are examined. In this context, while the origins of Freud's paradigm that associates melancholia with loss are investigated, a brief history of melancholia is also discussed in order to better understand this approach. Then, Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* (1957a), in which he presented his first theory on melancholia, is examined in depth. In this work, Freud detailed the distinction between melancholia and mourning in the context of the unconscious relations of losses. Freud's (1956a) concept of melancholia is based on an analogy he established between individuals in the mourning process and patients showing melancholia symptoms.

In his work *The Ego and the Id* (1961b), in which he developed his second theory on melancholia, Freud found it inadequate to address the distinction between melancholia and mourning only on the unconscious level. He revised this concept significantly, arguing that a part of the ego remains unconscious under all circumstances and avoids making a clear distinction between melancholia and mourning. Instead, she argued that all losses involve some kind of identification or internalization process (Butler, 1990; Flatley, 2008, pp. 48-49). This work is examined in detail in second chapter in order to understand the melancholic identification that is present in Butler's theories.

Finally, this chapter will also discuss the influence of Freud's concepts of melancholia and mourning on political thought. Although this examination does not directly address the main problem of the thesis, it provides a necessary and important context before moving on to Butler's understanding of melancholia.

The third and fourth chapters of the thesis constitute the main chapters that address the main problem of the study and examine in detail Butler's approaches to melancholia within her theoretical framework. These approaches present political perspectives consisting of parallel but different themes and are based on the reinterpretation of Freud's conceptualization of mourning and melancholia, specially developed in *The Ego and the Id* (1961b).

The fourth chapter deals with gender melancholia, the first of Butler's political perspectives on melancholia. According to this perspective, gender is shaped on a melancholic ontological basis; the internalization of desires that are prohibited or unacceptable by social norms enables the individual to construct their identity through 'melancholia-based subjectivity' (Butler, 1997; 1999). In this context, melancholia allows all gender identities to be reconceptualized on a constitutive basis of denial and acceptance (Eng, 2000, p. 37). Therefore, in this chapter, Butler's works *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999) and *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (1997), which focus on the theme of gender, are examined in accordance with the context of the thesis. This analysis aims to reveal Butler's understanding of melancholia in her early studies.

The fourth chapter examines Butler's second political perspective on melancholia and focuses on the politics of (un)mourning, which is shaped around the themes of kinship and vulnerability. In this context, *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* (2000) is examined first. Then, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004a), *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005), *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (2009), and *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind* (2020) are examined. This chapter analyzes how Butler's work on the politics of (un)mourning blurs the boundaries between melancholia and mourning and how vulnerability becomes a central theme in her thought. This analysis provides the opportunity to examine the ethical and political promises of mourning and melancholia and demonstrates the change in Butler's understanding of mourning, especially the transformation in her understanding of melancholia resulting from the inability to mourn.

CHAPTER 2

FREUD'S CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVE ON MELANCHOLIA: THE UNMOURNED LOSS

In this chapter, a critical examination of the Freudian understanding of melancholia will be made as the fundamental element that constitutes Butler's concept of 'melancholia-based subjectivity.'

First, in the section titled 'Freud's Paradigm of Loss and a Brief History of Melancholia,' how Freud's approach to melancholia differs from historical melancholia paradigms will be discussed. This section will provide a historical background better to understand Freud's conceptual framework for loss and melancholia and will serve as an introduction to the Freudian understanding of melancholia'.

Then, Freud's understanding of mourning and melancholia will be examined in depth under the title 'Analysis of Mourning and Melancholia'. The theoretical framework presented by Freud in this study provides an important basis for analyzing the complex relationship between melancholia and mourning. Understanding the psychodynamic structure of melancholia and mourning through Freud's eyes will help reveal the basic assumptions on which his thoughts on melancholia are based.

The section that follows, under the title 'Freud's Revision of Melancholia: The Ego and the Id,' will discuss how Freud reconsiders and transforms the concept of melancholia and mourning in his text *Mourning and Melancholia*. This section will take a look at Freud's structural subject model, developed in his second topography model, *The Ego and the Id* (1961b), and detail the central role of

melancholic identification in subject formation. How Freud's revision of this model provides a basis for Butler's idea of 'melancholia-based subjectivity' will be explained through the structural effects of melancholia on the subject. Analyzing this transformation of Freud is a key element in understanding how Butler brings the Freudian approach to melancholia to her own ethical-political context.

Since this thesis focuses on the Freudian emphasis on 'melancholia-based subjectivity' that underlies Judith Butler's ethical and political thoughts, looking at the influence of Freud's concept of melancholia and mourning on political thought does not directly target the main problem of the thesis, but it provides an important context before moving on to Butler's understanding of melancholia. Therefore, the title 'The Role of 'Mourning and Melancholia' in Political Thought' is included at the end of the chapter, thus aiming to create a bridge to the place of this concept in political thought before entering Butler's understanding of melancholia.

2.1. Freud's Paradigm of Loss and a Brief History of Melancholia

Modernity, as a particular experience of time and the totality of concrete changes in the material world of everyday life, is closely related to the experience of loss. The origin of term "modernity" is based on the Latin word "modernus", which expresses "today" or "now" as opposed to "yesterday". This meaning brings with it the idea of the past passing away and disappearing (Calinescu, 1987; Osborne, 1995; Koselleck, 1985; Harvey, 1989, as cited in Flatley, 2008, p. 27). Modernity has also been used to describe a subjective experience that expresses the transient, fleeting, and elusive nature of the moment an individual lives in. The passage of time evokes the feeling that the world around one is constantly receding and, as in Baudelaire, creates an uninterrupted accumulation of loss. In this subjective or social dimension, modernity and the experience of loss seem historically inseparable: being "modern" means having broken ties with the past. Modernity can even be seen as a desire to emphasize that the present is different from previous moments; this is the individual's perception of his/her own historical moment as unique and separate from others (Flayley, 2008, p. 28-29). It is possible to see the problematic relationship with the past, which is the expression of modern consciousness, even in

an old figure: “We moderns are dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants” (Calinescu, 1987, as cited in Flatley, 2008, p. 28). According to this metaphor, the shoulders of extinct giants are responsible for our current level of intelligence. Although we are more forward-looking thanks to the legacy of our ancestors, this situation also makes us feel smaller. The funerary theme carried by the figure deepens this uncertainty: As modern individuals, the foundation on which we move is made up of dead bodies. The spirits of the past offer us both the possibility of elevation and uneasiness (Flatley, 2008, p. 29). Indeed, the tension between the promises of modernity and the realities of modernization is the domain of modernism itself[4] (Flatley, 2008, p. 32). Just like the ambivalence of loss and the melancholia associated with loss since Freud.[5]

There is ample evidence to suggest that one of the most fundamental problems of modernity is the effort to cope with losses—with a new dimension, scope, and quality. In this context, Freud’s theory of melancholia, developed when the horrors of World War I began to become apparent, stands out as a modern text (Flatley, 2008, p. 31). Freud’s theories were marked by the great social and political turmoil following World War I and the Spanish Flu pandemic and were shaped by the complex social dynamics and conflicts of the period in which he lived (Roudinesco, 2016, p. 203). Technologies of war and destruction have dramatically revealed the destructive potential of man toward man and have caused local, individual losses to

[4] Modernity can carry not only its critical aspects but also a more optimistic, utopian, and even revolutionary meaning; it is closely related to the Enlightenment project (Habermas, 1980, as cited in Flatley, 2008, p. 31). It promises a better life through human perfection, progress, democracy, and the hope of achieving equality, reason, and science. However, the failure to fully realize the promises of modernity can lead individuals to a depressive mood over time (Hamilton, 1996, as cited in Flatley, 2008, p. 31). The constant postponement or incompleteness of the hopes offered by modernity can cause disappointment in individuals and constantly encountering aspects where these promises are not fulfilled can make the world feel ordinary, dull, and meaningless. In addition, the greater the hopes for science, technology, or international cooperation, the more shocking the impact of failures in these areas can be. One of the most striking examples of this is the Nazi Genocide, which was planned and implemented by bureaucratic mechanisms (Flatley, 2008, p. 31).

[5] There were also names that associated melancholia with loss before Freud. One of these was Baudelaire (1857/1993), and the other was Romantic sadness, which emerged in the face of the gains and losses of the Enlightenment. This sadness is a reflection of the losses that come with change. In addition, Freud’s contemporary Walter Benjamin also associated melancholia with modernism and loss, especially in The Origin of German Tragic Drama (1928/2003). However, Freud (1917/1957) used the concept of melancholia in order to compare the mourning process associated with loss with another phenomenon, and thus became the first thinker to systematically associate melancholia with loss.

be experienced on a massive scale. The Nazi Holocaust created a sense of loss so deep that it made even mourning almost impossible (Flatley, 2008, p. 30). In this context, the destruction caused by wars sometimes made it possible to mourn after losses, while sometimes it caused the unbearable mourning to be overshadowed by melancholia. However, it should be noted that, according to Freud, war is not an aberration or an exception, but both something that civilization tries to limit and fails to limit and an undeniable fact of human existence that establishes civilization (Freud, 1961a). Indeed, while this period is characterized by events such as the collapse of empires, mass wars, economic crises, and class struggles, it is also an era in which social mass movements based on nationalist, liberal, socialist, and communist ideals, seen for the first time in history, rose. These movements led to social, artistic, literary, and scientific innovations, emerging from the transformation of a family-based social structure, the development of capitalism, and the widespread experience of mourning and melancholia in society, resulting in discoveries related to family, sexuality, desire, the unconscious, and culture, all interacting with specific historical, social, and political conditions (Roudinesco, 2016, pp. 3-7, 25, 203).

Although melancholia is traditionally seen as an addiction to mourning or mourning as a way of life, in fact, from antiquity to the nineteenth century, the main cause of melancholia was not considered to be external loss (Luciano, 2003, p. 156). Although melancholia has been shaped around the problem of loss since Freud, it is specific to the modernist period, and to appreciate the unique focus of the modernist period, it would be useful to briefly look at the general history of melancholia. According to Flatley, Melancholia went through three separate paradigmatic evolutions until it came to Freud (Flatley, 2002, p. 171). Only the three paradigmatic evolutions before Freud will be examined here, and the remaining details will not be discussed as they would exceed the limits of the thesis. Indeed, although there have been several paradigm shifts throughout history, new understandings have not completely eliminated each other; On the contrary, it has created a situation where conflicting theories can exist simultaneously (Klibanksy, Panofsky, & Saxl, 1964, as cited in Flatley, 2008, p. 33). The first paradigmatic evolution is the Humurol Theories, and in ancient times it was believed that melancholic people had a black bile inside them. When we look at the connection of ancient philosophical thought

with the mythological worldview of the period, it does not seem reasonable to think that this belief could have originated from an organic cause only. Indeed, although the mind and body are considered as separate categories in the modern age, the first traces of the connection between bile and temperament became evident in the literature following Aristotle. The oldest written examples of melancholia are found in Homer's epics. Although the term "melancholia" does not appear in these texts, melancholic behaviors and temperaments are depicted with remarkable subtlety among Homer's heroes (Földényi, 2016, p. xi). When we look at the names that combine humoral medicine with temperament and melancholic behaviors based on this first paradigm of melancholia, it is possible to see Hippocrates, Plato, and Aristotle,[6] who raised the rhetorical question that has been discussed many times. Aristotle's association of melancholia with genius[7] created a literature that would follow Aristotle for years (Prigent, 2009). The relationship that Aristotle established between black bile and intellectual superiority has continued throughout history. In Rome, Cicero and Seneca continued the Aristotelian understanding of melancholia. While Galen developed his thoughts on melancholia as one of the founders of Western medicine, the understanding of melancholia continued to be adopted in the Arab world under the influence of Hippocratic medicine and Aristotelian philosophy. The first radical break from this tradition occurred in Christianity, especially in Patristic philosophy, when melancholic attitudes were accepted as sins under the name of acedia (Karbay, 2015, p. 55).

[6] The XXXth book of *Problemeta Physica*, written by Aristotle's student Theophrast, is the first comprehensive work on melancholia and black bile to reach the present day. This book is an objection to the concept of madness that Plato attributed to divinity, while Aristotle's approach is based more on Hippocrates' theory of body fluids. While Aristotle, inspired by Plato, attributed heroism to the melancholic state of mind, he adopted Hippocrates' concepts of the four temperaments and moods and considered melancholia not as a pathological but as a natural condition. (Kristeva, 1992). Unlike his definitions based on observed symptoms, Aristotle approached melancholia from a philosophical perspective. In other words, he evaluated melancholia not only in terms of illness but also in terms of genius (Kristeva, 1992, p. 7). At this point, his famous question is very critical: "Why is it that all those who have achieved excellence in philosophy or politics or poetry or the arts are clearly of a melancholic temperament, and some of them to such an extent that they are also affected by the diseases originating from black even (Aristotle, 2002, p. 60)."

[7] In the Aristotelian understanding of melancholia, melancholic temperament and melancholia as a disease are evaluated differently. While ordinary people can get melancholia, geniuses who have a melancholic temperament from birth are not considered sick. These individuals are separated from ordinary people because they have a unique morality and the capacity to be enthusiastic with verified passionate energy (Teber, 2009, p. 119). Accordingly, people with a melancholic temperament have an extraordinary nature and black bile has a healing core as much as it causes disease. Thus, black bile is the only secretion that can affect creation, unlike other secretions (Aristotle, 2002, p. 58-60).

The second paradigmatic understanding of melancholia is the Christian understanding of melancholia. The body-mind duality in the modern age originates from the Middle Ages. The exclusion of melancholia in the modern period is related to acedia, which was considered a sin in the Middle Ages. The sad and introverted were perceived as anti-establishment. Though the norms may have changed from the Middle Ages, the melancholics have always been kept out, while the priests have been substituted by judges and physicians during the modern period (Teber, 2009, p.142). Acedia has been identified with a state of melancholia which prevents the monks from worshipping with desperation and lethargy being one of the seven deadly sins in Christianity. Considered dangerous because monks are supposed to serve God cheerfully, acedia also leads to mystical union and the highest virtue, joy, when overcome (Cassian, 2000, pp. 69-70). In this context, melancholia was considered a mental illness and was treated with monastic medicine. In Christianity, the separation of body and soul developed a new treatment ethic under the control of the Church and presented the power of God as the absolute authority (Prigent, 2009, p. 35). However, with the Renaissance, melancholia regained the creativity attributed only to God through art and science and gained a new dimension. Thus, melancholia entered the third paradigm with the Renaissance.

The concept of acedia, which was considered a sin in the Middle Ages with the Renaissance, began to be used for the public in addition to monks over time. Acedia losing its spiritual meaning and being reduced to laziness caused melancholia to become widespread among the public (Prigent, 2009, pp. 34-38). This process paved the way for the secularization of melancholia in the Renaissance; melancholia was no longer seen as a punishment from God but as the pain of ordinary people. In the Renaissance, melancholia was associated with Saturn and accepted as a cold and harsh temperament. Thinkers such as Ficino and Agrippa identified melancholia with creative thought and genius; this understanding was also reflected in Dürer's engraving Melencolia I as a symbol of creative and mystical thought. Renaissance melancholia revived the melancholia-genius relationship in Antiquity and created an original understanding of melancholia-genius that brought together science, art, and mysticism (Klibansky, Panofsky, & Saxl, 1964). Melancholia craving has experienced many adventures from the Renaissance to the present day, taking on the

melancholia of Romanticism and settling in the field of modern medicine, and continuing to take its place in literature, philosophy, and art. In this context, by remaining loyal to the boundaries of the thesis, we will end the short history of melancholia before Freud here, and as will be remembered, Freud, who systematically associated melancholia with loss by comparing the mourning process with another phenomenon (Flatley, 2008, pp. 31-41), systematized the concept of melancholia in *Mourning and Melancholia* (1957).

2.2. Analysis of Mourning and Melancholia

Freud completed one of his most famous works, a short text called *Mourning and Melancholia*, in 1915 and published it in 1917, as mentioned above, due to the uncertainty, destruction, and fear of loss brought by the First World War, even when only his own personal circumstances were taken into consideration. Before moving on to a detailed analysis of this text, it would be appropriate to state that the text is a continuation of Freud's article *On Narcissism: An Introduction* (1914), the reasons for which will be discussed later. In addition, it is necessary to examine the findings in the article "On Temporality", which was written immediately after *Mourning and Melancholia* but whose effects can be read in the published version of *Mourning and Melancholia* because it was published earlier. This article is based on Freud's short and pleasant memories of a walk he took with an unnamed poet, allegedly Rilke (Bergmann, 1966, as cited in Lehman). According to the article, Rilke, known as a melancholic poet, could not enjoy beauty because he thought it was doomed to perish. This led Freud to the conclusion that transience was necessary to appreciate beauty and that we must therefore acquire the capacity to mourn. Later, in *Mourning and Melancholia*, he reached an essential conclusion: Rilke's mind was opposed to mourning (Bergmann, 2009, p. 4). In that article, Freud made a point that he would later elaborate on in *Mourning and Melancholia*: "We only see that libido clings to its objects and will not renounce those that are lost even when a substitute lies ready to hand. Such then is mourning" (Freud, 1917, as cited in Bergmann, 2009). Here, what Freud gained from his impression of a melancholic led him to an important definition of mourning and to the knowledge that the mind of a melancholic is opposed to mourning.

When we read Freud's works critically, we can observe that he typically draws comparisons and usually defines "normal" and "deviation" by the contrasts he presents. This can also be observed in his work *Mourning and Melancholia*; in fact, the initial sentence of the material takes its starting point thus: "Since dreams are prototypes of narcissistic psychical disturbances in normal life, we shall attempt to throw some light on the nature of melancholia by comparing it with the normal attitude of mourning" (Freud, 1957a, p. 253). When Freud compares the psychological characteristics of mourning with melancholia, he reveals the logic of the main argument of *Mourning and Melancholia*: Both states are reactions to loss and involve "serious deviations from the normal attitude towards life" (Ogden, 2009, p. 126). In fact, Freud (1957a) makes the following definition for melancholia:

> a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity, and a lowering of the self-regarding feelings to a degree that finds utterance in self-reproaches and self-revilings, and culminates in a delusional expectation of punishment (p. 244).

The characteristics mentioned in the text regarding melancholia can also be seen in mourning, but they are separated by a single difference. This difference is that the self-esteem seen intensely in melancholia does not manifest itself in mourning (Freud, 1957a, p. 243). Although this may seem like a single difference on the surface, it points to a very serious distinction.

> In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself. The patient represents his ego to us as worthless, incapable of any achievement and morally despicable; he reproaches himself, vilifies himself and expects to be cast out and punished. He abases himself before everyone and commiserates with his own relatives for being connected with anyone so unworthy. He is not of the opinion that a change has taken place in him, but extends his self-criticism back over the past; he declares that he was never any better (Freud, 1957a, p. 246).

From this quote, it can be understood, in the first place, that the melancholic, unlike the mourner, loses his self-esteem, based on the distinction in the nature of loss of objects in the unconscious and the conscious level. Second, both melancholia and mourning are painful experiences, and in both cases, the interest of the person in life decreases; however, while mourning is a situation which can be understood and

healed, in melancholia, there is an unresolved process of pain and the situation in which the person loses his self. In this sense, mourning is considered a "normal" process, while melancholia manifests itself as a "pathological" disorder. This unresolvability of melancholia is a result of being stuck on a libidinal object or person that is no longer accessible. Freud (1957a) explains this situation as follows:

> An object-choice, an attachment of the libido to a particular person, had at one time existed; then owing to a real slight or disappointment coming from that lost object, the object-relationship was shattered. The result was not the normal one of a withdrawal of the libido from this object and a displacement of it on to a new one, but something different. (. . .) The object-cathexis proved to have little power of resistance and was brought to an end. But the free libido was not displaced on to another object; it was withdrawn into the ego (p. 249).

As explained here, the libidinal drive's desire to remain attached to the lost object or person puts the person into an internal conflict. When this drive does not overcome the impact of the loss and the internal conflict does not disappear, the conflict targets the person's ego, which leads to feelings of self-blame and worthlessness. As Freud (1957a) stated, "the shadow of the object falls on the ego" (p. 249). In melancholia, the ego is identified with the lost object, and the ego and the object remain dependent on each other, imprisoning each other.

When we consider the melancholic's self-blame and feelings of worthlessness that are identified with the lost object, we encounter a critical situation. When a melancholic person talks about seeing themselves as worthless, they do not feel ashamed while blaming themselves, unlike people who do not suffer from this problem. We see that people who talk about seeing themselves as worthless usually do not want to voice this situation or that this situation is accompanied by a feeling of shame in them. As Freud also said, it can be observed that melancholic people become more talkative and look for a way to reveal their worthless attitudes towards themselves. What lies behind the person expressing such negative thoughts about themselves without any hesitation, as if they were not talking about themselves? The reason behind the person blaming themselves easily, even willingly, without shame, is that they do not actually direct this attitude towards themselves. The melancholic person who belittles themselves actually voices their criticisms towards the person or

object they have lost in their mind with this attitude. At this point, Freud (1957a) says the following:

> In melancholia, countless separate struggles are carried on over the object in which hate, and love contend with each other; the one seeks to detach the libido from the object, the other to maintain this position of the libido against the assault (p. 256).

In the state of mourning, which Freud defined by contrasting it with melancholia, there is a lost libidinal object or person, and at the end of the mourning process, this lost libidinal object or person is replaced by a new object or person; thus, the ego remains free. In melancholia, the reason why the ego cannot be free is that the person cannot replace the loss with something new as a result of the ego's identification with the lost object or person, and loses its ego by experiencing a contradiction. Therefore, it can be said that the accusations that the melancholic directs at himself are actually accusations made against the loved and lost object, and that these accusations are shifted to his own ego because he identifies with the lost thing (Freud, 1957a, p. 248). Thus, it can be argued that melancholia usually involves a struggle involving contradictory feelings towards the loved object, that melancholics always feel that they are treated with great injustice, and that for this reason, there is an emotional rebellion brought about by disappointment and injustice in melancholia (Freud, 1957a, pp. 245-248). However, it is difficult to predict the consequences of this rebellion; Because, according to Freud's theory, the existence of melancholia inevitably indicates a state of ambivalence and traps the melancholic subject in a constant cycle of contradiction and internal conflict. In this context, Freud does not clearly explain which ambivalent bonds lead to melancholia and which do not. The basic idea he puts forward is that melancholic individuals are structurally prone to ambivalent object attachments (Freud, 1957a, pp. 246-247).

Freud's theory shows that melancholia is a condition fueled by unresolved or repressed ambivalences in the unconscious; The individual is in a constant reckoning with opposing feelings such as love and hate, loyalty, and detachment. While the melancholic subject is stuck between the emptiness and unconscious conflicts created by loss, ambivalence is at the center of this contradictory situation and makes

the mourning process more complex. While Freud's ambiguous boundaries of ambivalence deepen the destructive effect of melancholia on subjective identity, his work suggests that emotional bonds established around loss can leave a permanent mark on the individual. In this sense, melancholia represents not only a mourning directed towards the past but also, or rather, a constantly recurring state of internal conflict within the individual itself (Freud, 1957a). It would be necessary to say that Freud, who addressed melancholia with unconscious processes, loss of the ego and identity, presented an important conceptualization of the ego. This conceptualization has an extremely important place both in terms of psychoanalysis and in terms of subject discussions in social sciences. In order to elaborate on the subject a little more, I will give the following statement by Freud (1957a):

> (...) the melancholic's disorder affords of the constitution of the human ego. We see how in one part of the ego sets itself over against the other, judges it critically, and, as it were, takes it as its object. What we are here becoming acquainted with is the agency commonly called "conscience" (…) and we shall come upon evidence to show that it can become diseased on its own account (p. 248).

Freud partly reconceptualizes ego on this aspect. The unconscious object relations reflected here contain several points which constitute the basis of Freud's psycho-analytic theory. Freud writes:

> The ego may be split, that a psychic structure-a genesis of an ego-can have conscious and unconscious parts; that an unconscious, separated portion of the ego can think and feel on its own; and that a separated portion of the ego can relate unconsciously to another portion of the ego" (Freud, as cited inOgden, 2009, p. 128).

I conclude this discussion here for the present, only to take up Freud's conception of the subject that has achieved importance in social sciences through the divisibility of the ego.

While examining Freud's text[8] *Mourning and Melancholia*, it was stated that mourning and melancholia are both different reactions to loss. However, after a certain point in Freud's text, it is seen that he makes a language change that gives the

[8] From page 49 of the text.

impression of a change of opinion on this subject. This is a change that will rename an important aspect of melancholia. Midway into his text, Freud begins, for the first time, instead of using the terms “lost object” or any other terms for that word, he will use the term “abandoned object”. Paradoxically, the melancholic's lost object, instead of being let go as it is in the case of a mourning person, is conserved through his identification with that object, and it is here that Freud can point to another subtle and small difference between mourning and melancholia (Ogden, 2009, p. 130). What does the abandonment of the object instead of its loss tell us? The person who cannot overcome the experience of loss and resists not to lose the object, identifies with the object, that is, divides his ego and equalizes with the object, and thus there is no loss. Now there is identification with the internal object and an abandoned external object. Through the division of the ego, the division of the internal object occurs and thus the critical part of the ego and the part of the ego identified with the object emerge. The critical part attacks the part identified with the object with anger. This process develops as a result of not being able to cope with the pain of loss and shows the following: the melancholic person, who cannot cope with the pain of loss and tries to escape from this pain, loses a significant part of his own life by disconnecting from a large part of external reality. The inner world of the melancholic person is strongly shaped by the desire to hold the object captive in an imaginary way instead of accepting the reality and pain of losing it, and as a result, he identifies with the object. In this sense, identification with the object preserves the object within the melancholic, while at the same time making the melancholic a slave to the object (Ogden, 2009, p. 131).

For the melancholic person to unconsciously identify with the lost/abandoned object, on the one hand, there must be an intense fixation on the loved object; in contrast, the resistance power of the object cathexis must also be low. This means that even if the person has made an intense emotional investment in the lost/abandoned object, this investment must have low durability (Freud, 1957a, p. 249). To make the contradiction here understandable, Freud turns to narcissism as an inventory that can resolve this contradiction. This contradiction expresses that object selection has a narcissistic basis and that as a result, when an obstacle occurs in front of the object cathexis, it will regress to narcissism (Freud, 1957a, p. 249).

I have said that the text *Mourning and Melancholia* is a continuation of Freud's article *On Narcissism: An Introduction*. Freud's conceptualization of narcissism, which he addressed in his article *On Narcissism: An Introduction* written in 1914, shortly before *Mourning and Melancholia*, helped to form the object relations theory that Freud put forward in *Mourning and Melancholia*. According to the article, the baby's first contact with the world is through narcissistic identification. This narcissistic identification is called "primary narcissism" (Freud, 1957b, p. 75). Over time, the baby gains enough stability to move beyond the narcissistic identification position and to be able to relate to objects in a narcissistic way. This object bond is formed by shifting the ego-libido to the object (Freud, 1957b). The transition from narcissistic identification to narcissistic object bond is a matter of the baby's ability to separate himself and thus recognize the otherness of the object, which leads to the formation of his self. According to Freud, a healthy baby can perceive and complete the differentiation between ego-libido and object-libido in the transition from narcissistic identification to narcissistic object bond. During this process, the baby learns to relate in a way of object love that does not involve the displacement of self-love onto the object. Here, according to Freud, lies the key to the contradiction that melancholia presents: Melancholia is a disease created by narcissism (Freud, as cited in Ogden, 2009, p. 134), and narcissistic disorder is a necessary precondition for melancholia (Freud, 1957a, p. 249).

For the melancholic person, it was not possible to shift from narcissistic object love to self-love in infancy or childhood to object love. This situation indicates that the melancholic person cannot accept the object loss or object abandonment he has experienced, that is, to mourn and develop a new object love over time. Instead of this confrontation, as a way of escaping the pain of loss, he returns to narcissistic identification with the lost or abandoned object, and the loved object is protected. In other words, the fact that the melancholic can only establish narcissistic object relations at the beginning is the element that distinguishes the melancholic from the mourner. Freud sees the world of unconscious internal object relations as a defensive regression to early object relations as a response to the pain of loss experienced in the melancholic state. In this case, the potential for a relationship established with the mortal and sometimes disappointing external object is replaced by an internal object

that exists outside of time and is therefore protected from the reality of death. In this process, a serious price is paid, such as the loss of a significant portion of emotional vitality at the expense of avoiding the pain of loss (Ogden, 2009, pp. 135-136).

In the following pages of the text, it can be seen that the most striking feature of melancholia is its tendency to transform into mania, with the exact opposite symptomatology (Freud, 1957a, p. 253). However, it should be noted that such a feature is not observed in every melancholia case. One can approach the text's narrative about mania in two ways: a psychoanalytic perspective and an economic observation. From a psychoanalytic perspective, mania, and melancholia are not different in terms of content; both try to cope with the "complex". However, while the ego is defeated by the complex in melancholia, in mania the ego has either defeated the complex or pushed it aside (Freud, 1957a, p. 253-254). In terms of economic observation, according to Freud, emotions such as enthusiasm and triumph experienced in mania are economically conditioned in the same way. There is always a state that results from great mental effort or long-standing habit, and eventually, a state arises that renders that effort unnecessary, so that energy is accumulated for many different uses. Freud (1957a) assumes that the economy of mania may be similar to the following states:

> [S]ome poor wretch, by winning a large sum of money, is suddenly relieved from chronic worry about his daily bread, or when a long and arduous struggle is finally crowned with success, or when a man finds himself in a position to throw off at a single blow some oppressive compulsion, some false position which he has long had to keep up, and so on (p. 254).

At this point, the part that really interests one is that Freud's use of economy is not only a mental economy; it is also an attempt to read it through poverty, which is a social situation. To discuss this issue later, it would be good to elaborate on mania a little more from where we left off.

In mania, a real external world replaces the world of internal objects; the feeling of omnipotence arises from despair; immortality offers an alternative to the inevitable realities of time and death. Thus, despair is replaced by triumph, and love is replaced by contempt. This situation shows that the manic person creates his internal object

world to escape losses in the external world. Escaping from external reality draws the manic person away from life, despite their relations with the real external world, into an omnipotent world of thought (Ogden, 2009, pp. 138-139).

In Freud's work, *Mourning and Melancholia*, the similarities and differences between the concepts of mourning and melancholia are emphasized. To summarize the relationship between melancholia and mourning, in both cases, the loss of a loved object and ambivalence can be seen. Yet, the outcomes of the loss or abandonment of an object dear and ambivalence are considerably different. Thus, while mourning is the conscious realization of a loss and the use of a process that will enable the surpassing of this loss, melancholia is characterized by a loss in which the lost object is not acknowledged or recognized. At the end of the mourning process, the lost object is replaced with a new object or person, making it possible for the mourner to continue his life; in melancholia, identification with the lost object occurs and the person feels the shadow of the lost object on his own self. Hatred and love compete with each other; one tries to separate the libido from the object, and the other tries to maintain the position of this libido (Freud, 1957a, p. 256). As a result, a melancholic person is in conflict with his passion for living and accepts the pain of irreversible loss and the inevitability of death, on the one hand; on the other hand, he has a desire to abstract himself from the pain of loss and the idea of death. An individual who can mourn manages to free himself from the struggle between life and death that freezes melancholia. In other words, the mourner has to accept that the death of the object is painful, and in order to mourn something, it means that it must first be killed. Views on object relations theory include the connection between melancholia and mourning. These processes explained by Freud through object relations theory show that melancholia is closely related not only to a past loss but also to the individuals' relationship with themselves (1957a).

As stated before, Freud's understanding in the text *Mourning and Melancholia* - written in 1915 and published in 1917- was shaped under the influence of the atmosphere of horror created by the First World War. Freud believes that he witnessed the darkest aspects of humanity in this process and thinks that this situation once again confirms his theories (Roudinesco, 2016, p. 174). At the same

time, he failed to realize that his thoughts, especially his latest work on narcissism, were not immune from the fatal transformation of the world he knew and was already beginning to miss (Roudinesco, 2016, p. 174). However, witnessing the devastating effects of the war led him to reevaluate and transform his arguments on the pleasure principle (Roudinesco, 2016, pp. 174-176). Thus, Freud argues that the formation of civilization did not eliminate humanity's aggressive tendencies or death instincts; On the contrary, he argued that these tendencies are ready to surface despite being repressed and that under certain conditions this repression can easily be relaxed (Freud 1955). In this context, Freud reviewed the pleasure principle and deepened the relationship between unconscious and libidinal investments. In his work *The Ego and Id* (1961b), he transformed this conceptualization by arguing that the unconscious's libidinal investments towards objects are reshaped through intensified representations and displacement channels (Roudinesco, 2016, pp. 178-179). This transformation also pointed out a radical change in Freud's understanding of melancholia and led him to present a new perspective on the conceptualization of melancholia developed in *Mourning and Melancholia* in his work *The Ego and the Id* (1961b). Freud reviewed and re-evaluated his previous speculations about melancholia and discussed this concept in more depth through ego and id dynamics.

2.3. Freud's Revision of Melancholia: *The Ego and the Id*

Realizing that the distinction of the unconscious, preconscious and conscious known as the "first topology" is inadequate to describe psychic functioning Freud then suggests that the psyche needs a much finer structure (Freud, 1953, 1961b). From here, he constructs a new structural model of the psyche and re-describes the psyche in three basic elements: the ego, id and the superego. This second cleavage, the second topography, is a complement rather than an antithesis to the first model. The ego, as a coordinating center of psychic workings, is charged with negotiating the instinctual pressures of the id and the moral entreaties of the superego; in this way, the individual's inner conflicts and ambivalence of feelings are brought together in the interaction between the three (Freud, 1961b). From here, Freud revisits the problem of melancholia with the second topography in *The Ego and the Id*, broadly modifying his earlier positions.

In *The Ego and Id*, Freud does not make a clear distinction between melancholia; instead, he suggests that all losses require some form of identification or introjection (Butler, 1990, as cited in Flatley, 2008, pp. 48-49). The perspective that considers mourning as a simple process involving detachment from the object and repair is no longer sufficient. According to Freud, it is not possible to completely purge melancholic elements in a process where loss is experienced; mourning does not occur without transforming the self. Freud takes this idea further and suggests that the character of the self is shaped by the accumulation of the remains of lost objects. Within this context, the traces of the past losses forge an internal structure with the self and, therefore, the act of mourning tends to bring a permanent transformation in the identity and subjectivity of the individual (Flatley, 2008, p. 49) providing him with a melancholic idenditity. Freud (1961b) says:

> When it happens that a person has to give up a sexual object, there quite often ensues an alteration of his ego which can only be described as a setting up of the object inside the ego, as it occurs in melancholia; the exact nature of this substitution is as yet unknown to us. It may be that by this introjection, which is a kind of regression to the mechanism of the oral phase, the ego makes it easier for the object to be given up or renders that process possible. It may be that this identification is the sole condition under which the id can give up its objects. At any rate the process, especially in the early phases of development, is a very frequent one, and it makes it possible to suppose that the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object cathexes and that it contains the history of those objectchoices (p. 29).

At this point, Freud (1961b) states that the character of the ego is formed by the residues of lost objects and that the ego contains the history of these object choices (p. 29). In other words, what constitutes our identity is the traces left by the losses we experience; the objects we lose penetrate the texture of our self and shape it. Such a perspective rips the melancholic mechanism from being only a side effect into the very center of the subject formation process and therefore means it becomes an integral part of the self-definition process of the individual (Flatley, 2008, p. 49). It is this understanding which forms the intellectual ground for melancholia-based subjectivity that Butler grounds upon the Freudian notion of melancholia.

In *Mourning and Melancholia* (1957a), Freud argues that love, with its instinct for self-preservation, imprints the ego with the image of the object. In this case, the bond

established with the object is completely transformed and merges into a third concept. As a result, we have two different types of melancholia and two different ways of internalizing the lost object. At this point, we have depressive melancholia, in which ambivalent feelings are directly internalized, leading to a deep conflict and division within the ego. Freud uses the metaphor of "the shadow of the object", which he developed in *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917) and used to summarize his views on melancholia, and in *The Ego and the Id* (1961b), he uses the metaphor of "the precipitate of the object."

In the first metaphor, Freud states that the lost object continues to exist as a conflicting trace within the ego, while in the second metaphor, this lost object does not remain only as an internalized trace; it directly transforms into an inseparable part of the "ego character." In this case, the bond established with the object is not limited to being taken in; it also becomes a fundamental element that reshapes the structure of the ego and deeply affects it. The idea that Freud abandons here is an accessible and complete mourning process because it is no longer valid to see mourning as a complete break from the bond with the object. In both of these two types of melancholia, the object is somehow taken into the ego and becomes a part of the individual. As Freud said, "it does not seem possible that the investment can be broken off without anything left behind (Freud, as cited in Flatley, 2008, p.50). In fact, the object, in being lost, stamps an indelible mark on one's self-identity, according to Flatley (Flatley, 2008, p. 50). Consequently, melancholia and mourning are equated to the residuum of abandoned object cathexes, to the state of not being able to live, while mourning-near to melancholia-is not only the work of dealing with a loss but also an inner struggle which leaves its scar in the Ego. (Clewell, 2004, p. 43). For this very reason, although it is at first glance difficult to see Freud presenting a theory of mourning that goes beyond the violent nature of melancholia in his text, his handling of the concept of "the ego as an elegiac" fundamentally undermines the desire to create an identity that is completely independent of the demands of the lost person and the past (Clewell, 2004, p. 43). Based on this, according to thinkers such as Judith Butler (2004a, 2009), Freud's approach emphasizes the positive and ethical dimensions of mourning by embracing loss as an internal part. Freud argues that the mourning process should not only be considered

as a process of overcoming loss, but also as a process of rebuilding the individual's identity by establishing an ethical bond with the past. Thus, the subject can carry the losses that he cannot mourn within himself and make a political and ethical intervention on behalf of these lost attachments and people. To further elaborate this discussion, I will now look at the reasons why Freud revised his understanding of melancholia in *Mourning and Melancholia* in *The Ego and Id*.

As may be remembered, Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* is shaped under the influence of the atmosphere of terror created by the First World War, and Freud considers that he witnesses the darkest aspects of humanity during this period (Roudinesco, 2016, p. 174). The effects of the First World War must have shaped his interpretations of melancholia and mourning more than we think, as he shaped his work and his understanding of mourning on the idea of "build up again all that the war has destroyed, and perhaps on firmer ground and more lastingly than before" (Freud, 1916, as cited in Clewell, 2004, pp. 57-58). Here, it would be appropriate to recall his emphasis on the reparative aspect in his conceptualization of mourning, as opposed to the pathological emphasis in his understanding of melancholia (Freud, 1957a, p. 250, 255). Thus, in the context of war-torn Europe, Freud offers great optimism about the future, expressing the hope that the mourning process will allow countless Europeans to put their losses in the past and start their lives anew. However, Freud begins to move away from the traditional therapeutic ideal of mourning, for while he reiterates his earlier formulation, he also makes a new observation that risks undermining his theory of mourning:

> But why is it that this detachment of libido from its objects should be such a painful process is a mystery to us and we have not hitherto been able to frame any hypothesis to account for it. We only see that libido clings to its objects and will not renounce those that are lost even when a substitute lies ready at hand. Such then is mourning (Freud, 1916, as cited in Clewell, 2004, pp. 58).

In his writings on grief, Freud for the first time explicitly acknowledges that mourning may not be a simple process of separation and consoling substitution as has been assumed. While expressing his astonishment at the long-lasting pain of mourning, he also admits that he does not have a sufficient theory that can explain why and how mourners remain attached to lost objects (Clewell, 2004, p. 58). In

addition to those conceptual Achilles heels, Freud's ruminations on civilization really left it a soft target. Freud does not urge to mourn these losses with new values. Rather, he declares the losses in humanity's values as illusion. The "civilized, peaceful, rational" nature of man is taken as just an illusion and it only serves to evaluate the brutality of war as a reality of the civilization that the civilization has failed to control. It is within this context that Freud modified and developed psychoanalysis and mourning theory under the impact of war to include the concept of aggression within them (Clewell, 2004, p. 59). In this respect, it would be relevant to examine the difference between the two works referred to above-*Mourning and Melancholia* and *The Ego and Id*.

The relationship between aggression and mourning, which Freud discussed in *The Ego and Id*, can be understood by starting from his early views on melancholia. Freud emphasizes the power of human aggression in *Mourning and Melancholia* (1957a) and defines it as the internalization of this hostility, which was initially directed at others and directed towards oneself. Freud (1957a) argues that, unlike the normal mourning process, melancholic individuals constantly attacked themselves and believed that they deserved some kind of punishment by exhibiting low self-esteem. According to him, behind this destructive effect of melancholia is an object relationship containing contradictory emotions. In this context, while feelings of love make it possible to overcome the loss during the mourning process, the melancholic individual feels both love and hatred toward the lost person (Freud, 1917, as cited in Clewell, 2004, p. 59). While Freud's view explains the roots of aggression directed towards oneself in the melancholia process, it also reveals the complexity and deeply painful structure of this emotional process. Freud, who explains the aggression of the melancholic towards oneself with the phenomenon of "critical agency", would conceptualize this phenomenon as "superego" in *The Ego and Id* (1961b). (Clewell, 2004, pp. 59-60). In this context, since I will criticize the founding of melancholia-based subjectivity in Butler's political theory through the ambivalence structure of the superego, it will be appropriate to focus on the relationship between melancholia and the superego at this point, as required by the structure of the thesis.

Long before Freud develops the concept of the superego, he describes its functions in psychic processes such as dream censorship, repression (1899/1953), and

unconscious guilt (1913/1955). However, in *The Ego and the Id* (1961b), the superego is, for the first time, clearly defined as a psychic structure independent of the ego, operating within a complex tangle of relationships with both the ego and the id. One of the most important premises Freud makes here is the concept of the ego ideal, which he describes in his work *On Narcissism* (1914), which is associated with the child's sense of omnipotence. According to Freud (1961b), the ego ideal provides a basic framework for understanding changes in self and object perception, not only in situations of falling in love or collective dependence on a leader but also in moments of dependence on authority figures such as hypnotists. In *The Ego and Id* (1961b), Freud identifies the ego ideal with the superego and uses the two terms synonymously. He claims that these first identifications develop on the superego and ego ideal in relation to the objects of love. He also suggests that the child's superego is shaped both by identification with the father figure and as a result of the prohibitions imposed by the parents (Freud, 1961b, p. 34).

The functions of the superego are divided into three: self-observation, criticism, and ideal goal setting; Freud defines this structure as the representative of value judgments that continue across generations. He argues that the effect of the superego on the seriousness of moral conscience and the unconscious guilt it creates in the individual is directly related to the intensity of the oedipal conflict; thus, the strength of the superego varies from person to person (Freud, 1961b, pp. 35-37).

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the ego, the “moral conscience”, while turning towards the individual himself, simultaneously devalues the object at an unconscious level. Thus, the melancholic person may enter a destructive process within the punishing structure of melancholia, being met with hatred and contempt by the object with which he is identified, and may commit suicidal tendencies (Freud, 1957a, pp. 251-253). Freud associates this vicious cycle in melancholia with criticisms directed at a non-ideal object and states that in this cycle the ego is attacked by both the object and the superego. He summarizes the pain caused by melancholia as follows: the ego comes to the point of giving up its own existence because it feels hated and persecuted by the superego. As Freud puts it, 'the super-ego has obtained the father's preservative function'; but in melancholia this conservative function is thoroughly broken. The superego throughout the examination of Freud's structural model and the complexity of his vision is bipolar in nature: it is the heir of the oedipal complex as an expression of social structure on one hand, while on the other hand, carrying melancholic destructiveness and antisocial tendencies as a structure (Freud 1961b, pp. 51-55). To explain this destructive nature of the melancholic superego, Freud structures the death drive he defined in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) in The Ego and Id: What dominates the superego is, as it were, a pure expression of the death instinct, and this often drives the ego to death; however, the ego can avoid this if it can ward off this compelling force by going into a state of mania (Freud, 1961b, p. 52). Freud, implying that the superego carries the influence of both the life and death instincts, draws attention to its contradictory nature by emphasizing that the reparative and destructive aspects of the superego represent the dynamics resulting from the combination of these two instincts.

At this point, it should be emphasized that the inclusion of the death drive in the structure of the superego in *The Ego and Id* (1961b) represents a radical paradigm shift in understanding the dynamics of melancholia. Indeed, in Mourning and Melancholia, the emphasis is more based on primitive trauma. Accordingly, the relationship that begins with the libido turning to an object is shattered due to the disdain or disappointment from the loved one, causing the shadow of the object to appear on the ego, and the ego begins to be judged as an abandoned object (Freud, 1957a, p. 249). However, in *The Ego and Id* (1961b), Freud no longer speaks of mere

reactive aggression against emotional disappointment, but directly of the fundamental effects of the death drive. This structural change shows that Freud considers melancholia not only as a loss, but as a process that transforms the identity structure of the subject, and allows him to reinterpret the theory of mourning from a more in-depth perspective of internal struggle. The conclusions reached by Freud not only point to a deeper understanding of the mourning process but also form the basis of a broader psychoanalytic perspective on the way an individual defines their loss and themselves. It has been argued that this aggressive component is emphasized in Freud's late mourning theory and that the individual's failure to completely sever ties with the person they lost during the mourning process, may lead to an endless continuation of mourning (Freud, 1961b). It would be appropriate to focus on this conclusion about mourning a little more.

Freud developed his structural theory of subjectivity in *The Ego and the Id* (1961b) by redefining the process of identification associated with melancholia, that is, melancholia-based subjectivity, as a fundamental component of both subject formation and mourning. Recalling his definition of melancholia as "the introjection of the lost object into the ego, that is, the substitution of identification for the libidinal investment in the object" (Freud, 1961b, p. 28), he narrows in on the conditions of the identification process and confesses that he has not yet fully understood the meaning of the process but “did not at the time appreciate the significance, or did not recognize as a typical process” (Freud, 1961b, p. 28). Freud's new understanding is that identification, formerly considered a pathological feature of the mourning process, is actually the sole condition under which the id is willing to renounce objects (Freud, 1961b, p. 29). During earliest infancy, the loss or separation from the primary love object is dealt with through identification with the lost other. Freud developed his structural theory of subjectivity in *The Ego and the Id* (1961b) by redefining the process of identification associated with melancholia, that is, melancholia-based subjectivity, as a fundamental component of both subject formation and mourning. Recalling his definition of melancholia as “the introjection of the lost object into the ego, that is, the substitution of identification for the libidinal investment in the object,” he narrows in on the conditions of the identification process and confesses that he has not yet fully understood the meaning

of the process but “did not at the time appreciate the significance, or did not recognize as a typical process” (Freud, 1961b, p. 28). Freud's new understanding is that identification, formerly considered a pathological feature of the mourning process, is actually the sole condition under which the id is willing to renounce objects (Freud, 1961b, p. 29). During earliest infancy, the loss or separation from the primary love object is dealt with through identification with the lost other. In this respect, identification becomes a fundamental condition of the self-structure, forming the basis of an internally divided psyche comprising the ego, id, and superego. Freud (1961b) now argues that the individual becomes a subject through the internalization of the lost via identification in the mourning process. Freud (1961b) goes even further in transcending the mechanical opposition between mourning and melancholia, for he makes the very formation and development of the ego dependent on loss and situates melancholic identification at the heart of the mourning process. This conception dramatically revises the conventional view of working through loss. The mourning process no longer entails a complete detachment from the lost object or the redirection of released libido to a new object; nor does it seek to compensate for the loss with an external substitute. Instead, mourning work rests on the internal incorporation of the lost object into the individual’s identity structure, preserving this object as an integral part of the self. In this context, similar to Freud’s notion of melancholia (Freud, 1957a, p. 249), which he defines as a shadow cast over the self—and even extending this claim further—mourning also becomes a residue within the self, shaping its structure and positioning the individual as a subject (Freud, 1961b, p. 29). Thus, the notion that mourning can one day be completed gives way to the view that it persists as an endless struggle, potentially a lifelong internal conflict (Freud, 1961b). In this way, melancholia and mourning become equated as states of living with the residue of abandoned object-cathexis; mourning, like melancholia, is not simply the processing of loss but an internal struggle that leaves lasting marks on the self (Clewell, 2004, p. 43). Therefore, although Freud (1961b) does not overtly present a theory of mourning that surpasses the violent nature of melancholia in his work, his concept of “the ego as elegiac”" fundamentally challenges the desire to form an identity detached from the demands of the lost individual and the past. According to Freud (1961b), mourning is not solely the process of overcoming loss but also a process of reconstructing individual identity by

establishing an ethical bond with the past; in this context, mourning directs the individual toward creating a meaningful relationship with the past and defining identity through the continuity of this bond (Clewell, 2004). Based on this, thinkers like Judith Butler (2004a, 2009) argue that Freud's approach emphasizes the ethical and political dimensions of mourning by incorporating loss as an internal part of the self.

As examined under this title, melancholia is situated within a speculative conceptual framework in Freud's thought as 'a loss that has not and cannot be mourned.' Freud's approach—at a time when loss, as a phenomenon, has attracted significant interest in the social sciences—further intensifies this interest by associating loss with melancholia. Freud's formulation not only has a profound impact on later psychiatrists and psychologists but also provides a necessary point of reference for feminist and postcolonial studies, particularly in the context of identity politics crystallizing around loss. This intellectual infrastructure provides a rich theoretical basis for scholars working in the area of identity and subjectivity and those working in the political and policy aspects of loss. In this context, before moving to the third chapter, where the concept of melancholia is integrated into Butler's political theory, it is pertinent to briefly address the role of melancholia-based subjectivity —a notion Butler also draws from Freud—in political thought.

2.4. The Role of *Mourning and Melancholia* in Political Thought

It is also necessary to underline the importance of the Freudian concept of melancholia, which we analyzed above, for political thought. First of all, Freud founded the Mourning Studies field, Trauerarbeit, in his own unique terms, with this *Mourning and Melancholia* (1957a). In this text, Freud goes much further than a merely psychological interpretation of mourning and melancholia; he rather elaborates their historical processes and analyzes them under the view of social sciences. Here, at the intersection with mourning, melancholia—and mourning itself—go far beyond what could be characterized as mere individual inner experiences. By linking psychic and social realities, Freud repositions these emotions as social experiences and rituals (Karbay, 2015, p. 123) that begin to serve a political

function. This thesis, which questions this political function acquired by the Freudian melancholia understanding, is ultimately based on this political function.

For Freud, mourning and melancholia cannot be expressed as a simple reflection on death or loss. For this very reason, Freud acknowledges that the understanding of melancholia is not entirely clear; the melancholic person fixates on what has been lost and refuses to relinquish it. By internalizing the remnants of the lost object and making them a part of themselves, melancholia resists interpretative closures. In this sense, according to the text of Freud, melancholia does not correspond to a fixed meaning but opens up a new semantic field that allows for various conceptual movements, and thus melancholia has a political function in that it is not only reactionary but also implicitly always a process of becoming (Min, 2003, pp. 232-233). In addition, as I mentioned above, melancholics always feel as if they have been treated with great injustice (Freud, 1957a, p. 248), and thus we can see the existence of an emotional rebellion brought about by disappointment and injustice in melancholia. Freud's melancholia is thus a provocative model for thinking through how assimilation processes work, and how melancholia, is thus ascribed to specific social groups (Eng & Han, 2003, p. 344). In that sense, this "emotional rebellion" and this "provocative model" do not find articulation into positive political action (Freud, 1957a). At this point, for Judith Butler, to whom the thesis is mainly directed, Freud's melancholia provides a provocative basis for understanding the melancholic subjectivity that she uses to describe excluded groups and forbidden loyalties.

Freud, by addressing melancholia through unconscious processes, ego loss, and identification, told us that the ego is divisible and opened a gap in the unshakable integrity of the fantasy of an omniscient, self-appointed, self-assured, capable rational subject who does not need another, in the thought that everything can be explained (1957a, 1961b). In addition, psychoanalysis needed to discover the fear of loss as the most fundamental, leading it to the divisible, fragmented subject because it would not be possible for a powerful, self-appointed subject to lose anything. The perfectly powerful subject that Freud disrupts is a white, property-owning male citizen who embodies a fantasy of sovereignty, disregarding the inclusion of the

other in political thought, even without explicitly conceptualizing it. Freud makes a critical contribution to the field of social sciences with the idea that the ego is divisible and that a large part of the mind is structured in the unconscious. His discovery of the unconscious leads him to ideas about the divisible structure of the ego. From this perspective, psychoanalysis, more than a therapeutic technique, is located at the heart of philosophical thought and pushes the idea of subject divisibility to a critical foundation. The idea is taken as an original thesis in the Frankfurt School, in modern French philosophy, and in structuralism and post-structuralism in general (Jay, 1973; Lacan, 1977; Derrida, 1978).

Freud's thoughts on melancholia are informed and influenced by the history of melancholia dating back to ancient times (Enderwitz, 2015, p. 21), and Freud's original title of the text, *Trauer und Melancholie*, contains a reference to the ancient Greek understanding of the word. In other words, while writing this text, Freud goes beyond the understanding of melancholia to the extent of placing it solely in the field of psychoanalysis and draws it into the field of loss under the influence of the century in which he lived. Thus, Freud's understanding of melancholia provides a starting point in the search for a theoretical vocabulary on loss (Johnson, 2003, p. 281). Freud's association of melancholia with the realm of loss, along with both the nature of melancholia and its connection to loss, paves the way for this concept to find a place in political thought. When we speak of loss, what comes to mind, as Butler notes, are the "losses of genocide, the loss of 'humanness' under slavery; the loss that is undergone with exile; the loss that is effaced through colonization; the loss of culture that is performed by the mandatory production of a colonized subject" (2003, p. 467). Furthermore, Freud's approach to loss, in which he associates it not only with death but also with homeland, freedom, or an ideal (1957a, p. 243), underscores that this experience of loss falls directly within the domain of the political. In addition, the conceptuality of loss itself; its many economic, social, historical, and national aspects that transcend its individuality, relate it to the political.[9] Freud refers to the concept of the economy more than once in the text, and

[9] María Lucila Pelento, after describing the state violence prevailing in South American countries, states that the word missing was invented after this violence: "These conditions, which reigned in various South American countries –in Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Uruguay– led in Argentina to the creation of a new signifier: the sadly world-famous "missing" [in Spanish, "desaparecidos"]. The term

this reference does not only include references to the economy as a libidinal energy that can be addressed from a psychoanalytic perspective but also emphasizes a poor person who is chronically anxious about his bread (1957a, p. 254). In this sense, Freud gives the impression that there is an indirect relationship between loss and the economic-political situation through melancholia, although not directly. The loss is, first of all, a theoretical attempt regarding the temporality of the social and political (Butler, 2003, p. 467). Because it explains that what is lost-namely, what is left in the past-is constitutive of the future, and the future and the present represent the expiation of the past in order to save it. Within this framework, the reading of melancholia proposed by Freud certainly represents a steady pole of influence and a point of reference in political thought.[10]

refers to people who were abducted and disappeared and were thereafter tortured and murdered (Pelento, 2003, s. 60)."

[10] When we trace the influence of Freud's concept of melancholia in political thought, we come across many thinkers who address this issue in various contexts. For example, Homi K. Bhabha emphasizes the role of mourning and melancholia in identity formation after colonialism and independence. Helmut Dubiel analyzes the German academic left after the reunification and collapse of East Germany in his work *Beyond Mourning and Melancholy of the Left* (2003). José Esteban Muñoz examines Freud's pathological treatment of melancholia and his rejection of the distinction between mourning and melancholia in his work *Pop Out: Queer Warhol* (1999), while Douglas Crimp evaluates mourning and melancholia through AIDS and queer politics in his work *Melancholia and Moralism* (2002). Marc Nichanian examines Freud's concepts of mourning and melancholia from the perspective of Armenian Studies in his works *Catastrophic Mourning* (2010) and *Between Genocide and Catastrophe* (2002). Slavoj Žižek includes mourning and melancholia in his analyses of contemporary philosophy, cultural criticism, and ideology. Jacques Derrida, on the other hand, questions the boundaries and meanings of mourning and melancholia through the method of deconstruction while addressing the concepts of memory, history, and archive in philosophical, ethical, and political contexts.

CHAPTER 3

IN THE SHADOW OF "FORECLOSED" MOURNING: THE MELANCHOLIA-BASED SUBJECTIVITY IN JUDITH BUTLER'S GENDER THEORY

Butler develops an approach to melancholia based on *The Ego and the Id,* Freud's revision of *Mourning and Melancholia* that offers two parallel but different political perspectives on mourning and melancholia. The first is the view that gender is constructed on a melancholic ontological basis, which she addresses in *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999) and *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (1997). The other is aimed at developing an understanding of mourning and vulnerability that allows for an inquiry shaped around the loss, as discussed in the texts *Antigone's Claims* (2000), *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004), *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005) and *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable* (2009). In this context, Butler's second approach makes it possible to investigate the practical potential of a new community formation through loss and mourning. In her works where she addresses both approaches, Butler's thoughts on agency and resistance parallel each other and are nourished by Freud's concept of melancholia based on psychoanalysis. In this direction, Butler's theories are based on the idea of 'melancholia-based subjectivity', that is the shaping of the subject and identity through melancholia. The main reason for the emergence of melancholia-based subjectivity is the attachments that social norms prevent from mourning. The theoritical framework developed by Butler in both her gender and kinship and precarious studies are shaped by the trace of melancholia caused by this unfulfilled mourning. The differences observed between the two periods are based on the change in the understanding of mourning that determines the melancholic formation of the subject. Thus, despite her theoretical orientations in different periods, the construction of the melancholia-based subject,

and ungrievable attachments and identities that are against social norms continue to play a central role in Butler's thought.

Butler's approach to the concept of melancholia, which he discusses in many parts of his work *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997), especially under the title *Melancholy Gender / Rejected Identity*, is based on his first interpretation of melancholia, which was discussed much earlier in his work *Gender Trouble* (1999), especially under the title *Freud and the Melancholy of Gender*. When it comes to Butler's speculations on gender melancholia, her interpretation in *Gender Trouble* (1999) is strangely often overlooked. The biggest reason for this is that although *Gender Trouble*'s (1999) analysis of gender performativity is innovative, its theoretical scope in understanding melancholia is more limited than the theoretical scope in *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997). Although Butler's interpretation of the concepts of melancholia and mourning is similar in both works, both works need to be examined comprehensively to understand this theme in depth. Thus, Butler's understanding of melancholia can be evaluated from a deeper perspective and the theoretical ground on which this idea is based can become more understandable. However, focusing only on the melancholia-related sections of these two works to look at Butler's understanding of melancholia will lead us to miss the deep intellectual ground behind her understanding of melancholia. Indeed, Butler's first thoughts on mourning and melancholia are based on her theorization of gender as a construction and she attributes the emergence of melancholia in her early studies to the understanding of mourning as "foreclosed" by the heteronormative order. Therefore, it would be a more appropriate approach to first examine the works in accordance with the context of the thesis and then focus directly on the sections where her understanding of melancholia is found. In this context, before beginning to evaluate Butler's works, her intellectual position and the criticisms to this position will be briefly touched upon. Rather than presenting a detailed discussion, this introduction will be a preparation for analyzing Butler's works by drawing a general framework of his intellectual background. Afterwards, first examining her work *Gender Trouble* (1999), I will first examine her work *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997). Based on the intellectual ground in these works, I will discuss the concept of melancholia in her works holistically under a single title to avoid repetition.

3.1. Judith Butler's Intellectual Position and Key Criticisms of the Position

Judith Butler’s first work examined the influence of Hegel’s works on 20th-century French philosophers. In her later works, Butler drew on psychoanalytic, feminist and post-structuralist theories and contributed to comprehensive formulations of these theoretical frameworks on identity (Salih, 2002, p. 1). Influenced by thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Sigmund Freud, Jacques Derrida, and Louis Althusser, Butler exhibits an intellectual position that bridges philosophy, feminist theory, queer theory, and political theory. For this very reason, although Butler’s works are often difficult to categorize, all of her works raise fundamental questions about the formation of identity and subjectivity. These works trace how individuals assume sexed, gendered, or “racialized” identities within existing structures of power and how they become subjects in the process. Butler questions how the "subject" gains into being, with what tools it is constructed, and how these processes work or fail (Salih, 2002, p. 2). According to her, subjectivity is the result of a continuous negotiation with norms; norms shape the identities of individuals and at the same time ensure the reproduction of oppressive orders. However, identity is not fixed by these norms. Butler evaluates identity as a fluid process and argues that this process offers areas for resistance and re-signification against oppressive norms. In this respect, Butler's concept of subjectivity does not refer to the individual, but to a linguistic structure in formation (Salih, 2002, p. 2). The constructive effect of language on the individual, together with the continuous reproduction of social norms in historical, cultural and political contexts, form the basis of Butler's thought. In this direction, Butler argues that existing structures should be constantly questioned. Her work is not limited to the criticism of norms alone; also they discuss how this critique can be used to reconstruct identities and political resistance spaces. In this context, Butler's late works, in particular, focus on the concepts of vulnerability, mourning and solidarity in ethical and political issues. According to her, the fact that society does not see some lives as worthy of mourning is not only an individual issue, but also a social and political problem. Butler argues that mourning offers a powerful political potential to make excluded lives visible and to resist social inequalities (2000, 2004a, 2009). This idea constitutes one of the cornerstones of her ethical and political critiques.

Butler has been criticized by people like Martha Nussbaum for using unnecessarily complex language due to the density of post-structuralist and psychoanalytic terminology in her works and the combination of this density with her unique language. Nussbaum (1999) finds Butler's language unnecessarily complex and describes her theoretical approaches as a kind of academic luxury that leads radical left intellectuals to distance themselves from political activism. She argues that Butler's theories on gender and identity—she states that they remain stuck in critical analysis rather than providing a roadmap for change—are part of abstract discussions rather than supporting activism and practical politics. When we look at the main criticisms directed at Butler, Benhabib (1992), similar to Nussbaum, finds Butler's efforts to decipher and criticize social norms important, but argues that these criticisms fail to provide a concrete political action plan and lead to the isolation of the individual from identity and social context. Another similar criticism is made by Fraser (1997) on Butler's focus on identity politics. According to him, the intense focus on identity politics neglects broader social problems such as economic injustice and class struggle, and the critique of norms remains at the level of abstract critique rather than connecting to concrete political struggles. In addition, many criticisms of Butler's identity politics have also been made by Marxists. Those who criticize the importance Butler gives to identity politics—despite the fact that many accept her critique of norms as important—argue that this approach pushes broader systemic problems such as class inequality into the background, and as a result, her theories are not sufficient for revolutionary change. At this point, Terry Eagleton's (1996) general critique of postmodernism and Slavoj Žižek's (1996) critiques also come to the fore. Žižek is critical of theories that do not center on economic factors and argues that these are more urgent and important than the identity politics that Butler highlights. According to him, the left has abandoned the responsibility of economic criticism focused on the struggle of various minority groups and adopted identity politics. Žižek opposes seeing such identity politics as the fundamental struggle of today, arguing instead that the economic globalization model is a more pressing issue (Pound, 2008).

If we look at these fundamental critiques, which I have not gone into in detail, we can see that the focus of the critiques and their histories intersect. At this point,

Butler's work effectively transforms feminism and LGBTI+ movements, and we can say that the publication of *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999), which reshaped the orientations and theoretical approaches of these fields, created the partnership mentioned above. So, with this work, Butler became a fundamental reference source where poststructuralist thought could be discussed and criticized in depth. At this point, where we have once again emphasized how important it is to focus on this work, I am now moving on to examine this work.

3.2. The Troubled Structure of Gender[11]

Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1999) has been an important work that has made her a well-known name in the world academy and has led to extensive discussions. Offering a self-critical view of feminist theory, this work has effectively transformed feminism and LGBTI+ movements, reshaping the orientations and theoretical approaches of these fields. This work has made a significant contribution to the production of knowledge in different disciplines of the academy—especially in areas such as feminism, queer theory, philosophy, politics, and ethics—and has been accepted as an important milestone for feminist theory, queer theory, and post-structuralist thought. One reason why the work is considered a milestone is that it is appreciated in this way by those who embrace its subversive ideas and approach. Another reason is that it has become a fundamental reference source where post-structuralist thought can be discussed and criticized in-depth for those who look critically at these subversive perspectives. For this very reason, in the preface she wrote to the book nine years after its publication, Butler (1999) says the following:

> I did not know that the text would have as wide an audience as it has had, nor did I know that it would constitute a provocative 'intervention' in feminist theory or be cited as one of the founding texts of queer theory. The life of the text has exceeded my intentions (p. vii).

In this study, without giving room for in-depth objections to the work, I will consider Butler's understanding of melancholia-based subjectivity on which she bases her understanding of gender as an intellectual ground.

[11] The titles used in thesis chapters on Butler—except The Fragility of Melancholy or The Melancholy of Fragility: An Attempt at a Critical Reading—are informed by direct claims in Butler's work. These titles are chosen to reflect the ideas and theoretical perspectives Butler puts forward in her work, not the arguments or claims of the thesis itself.

To analyze the performativity and "heterosexual matrix" theories that Butler addresses in her work *Gender Trouble*, which she associates with the concept of melancholia, it is critical to first clarify the difference between the concepts of “sex” and “gender.” The importance of this distinction emerges from the frequent identification of “gender” with biological sex and the use of these two terms interchangeably. Indeed, this view holds that biological sex is taken as determining social gender; further, sex is a fixed, unchangeable structure. This belief has been supported by social norms and cultural codes and spread widely. It is precisely for this reason that the most important academic discussions are found at the forefront of questioning that assumption and drawing a distinction between biological sex and social gender.

Butler brings a critical perspective to the established perceptions of identity, gender, and sex, and argues that these categories are social constructions. By analyzing the dichotomies such as man/woman and masculine/feminine, she shows that these categories are not fixed and are constantly reproduced, and deconstructs them. Thus, Butler creates a field of thought that offers new possibilities both politically and theoretically by arguing that gender is not innate but a performative process. With this approach, she addresses an important criticism of the feminist theories before her, by opposing the treatment of sex and gender as separate and fixed categories. (Butler, 1999, pp. 10-11). Unlike the feminist theorists before her, Butler opposes the widespread view that gender is identified with culture and sex with nature. While the idea that gender is innate supports biological determinism, accepting gender as a construction may lead to the risk of cultural determinism, not biological. Reducing the political and discursive foundations of gender identity to an 'essence' prevents an in-depth analysis of how the gendered subject is constructed politically. This reduction also overlooks how the internal meanings attributed to gender or identity are produced through historical, cultural, and discursive processes (Butler, 1999, p. 174). Thus, the biological characteristics attributed to people are accepted as an essence and culture attributes meanings to this essence. However, these cultural meanings do not question the biological basis on which gender is based; on the contrary, they present biology as an unchangeable and natural essence. By fixing gender roles with biological determination, this perspective renders invisible how

social norms and identities are constructed culturally and discursively. Thus, biological sex becomes an unquestionable reference point and, by limiting critical thinking about the performative structure of gender, prepares the ground for the reproduction of normative identity orders. (Butler, 1999, p. 94). "Science" and "naturalness" are shaped by discourse, and while it may seem contradictory to challenge the authority of "science" after citing what appears to be "scientific" evidence, Butler's (1999) argument is clear: the body is not a merely passive or unquestionable fact (p. 48). In this context, Butler (1999) essentially claims that no sex exists before gender.

> Gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which 'sexed nature' or 'a natural sex' is produced and established as 'prediscursive,' prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts (p. 11).

The destructiveness of Butler's theory is proven by the existence of this quote. Indeed, what this quote says is that the acceptance of sex as pre-cultural, which has never been said before, is a result of the assumption of gender as a cultural construction. In this context, what is called gender is not a structure built upon sex; on the contrary, it is the totality of social actions and practices that shape and determine sex. Thus, Butler (1999) argues that sex and gender are not different from each other and that sex, like gender, is a construction of culture:

> If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all (s. 10-11).

This quote gives to the idea that identity is culturally constructed; its subtext implies that while human physiological characteristics may be fixed, the structure of gender identity is variable and flexible. Such an approach demonstrates that gender is constructed through cultural and discursive processes, not an innate biological phenomenon.

To strengthen and ground her argument that gender is constructed, Butler argues that gender is performative through repeated actions, gestures, and staging. Accordingly,

she argues that gender roles such as femininity and masculinity are constructed through the constant repetition of certain behaviours. From this perspective, the body becomes a material dimension of identity that is constantly shaped, beyond being merely a physical entity. Through repeated performances, the body acquires an identity in a historical and social context, and this identity continues to exist by being constantly reproduced (Butler, 1999, p. 178). Heteronormativity lies at the basis of these repeated performances, and this functions as the organizing principle of sexuality, which Butler calls the "heterosexual matrix" (Butler, 1999, p. 141).

The "heterosexual matrix" concept is predicated on the notion that gender can be understood only through hierarchical and binary structures in which masculinity represents only men and femininity represents only women. Theoretically, this matrix prescribes that individuals perform their identities under certain social norms and figures gender as fixed, natural, and unchangeable truths through normative structures. Butler argues instead that gender does not express an inner essence and does not try to actualize some ideal form. The critique has shown that the so-called ideal model of what it is to be feminine and masculine fixed by social customs are cultural fictions after all. By forcing men to be masculine and women to be feminine, the normative system creates the illusion that these identities are innate realities. According to Butler, social norms are constantly repeated through heteronormative performances, and this repetition causes the historical and cultural roots of the norms to become invisible. Thus, these norms are perceived as natural and universal realities. These repeated performances not only reinforce individuals' identities but also ensure that social norms are ingrained. It can be said that gender is a performative achievement established through actions that are not continuous, but rather than an essential and unchangeable identity. According to Butler, this performative achievement leads ordinary social audiences and individuals to adopt these actions as a natural identity and begin to perform this identity. Thus, the seemingly natural legitimacy of social norms is strengthened, and normative structures become established within society (Butler, 1999, pp. 178-179-180).

> Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being. A political genealogy of

> gender ontologies, if it is successful, will deconstruct the substantive appearance of gender into its constitutive acts and locate and account for those acts within the compulsory frames set by the various forces that police the social appearance of gender (Butler, 1999, s. 43-44).

This performative achievement is shaped by the presentation of gender as a natural and immutable existence, thus reinforcing the assumption that sex, sexuality, and gender are tightly interconnected. In this context, the idea that heteronormative performances produce ‘natural' femininity and masculinity reveals that the dissolution of these identities is also a performative process. A deconstructive perspective comes into play here; however, this dissolution becomes possible only when the subject’s actions disrupt the assumed harmony between gender, sex, and sexuality. In this way, refusing to display gender roles invalidates an idealized gender reality and undermines the illusion that normative identities are natural. Drag queen performances are one example of a clear disruption of this harmony (Butler, 1999, p. 174). These performances reveal that gender identities are not rigid and unchangeable; on the contrary, they are constantly re-established and constructed through repeated practices. “Sexuality” is the correlative of the discursive practice that gradually evolved and forms the scientia sexualis, according to Foucault (1978). The essential characteristics of this sexuality correspond to the functional needs of a discourse that must produce its truth, not the expression of a representation that is more or less distorted by ideology or of a misunderstanding brought on by taboos (Foucault, 1978, s. 68). In fact, Butler contends that gender, hierarchy, and mandatory heterosexuality serve as the framework for the rules that guarantee the intelligibility of identity, and that these rules are upheld through repetition. Thus, Butler treats gender identity not as a fixed essence or an innate reality, but as a practice that carries meaning and defines the position of the subject within discursive structures. According to this approach, the subject performatively reproduces his/her identity according to the normative expectations of society, while at the same time carrying the potential to subvert these norms (Butler, 1999, p. 182).

Butler (1997, 1999) explains that gender identities are created within a “heterosexual matrix” and take on a melancholic structure through the repudiation of desires and identities that cannot be part of this matrix. In this sense, gender performance

becomes a strategy of survival in the “heterosexual matrix”, since individuals are punished in different ways when they fail to act according to the norms. However, this punishment does not remain only as an external social sanction; the individual's failure to act in accordance with his or her own identity leads to an internal conflict, and this conflict activates self-discipline and self-punishment mechanisms in the individual. Indeed, Butler (1997) emphasizes that melancholia is important both on a political and personal level because gender identity manifests itself not only through processes of loss, repression, and performance but also as a fixed reality in the individual's inner world (p. 142). Melancholia therefore reveals the libidinal economy of individuals' conformity to gender norms and creates new ways of thinking to subvert these norms.

In *Gender Trouble* (1999), Butler expands the scope of feminist and queer theory by positing that gender is not a fixed, natural identity but is built through constantly repeated social performances. To put it another way, the perspective that Butler puts forward with this work is that there is no pre-existing identity behind the expressions of gender identity. On the contrary, gender identity is primarily produced through these expressions themselves, in a performative process. In other words, gender identity emerges not from an existential essence but as a result of repeated actions and discourses (Butler, 1999, pp. 11-13 and 34-35). This performative understanding of gender questions the oppressive effects of social norms on the individual, while revealing how the subject is shaped within the mechanisms of power. However, the performance of gender is not limited to external practices; it is also deeply related to the individual's psyche (Butler, 1999, pp. 177-178). Although Butler mentions this internal mechanism in *Gender Trouble*, she does not elaborate on it, but in her subsequent work *The Psychic Life of Power*, she discusses in more detail how the subject internalizes these actions and how submission to social norms becomes a psychic process. I will now examine *The Psychic Life of Power* to understand how she relates the performative structure of gender to these internal dynamics.

3.3. The Melancholic Anatomy of Power

The Psychic Life of Power (1997) is an attempt by Judith Butler to analyze the process of internalization of power—that is, the psychic structure of the subject's

obedience. In this respect, Butler explores in great detail the paradoxical relation between the subject and power by creating a dialogue with such thinkers as Hegel, Nietzsche, Freud, Althusser, and Foucault. According to Butler (1997), the individual's coming into being as a subject also constitutes the condition for their submission. Therefore, Butler (1997) attempts to question the reasons and mechanisms behind this submission. This investigation not only explains the power-subject relationship but also investigates the reasons why individuals submit to the "heterosexual matrix." The process of adapting to social norms does not only work through the individual's external behavior; it is also directly related to repressed desires, lost identities, and unmourned gendered experiences. In this respect, Butler interprets the necessity of individuals to adapt to social norms not only as an external necessity but also as an internal conflict and melancholic process of subjection.

As observed in Butler's previous works, there is a question that she seeks an answer to in this work. Power does not only suppress the subject; it also shapes the subject's desires by reproducing them (Butler, 1997, pp. 18-19). So "how does the subjection of desire require and institute the desire for subjection?" (Butler, 1997, p. 19). The answer to this question is as follows: Power produces desire through the subjects' internalization of social norms. This process is directly related to Judith Butler's understanding of melancholia and reveals an important point where her understanding of power both overlaps and differs from Foucault's. Foucault (1978) argues that power, knowledge, and truth are as fundamental and decisive as oppression (p. 73). Butler, in a similar manner, argues that power shapes individuals not only through oppression but also by constructing their identities. However, the difference between them lies in Butler's emphasis on the psychic dimension of power (1997, p. 4). Similarly, Butler also considers Althusser's (1971) theory of "interpellation" and accepts that this theory successfully demonstrates how the recognition of the individual by social norms is linguistically constructed. However, Butler (1997) states that Althusser's theory neglects the question of how the subject accepts and internalizes this recognition (p. 2).

Butler's aim in writing *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997) is to trace the shortcomings of previous thinkers in their failure to provide a comprehensive enough answer to the

question of how the subject accepts and internalizes the process of subordination. In this work, Butler argues that power—including gender norms—functions not only as an external means of domination, but also as a mechanism that shapes the subject's internal world, identity, and desire dynamics. In this context, Butler offers a critical framework that does not reduce the subject's relationship with power to external oppression but also includes the subject's psychic structure. In making this analysis, Butler (1997) develops an important critique of Foucault's (1978) perspective on power.

According to Butler, although Foucault's conceptualization of power suggests that power permeates everywhere, it does not provide a clear enough framework for how resistance is possible within this system. However, Butler (1997) also accepts that Foucault does not completely ignore the possibilities of resistance. Indeed, Foucault's conceptualization of "reverse discourse" offers the possibility of resisting existing norms by reversing the language and discourse of power (Butler, 1997, pp. 92-93). However, according to Foucault (1978), this struggle is in a constant process of change and transformation within the mechanisms of power, and there is no permanent or fixed counter-discourse against power. Discourses function as strategic blocs within power relations, but these blocs cannot take a position independent of power or completely separate from it. Therefore, the fluid structure of discourses and power dynamics does not allow them to be fixed or independent enough to enable a definite and absolute resistance (Foucault, 1978, pp. 101-102).

Foucault argues that the soul is a tool of power that controls the body. In this approach, the prison of the body is not the soul; on the contrary, the soul is a mechanism of power that disciplines, controls, and shapes the body. Thus, the body becomes a field where power directly intervenes. Through these interventions on the bodies of individuals, power ensures compliance with social norms and establishes the subject as a part of the social order. (Butler, 1997, p. 91). In the section titled *Subjection, Resistance, Resignification: Between Freud and Foucault* of her work *The Psychic Life of Power*, Butler offers a critical perspective on Foucault by arguing that it is not possible to fully understand the process of subjectification and the individual's imprisonment in his own subjugation without psychoanalytic explanations, and says the following:

> I am in part moving toward a psychoanalytic criticism of Foucault, for I think that one cannot account for subjectivation and, in particular, becoming the principle of one's own subjection without recourse to a psychoanalytic account of the formative or generative effects of restriction or prohibition (Butler, 1997, s. 87).

From here, Butler (1997) wants to reconsider the soul, which Foucault defines as the mechanism of power that shapes the body—that is, the process by which an individual internalizes obedience—and she carries out this reassessment through the concept of "melancholia." Butler (1997) uses melancholia as a key concept to explain the position of an individual's repressed or "foreclosed" gender identities vis-à-vis heteronormative structures.

> Unowned and in complete, melancholia is the limit to the subject's sense of pouvoir, its sense of what it can accomplish and, in that sense, its power. Melancholia rifts the subject, marking a limit to what it can accommodate. Because the subject does not, cannot, reflect on that loss, that loss marks the limit of reflexivity, that which exceeds (and conditions) its circuitry. Understood as ***foreclosure***[12], that loss inaugurates the subject and threatens it with dissolution. Considered along Nietzschean and Hegelian lines, the subject engages in its own self-thwarting, accomplishes its own subjection, desires and crafts its own shackles, and so turns against a desire that it knows to be–or knew to be–its own (Butler, 1997, s. 23).

It would be appropriate to include Butler's interpretation of Nietzsche along with this quote. Butler interprets Nietzsche's understanding of power, morality, and the process of subjectivation, emphasizing that morality as a form of power is not only based on a type of violence but also that this violence plays a constitutive role in the formation of the subject (see Nietzsche, 2006). Morality transfers this violence that operates on the subject to the individual's inner world, thus turning the individual into a self-centered, self-controlled being. In this context, Butler (1997) examines Nietzsche's concept of "bad conscience" to show how power is internalized by individuals. Nietzsche (2006) sees "bad conscience" not only as a mechanism of punishment but also as a creative force through the individual's internal conflicts. Butler also adopts this interpretation and argues that bad conscience is a dynamic that not only forces the subject to submit to the demands of power but also plays a role in the production of new identities and norms (1997, pp. 74-75-76). According

[12] All bold and italic emphasis here and thereafter is mine.

to Butler (1997), “bad conscience would be the fabrication of inferiority that attends the breaking of a promise, the discontinuity of the will, but the 'I' who would keep the promise is precisely the cultivated effect of this continuous fabrication of inferiority” (p. 75).

The body demonstrates its power to resist the prohibitions imposed on it by creating a new body form. However, this resistance is not completely free or independent; because while the body exhibits resistance, it also acts within the boundaries of the structure that imposes the prohibitions. In this context, there is a striking parallel between Butler’s (1997) discussion of Nietzsche’s concept of “bad conscience” and her own understanding of melancholia. According to Butler (1997) – drawing on Freud – the denial of a loss in melancholia does not mean that the loss has disappeared. In fact, internalizing the loss is a way of keeping it alive in the mind. To put it more clearly, the internalization of the loss functions as part of the process of denying the loss (1997, p. 134). In this context, Butler says that the condition for giving up loss is to embody that loss and shows that the internalization of power has a political aspect (1997, p. 134).

Butler (1997) expands her analysis of identity by drawing inspiration from Freud's theories and deepens this analysis by drawing on Althusser's (1971) theory of “interpellation” and the deficiencies she identified in Foucault's (1978) concept of submission. She tries to explain the nature of “reflexive” subjectivity, which means the subject's ability to see himself as an object of thought and judgment, and the passionate commitment to discursive norms that bind us (Butler, 1997, pp. 5-6). Butler asks the following question: Is this aguilty subject and, if so, how did it become guilty? Might the theory of interpellation require a theory of conscience (1997, s. 5).

What is the purpose of the subject's passionate attachment to discursive norms through guilt? The main purpose of the power to reshape the subject by oppressing him is to ensure that the subject internalizes social norms and makes him conform to the rules determined by the power (Butler, 1997, p. 19). This internalization process becomes a mechanism that enables the subject to gain a gendered identity. Butler

argues that this process occurs through melancholic identification and constant repetition of prohibitions. Based on Freud's psychoanalytic theory, Butler argues that gender is closely related to melancholia and that melancholia plays a role in the formation of gender as a result of the subject's unconscious identification with a forbidden or lost object (1997, p. 132). In this context, Butler's concept of melancholia, developed in her works *Gender Trouble (1*999) and *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997), is of central importance in understanding how the subject's gender performance is constructed. Butler argues that gender is not merely an imitation or repetition based on external norms; on the contrary, it is the product of a melancholic process of internalization and identification. The subject's internalization of social norms occurs through the melancholic merging of forbidden desires and unmournable losses with the individual's identity. In this process, the subject includes the lost objects and socially forbidden desires as part of his/her own identity. Thus, gender identity is constructed not only through the performances the individual exhibits in order to conform to the norms but also through the influence of desires internalized through mourning and repression (Butler, 1997, pp. 133-135). This process reveals that the subject is shaped within power relations and that his/her identity is formed in line with the norms determined by power. Butler's understanding of melancholia, developed in *Gender Trouble* (1999) and *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997), provides a critical framework for understanding how the subject adapts to social norms while also existing in tension with these norms. I will examine Butler's understanding of melancholia, presented in these two works, in relation to the main discussion framework of the thesis.

3.4. The Subversive Melancholy of Gender

"within me it grows like a flower of shame, hü
my love that defies all rules,
my anomaly, my metaphysical, my supernatural mistake
my love, my cherished illusion, my chief judge
my hatred, my hatred, where are you? (Özger, 1984)"[13]

[13] The original language of the quoted text is Turkish and it is a poem. This poem was translated into English, the language of the thesis, by me and lost its original spirit and emotion. The original poem is as follows:
"içimde utanç çiçeği gibi büyüyor hü

Butler's analyses of the effects of power on the subject's inner world in *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997) and the performative nature of gender in *Gender Trouble* (1999) provide an important foundation for understanding the role melancholia plays in the formation of gender identities. The theoretical framework formed by these two studies shows that gender is shaped both by external performances and by the internalization of repressed desires and losses. Based on this intellectual foundation, Butler begins her work on gender melancholia, *Gender Melancholy / Refusal Identification*, which she conceptualizes based on Freud's theory of melancholic identification, with the following sentence: "It may at first seem strange to think of gender as a kind of melancholia, or as one of melancholia's effects" (Butler, 1997, p. 132). The reason why this idea seems strange at first is that there has been no serious attempt to interpret gender as a form of melancholic identification before. For example, Irigaray argues that the structure of femininity is related to melancholia, while Kristeva associates motherhood with melancholia[14] (Butler, 1999, s. 73). However, neither thinker has done a sufficiently in-depth study of how gender is constructed within heterosexual norms, especially in terms of examining how homosexuality is both denied and preserved through melancholia. In addition, Freud, although he considered melancholia as a fundamental mechanism in the formation of self and character, only partially addressed the impact of this concept on gender. Although Freud's understanding of melancholia plays an important role in the construction of individual identity, it offers a very limited perspective on the position of gender identities within the heteronormative order (Butler, 1999, p. 73). Thereupon, adhering to Freud's understanding of melancholia, Butler established the foundations of the relationship between gender and melancholia in *Gender Trouble* and in the following years, she examined gender theory from a more in-depth perspective in the title *Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification* in *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997). In these respects, Butler's interpretation of gender and homosexuality within the framework of melancholia should be evaluated as a noteworthy attempt.

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kural tanımayan sevgim benim aykırım fizikötem doğaüstüm yanlışlığım
aşkım. sevgili yanılgım benim başyargıcım
nefretim nefretim nerdesin (Özger, 1984)"

[14] For more detailed information, see Irigaray's Speculum of the Other Woman (1985) and Julia Kristeva's Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art (1980).

Drawing on the theoretical contributions of Freud's works such as *Mourning and Melancholia* (1957a) and *The Ego and the Id* (1961b), Butler analyzes the identity structure of internalized loss and its relationship with gender norms. However, the theory developed by Butler does not remain entirely dependent on psychoanalysis; although it benefits from psychoanalysis, it looks at loss from a political perspective. Butler (1999), who examines the shaping of identity by loss through cultural structures, focuses on the social and political dimensions of this process. By investigating the potential of the subject to become an agent, Butler (1999) emphasizes the social and political importance of loss instead of the pathological approach of psychoanalysis. In this context, melancholia and heteronormative prohibitions are not only considered pathological structures that put pressure on the individual but also dynamic processes that can be creatively reinterpreted and transformed. In this process, Butler (1999) shows that the repetition of prohibitions and loss allows individuals to reconstruct their identities and question and transform normative structures. Butler's (1999) approach positions melancholia not only as an individual pathology but also as a process that is intertwined with cultural norms and shapes gender identities. Indeed, I have emphasized that Freud, in his work *Mourning and Melancholia* (1957a), presents a detailed analysis of the functioning of melancholia by considering melancholia as a specific pathology.

First, Butler (1999) argues that all identifications emerge as a result of a loss (pp. 73-74). Although Butler (1999) developed this assumption inspired by Freud's *The Ego and the Id* (1961b), Freud does not directly associate all identifications with loss. According to Freud (1961b), the first and most important identification in an individual's personal history is an identification with his father. From his point of view, this identification is not the result or product of an object investment; on the contrary, it is a direct and immediate identification and emerges before any object investment. Freud's (1961b) perspective shows that identification can occur not only after losses, but sometimes through a direct bond established with the object (p. 31). On the other hand, Butler (1999) claims that Freud evaluates the entire subjective life as being based on an unacceptable loss:

> In The Ego and the Id (1923), he elaborates on the structure of mourning as the incipient structure of ego formation, a thesis whose traces can be found in

> the 1917 essay 'Mourning and Melancholia.' In the experience of losing another human being whom one has loved, Freud argues, the ego is said to incorporate that other into the very structure of the ego, taking on attributes of the other and 'sustaining' the other through magical acts of imitation (pp. 73-74).

This quote, in which Butler (1999) argues that Freud associates all identifications with a loss, has often led to her being criticized. In this context, Butler's (1999) interpretation of Freud's identification with the father as an experience of loss reflects an assumption that is incompatible with Freud's original theory. Behind Butler's (1999) consideration of Freud's identification with the father as a result of loss lies her attempt to re-read Freud's theory within the framework of the loss of homosexual ties. She focuses on the repression of homosexual desires due to heteronormative norms and the melancholic internalization of these desires. According to her, gender identities are formed by the processing of forbidden desires and losses into identity. However, this perspective of her causes her not to sufficiently consider some of Freud's conceptual distinctions. According to Butler (1999), identification with the father, which Freud sees as the most basic and first identification, emerges as a result of a boy losing his father as a love object; after this loss, identifications are established through melancholia, replacing object relations (p. 80). In this case, the question of how identification with the father, which is considered the first and most important identification in Freud's theory, will be addressed from the perspective of a girl remains unclear. This is an important area that Butler (1999) leaves unanswered and is subject to criticism. Although her effort to reinterpret Freud's concept of identification through the loss of homosexual ties and melancholia makes important contributions to the construction of gender identities, it is criticized for neglecting some fundamental points in Freud's theory. In addition, her understanding of gender melancholia makes it possible to conclude that Freud's theory does not take into account those who can develop heterosexual desire without losing or mourning the desire for the opposite sex. However, the point we need to understand here is that her main focus in her understanding of melancholia is largely on forbidden homosexual desires and objects as a cultural formation. As I have stated before, until Butler (1999), the understanding of melancholia has not been deeply addressed in terms of forbidden desires and lost attachments. Behind this situation, as we can imagine, lies the pressure of the gender regime that we have to live in, without a doubt. However,

she has attempted to bring these ignored experiences to light by focusing on the identities excluded by the "heterosexual matrix". For this very reason, she has ignored the main conclusions of Freud, who shaped his theory on the heterosexual structure, and has reinterpreted his melancholia theory on forbidden homosexual attachments, and in my opinion, in a very creative way. Although this interpretation overshadows some of Butler's (1999) political implications through melancholia, as will be discussed later, her approach, which is based on the basic starting point in Freud's theory and presents itself as a theoretical claim with a deconstructive revision, contains a desire to go beyond the limits promised by the theory and should be evaluated as an important attempt. In addition, the criticism that Butler neglects those who develop heterosexual desire – indeed, this desire is a dominant desire appreciated by the normative order – seems extremely problematic, and in fact, her attempt to bring forbidden lost attachments to light should be appreciated as an extremely important intervention from a theoretical perspective.

If her approach to Freud's understanding of melancholia is continued, it is stated by Butler (1997) that

> a process by which an originally external object is lost, or an ideal is lost, and the refusal to break the attachment to such an object or ideal leads to the withdrawal of the object into the ego, the replace-ment of the object by the ego, and the setting up of an inner world in which a critical agency is split off from the ego and proceeds to take the ego as its object (p. 179)

At this moment, for her, the "inner world" always overlaps with the external, that is, the social construct that establishes the "heterosexual matrix". The identifications, desires, and prohibitions that the individual experiences internally are a reflection of social norms that are processed into the individual's psychic structure. According to Butler (1997), the individual's "critical agency" that seems to belong to him/her is actually an internalized extension of external norms (p. 198). Therefore, the inner world, defined as a series of 'topographic constructs' that shape the psyche, actually becomes a part of the social construct, and the person's inner world becomes a reflection of external social norms and power structures, and as a result, the reconceptualization of this inner world becomes necessary (Butler, 1997, p. 171).

Therefore, according to Butler (1997), the overlapping of the inner world with the heteronormative matrix reveals how social constructs are processed into the individual's psychic structure. In addition, the refusal to sever attachment to the lost object is directly related to the fact that this object is not considered legitimate within the framework of social norms and therefore cannot be mourned. According to her, social norms do not grant legal status to certain desires, identities, and relationships, which leads to the melancholic internalization of losses. This loss that cannot be mourned is inscribed in the psychic structure of the person and becomes a fundamental part of the ego. Ultimately, this forbidden and mournable melancholic object is homosexual love, which has taken its place in the structure of the psychic-social subject, whose social existence continues only through the creation and maintenance of persons who are considered "socially dead" (Butler, 1997, p. 27). Indeed, the process of internalization of lost loves, which makes a significant contribution to the formation of gender identity, begins with the incest prohibition initiating the loss of a love object for the ego, as in Freud's theory. The incest prohibition necessitates the individual to suppress his/her desires towards people who may be objects of desire within the family. With this prohibition, the ego is faced with the loss of the desired but forbidden object. The void resulting from this loss is filled through the internalization of the object of desire. The ego incorporates this forbidden love object that it has lost into its own structure through an internal identification. Thus, although the individual cannot openly express his/her desires towards the tabooed object, these desires are internalized and become part of the ego. Thus, the ego recovers through the internalization of the forbidden desires, but this recovery also enables the individual to adapt to social norms and reproduce these norms in his/her inner world. This internalization serves a fundamental function in maintaining the heteronormative order; because while the repressed and internalized desires shape the identity of the individual, they also cause the desires that conflict with social norms to continue to exist in the unconscious (Butler, 1999, p. 75). In this context, Butler (1999) has subjected Freud's Oedipal complex to a creative re-reading and translated this theory into the language of homosexual melancholia (pp. 76-77). To better understand the formation process of sexual identities excluded by the "heterosexual matrix" that Butler claims is established through melancholia, it will be easier for us to remember Freud's Oedipal complex theory.

In Freud's psychoanalytic theory, the Oedipus Complex is an important turning point in the individual's psychosexual development. This process begins in the phallic period, and while the child develops a sexual desire for the opposite-sex parent, he sees the same-sex parent as a competitive element. For example, while a boy has a sexual desire for his mother, he positions his father as an obstacle to this desire. However, the fear of castration arising from his father's authority forces him to give up this desire and as a result, he identifies with his father. This process works with a different dynamic in the girl child. While a girl develops a sexual desire for her father, she perceives her mother as a rival to this desire. However, in Freud's theory, children's abandonment of their love objects does not always result in identification with the same-sex parent. While Freud accepts that identification with the same-sex parent is a common pattern, he suggests that which parent the child identifies with depends on the dominance of his feminine or masculine tendencies. The orientation of these tendencies is a result of the bisexual structure that children initially have. Freud stated that, especially in girls, in the process of giving up their father, who is the object of love, the tendency to replace the loss with someone of the opposite sex is more likely than in boys, and that the bisexual structure manifests itself more in girls (Freud, 1961b).

The identification process that Freud envisioned prepares the ground for the child to develop his superego and internalize social norms. Freud offers two different perspectives regarding the superego. A moderate superego suppresses the child's libidinal tendencies towards his parents, while also contributing to directing this energy towards successful future love relationships. This type of superego not only imposes prohibitions but also facilitates the child's adaptation to norms by offering temptations and rewards. However, the superego does not always function in such a balanced way. Sometimes it turns into a one-sided and ruthless authority, keeping the individual under pressure and controlling him. In this case, the superego becomes a harsh disciplinary mechanism in the individual's inner world, limiting the subject's potential for liberation with prohibitions. Thus, the superego functions as a dual structure that both enables the individual to live in harmony with normative structures and maintains the oppressive aspects of the same norms (Freud, 1961b, p. 30). This nature of the superego should be taken into consideration as it is of vital

importance in order to understand Butler’s politics and debates shaped by her understanding of melancholia, as we will discuss later.

As Freud (1961b) put it, if oedipal anxieties cannot be adequately expressed and resolved, the fear of disappointment gives way to the fear of persecution. The transformation of castration fantasies into fear causes the superego to cease being a moderate force and to transform into an oppressive authority that constantly observes deviant behaviors and controls the person's every move. When the aggression that should be directed towards the loved object cannot be expressed externally, this aggression is directed inward and settles as a masochistic force in the person's identity. (Freud, 1961b, p. 56). At this stage, attraction and persuasion give way to harsh prohibitions: Melancholia becomes an expression of the extremely powerful superego's extremely violent attack on the self. According to Freud (1961b), the external aggression that the person cannot direct turns inward and the superego no longer only ensures compliance with the norms, but also punishes the individual mercilessly (p. 54). Thus, the melancholic superego reveals itself as an authoritarian command and turns into an authority over the self that can reach the most primitive impulses of the id. This superego, beyond being a power that only imposes prohibitions, becomes a controller that suppresses the individual's desires and impulses while kneading them with guilt and regret. The individual is now governed by this harsh superego within himself rather than an external authority. The individual, who is squeezed between the impulses that the id tries to suppress and the oppressive commands of the superego, is trapped in a continuous cycle of criticism of his own desires. This ruthless internal authority keeps the individual within the boundaries of the normative order, while preventing the free expression of his desires, leading to the rooting of a melancholic identity (Freud, 1961, p. 55-56-57).

Butler does not adequately estimate Freud's distinction between normal guilt and the melancholic superego. He defines the conscience as a structure that develops a habit of berating oneself over time under the influence of internalized prohibitions. While the conscience functions to ensure that the person adapts to social norms, the melancholic superego surpasses this function and turns into a more intense and constant mechanism of internal criticism and repression. However, in Butler's

interpretation, this distinction of Freud's is blurred. As will be recalled, Butler sees melancholia not only as a possible psychological outcome but as an element that grounds the subject's existence, based on Freud's statement in *The Ego and the Id* (1997), in which he states that all subjective life is based on an unacceptable loss (pp. 22-23). Thus, the exclusion of certain types of love shows that melancholia forms the basis of the subject and that this structure is always fragile. This melancholia manifests itself as an unresolved and incomplete mourning process. Melancholia that is not owned and completed limits the subject's ability to perceive its potential and thus weakens the subject's inner strength. This situation directly affects how the subject behaves and performs its actions in both the internal and external worlds. The subject does not have the capacity to think about or make sense of the loss, nor does it have the ability to recognize its existence. This incomplete mourning process leads to the transformation of loss into a cyclical structure that determines the limits of the subject's reflexive thinking ability. Thus, the loss ensures that the subject's intellectual boundaries remain fixed, and these boundaries are reproduced each time. Since the loss cannot be recognized and processed, it becomes a component that constantly conditions and limits the subject's identity and potential. (Butler, 1997, p. 23). This situation also weakens political inferences built on melancholia—just like she did. After all this narrative, it would be appropriate to return to the Oedipus complex for the integrity of the thesis.

The Oedipus complex addresses the process of a child's sexual desire reaching a normative or non-normative end under the command of the superego, and this process shapes both the construction of identity and the orientation of desire. The resolution of the Oedipus complex lays the foundations of the child's heterosexual identity while allowing the person to internalize external authority through the superego. At this point, the superego functions as an internal authority that forces the individual to construct an identity that is compatible with social norms. Butler criticizes Freud's Oedipal conflict within this framework, because, according to her, his theory assumes the distinction between heterosexual and homosexual desires from the outset, based on the incest prohibition. This assumption reveals that the Oedipal conflict prejudicially stigmatizes homosexual desires and same-sex orientations and presents heterosexual desire as a normative and natural tendency.

According to Butler (1999), the incest prohibition does not only initiate the Oedipal conflict; it also constructs heterosexual desire as a natural and normative tendency. This process becomes a mechanism that supports certain sexual orientations in order to maintain social order and legitimizes heterosexuality while suppressing non-heteronormative desires (Butler, 1999, pp. 80-81). In this direction, "it would appear that the taboo against homosexuality must precede the heterosexual incest taboo; the taboo against homosexuality in effect creates the heterosexual 'dispositions' by which the Oedipal conflict becomes possible" (Butler, 1999, p. 82).

> Freud assumes to be primary or constitutive facts of sexual life are effects of a (*incest*)[15] law which, internalized, produces and regulates discrete gender identity and heterosexuality. Far from foundational, these dispositions are the result of a process whose aim is to disguise its own (heterosexsual taboo) genealogy. (...) The narrative account of gender acquisition that begins with the postulation of dispositions effectively ***forecloses*** the narrative point of departure which would expose the narrative as a self-amplifying tactic of the prohibition itself (Butler, 1999, p. 82).

Focusing on the incest prohibition from the Oedipus complex, Butler (1999) argues that what actually shapes ego development is the suppression of same-sex desires through social restrictions. These restrictions not only exclude certain desires; they also construct normative heterosexual desires (Butler, 1999, p. 83). The incest prohibition and implicit anti-homosexual taboos determine the normative desires that are deemed necessary for the continuity of the social order. Desire that is included in the cultural system is subject to displacement by deviating from its initial meaning, and the boundaries of what is legitimate or illegitimate are drawn through discourse. Thus, prohibitions do not only exclude, they also produce what is talkable and acceptable, fixing heterosexuality as the norm approved within these boundaries (Butler, 1999, p. 91). While these prohibitions provide the individual with their sexual identity, the performative repetitions of the homosexuality taboo reinforce and perpetuate this identity. Butler relates her theory of gender performativity, which she developed with *Gender Trouble* (1999), to melancholia, and suggests that performance is an expression of unresolved mourning. In this context, gender performances are not only an expression of identity but also symbols of melancholic

[15] The italicized words in the text were added by me to make it easier to explain what the quote is trying to say.

mourning. The prohibitions and exclusions imposed by the heteronormative order lead to a mourning process that operates in the unconscious of the individual; this process becomes visible through repeated performances of gender. Melancholia establishes gender identities by internalizing mourning for rejected or lost objects of desire, so gender performances bear the traces of both social norms and repressed desires. In fact, Butler (1997) says the performance "allegorizes a loss it cannot grieve, allegorizes the incorporative fantasy of melancholia whereby an object is phantasmatically taken in or on as a way of refusing to let it go. Gender itself might be understood in part as the 'acting out' of unresolved grief (Butler, 1997, p. 145-146).

Masculinity is established through the refusal to mourn the possibility of love for the father, while femininity is established through the refusal of the mother as the object of love. Thus, both identities are built on the denial of loss. In this process, the individual identifies with a love object of the same sex, and this identification results in the individual taking into himself/herself his/her desires for the same sex. In this case, homosexual orientation comes into being in the individual's psyche as both an object of desire and a point of identification. These identifications associated with melancholia keep the individual's unresolved object relations alive. Even if the gender identification established with the same-sex parent is completed, the unresolved desires in these relations continue to exist. The more fixed and rigid the gender identity appears, the deeper the underlying loss becomes. This rigidity of identities covers up the lost and unacceptable first love, so that the repressed desire continues to echo within the boundaries of identity (Butler, 1999, pp. 80-81). However, although the gender regulation system and compulsory heterosexuality are shaped through melancholia, we cannot say that all gendered subjects are inevitably melancholic (Eng, 2000, p. 1277); since, given Freud's focus on gendering practices on the normative heterosexual male, these subjects are largely unaffected by melancholia. To support this judgment, we can say that when the loss of a heterosexual object is compared to the loss of a homosexual object within the "heterosexual matrix", there are differences between the two through the following quote.

> In the case of a prohibited heterosexual union, it is the object which is denied, but not the modality of desire, so that the desire is deflected from that object

> onto other objects of the opposite sex. But in the case of a prohibited homosexual union, it is clear that both the desire and the object require renunciation and so become subject to the internalizing strategies of melancholia (Butler, 1999, s. 75)

At this point, it is important to recall Freud's (1957a, 1961b) concept of melancholia, which we discussed earlier. According to him, the mourning process is completed by the gradual withdrawal of libidinal energy directed toward the lost object. During this process, the individual gradually loosens his attachment to the lost object and establishes new bonds by releasing his emotional energy. Thus, replacement is provided with new objects that can replace the loss. (Freud, 1957a, p. 255). However, does not the taboo on homosexuality also prohibit a person who has lost a same-sex loved one from establishing a relationship with a new same-sex person who can replace this loss? According to the above quotation, in the case where homosexuality is prohibited, homosexual desire cannot be sustained after losing its object, and the mourning process is interrupted because the person cannot find a new object of the opposite sex due to this prohibition. Here, the prohibition necessitates the abandonment of not only the object but also the desire. The point we need to pay attention to here is that Butler treats gender identity and desire as two different axes. Thus, Butler (1999) argues that a fundamental rejection of same-sex desire initiates the formation of the gendered subject, based on Freud's views on character formation through gender consolidation. In this process, the child internalizes the prohibition imposed by the homosexual taboo as "an interior moral directive" (Freud, 1957a, pp. 239-258). When the child adopts this direction, desires that are initially free and irregular take shape within the boundaries drawn by cultural prejudices. Since the loss experienced in this process cannot be consciously recognized, it cannot be mourned, and the unrecognized loss becomes inexpressible. In this case, the child is forced to give up both the object of desire and his desire. However, this renunciation cannot be replaced by establishing new bonds (Butler, 1999, p. 88). Thus, this forbidden loss cannot be expressed externally, cannot be consciously expressed by the child, and is internalized; this situation leads to melancholia. The person cannot completely suppress the object or desire he has lost and instead carries this loss in his inner world, this loss that cannot be expressed externally creates a deep melancholia (Freud, 1961b, p. 28).

In short, according to Butler's theory (1997, 1999), under the normative pressures of the “heterosexual matrix”, individuals experience a melancholic process woven with unmourned losses and repressed desires. Butler examines the “foreclosed” mourning process towards homosexual desire and states that homosexual losses are neither recorded nor accepted due to the stigmatizing approach of society. The exclusion of cultural traditions that can express the loss of homosexual love creates a situation of "refusal to grieve." This rejection leads individuals to internalize their desires in a melancholic way, which creates a repressed tension in their identities (Butler, 1997, p. 147). The melancholic process that results in this failure to mourn is shaped when individuals are forced to conform to the gender norms imposed by heteronormativity and suppress their own desires in line with these norms. Objects that have not been mourned, that are loved and gradually lost, become a residue, and this residue somehow turns into the “archaeological remainder” of undispelled sadness (Butler, 1997, p. 133).

It would be appropriate to ask the following questions asked by David L Eng: Why does a normative heterosexual man not have to confront this loss? In this context, why is normative masculinity experienced neither as the subject of loss nor as a lost object? On the other hand, why are women, LGBTIQ+ individuals, and ethnic and postcolonial subjectivities the groups most exposed to melancholia and depression in contemporary society? (2000, p. 1277-1278). At this point, it is inevitable to make clear social distinctions between the objects that trigger melancholia, since not every loss is placed in the same network of meaning and not every mourning receives the same social acceptance. It is essential to evaluate this dimension of melancholia on a political basis, since the social status of the lost object is one of the primary elements that determines whether the subject will be dragged into a melancholic existence (Eng, 2000, p. 1278). The contexts in which losses find meaning, when mourning is considered legitimate, or when losses are attempted to be erased from memory by making them invisible are closely related to the social position of the subject. Therefore, melancholia is not only an internal state experienced in the individual's spiritual world but is a reflection of power relations and social hierarchies. Which losses are allowed to be mourned, and which ones are suppressed and rendered invisible; is directly related to which subjectivities are valued by the social structure

and which lives are deemed worthy of mourning. Therefore, melancholia is not only a psychological state but also a political ground where social domination and exclusion mechanisms are elaborately processed. Indeed, Butler's *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997) discusses the forms of social power that regulate which losses can and cannot be saddened (p. 183). According to her, we can find what provokes the inner violence of conscience in the social exclusion of sadness (Butler, 1997, p. 183).

Women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and societies with a colonial past are forced to give up objects devalued by social hierarchies, while at the same time, they cannot avoid identifying with these objects. The ambivalence felt towards these devalued objects plays a decisive role not only in defining minority identities but also in the construction process of these identities (Eng, 2000, p. 1278-1280). Denying the loss in melancholia does not ensure that the loss disappears completely; on the contrary, the loss settles in the psychic field and finds a new form to continue its existence. In more precise terms, internalizing the loss is part of the denial process. If the object can no longer exist in the outside world, it will continue to exist within the psyche (Butler, 1997, p. 133). In this context, the formation of an ambivalent feeling towards the lost object becomes inevitable. The melancholic subject can feels both a deep attachment and anger towards the object s/he has lost; the coexistence of these feelings leads to psychic tension. The prevention of mourning the loss can causes the ambivalence in question to turn against the ego. Thus, the anger and disappointment felt towards the lost object can return in the form of the ego's self-accusation and weaken the ego's integrity. The ego can experiences a split within itself: it is caught between the desire to hold on to the lost object and the pressure to give it up. The melancholic person's ambivalent feeling towards the lost object can be considered as a result of the social conflict resulting from the desire to sustain a loss that the dominant society does not recognize or approve of (Eng, 2000, p. 1278). Thus, “that love, that attachment becomes subject to a double disavowal, a never having loved, and a never having lost” (Butler, 1997, pp. 139-140), and “this 'never-never' thus founds the heterosexual subject, as it were; it is an identity based upon the refusal to avow an attachment and, hence, the refusal to grieve” (Butler, 1997, p. 140). In this context, Focusing on Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* (1957ab) and *The Ego and The Id* (1961b) texts, Butler (1999) argues that while the establishment of gender is

based on melancholia, the formation of the subject is inevitably intertwined with loss, thus placing the formation of the subject on a deep melancholic basis, just like the establishment of gender identity (pp. 73-74).

Finally, In cases where Butler's interpretation of gender melancholia, based on excluded mourning, allows her to define melancholia as a tool of ethical resistance and political intervention, the possibility of ignoring the internal contradictions of melancholia may arise. In Butler's interpretation of melancholia, based on Freud's theory of melancholia, the positioning of melancholia as the conflict between longing for the lost object and rejection of this object is at the center of melancholia-based subjectivity. This may lead to minority identities having to resist not only external pressures but also deep internal conflictsThe visibility of the scars of the past reveals not only the scars of the past but also how these scars shape our present existence. The effort to internalize an object that has been excluded by society in the past can be seen as an implicit resistance to normative demands. However, while the internalization of these devalued objects becomes inevitable in the subject's identity construction, it also leads to a struggle in which love and hate conflict (Butler, 1997, p. 163). This situation can also make the resistance based on ‘melancholia-based subjectivity’ a destructive feature. However, these effects of melancholia cannot be put into clear categories. In this context, Butler's treatment of ‘melancholia-based subjectivity’ as a political structure creates an area of uncertainty regarding the formation of this political context. This uncertainty arises both from the ambivalence inherent in melancholia and from the fact that, although Butler points out the resistance of the melancholic subject against power structures, she does not clarify the scope, nature, and forms of emergence of this resistance.

In this chapter, I have explained the first of two fundamentally similar but different political perspectives on melancholia that Butler developed based on Freud's conceptualizations of *Mourning and Melancholia* (1957a) and *The Ego and the Id* (1961b). Drawing on *Gender Trouble* and *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997), I have examined theoretical discussions on the melancholia of gender and evaluated her understanding of melancholia within the framework of her thoughts on gender and identity construction. In particular, I discussed how Butler’s social understanding,

which is based on Freud’s understanding of melancholia but deconstructs it, is shaped by the internalization of forbidden desires and unmourned losses under the “heterosexual matrix” of gender. I stated that from Butler's analysis of Freud in gender studies, she directly defines the subject as a melancholic structure and understands the unmourned melancholia as a practice, especially on the homosexual subject, with Freud's term "foreclosed". From here, Butler's emphasis on melancholia-based subjectivity extended into her later discussions. Although Butler frames her later works as an effort to move away from the subjugating nature of melancholia, she continues to pursue the Freudian understanding of melancholia, on which she bases her political conclusions on gender, with different themes in her later works. Only a change in the understanding of melancholia is observed. However, Butler's thoughts on melancholia-based subjectivity remain a commonality in her works, still finding their way into the political implications seen in her later works, where themes of kinship and vulnerability emerge.

Now I will move on to the second approach, where I will discuss Butler's ethical and political understanding developed through melancholia and mourning, which are essentially the same but offer two different political perspectives, based on Freud's understanding of mourning and melancholia.

CHAPTER 4

THE POLITICS OF MOURNING THAT ITS ROOTS IN MELANCHOLIA-BASED SUBJECTIVITY IN JUDITH BUTLER'S THEORY

In this chapter, I will examine in depth Judith Butler's ethical-political understanding, which was inspired by Freud's understanding of mourning and melancholia and transformed over time. In her initial studies, Butler conceptualized subjectivity as a melancholic structure and interpreted it as the structural basis of both individual and political submission. Melancholia is at the center of Butler's initial theoretical framework for establishing identity and obedience. Over time, the shadow of melancholia is carried over to her themes of mourning and vulnerability, where she focuses on the concepts of precarios, mourning, and recognition. Although Butler aimed to create a new ethical-political field by moving away from melancholic submission in these studies, traces of her first intellectual contact with Freud are clearly felt in the background of these texts, and melancholia-based subjectivity is still constitutive in her theories. However, a difference emerges regarding the causes of unfulfilled mourning. This understanding, while it is a "foreclosed" mourning in the gender melancholia theory, turns into a "prohibited" mourning concept with the *Antigone's Claims* (2000).

Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death (2000) stands out as a transitional text that lays the foundations for the politics of vulnerability and mourning from Butler's melancholia-based analysis of subjectivity. Although *Antigone's Claim* (2000) is among Butler's initial studies such as *Gender Trouble* (1999) and *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997), the in-depth analysis it offers on how resistance to social norms can be expressed through mourning is a strong bridge to her vulnerability studies, which focus on the theme of vulnerability and the politics of mourning. The figure of Antigone is a symbol not only of individual mourning but

also of the public and political struggle waged over unrecognized losses. Therefore, in order to understand the transition from melancholia to the politics of mourning, it is necessary to examine Antigone's Claim in this chapter for a holistic theoretical analysis. After this analysis, I will discuss the politics of mourning in which Butler develops the themes of vulnerability, recognition, and dispossession under the title 'The Ethics of Precarious: The Subversion of Dispossession'

Butler's works *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004a), *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005), and *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (2009), and *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind* (2020) are complementary works that address concepts such as frag, loss, mourning and recognition on a political and ethical level.

In *Precarious Life* (2004a), Butler argues that vulnerability reveals not only the vulnerability of individuals but also their interdependence, and argues that individuals' interdependence and experiences of vulnerability are an opportunity for the construction of new forms of ethical and political solidarity. However, Butler emphasizes that some lives are made more valuable by political and social frameworks, while others are left invisible, and reveals that these political and social frameworks determine which losses are mourned and which are ignored.

In *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005), Butler focuses on ethical responsibility and the narrative of the self, focusing on the themes of ontological vulnerability, recognition, and responsibility. She evaluates the subject's capacity to tell their own story and take responsibility within social contexts intertwined with ethical norms. The subject is dependent on others when constructing their own narrative, and the narrative process involves a constant negotiation between the self and social conditions. Here, Butler (2005) argues that the individual's narrative of the self can also be dispossessed by normative structures. In this context, "dispossession" is not only an economic or material process but also a social process that limits and determines the narrative power of the subject.

In Frames of War (2009), Butler expands on her previous analyses, particularly those in Precarious Life (2004a), to detail how media and political discourses frame which

lives are recognizable and mournable. These framings determine not only who can be mourned, but also whose lives are worthy of preservation. Butler (2004a, 2009) suggests that acknowledging the process of mourning may create possibilities for new political spaces to emerge that challenge prevailing forms of oppression.

In The Force of Nonviolence (2020), Butler presents nonviolence as a transformative ethical and political stance. Rejecting the traditional understanding of nonviolence as merely the absence of violence or passive resistance, she positions it as a proactive and relational principle based on mutual dependency, vulnerability, justice, and equality.

4.1. The Legacy of Antigone: The Subversion of Kinship through "Foreclosed" and "Unspeakable" Mourning

"What we have lost has left behind
not only a nearly unbearable sorrow
but also a question that is hard to answer:
Can we manage to mourn without succumbing to
the seductions of darkness?
We could, of course, pose the same question differently:
Can we manage to mourn through
the strength of what is good? (Agtaş, 2015, p. 3)" [16]

Sophocles' *Antigone* (2001) is a tragedy that examines the ongoing conflict between personal conscience and state authority. The tragedy is about Antigone, the child of the incestuous relationship between Oedipus and his mother Jocasta, challenging Creon, the new king of Thebes and her mother's brother. Antigone's brother Polyneices waged war against his other brother Eteocles to regain the throne of Thebes, and the two brothers killed each other in the war. While Creon honors

[16] The original language of the quoted text is Turkish and has been translated into English, which is the language of the thesis. The original text in Turkish is as follows: *"Kaybettiklerimiz geride yalnızca dayanması güç bir acıyı değil, aynı zamanda yanıt vermesi güç bir soruyu da bıraktılar: Kötünün ayartmalarına kapılmadan yas tutmayı becerebilecek miyiz? Aynı soruyu başka türlü de sorabiliriz elbette: İyinin gücüyle yas tutmayı becerebilecek miyiz?* (Agtaş, 2015, p. 3)."

Eteocles as a hero, he declares Polyneices a traitor and orders that his body not be buried but left in the open (Lloyd, p. 453). This was an order that would have been considered a great crime in ancient Greece, both religiously and morally, since the honorable burial of the dead was deemed sacred to Greek tradition.

Antigone (2001) openly challenges the authority of King Creon of Thebes by deciding to bury her brother Polyneices. Polyneices fought against his brother Eteocles to regain the throne, and both brothers killed each other in the conflict. Therefore, Creon honored Eteocles and gave him a military funeral, while declaring Polyneices a traitor and forbade his burial. While Eteocles was mourned, Polyneices was not. Antigone, however, opposes this order and buries Polyneices twice. Thereupon, Creon locks her in a tomb and leaves her with very little food and water. Creon, who is filled with remorse, decides to allow Polyneices to be buried, but it is too late; Antigone hangs herself. Unable to bear this pain, his fiancée Haemon also commits suicide, and then Haemon's mother Eurydike also ends her life in the same way. At the end of this tragic chain of events, Creon is deeply devastated (Lloyd, p. 453).

In Sophocles' Antigone (2001), Creon represents the laws and authority of the state, while Antigone initiates a series of events that question the foundations of law, ethics, and family responsibilities with the action she takes. Through this opposition, Sophocles opens up discussions about the responsibilities of the individual towards the state and the limits of state authority. The story of Antigone, therefore, goes much beyond the realm of individual disobedience and asks some basic questions about the limits of power and the place of the individual within political society. Antigone's disobedience to the order against the burial of her brother is not strongly associated with family ties or loyalty; it is rather a crucial negation of Creon's decrees by virtue of divine law and ethics Antigone speaks to the tension between individual ethics and political order which would condition human existence. Meanwhile, Creon stands for state power and a legal order in holding social cohesion together. Thus, the action of Creon against Polyneices is not one of personal vindictiveness but rather a political rationale in intent to consolidate his reign within a city traumatized by civil war. He views Antigone's act as not only a personal

decision but also as a real danger to his power and authority, to the entire state of Thebes. He therefore believes that such open disobedience on Antigone's part should receive a severe punishment. Finally, the conflict between Antigone and Creon provides a context wherein the possible analysis through a gender perspective is evident, and in which Antigone's rebellion will not only be a resistance to the power held by Creon and the state but also a challenge to traditional gender roles. In this light, it is relevant to remember that in the Ancient Greek society, women were excluded from public space and/or any expression of a woman's public grief was forbidden (Butler, 2000).

Sophocles' *Antigone* (2001) has deeply influenced many thinkers and critics over the centuries and has left a permanent mark on the intellectual world. It has an influence that extends from ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle to leading philosophers of the modern era such as Hegel[17] and Kierkegaard[18] Antigone has been at the center of countless philosophical, ethical, and political discussions on themes such as the fate of the tragic hero, moral and individual responsibility, state authority, and family ties. In recent years, this tragic work has been reinterpreted and appropriated by different disciplines such as feminism, psychoanalysis, sociology, and politics (Sanctis, n.d., p. 27).

What is the fundamental element that Butler seeks in Ancient Greek tragedy and the character of Antigone? In the introduction to Antigone's Claim, Butler (2000) mentions that she began to question how feminist movements shaped their opposition to the state. She emphasizes that Antigone emerged as a counter-figure to the tendency of feminist politics to cooperate with the state (Butler, 2000, p. 1). Butler expresses her discomfort with the reduction of political opposition to legal complaints, in other words, the legalization of politics, and examines what Antigone can contribute to feminist thought. According to Butler (2000), Antigone's resistance to the state offers a more effective form of opposition than seeking state support in a democratic society (pp. 1-2). In the work, Butler (2000) particularly addresses

[17] See Hegel (1977) for a detailed discussion of this concept.

[18] See Kierkegaard (1987) for a detailed discussion of this concept.

Hegel's criticism of the figure of Antigone as a symbol of ethical life and Lacan's interpretation of Antigone as a limited figure of ethical desire.

Butler (2000) states that Hegel argues that Antigone symbolizes the conflict between the family and the state, and according to him, Antigone is a figure who opposes human law as a defender of family ties and divine law (p. 4). Antigone opposes the law of the state with her loyalty to her family and her determination to bury her brother Polyneices. However, Hegel's interpretation implies that Antigone necessarily loses this conflict and the law of the state prevails; this points to the defeat of the divine law and family ties that Antigone represents. In addition, from Hegel to Lacan, Antigone is considered a figure who allegedly defends kinship; this kinship is a structure necessary for the intelligibility of the social but is based on certain rules that are not directly social (Butler, 2000, p. 15). However, according to Butler, since Antigone's family ties are based on incestuous relationships, it is quite difficult to evaluate her as a representative of normative kinship structures. Even when Antigone expresses her loyalty to her brother, this loyalty may refer not only to Polyneices but also to a network of family ties that encompass many people (Butler, 2000, p. 2). Therefore, to say that Antigone's kinship relations only reflect a traditional hierarchical and normative structure is quite problematic, considering the complexity of her familial ties. In addition, Antigone states that she would not do the same for other members of her family regarding the challenge she undertook for Polyneices (Butler, 2000, p. 9). It can be said that Antigone erodes normative family structures and disrupts existing kinship orders while acting within these ties (Butler, 2000, p. 82).

Lacan (1992), on the other hand, interprets Antigone as a figure of desire aimed at reaching the “real” and positions her ethical stance at the edge of an existence beyond the symbolic order. According to Lacan, Antigone's desire is intertwined with death; this desire is read as a passion that goes beyond the symbolic order (Butler, 2000, p. 3). However, Butler (2000), going beyond the interpretations of these two thinkers, considers Antigone neither solely within Hegel's family-state conflict nor limited to the limits of Lacan's ethical desires. Butler (2000) seeks a way to think of Antigone beyond these classical ethical and political categories.

According to her, Antigone's action can be evaluated not only as an ethical or political symbol but as a figure that pushes the boundaries of existing social norms. She argues that Antigone, rather than confronting Hegel's normative order as well as Lacan's symbolic law, offers a political possibility at the limits of representation and beyond identities (Butler, 2000, pp. 29-30). This perspective implies that Antigone needs to be re-evaluated within modern feminist theory and political thought. At this point, it would be appropriate to express Butler's criticism of Irigaray's interpretation of Antigone. While Irigaray presents Antigone as a point of identification for women, she evaluates her as a figure that glorifies femininity and motherhood, and in this context, she sanctifies femininity against masculinity and the patriarchal order. However, according to Butler (2000), this approach not only addresses gender in an essentialist way but also creates hierarchical taxonomies by rigidly classifying the areas where freedom can be realized (p. 4). In addition, it is difficult to make Antigone a symbol for feminist politics when her representational function is already in crisis. Moreover, Antigone's function as a political figure points to a radical possibility in which the limits of representation are revealed (Butler, 2000, p. 2). In this context, she avoids limiting Antigone to a mere figure of resistance and aims to explore her much deeper potential, pointing beyond representation and normative structures. Indeed, she argues that Antigone is not only a symbol of political opposition to the state but also a representation of "politics not of oppositional purity but of the scandalously impure" (Butler, 2000, p. 5). It would be useful to elaborate on this part a little more.

In Butler's analysis of Antigone, Antigone's resistance is presented not simply as a "pure" opposition to the dominant power, but as an act intertwined with the language and norms of sovereignty. Butler (2000) states that Antigone uses Creon's language and dominant norms to oppose him and that her resistance is, therefore, a form of politics that is "scandalously impure" (p. 5). Indeed, there is a meaning in Antigone's resorting to Creon's language while rejecting his laws. Antigone establishes a complex relationship with the power she opposes, and rather than creating an external alternative to sovereignty, she borrows the language of sovereignty and resists this language. From this perspective, Antigone's rebellion reveals a crack within the dominant language, but this crack occurs by speaking from within the

language of sovereignty. According to Butler (2000), this is a policy of opposition, but this opposition is not in a pure oppositional relationship. Antigone opposes Creon in his field of play by using his norms. In this context, Antigone's action can be read as a resistance that is intertwined with normative forces and shaped by these forces and thus violates the boundaries of representation and normative structure (Butler, 2000, pp. 5-28).[19]

If we return to the element that Butler sought in Ancient Greek tragedy and the character of Antigone, how can we comment on the fundamental purpose of this search? When Butler questions the structures and norms of kinship, she asks "What happens to Oedipus and the interdiction for which he stands?" (Butler, 2000, p. 22). Indeed, Antigone's identity has led to the questioning of Oedipus' heritage by confusing traditional family ties and laws. Could it be that one of the things Butler sought in Antigone was that Oedipus' heritage was brought into crisis? Indeed, Antigone, who neither represents kinship alone nor its radical outside, brings into crisis these distinctions that point to the deviation of norms as an opportunity for a rereading (Butler, 2000, p. 29). The figure of Antigone deeply reveals how kinship norms, gender roles, and the male-dominated boundaries of the political are displaced and questioned. Antigone comes into conflict with the laws that represent both social and familial order, causing traditional gender and authority relations to be shaken. Her stance shows that kinship relations are not fixed and unchangeable, but rather that social norms, gender identities, and political order can be dynamically renegotiated. This figure, while confronting dominant structures, stretches the boundaries of these structures and opens the door to an alternative social imaginary (Butler, 2000, pp. 5, 38, 76, 82). This is what Butler (2000) seeks in Antigone. However, this is not the only thing she seeks. Another element that Butler is looking

[19] It is possible to conduct a more in-depth discussion at this point, but this discussion goes beyond the limits of this thesis. The debate in question can focus on the exact context in which Butler defends Antigone's adoption of the language of sovereignty in her work Antigone's Claim. Referring to Foucault's concept of "governmentality" in his work *Precarious Life* (2004), Butler states that the main purpose of sovereignty is to impose its own power and to make this power effective and permanent in an authoritarian manner (Butler, 2004a, p. 93). Based on this, the following question can be asked: When Antigone speaks in the language of the sovereign, is her aim really to impose her own power and maintain this power in an authoritarian manner? This could raise an interesting debate that questions the fundamental understanding that Butler (2000) sees in Antigone. However, it would not be appropriate to deepen this discussion in the context of this thesis; I would just like to point out that such a question could pave the way for a fruitful discussion for future studies.

for in Antigone coincides with what we are looking for in Antigone in the context of examining Butler's (2000) concept of melancholia in this thesis: “O tomb, O bridal chamber, O deep-dug home, to be guarded for ever, where I go to join those who are my own (s. 23). What is the meaning of Antigone's words as she approaches the grave? Antigone's death is depicted as a marriage with the dead members of her family, which reveals the similarity of love that has no place in culture to death. Antigone's rejection of the idea that her failure to give birth to children is a tragic fate and the idea that the incest taboo must be lifted for love to develop freely is also noteworthy in this context. The aim here is not to return to familial normality or to praise incest (Butler, 2000, p. 23). The aim here is to point to Antigone's melancholia-based subjectivity. Indeed, Antigone's melancholia-based subjectivity emerges as an allegory for a crisis in kinship structures: “Which social arrangements can be recognized as legitimate love, and which human losses can be explicitly grieved as real and consequential loss?” (Butler, 2000, p.24). Antigone refuses to comply with any law that would deny her loss to be acknowledged by society “and in this way prefigures the situation that those with publicly ungrievable losses – from AIDS, for instance–” (Butler, 2000, p. 24). Therefore, for Butler, Antigone’s actions demonstrate the possibility of people challenging and reshaping the discursive patterns that constrain them. The entire city sees her stubbornness in claiming her brother’s body and the vulnerability inherent in the law itself. Thus, Antigone introduces a new practice of mourning to city, where she lives. Her resistance challenges and disrupts the rigid rules of who has a say in the public sphere and whose losses are deemed worthy of mourning (Butler, 2000).

Reading Antigone through the concepts of loss, melancholia, and mourning is another element that Butler looks for in Antigone; in this context, this is what is sought in Antigone in this thesis while examining Butler's idea of melancholia. First, I will consider the melancholia created by a forbidden love, and then I will examine the issue of mourning after a loss for which even mourning is forbidden. Both issues come to the same conceptual point in Butler’s flow of thought and deepen the line we follow in this thesis. The melancholia created by the inability to mourn for forbidden and lost attachments plays a central role in both examples and shows how the concept of melancholia in Butler’s early studies also takes place in her

vulnerability studies. Indeed, the mourning caused by forbidden love and the prohibition of a person's mourning is shared by Butler's question: "What new schemes of intelligibility make our loves legitimate and recognizable, our losses true losses?" (Butler, 2000, p. 24). She asks the following after this question:

> This question reopens the relation between kinship and reigning epistemes of cultural intelligibility, and both of these to the possibility of social transformation. And this question, which seems so hard to ask when it comes to kinship, is so quickly suppressed by those who seek to make normative versions of kinship essential to the working of culture and the logic of things, a question too often ***foreclosed*** by those who, from terror, savor the final authority of those taboos that stabilize social structure as timeless truth, without then ever asking, what happened to the heirs of Oedipus (Butler, 2000, s. 24)?

This quote by Butler (2000), which presents the normative, social structure as a fixed and unchanging truth, brings together both the melancholia created by a forbidden love -for example, a homosexual love- and the forbidden mourning after a death. If we come to the melancholia created by a forbidden love and its relationship with gender; the incest taboo could not prevent the love between Oedipus and Jocasta in advance. Indeed, it could not prevent Antigone's love for her brother Polyneices. However, while Oedipus's damnation comes when he accepts the situation after committing the act, the curse comes from the very beginning for his brother Antigone; it makes the life and love she can live impossible from the very beginning (Butler, 2000, p. 78). Thus, "indeed, she is at once cursed with a loyalty to a dead man, a loyalty that makes her manly, compels her to acquire the attribute that carries his approbation such that desire and identification are acutely confounded in a melancholic bind" (Butler, 2000, p. 61-62). This melancholia loyalty causes Antigone not to love anyone else.

> when the incest taboo works in this sense to ***foreclose*** a love that is not incestuous, what is produced is a shadowy realm of love, a love that persists despite its ***foreclosure*** in an ontologically suspended mode. What emerges is a melancholia that attends living and loving outside the livable and outside the field of love (Butler, 2000, p. 78).

At this point, melancholia not only shows that a term can continue to carry meaning beyond its traditional boundaries; but at the same time, it reveals how this uncertain

form of meaning deprives a life of ontological certainty and permanence in the public and political sphere. Accepting norms as equivalent to cultural significance means accepting a system of thought that reproduces melancholia at the cultural level. This melancholia can be partially overcome as a recurring discomfort when it tries to express itself by borrowing terms intended to silence the unutterable and by breaking this silence (Butler, 2000, p. 78). In this context, it can be stated very clearly that with Antigone, just as in her previous works, Butler emphasizes the destructive side of melancholia.

If I come to another part that makes Antigone valuable for Butler and the subject of this thesis, in the tragedy of Antigone, Antigone is first and foremost mourning her dead brother Polyneices. In this respect, the story can be rewritten. Polyneices being declared a traitor and not being allowed to be buried overshadows the experience of mourning for Antigone with a deep injustice, and the right to mourn becomes a matter between life and death for her; therefore, mourning also turns into an act of resistance that will cause her to lose her life (Butler, 2000, p. 79). For Butler, when a person experiences something beyond their control, mourning provides an opportunity to grasp a fundamental lack that shapes their identity, one that shows that people's physical existence is dependent on others and intertwined with their lives. Butler (2000) argues that even though 'I' do not always know what affects me, even though 'I' cannot grasp what 'I' have lost, this deprivation reveals the unconscious trace of sociality and the fact that 'I' exist beyond my own boundaries (p. 28). According to this understanding, mourning opens the person to the outside, and while mourning, the person loses himself even though he cannot grasp what he has lost (Butler, 2000, p. 28). At this point, if we recall from the previous sections of the thesis, these statements of Butler directly tell us about Freud's thoughts in the text *Mourning and Melancholia*. Also, she says:

> Freud reminded us that when we lose someone, we do not always know what it is in that person that has been lost. So when one loses, one is also faced with something enigmatic: something is hiding in the loss, something is lost within the recesses of loss. If mourning involves knowing what one has lost (and melancholia originally meant, to a certain extent, not knowing), then mourning would be maintained by its enigmatic dimension, by the experience of not knowing incited by losing what we cannot fully fathom (Butler, 2004a, s. 21-22).

According to context, Antigone cannot know what she has lost with the loss of Polynices, that is, with this loss that includes her own self. Polynices' death questions Antigone's subjective existence and teaches her that existence is not absolute, but rather gains meaning through relationships established with others, and Antigone finds herself as part of the community through Polynices' death. Polynices' death and the deep sense of inadequacy created by this loss lead Antigone to give up on herself and to the dissolution of her self-boundaries (Butler, 2000, pp. 13-14). The loss Antigone experiences establishes her bond with the other and shapes her identity; in other words, it is this relationship of loss with the other that constructs her existence as "Antigone." Thus, she finds herself in an ethical and political challenge as part of a community, realizing that existence is only an experience shared with another (Butler, 2009, pp. 33-34). Antigone's political action is not limited to burying her brother Polynices; it is also her defense of the right to publicly mourn his loss because She is someone for whom expressing grief openly is, in itself, forbidden (Butler, 2000, p.79). As a result of this,

> it is not simply that these are relations that cannot therefore be grieved publicly, but that these relations involve persons who are also restricted in the very act of grieving, who are denied the power to confer legitimacy on loss (Butler, 2000, p. 79).

Butler asks the following in the title *Violence, Mourning, Politics* of *Precarious Life* (2004), which we will examine in the following section: "Who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And, finally, What makes for a grievable life?" (Butler, 2004a, p. 20). Butler (2004a) answers the questions she asks as follows: Despite our different backgrounds and histories, 'I' believe it is possible to appeal to a shared 'we,' because each of us, in some way, knows what it means to lose someone. The thin sense of unity among us has been woven by loss. And if we know loss, then it means we have known what it is to have, desire, love, and strive for the conditions that enable us to fulfill our desires (Butler, 2004a, p. 20). However, not all losses are deemed deserving of public mourning (Butler, 2009, pp. 37-38). A similar approach is followed to that of Agamben in Homo Sacer (1998). In her work *Frames of War*, Butler examines how those who lost their lives after the September 11 attacks are commemorated in the US media, and questions why some lives are

deemed worthy of mourning while others are ignored. But Butler, on the other hand, contends that such a distinction is determined by structures in social values and norms, and the lives bearable and acceptable to be mourned publicly are closely connected to their acceptability or refutation as human or subject. It is in this sense that Butler (2004a) argues that mourning, other than being an emotional or personal experience of people, also reveals its ethical and political edges. While the commemoration of certain losses reinforces the recognition of the humanity of those individuals or communities, the evaluation of some lives as ungrievable points to the denial of their value as human beings. These frameworks determine which lives are deemed valuable and which losses are deemed worthy of public mourning. Thus, Butler's analysis involves a deep ethical and political debate that questions how human life is given meaning and which lives are deemed worthy of preservation and commemoration. Her arguments suggest that mourning functions as a political tool and that public recognition of the losses of certain groups can challenge the boundaries of social belonging. This is a phenomenon that invisibilizes certain lives and simultaneously contributes to the systemic erasure of the lives that are rendered less valuable or have been so in the past. Drawing on this, Butler (2009) explores how these frames of who should be grieved are part of warfare, violence, and othering practices. The situation with Antigone is quite evocative in this context because her claim to public mourning is rooted in a loss that is refused recognition by the community.

According to Butler, what makes Antigone's action political is her determination on defending her right to mourn after a loss that is forbidden to be mourned in public. However, Antigone's mourning is not meaningful because it aims to create a wider public space for processing traumatic losses or to gradually relax the norms and rules of speech. On the contrary, her mourning is important because it points to a scandal that allows the "unspeakable" to reverse the expressions used to silence it and make its own voice heard (Butler, 2000, p. 79). Indeed, this determination on mourning is a struggle for the recognition of losses that social structures exclude. However, "her claim to entitlement may well be the sign of a melancholia at work in her speech" and "her loud proclamations of grief presuppose a domain of the ungrievable" (Butler, 2000, p. 80). As Butler (1997) has stated: I am not sure I know when one has

fully mourned another human being. Freud changed his mind on this subject: he suggested that successful mourning meant being able to exchange one object for another; he later claimed that incorporation, originally associated with melancholia, was essential to the task of mourning (p. 20).

From this point of view, the unmournability—that is, the idea of melancholia—functions again as a common motif that brings Butler's work together. Although, for Butler (1997), unsuccessful mourning is a necessary inventory to reveal subjectivity based on melancholia, since his works *Gender Trouble* (1999) and *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997), her interrogations, which focus on mourning and melancholia, systematically repeat while protecting herself. For this reason, it can be stated that Butler did not experience a theoretical transformation with *Antigone's Claim* (2000). Because, when Antigone's right to mourn is denied despite this determination on her mourning as a casuist, social prohibitions not only silence her but also cause her to internalize it because "she is grieving her brother, but part of what remains unspoken in that grief is the grief she has for her father and, indeed, her other brother. Her mother remains almost fully unspeakable" (Butler, 2000, p. 79).

Butler (2000) draws attention to the intersection between social prohibitions and melancholia. If we remember Antigone's love for her brother, this intersection positions the work of Antigone Claims (2000) as a bridge between gender melancholia and mourning politics by commonizing "foreclosed" loves and "unspeakable" mourning.

Butler emphasizes that we need to question these unspoken mourning in order to understand how the social condemnations the individual is exposed to turn into self-rejection over time. For him, objections to public laws actually represent the individual's attempt to overcome the silent anger arising from his inner rejections (pp. 78-80). In this context, her connection with Freud's concept of melancholia reemerges. As a matter of fact, for him, melancholia is the situation where the loss cannot be fully accepted and mourned; therefore, the loss is internalized in the individual's self and turns into a rejected pain. Butler places Freud's understanding of melancholia on a political basis and asks the following question:

> In confronting the ***unspeakable*** in Antigone, we are confronting a socially instituted foreclosure of the intelligible, a socially instituted melancholia in which the Promiscuous Obedience unintelligible life emerges in language as a living body might be interred into a tomb (Butler, 2000, pp. 80-81).

Butler (2000) combines Antigone's struggle to mourn or not to mourn publicly with Freud's understanding of melancholia, emphasizing how mourning is regulated by social norms or how the bonds of loss are "foreclosed" and "unspeakable" (p. 80). The overlapping of the person Antigone is forbidden from loving and the person she is forbidden from mourning is an important coincidence in terms of expressing a theme that she addresses in her intellectual background and reveals the melancholia line in her initial and recent studies. This line is the mourning that cannot be held, created by a "foreclosed" love that is not publicly recognized and a loss that is "unspeakable" publicly. If we consider these two contexts together, according to Butler, subjects shaped within the framework of gender and kinship norms can exceed the boundaries of fixed and unchangeable norms, a common line in her previous studiesAs a matter of fact, while Butler emphasizes the performative structure of norms and identities, he also states that these structures are not fixed and unchangeable; on the contrary, she argues that reproduction processes constantly carry the potential for transformation. For example, the mourning ceremony, which was honorific for Eteocles and prohibitive for Polyneices, only gains meaning as long as the people accept this prohibition and continue to comply with similar orders and prohibitions and perform them (Butler, 2000). Considering that norms come into existence through repeated performances over time allows subjects to reinterpret normative rules and offer alternative paths to social life. In this context, Butler, in her interpretation of Antigone, considers the mourning process to question the established frameworks of how losses are organized. In the adaptation of this perspective to Antigone, the shocking inclusion of "***unspeakable***" losses into social life gains a new meaning (Butler, 2000, ss. 78-80).

It is clear that his theory is based on melancholia-based subjectivity, both in gender-based studies and—as will be examined in the next section—in vulnerability studies. In this context, what seems like a theoretical transformation is a transformation in the meaning of grief. Antigone's persistent mourning practice appears as a performative

resistance against cultural prohibitions. However, the "foreclosed" mourning in *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997) is preserved, and "unspeakable" mourning is added to it with *Antigone's Claim* (2000). Thus, mourning being "foreclosed" and "unspeakable" causes subject and identity to be established through melancholia, despite Antigone's persistent mourning practice. Butler's addition of the concept of "unspeakable" mourning to the "foreclosed" law not only expresses the exclusion of homosexual melancholia and homosexual attachments by the norms; it also shows that he broadened his political perspective to include other groups socially inhibited from public mourning. This provides a transition to her theory, which is shaped around the theme of vulnerability.

4.2. The Ethics of Vulnerability: The Subversion of "Dispossession"

"We are broken, and will break even more
Across the world, from east to west.
Yet the dagger brother drives into brother
Creates a link between two hearts,
Growing richer and fuller there,
For hidden within is the elixir
That revived Ali, concealed
In the poison offered to Hasan (Süreya, 1995, p.112)."[20]

In our age, due to the inequalities caused by political, economic, and social conditions, climate crisis, poverty, anti-immigration, sexism, homophobia, racism, and multidimensional crises such as labor exploitation, the material is abundant not only for melancholia or mourning but also for reflecting on vulnerability and conducting academic studies. The fact that a series of conflicts brought about by the

[20] The original language of the quoted text is Turkish and it is a poem. This poem was translated into English, the language of the thesis, by me and lost its original spirit and emotion. The original poem is as follows:
"Biz kırıldık daha da kırılırız
Doğudan batıya bütün dünyada
Ama kardeşin kardeşe vurduğu hançer
İki ciğer arasında bağlantı kurar
Büyür, bir gün, zenginleşir orada
Çünkü Ali'yi dirilten iksir de saklı
Hasan'a sunulmuş ağuda (Süreya, 1995, p. 112)"

many dimensions of inequality is not unique to our age establishes, I would say hesitantly[21], a fundamental tension between our "social vulnerability" and the "ontological vulnerability" inherent in the essence of being human. These two tension, which have been called and expressed with different symbols and names in different ages in many areas from literature to philosophy, from art to political struggle practices, have been discussed throughout human history. In this way, vulnerability is a concept that reflects not only the relationship between humans, the world, and nature but also the constant threat posed by social and political forces. However, as a modern concept, it was first conceptualized and introduced into academic literature following the events of September 11, 2001. Judith Butler's construction of the "ethics of vulnerability" also occurs during this period, and Butler states that mourning brings a new dimension to life and reveals human vulnerability. Indeed, in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment*, again with an implicit reference to Freud, it is stated that the state of mourning is the scar of civilization (Erşen, 2017, p. 31)."

Butler, in *Frames of War* (2009), has encountered the concepts of "ontology-based vulnerability" and "politics-societal vulnerability" with the concepts of "precariousness" and "precarity" (Yılmaz, 2022, p. 200). As an ontological precondition, according to Butler (2009)

> lives are by definition precarious: they can be expunged at will or by accident; their persistence is in no sense guaranteed. In some sense, this is a feature of all life, and there is no thinking of life that is not precarious-except (p. 25).

On the other hand, Butler (2009) describes politics-based vulnerability as "precarity, designates that politically induced condition in which certain populations suffer from

[21] The reason for this hesitation is the danger of subjecting ontological vulnerability to social vulnerability in a permanent relationship. Indeed, Alyson Cole has expressed this danger with a "hesitant" criticism of vulnerability studies. Although I do not fully agree with her thought, I think the concerns she expresses about vulnerability studies are very valuable. According to Cole, the effort to place vulnerability in a political potential by emphasizing its productive aspect can lead to the exaggeration of this concept as a universal and common condition of humanity. This approach can lead to the inequalities that groups that are more vulnerable socially and politically are exposed to being ignored and thus an injustice towards them being born (Cole, 2017, pp. 79-80). Indeed, according to Butler, even though she articulates the difference between ontological and situational vulnerability, in other words, between precariousness as a condition of life and precarity embedded in certain power structures, the criteria needed to explain this distinction and the relationships between different forms of vulnerability are not adequately theoretically framed. Moreover, it seems contradictory to advocate such a broad conceptualization of vulnerability while at the same time trying to sharply separate its different manifestations (Cole, 2017, p. 87).

failing social and economic networks of support and become differentially exposed to injury, violence, and death" (Yılmaz, 2022, p. 20). Even when looking at these statements alone, it is not surprising that Butler places vulnerability on the concepts of melancholia-based subjectivity and mourning, marking vulnerability as an ethical resistance and political potential. Butler, especially in her work *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997), brought Freud's concept of melancholia to identity-building processes, saw melancholia as a structural part of subjectivity, and attributed an ontological basis to it, in other words, stated that all subjective life is based on unacceptable or inexpressible losses. On the other hand, by considering melancholia-based subjectivity in terms of loves, attachments, and losses excluded by the "heterosexual matrix", she argued that as a result of a discriminatory allocation of mourning and normative prohibitions, not every sexual identity receives an equal share of this melancholia, and attributed a social basis to melancholia (Butler, 1999, pp. 81-82). The reason for this undeniable similarity is that, beyond the fact that both concepts are in a relationship with each other, they are notions shaped around ontological or socially based "loss."

With her works *Precarious Life* (2004a), *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005) and *Frames of War* (2009), Butler (2004a, 2005, 2009) has blurred the boundaries between melancholi and mourning, placing it at the center of vulnerability. This orientation reconsiders mourning as a subversive force, reframing it around the theme of "dispossession." This transition signifies a shift from performative resistance to the shaping of bodies and subjects by social norms to the productive promotion of ethical-political values. In this process, Butler questions the submissive nature of melancholia-based subjectivity, which she had accepted in her previous works. Thus, by questioning this scene, she attempts to rethink melancholia within a more liberating and alternative ethical-political framework. The priority is no longer the performative reinterpretation of oppressive norms, but rather the development of less violent and more generous politics by accepting the universal "vulnerability" of human (Butler, 2004a, pp. 16-18). However, her interest in melancholia does not completely disappear; it simply emerges by being reshaped differently. Indeed, Butler (2004a), basing herself on Freud's conceptualization of melancholia as the rejection of mourning in *The Ego and Id* (1961b), positions the mourning held in the

face of pain through melancholia and evaluates it as a potential principle that makes possible the questions "What is it in the Other that I have lost?" (Butler, 2004a, p. 30).

Precarious Life (2004a) is a series of articles by Judith Butler on politics following the September 11, 2001 attacks. In these articles, Butler (2004a) specifically considers the US response to the attacks and a lost political opportunity. According to her, the US missed the opportunity to redefine itself as part of the global community by instead escalating nationalist rhetoric, expanding surveillance mechanisms, suspending constitutional rights, and engaging in overt and covert forms of censorship. As a result, public criticism has been almost completely silenced (Butler, 2004a, p. xi). Butler examines this lost political opportunity and asks what it means. What is the lost political opportunity? Butler (2004a) emphasizes the missed opportunity to acknowledge that people are interdependent and that their lives "depend on people they do not know and will never know." Moreover, according to her, the opportunity to think about the relationship between human vulnerability and violence and the political meaning of mourning has been lost (Butler, 2004a, p. xii). In other words, the September 11 attacks presented an opportunity to imagine a world in which violence could be minimized and inescapable interdependence accepted as the basis of a global political society (Butler, 2004a, pp. xii-xiii). Butler addresses the importance of this lost opportunity in *Precarious Life* (2004) and moves to rethink the political power of mourning and violence.

Butler (2004a) interprets mourning studies from the Freudian melancholia perspective, presenting loss as an opportunity for social transformation and reconstruction. According to her, instead of responding violently after shocking social crises and events that leave deep wounds, accepting and making sense of loss through melancholia paves the way for both the dissolution of identities and the emergence of new political fields. Thus, considering melancholia as the internalization of unforgettable losses and the process of identifying with these losses becomes not only a state of mourning but also an opportunity for the politicization of loss. This internal loyalty shown to loss reveals the deep interdependence of

individuals and the inevitable vulnerability of human. Instead of being trapped in the unhealing wounds of the past, mourning becomes a process that revives social memory and weaves new bonds. The melancholic thought proposed by Butler offers an alternative political imagination that develops through vulnerability and loss, beyond political reactions based on violence. Accepting human vulnerability does not only unite individuals around pain; it also enables the emergence of a new community based on solidarity and interdependence. Thus, according to her, mourning becomes the carrier of a silent resistance and solidarity woven around vulnerability; loss becomes not a collapse of the past but a political possibility that can build a common future (Butler, 2004a).

In her article *Violence, Mourning, Politics* in *Precarious Life* (2004a), she examines her analysis of mourning and how norms of mourning are shaped by power relations. For Butler (2004a), mourning is not only an individual experience of loss but also an ethico-political indicator that reveals the vulnerability of life and our interdependence on others. She also voices these ideas in *Antigone's Claim* (2000) and other texts (Butler, 2004a, p. 26). Rather than directly examining the process of mourning, she explores the possibilities that mourning offers for rethinking international politics and social life on a less aggressive and more ethical basis. That is, mourning and mourning are seen as important indicators for activating ethical politics that point to the interdependence of human existence. Indeed, Butler (2004a) states that the experience of mourning is not only the emotional impact of a loss but also reveals an important truth about "who we are", that we construct our own self through the relationships that connect us to others (p. 22). So she comes to the view that what loss reveals is that we are all somehow interdependent, and that this relational interdependence is a fundamental aspect of being human (Butler, 2004a, p. 20). At this point, Butler's thoughts on mourning and self in *Precarious Life* show the line she traces through the example of Antigone. According to the text, the transformation Antigone experiences with the loss of her brother Polynices is not only the absence of her brother but also the dissolution of a part of her self through melancholic identification. Therefore, Antigone's self has dissolved by losing an object she loved and desired and has transformed it and placed it in a social and ethical network of responsibility (Butler, 2000, pp. 33-34). In this state, Butler claims

that she is constantly open to others for "being socially constituted bodies." According to her, this openness manifests itself both through positive ways of relating and through destructive experiences such as violence (Butler, 2004a, p. 20). In other words, she indicates that people relate to others through their bodies, through touch, gaze, or violence, and this forms the basis of human vulnerability. (Butler, 2004b, p. 21). This thought places vulnerability at the center of both human existence and social life (Butler, 2009, pp. 13-14). Thus, for Butler, the process of mourning is experienced as a kind of "dispossession" and she states that: when we lose someone, we lose not only that person but also a part of ourselves because the relationships we establish with others shape our identity; without these connections, we cannot fully continue to be who we are (Butler, 2004a, p. 22). Indeed, this idea has been present in Butler's previous works, and again, based on the melancholic identification in Freud's *The Ego and Id* (1961b), Butler brings the melancholia-based subjectivity she has framed before us. Thus, it is possible to see that Butler's ethico-political inferences on mourning are based on her thoughts on melancholia-based subjectivity and are essentially a strategy of rebellion and rejection inspired by Antigone and fed by the conflict between repressed desires and the powers of social and cultural prohibitions. In addition, Butler transforms the metaphysical model that sees the subject as sovereign and self-sufficient with her understanding of melancholia-based subjectivity. She does this with the psychoanalytic model she took from Freud, as well as Levinas' relational ontology model. According to Butler (2004a), "being a subject" means being "interrupted" by the other and relations (pp. 23, 138). Therefore, her approach necessitates that existence submit to a relational structure. Regarding this, Butler (2004a) says:

> If I am confounded by you, then you are already of me, and I am nowhere without you. I cannot muster the 'we' except by finding how I am tied to 'you,' by trying to translate but finding that my own language must break up and yield if I am to know you. You are what I gain through this disorientation and loss. This is how the human comes into being, again and again, as that which we have yet to know (p. 49).

The concept of "human" that this quote refers to bears the name of the confusion and loss that occurs as a result of the wound inflicted by another. Accordingly, from the very beginning, the self exists only through the relationship with the other and is

shaped by otherness. Moreover, the self is subject to collective normative systems of meaning that determine the boundaries of existence and even the body, and these systems are irreversible. Because, according to this understanding, the self can exist within these social processes; it can only survive, let alone develop. This understanding therefore suggests that claims of sovereignty are always an illusion and that the individual does not have the power to eliminate the structural passivity towards the world around her/him. At this point, it is important to state that Butler's thought is based on a Levinasian foundation and to examine Levinasian thought in terms of its consistency with the flow of the thesis.

Levinas (1997) argues that responsibility between individuals begins with a pre-existing relationship that is at the foundation of existence, prior to the person's existence as an autonomous and rational subject. This "pre-ontological" condition is the constitutive condition of the subject, and Levinas calls it the "original trauma." The original trauma defines an involuntary and inevitable relationship with the other. This relationship is symbolized through the face of the Other (Levinas, 1996). The face of the Other speaks directly and irrevocably, imposing a moral imperative: "Thou shalt not kill" (Levinas, 1997, p. 8). Because violence accordingly can be defined as a "temptation" that the subject can experience when confronted with the fragile life conveyed through the face in front of him. The face functions as a boundary that both triggers a murderous impulse and counteracts this impulse. The meaning of the face is revealed only when exposed to a murderous temptation; otherwise, the existence of the face becomes meaningless. The vulnerability conveyed by the face can fuel the subject's aggression, but at the same time, this vulnerability imposes an ethical responsibility on the subject by opposing the desire to kill. Levinas expresses this contradictory situation of the subject confronted with the face—the ethical tension between the desire to kill and the obligation not to kill (Butler, 2009, pp. 172-173). As Butler (2009) interprets this concept, the face of the Other confronts the person he/she encounters in a unique way, irreducible to general categories and impossible to change (2005, p. 91), and at this point the subject can only escape the "unbridled cruelty" that emerges as he/she tries to detach himself/herself from his/her basic social commitment by remaining open to the unique demands of the Other (Butler, 2005, p. 77).

While Levinas's (1997) concept of "face" implies that the existence of the other imposes a moral obligation on the subject and commands to avoid violence, Butler's ethics of vulnerability takes her interpretation of relational ontology to a radical point by suggesting that the limits of the subject are determined only by the presence and influence of others. According to this understanding, the experience of hatred as a limited being is merely a fiction, or worse, an arrogant and violent illusion. Therefore, humans' relational existence is shaped without consent, and the ethics of vulnerability is based on this foundation (Butler, 2009, pp. 48–49). Indeed, it is possible to see this intellectual ground in his early studies.

According to Butler (2009), the ethics of nonviolence necessitate the individual to remain open to the influences and impressions of others. The understanding of responsibility created by this situation is linked to the mourning process because resisting the premature termination of mourning or the suppression of vulnerability means recognizing common vulnerability (Butler, 2005, p. 100). Mourning allows the individual to develop ethical sensitivity to others' demands by accepting social influence and bodily vulnerability. Realizing the vulnerability of life also brings with it seeing how this vulnerability is unjustly distributed among different communities. If remembered, for Butler, understanding of life as life is possible when it is recognizable within a reality constructed through norms. The subject gains meaning through the norms framed by the eyes that recognize its existence; this process of recognition makes some lives more visible while condemning others to obscurity and oblivion (Butler, 2009, pp. 2-3). Butler's (2009) concept of "to be framed," which reveals the possibilities promised by language by conveying the meaning of "I fell victim to a scheme," plays a critical role in this process. The boundaries drawn by norms determine how the subject is perceived, and lives that go beyond the framework are kept outside the recognizable area of life due to the policies of violence and unjust treatment they are subjected to (p. 8). However, elements that violate the boundaries of established norms shake the perception of reality and lead to the emergence of a truth that goes beyond the framework. When the existing framework is disrupted, the episteme of the lives that go beyond the framework is revealed, and thus, the criticism directed at the existing framework by noticing the existing order of meaning has the potential to destroy this framework: "Something

occurs that does not conform to our established understanding of things" (Butler, 2009, p. 9).

Accepting the vulnerability of life may also require accepting the ego's incompleteness and dependence on objects, and this acceptance creates an ethical understanding that accepts that one's self-awareness is limited (Butler, 2005, p. 42). This process progresses slowly and allows one to establish a deep identification with the pain (Butler, 2004a, p. 30). In this way, mourning keeps the relationships with others open, reminds social existence, and supports a more generous and modest approach to shared lives, imposing an ethical responsibility. Thus, Butler (2004a, 2005), following Levinas's thought, accepts that the state of being interrupted by the pain and longing of others makes one ontologically dependent on others and that this bond creates an indestructible accountability. Although Butler argues that this common vulnerability is common to humanity, she argues that the commonality of vulnerability is not equally distributed across social groups but is nevertheless implicitly universal:

> I do not mean to deny that vulnerability is differentiated, that it is allocated differentially across the globe. I do not even mean to presume upon a common notion of the human, although to speak in its 'name' is already (and perhaps only) to fathom its possibility (Butler, 2004a, pp. 30-31).

The social ontology on which Butler's thought is based includes not only the global interdependence of humanity but also the inevitable interdependence of individuals, and this understanding prepares the ground for an ethic of responsibility. This responsibility requires individuals to stand against violence against others, including those who live in distant geographies or those who seem to be contrary to their own values and cultures. Acknowledging vulnerability provides a basis for empathy and identification and also forms a solid foundation that feeds ethical anger. At this point, Butler relates the reason why individuals oppose injustices against others to their ability to put themselves in their shoes. Because awareness of the fact that a similar injustice may one day be directed at them under different circumstances increases sensitivity to the pain and violence experienced by others (Butler, 2004, p. 150; 2009, p. 68). In this context, Butler (2004a) raises the following question: "If not

from a concern for common human vulnerability, where can a principle emerge that aims to protect others from the kinds of violence we are subjected to?" (p. 30). Butler's questions are often rhetorical, and in this case, the answer is hidden in the question itself: the responsibility to protect others from violence arises from an understanding of a shared vulnerability (Butler, 2004a, p. xii). This idea is particularly concretized in the example of the Vietnam War. According to Butler, the vulnerability of lives resulting from the destruction caused by the American army during the war triggered feelings of shock, anger, guilt, and mourning in American society. These emotional reactions led to widespread anti-war protests and mobilized various social groups politically. Anti-Vietnam War actions had an impact on policy-making processes in the United States in the long term; however, it should not be ignored that the international political dynamics of the period also played an important role in this process. In this example, Butler's main concern is that the images released during the war revealed a reality that Americans were not expected to see: the fact that, despite geopolitical power structures, people defined as "others" were equally vulnerable and defenseless. According to Butler, this awareness has forced the public to see a fundamental commonality among individuals with different cultural, ethnic, and religious affiliations. However, this process of remembering requires not only understanding the suffering experienced by others but also waging a moral struggle with the destructive tendencies that the individual carries within himself (Butler, 2004a, p. 150). Thus, Butler argues that ethical responsibility based on vulnerability is possible when the individual assumes responsibility for himself and develops sensitivity to the suffering experienced by others.

In Butler's thought, the fundamental principle that makes possible the commitment to protect others from forms of violence is the intuition of shared vulnerability (Butler, 2004a, p. 30). In this context, the precondition for preventing violence is the interdependence of individuals and the acceptance of the fragile nature of human beings. However, what is important for Butler is not the mere existence of the state of vulnerability, but what is done with it. At this point, she emphasizes that instead of seeing vulnerability as a mere weakness, it should be considered as an opportunity that deepens ethical responsibilities and social solidarity: "One's persistence as an 'I' through time, depends fundamentally on a social norm that exceeds that 'I', that

positions that ‘I’ ecstatically, outside of itself in a world of complex and historically changing norms” (Butler, 2004b, p. 32). According to this understanding, it can be said that every perception of the subject is shaped by regulatory norms that find meaning in social, historical, and cultural contexts. This approach emphasizes that the individual's self is not only an internal and independent essence; on the contrary, it is a structure determined by social relations, historical conditions, and cultural codes. In this context, the self emerges as a "dispossessed" social entity that is subject to normative regulations and can only be understood through these norms (Butler, 2005, p. 8). This understanding also overlaps with Butler's early work, The Psychic Life of Power (1997), where it examines how the structure of the psyche is shaped by certain social norms and how it is constructed in accordance with power relations. Butler (2009) states that this state of vulnerability shows that what needs to be constructed must also carry an act of nonviolence since a person exists through his/her ties with others and can only become resilient through these ties (pp. 179-180).

In Butler’s thought, the idea that the nature of the subject is shaped by the relationships established with others and the social structure shows that social norms and regulations construct the subject within certain patterns. This also makes it possible to develop a critical perspective on the norms of who can be considered “human” (Butler, 2009, p. 180). However, an important dilemma arises here. Butler (2004b) emphasizes that the enthusiastic character of a person’s survival is the basis of his/her survival as a human being and that his/her existence depends on others and norms outside of himself/herself (p. 33). In this context, Butler suggests that the subject’s sensitivity to uncertainty and unrecognizability can be increased by introducing “dispossessed” experiences such as melancholia, mourning, or anger. These experiences form a basis for shared claims that can bring together new communities and ways of life. Because lives, desires, and even deaths do not come into being by themselves; these are shaped by sociocultural forces that are beyond one’s control (Butler, 2004a, p. 30). Butler (2009) argues that when one realizes this control's lack, this awareness leads to ethical solidarity with those who are oppressed, persecuted, and whose legitimate demands are thwarted (pp. 55–62). In other words, Ruti (2017) puts it this way: If I reach a point where the other’s

mourning becomes my mourning, the other's anger resulting from oppression also becomes my anger. In this way, I can act on behalf of this other, transcending the differences between myself and the other (p. 102).

At this very point, in order to open up a new discussion on Butler's ideas under a subheading, it is important to ask the following questions according to the above thought path: Why should this relationship with others or the intuition of shared vulnerability prepare the ground for nonviolent interaction? Why should dispossessing experiences such as mourning lead to ethical solidarity with the oppressed or persecuted? What is it that enables us to see others as deserving of an ethical response and their grief as our own, regardless of who they are and what their cultural affiliations are?

4.2.1. The Fragility of Melancholy or The Melancholy of Fragility: An Attempt at a Critical Reading

Under this heading, Butler's ethics of vulnerability, based on her concept of 'melancholy-based subjectivity,' is discussed from the perspective of the implicit but unrealizable ethical-political promises it contains and the critical perspective created by the questions left unanswered by these promises.

An understanding of ethics based on the ability to identify with the pain of others carries with it another risk: the possibility of turning into a paralyzing mourning process that can replace political action. Mourning can centralize the individual; this situation has the potential to stop politicization because it can cause the individual to withdraw from the social world. Such withdrawal is partly related to the fact that the mourning process clearly reveals the individual's dependence on others, which can function as a defense mechanism against his/her own vulnerability. Being under existential threat from the loss of others reveals how vulnerable the individual's dreams of sovereignty are. Apart from severe physical pain, few experiences shake existential integrity as much as the deep anguish felt during mourning. The loss of another is not limited to the sadness felt for the absence of that person; it also causes the individual to confront his/her own shortcomings and helplessness. Therefore,

traces of vulnerability reminded by loss lie in the depths of the mourning experience. In addition, it can be said that melancholia can lead to a self-centered preoccupation, completely contrary to an ethical stance. In this case, melancholia can lead the individual to exclude others from the self's closed, sad and sanctified area, turning into a selfish introversion. As Butler also points out, although mourning can function as an ethical resource, the melancholia it triggers carries the risk of alienating the individual from others, differences, and the formation of new bonds. In addition, it is difficult to transform melancholia into an ethical intervention language because melancholia has the potential to paralyze action. Indeed, while it becomes difficult for a depressed individual to perform even their daily functions, it becomes almost impossible to participate in political action (Ruti, 2017, pp. 99-101). In this context, the ethical and political interactions resulting from the mourning process that has become impossible to prevent due to dispossession and the dynamics that emerge from 'melancholia-based subjectivities' carry the risk of weakening the expected political engagements. Further expansion and deepening of this claim would be appropriate in order to increase the coherence and analytical power of the study.

Mourning can be the trigger for deep anger, but it can also be the starting point for ethical understanding. However, the melancholic echoes it contains and the fact that it reveals our structural weakness may render it inadequate to make a solid foundation. Indeed, as I have already mentioned, for Butler (1997), melancholia was not only considered as an individual psychological disorder, but also as a contemporary social problem and a model for political identity construction. Melancholia is a reflection that contains the wounds that both the individual and society have experienced in the past, and it makes it possible to recognize these wounds. However, this reflection does not only present traces of the past; it also reveals how these traces shape our present existence and what kind of effects they engender on us. In this context, it should not be forgotten that when Butler interprets the concept of “foreclosure” in her work *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997) and the concept of “dispossession” in her *work Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005) as means of a ethical resistance and political action, the possibility of not taking into account the ambivalence contained in melancholia arises. Melancholia creates a constant tension between longing for something lost and denial of this loss. At this

point, it can be said once again that although Butler relies on Freud's interpretation of melancholia, she ignores the ambivalence that Freud sees in melancholia and directly elaborates on melancholia into a 'positive' political agent.

Mourning can serve as a distraction; it can become a tool that distances individuals from political and economic solutions to global problems. Although the political potential of mourning seems to function to unite groups excluded by the mechanisms of social power into a political community, it can also take on an illusory function. Allowing the expression of the mourning process can create a situation where individuals can actually avoid the obligation to do more. In this way, mourning can function as a consolation mechanism that legitimizes inaction by providing individuals with the illusion that "something is being done" rather than providing any transformation.

In this context, individuals who deeply grieve for communities suffering in distant geographies may tend to create a positive image of themselves as benevolent subjects. However, such a performative mourning experience can further weaken the individuals or communities in question. Such a mourning performance can push these communities into the dangerous position of "victimhood," which risks reinforcing hierarchical relations. Indeed, this situation has the potential to reproduce relationships in which power is transformed into a privilege "granted" by the powerful to the powerless (Ruti, 2017, p. 101). Therefore, although the ethics of mourning have the capacity to develop sensitivity through loss and pain, it can prevent this sensitivity from resulting in political and structural transformations. Approaching mourning as an ethical form of action can only be functional if this situation turns into a practice of transformation. Otherwise, mourning may carry the risk of remaining a means of emotional relief due to the internal conflicts of mourning and melancholia. In response to such a possibility—whether conscious or unconscious—Butler (2004a) states:

> But this can be a point of departure for a new understanding if the narcissistic preoccupation of melancholia can be moved into a consideration of the vulnerability of others. Then we might critically evaluate and oppose the conditions under which certain human lives are more vulnerable than others, and thus certain human lives are more grievable than others (p. 30)

This quote assumes that for an ethics of mourning to be able to emerge, the fixation on melancholia must be transformed into an attention to the vulnerability of others. At this point, Butler suggests shifting the narcissistic dimension of melancholia to an empathic dimension by reminding us of the overlooked ambivalence of melancholia; thus encouraging the emergence of an ethical principle. Indeed, the ethics of vulnerability she puts forward aims to rethink the mourning process around the theme of "dispossession" by reconsidering the punitive structure of 'melancholia-based subjectivity' and to address melancholia from a more liberating perspective, within an alternative ethical-political understanding. However, to the extent that Butler remembers the ambivalence that melancholia involves, she realizes that melancholia alone cannot give rise to an ethical principle, and this strengthens the claim I have put forward and shows that the conditions for melancholia to give rise to this principle are again left unclear.

When vulnerability is considered within the framework of universal human claims—although Butler sometimes states that not every community is equally vulnerable—after a certain point, it tends to evaluate vulnerability in an abstract and universal framework. This approach generally ignores the different cultural and experiential realities of communities. However, these experiences gain meaning in the cultural and social contexts of the communities in which individuals live. Each community shapes the vulnerability of individuals with its historical, cultural, and religious specificities. The limits of vulnerability, its emergence, coping mechanisms and sometimes dispossessing melancholia and mourning rituals are important parts of these specificities. In this context, Butler's "face of the other" approach and the related ethics of responsibility, developed based on Levinas, are problematic due to the abstract universal human claims regarding vulnerability and defenselessness. Although the acceptance of vulnerability and the necessity to live a recognizable life that has the right to be mourned point to a partnership for creating new commitments and communities, the abstract and universal emphasis on the ontological similarities of being human ignores the complex social structures from which our ethical and political obligations originate. This can lead to the decontextualization of these obligations. Furthermore, the concept of "face of the other" carries multiple layers of meaning that cannot speak to us in a self-evident, single-layered, fixed, and

unchangeable way. One of these faces can represent the perpetrators of political, social, economic, and sexual violence, in other words, the figure of the "enemy." This enemy figure presents an important ethical and political challenge: How can we empathize with this entity that is seen as the source of violence or how can we recognize its vulnerability? A more fundamental question that needs to be answered before this is: Is it necessary for us to establish nonviolent communication with the sources of violence, recognize their vulnerability, or develop empathy towards them? At this point, Ruti (2020) argues that Butler goes to an extreme and makes masochism a virtue, and that Butler's idea that "I am responsible for others who harm me against my will" is quite problematic (p. 105). According to Ruti (2020), it is clear that this problem in Butler's understanding of vulnerability stems from her orientation towards Levinas' ethics of responsibility, and the ethics of vulnerability contains masochistic tendencies (p. 103). Similarly, Cole (2017) states that the relationship between the oppressed subject and the dominant subject enables the continuation and justification of violence by ignoring the universal nature of vulnerability (p. 85). This situation reinforces the tendency to see victimization as a dangerous pathology (Cole, 2017, p. 86). While I agree with Ruti and Cole's criticisms, I would like to add that Butler is aware of these masochistic tendencies and the problems that a persecuted subject can create. With her emphasis on the unequal distribution of vulnerability and even melancholia, Butler draws attention to the potential of those deemed unworthy of mourning and the dispossessed lives of the persecuted to form a community, revealing that she does not want to establish solidarity with the persecutor. In addition, there are signs that Butler also thinks about the questions raised above. In addition, Butler's attempts to overcome the persecutory nature of melancholia may also indicate that she is aware that a persecuted subject will create problems. For this very reason, Butler has some reservations about the abstract nature of Levinas's universalism and publishes *Giving an Account of Oneself,* in which she takes a critical stance towards universalism, aiming to place the understanding of ethical responsibility in a more concrete context.

In *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005), Judith Butler examines the complexity of ethical responsibility and how individuals' ethical identities are shaped in social

contexts. Butler criticizes traditional ethics for assuming that individuals are self-conscious subjects who can fully explain their actions and intentions. In this context, Butler (2005) discusses the pressures that ethical norms place on individuals, influenced by the ideas of Theodor Adorno (2001).

According to Adorno (2001), the conflict between universal interests and individual interests constitutes the fundamental source of moral problems. This conflict occurs when universal interests are not compatible with individual rights and interests or cannot encompass them. In this context, claims of universality can ignore and even suppress the rights of individuals. Adorno's approach is embodied in the example of a government-imposed on another country by force based on democratic principles. In such cases, the principle of democracy, presented as a universal value, ignores the right of the relevant society to self-determination and violates individual will. In this context, universality emerges as a structure that cannot establish a connection with the concrete realities of individuals, is alien to them, and is imposing. Adorno (2001) evaluates such universality as an abstract form of violence. However, his criticism is not directed at the complete rejection of the concept of universality, but at the incompatible functioning of this concept with social and cultural contexts. The fact that universality is indifferent to social and cultural conditions and cannot reshape itself in line with these contexts makes it abstract and imposing. According to Adorno (2001), just as claims of collectivity are generally not truly collective, abstract claims of universality also lack a truly inclusive universality. At this point, the incompatibility between the universal and the individual constitutes a negative dialectic. This incompatibility constitutes the fundamental condition of moral inquiry and becomes more apparent when universality does not take into account the rights and social specificities of individuals (Butler, 2005, pp. 5-6, 8-9).

Butler (2005), as in her other works, argues that ethical responsibility should be based on individuals' acceptance of their vulnerability and interdependent nature. However, this time, she deepens this perspective by resorting to Adorno's (2001) concept of "ethical violence." Adorno's concept expresses violence resulting from the imposition of moral obligations, recognizing that individuals always act under conditions they cannot fully explain (Butler, 2005, pp. 5-6). Butler argues that the

way to avoid such violence requires individuals to be in constant negotiation with norms and to position themselves with critical awareness. With this approach, Butler redefines ethics as a practice that is not limited to merely obeying rules, but also questions norms, based on Adorno's criticisms. This perspective foregrounds vulnerability and humility in intersubjective relations and emphasizes that an ethical existence is only possible with critical awareness. Butler opposes views that claim that morality is only the privilege of the powerful and states that the concept of responsibility should be understood from the perspective of the oppresseds. In this context, she asks the question: "What becomes the evil that we deplore?" (Butler, 2005, p. 102).

The "ethical violence" approach developed by Adorno (2001) requires the individual not only to be content with his/her own internal criticism but also to question the social and material conditions in which he/she lives and the intellectual structures that legitimize these conditions. Adorno (2001) defines this approach not only as the individual's criticism of himself/herself, but also as the criticism of the "inexorable something" that has settled within us and continues to exist uncompromisingly (p. 169). The "inexorable something" mentioned here is an internal pressure that takes root within a person and continues to exist uncompromisingly. This pressure forces the individual to constantly criticize and causes him/her to question not only his/her own mistakes but also the relationships he/she has established with social structures. However, this constant internal pressure—just like melancholia—can also have a limiting and oppressive effect on the individual's agency. Butler (2005), adopting Adorno's (2001) understanding of "self-criticism," emphasizes the importance of accepting one's own uncertainty and potential for error. However, Adorno's (2001) repetitive critical approach to oneself can trap the individual in a vicious cycle by keeping him in a constant state of "self-reflexivity." In this context, the "inexorable something" has the potential to become a worldview, similar to the subjugating and punishing nature of melancholia. In this context, Eng's (2000) view on Butler's attempt to politicize melancholia based on Freud's theory of "inexorable suffering" should be remembered (p. 1276). This approach shows that there is no difference between "inexorable something" and "inexorable suffering" and that Butler has not completely escaped Freudian melancholia. Indeed, according to Adorno, ideas

developed in the field of moral philosophy cannot claim to present a definitive and universal plan for a good life. Because life has an extremely complex and corrupt structure; it is not possible to live a truly good life or to fully realize one's potential as a human being in this world. Perhaps the only thing that can be said about what a 'good life' might mean today is that the most conscious and forward-looking minds must resist bad lifestyles by critically examining them. This resistance consists in rejecting everything encountered in a certain way. Beyond that, all that remains is the ability to reflect on these issues and the awareness of one's own powerlessness (Adorno, 2001, pp. 167-168). In this context, according to Adorno, the only way an individual can live a responsible life is to adopt an absolute attitude towards the world and its effects with the "negative prescription" he proposes (p. 168). According to Adorno's perspective, no action or lifestyle can be considered completely harmless or innocent; even the simplest action can be considered a show of conformity in which the individual betrays his critical consciousness and submits to the distorted, violent world order. Such actions show that the individual has unknowingly accepted the norms imposed by the system and has lost his critical distance. From Adorno's perspective, this situation is seen as an unforgivable example of conformism (p. 168).

In this context, an answer to Butler's question emerges: Through repeated self-criticism, a person can avoid becoming the evil she/he criticizes or condemns. Butler, however, turns to Adorno for an attempt to overcome Levinas' abstract and universal claims of humanity, which are disconnected from history. Butler considers the ideas of these thinkers in a context that goes beyond a political inference based solely on resistance and reactive subjectivity. With these influences, she aims to reinterpret the mourning process as a practice of "dispossession." She aims to remove melancholia from its subjugating nature move it to a more liberating perspective, and place it in an alternative ethical-political understanding (Butler, 2004a, 2005). However, this approach remains in a cycle that resembles the repetition of melancholia, and instead of the expected transformation, the same melancholic structure re-emerges. Butler's adoption of the imperative ethical commands of first Levinas and then Adorno limits the individual's agency by reproducing the rigid, merciless, and subjugating the melancholic superego's oppression. But such an oppressive force "often enough

succeeds in driving the ego into death" (Freud, 1961b, p. 55). For this very reason, Butler adopts a different approach in her work The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind (2020) in order to overcome the pressure of the melancholic superego.

In Butler's *work The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind* (2020), she adds a new one to her efforts to escape the rigid, merciless, and subjugating pressure of the melancholic superego by considering nonviolence and mourning as both an ethical and political stance. In this context, she aims to bring melancholia back to a liberating area by remaining loyal to the Freudian understanding of melancholia. In this attempt, Butler resorts to the concept of "mania", which Freud (1957a) defined as one of the most peculiar and difficult-to-explain aspects of melancholia and is seen as the opposite of melancholia in terms of its symptoms. If we recall, mania momentarily overcomes the loss of the object and directs the destructive impulses of melancholia, which are usually directed inward, and outward with a great burst of energy and joyful courage. This situation releases the burden of painful melancholia and relieves the oppression full of suffering (Freud, 1957a p. 253). This is precisely why Butler (2020) resorts to "mania." Butler asks: what, if anything, can stop this brutal violence unleashed by one part of the ego against another? Freud completes this question by suggesting that one way to prevent self-destruction from succeeding is to push back the ego's tyrant in time through mania. In this context, if the superego is a continuation of the death drive, mania is a protest against destructive actions against the world and oneself. This opposing tendency, which Freud calls "mania," may provide a key to understanding forms of resistance to authoritarian and tyrannical rules (Butler, 2020).

Butler tries to balance the characteristics of melancholia, which leads the individual to withdraw and attack himself, with the outward energy of mania. In this context, mania functions as a tool for the reconstruction of social ties and ethical transformation rather than a source of destructive energy. Butler suggests that communities shaped by the "dispossessed" mourning experience of marginal groups can be re-evaluated through mania, which is seen as the opposite of melancholia but an inseparable part of it. In this direction, marginal groups that are prevented from

mourning and are oppressed can come together through mania, another part of melancholia, instead of their ‘melancholia-based subjectivity’, which is the result of not being able to mourn. At this point, Butler says the following: Mania is a way of confronting reality and therefore a part of the melancholia cycle. Although at first glance it seems to act with an absolute sense of freedom, it eventually returns to the problems of a life subject to conditions. So, who or what shapes these conditions? What emerges when the existing conditions are questioned in the name of realizing freedom? At this point, a temporary vision of utopia may emerge—it is short-lived, but that does not mean that its political potential can be ignored (Butler, 2020). Although Butler points to the political potential of mania, she does not outline a conceptualization or resistance model for it. However, this situation is not only related to the way she deals with melancholia and its other face, mania, but also to Butler's intellectual and intellectual position and the way she deals with political resistance. Indeed, instead of including political structures and norms in a clearly defined program, Butler aims to create areas of transformation by revealing the ambiguity of normative regulations (Butler, 1997, 1999). For this very reason, the ambiguity created by Butler's melancholia-based subjectivity narrative can be evaluated as a framework compatible with her theoretical goal. However, although the manic individual seems to gain political agency by experiencing a great burst of energy, a pleasurable sense of courage and freedom by momentarily overcoming the loss of the object, two fundamental problems arise here.

First, Butler considers melancholia as an expression of an incomplete mourning process that has not been overcome by loss and argues that this process offers the potential for political resistance. However, when we think about mania, it is understood that Butler envisions a situation similar to the mourning work of a subject who has overcome the loss and is 'cured.' On the one hand, this situation fundamentally undermines Butler’s idea of creating melancholic politics by not being able to mourn “foreclosed,” “unspeakable,” and “dispossessed,” and on the other hand, it weakens the foundations on which her theoretical framework has been built so far.

Secondly, within the framework of the Freudian understanding of mania, mania is expressed as the opposite of melancholia. While manic individuals appear to be in a

cheerful mood on the one hand, on the other hand, they exhibit uncontrollable behavior (Freud, 1957a, p. 254). While Butler tries to balance the cruel and destructive aspects of melancholia with mania, this time she may be faced with the destructiveness of a phenomenon that is difficult to control. Indeed, the entire burden of the counter-occupations that melancholia has taken from the subject of the individual and attached to itself is released. The manic individual expresses his liberation from the object that causes him great suffering by seeking new object occupations, like a hungry man (Freud, 1957a, p. 254).

Finaly, Although Butler's concept of "foreclosed" mourning, which she used to understand melancholia in her early studies, encompasses the concept of "unspeakable" mourning with *Antigone's Claim* (2000), suggesting that 'melancholia-based subjectivity' creates a political phallic, this understanding of mourning shows that the oppressive structure of melancholia continues. However, Butler addresses melancholia from a liberating perspective in the context of the ethics of vulnerability and introduces the concept of "dispossessed" mourning. In this context, she argues that mourning dispossessed the individual of their identity, ties, and dreams of sovereignty, and that this dispossessed can create a space for new forms of solidarity. This approach calls for to remove melancholia from its oppressive nature and recognizing the "dispossession" effect of mourning on the individual, building a community around the political potential of mourning and even the inability to mourn. However, it can also be said that redefining melancholia as "dispossessed" mourning is not enough to completely eliminate its oppressive nature. These contradictions at the core of melancholia continue to challenge the boundaries of ethical and political interventions, both at the individual and societal levels. In other words, although the changes in Butler's definitions of mourning in order to explain melancholia are new attempts to ensure that melancholia constantly gives rise to political agency, and each attempt that she tries carries the possibility of reaching its goal due to the ambivalence of melancholia.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In Judith Butler's theoretical framework, it has been examined how the concept of melancholia shapes the themes of identity, subjectivity and loss. In this context, it has been observed that melancholia plays a central role in Butler's theoretical paradigm and that Freud's understanding of melancholia creates continuity in her intellectual system. In Butler's theory, it is seen that Freud's understanding of melancholia presents a structure that maintains its validity not only at the individual level but also in social and political contexts. Butler reshapes this understanding as a tool of ethical and political criticism in different periods and various contexts. The inability to mourn "foreclosed," "unspeakable," and "dispossessed" losses due to normative conditions leads to the acceptance of a ‘melancholia-based subjectivity.’ The significance of this situation lies in the fact that each time Butler attempted to redefine melancholia as a liberating political force, she inadvertently became trapped in a vicious cycle. Her efforts to transform her perception of melancholia ultimately proved unsuccessful due to the inherent contradictions in Freudian concepts of melancholia. To clarify and support this observation, the findings of the study are presented below.

First, looking at Butler’s findings on gendered melancholia, one of the fundamental questions she tries to answer in *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997) is what this formation of subjects is when power not only works to dominate or oppress existing subjects but also to form subjects. This question serves as a bridge to Butler’s approach, which builds subjectivity on the notion of lack through melancholia. According to Butler (1997), the subject’s attachment to the power relations to which he submits is a fundamental element that constitutes his identity, and the process of submission plays a central role in identity formation. In other words, attachment to

our losses at the beginning of subjective life can lead to the transformation of the superego into a ruthless control mechanism, creating a melancholic state, and this process can weaken the ego (Freud, 1961, pp. 56-57). Butler (1997) argues that despite the possibility of melancholy weakening the ego, it politically constructs identity. At this point, it would be appropriate to focus on two fundamental questions: How does melancholia direct political identity to a political activity? How does relying on Freud's understanding of melancholia affect this political function? Butler answers these questions in a way that is exactly in line with the criticisms directed at her. Melancholia is linked to an incomplete mourning process and manifests itself with an intense sense of remorse and self-accusation. The repression of certain types of love reveals that melancholia is an expression of unresolved and incomplete mourning and that this situation always has the potential to disrupt the subject's balance by affecting her/him at his core. This unclaimed and unconcluded melancholia becomes an element that limits the subject's sense of power, that is, what he can do, and thus his own power. Melancholia cuts through the subject and determines the limits of its scope because the subject cannot think or comprehend this loss. This loss transcends the subject's thought cycle and boundaries; it also conditions these boundaries. This loss, perceived through denial, is an element that initiates the subject's existence, but it also constantly brings with it the threat of its dissolution (Butler, 1997, p. 23).

In this context, it can be said that when Butler’s interpretation of gender melancholia, which is based on “foreclosed” mourning, defines melancholia as a political agent, it may be possible to ignore the internal contradictions of melancholia. Butler positions melancholia as the conflict between the longing for the lost object and the rejection of this object. This approach is at the center of ‘melancholia-based subjectivity’ and may cause minority identities to resist not only external pressures but also deep internal conflicts. The visibility of wounds from the past reflects not only the traces of the past but also how these traces shape our present existence. The ambivalent nature of melancholia may lead to the melancholic traces of the past having a limiting effect on our present existence. The effort to internalize and claim an object excluded by society can be read as an implicit resistance to the normative demands of power. However, the internalization of objects that are devalued and rejected by

society becomes inevitable in the subject's identity construction, and a constant battle is waged with this internalized devalued object. Indeed, as Butler (1997) also states, countless struggles take place where love and hate for the object clash with one another. In this case, a resistance based on ‘melancholia-based subjectivity’ can also take on a destructive quality. In this way, it should be kept in mind that melancholia, which produces destructive results on an individual level, can also create destructive effects on a social level. On this point, I agree with Eng (2000) in seeing melancholia, based on Freud’s theory, as an effective tool for examining the psychoanalytic production, conditions, and limits of marginalized subjectivities. Eng (2000) suggests that the rise of melancholia as a form of political protest has allowed for the re-centering of gender and feminism within progressive politics on the global stage in the millennial era. At this point, the findings of this thesis offer a critical perspective to this approach, contradicting the idea that melancholia can be repositioned at the center of progressive politics when it becomes a form of political protest. Of course, it cannot be assumed that melancholia has a destructive effect on the social level, nor can it be definitively concluded that its ambivalent nature necessarily leads to political activity. Melancholia cannot be fit into clear categories, neither in a way that will produce destructive results nor in a way that results in resistance. In this context, Butler's treatment of ‘melancholia-based subjectivity’ as a political structure may create an area of uncertainty regarding the emergence of this political context. This uncertainty stems both from the nature of melancholia and from the fact that, although Butler points to the resistance developed by the melancholic subject against power structures, she does not clarify the scope, nature, forms of emergence, and strategies of resistance of this resistance. However, it would be unfair to ignore that Butler also provides a concrete example of the political activity of ‘melancholia-based subjectivity.’ In this context, according to Butler, homosexual melancholia is not only a state of sadness, but also an anger that can be transformed into a political expression. This situation requires a struggle against the cultural risks caused by homosexual melancholia, which newspapers usually call "depression". In particular, it is of great importance that the mourning for those who lost their lives due to AIDS gains a political dimension and finds a public expression. In this context, The Names Project Quilt constitutes a concrete example of this situation. This initiative creates meaning by ritualizing and repeating the names of

the lost in order to ensure the social recognition of unlimited losses (Butler, 1997, p. 148). In this example, it is seen that resistance is considered as a field of struggle over meaning and that a form of resistance that aims for the social recognition of losses is pointed out. In this approach, Butler was inspired by Foucault's (1978) teaching that considers power not only as a mechanism that exerts pressure but also as a phenomenon that works on meanings and creates areas of struggle around these meanings. The idea that power shapes social realities through the production of knowledge and normative regulations at the discursive level is an important reference point in Butler's theoretical framework. Butler (1999) emphasizes the performative structure of norms and identities, she states that these structures are not fixed and unchangeable; on the contrary, they constantly carry the potential for transformation in their reproduction processes. This perspective also shapes the way Butler addresses political resistance. Her intellectual and thought position does not define political resistance with a clear program; instead, it aims to create areas of transformation by revealing the ambiguity of normative regulations. For this very reason, the uncertainty created by Butler's melancholia-based narrative of subjectivity seems to be in line with Butler's theoretical goal in one respect. However, Butler's efforts to reconsider melancholia in different ways in order to escape from the impasse it creates disrupts this harmony and creates a contradiction, as it points to the aim of overcoming this uncertainty.

Secondly, when we examine the findings obtained from the Antigone figure that Butler shaped within the framework of gender and kinship norms, it is seen that Butler draws attention to the subjugating nature of melancholy by stating in the last pages of her work Antigone's Claim (2000) that the forbidden area is related not only to external pressures but also to prohibitions developed within the individual, as she has argued in her previous writings. Indeed, when Antigone's right to mourn is denied despite her determination, social prohibitions not only lead to her silencing, but also to Antigone's internalization of these prohibitions. At this point, according to Butler's views in *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997), the absence of a public recognition or discourse in which a loss can be named and mourned causes melancholia to gain cultural dimensions with contemporary consequences. In this framework, socially "unspeakable" and "foreclosed" lives, that is, those who cannot

be mourned, become unrepresentable in the field of language and law, and these lives are ignored as a kind of "public melancholy." In this context, Antigone's act of mourning is also a claim for the right to mourn lives that fall outside the norm. However, according to Butler, for rights may be a sign of melancholia operating in her speech. This melancholia makes the claims of mourning expressed aloud a precondition for a space that cannot be mourned (Butler, 2000, pp. 80-82). There is an important contradiction here, and this contradiction has various consequences. First, Antigone's 'melancholia-based subjectivity', which reveals her political claim for rights, is confronted by Butler herself as an element that prevents claims of mourning. As a result, the political function of melancholia enters a vicious circle. Secondly, this contradiction shows that melancholia reveals its own internal contradiction in the political perspective that Butler developed based on the Freudian understanding of melancholia. In addition, the effort to evaluate the power of mourning as a practice of resistance and a way of claiming rights is isolated from its performative dimension in conflict with social prohibitions and remains stuck in an individual and theoretical melancholia.

Third, the findings from Butler's melancholia based on the ethics of vulnerability show that Butler's melancholia-based politics of vulnerability and mourning, which advocates an approach based on understanding the pain of others, carries a risk: Mourning reveals not only the pain of the lost but also our own vulnerability and helplessness. This makes it difficult to connect with differences and makes it almost impossible to transform melancholia into political action, paralyzing the potential for solidarity with others. In this way, mourning may be a starting point for ethical understanding, but its melancholic echoes and the exposure of our fragility may render it inadequate for a solid foundation. In addition, mourning can become a distraction by distancing us from political and economic solutions. While mourning has the potential to bring marginalized groups together in a political community, it can also serve as a distraction. Instead of concrete solutions to global problems, the mere act of mourning can create the illusion of transformation and make us feel comfortable with inaction. Moreover, this performance of mourning can reinforce hierarchical orders by creating a sense of privilege that the powerful grant to the powerless and can push the marginalized groups into an even more passive position.

Thinking of mourning as an ethical form of action can only be functional if it becomes a practice of transformation; otherwise, mourning may remain a means of emotional relief due to the internal contradictions of melancholia.

Butler's prescription that if the narcissistic preoccupation of melancholia can be transformed into attention to the vulnerability of others, it can be a starting point for a new understanding also assumes that the fixation on melancholia must be transformed into attention to the vulnerability of others for an ethics of mourning to emerge (2004a, p. 30). This prescription also points to an important point. The possibility of an ethical principle emerging by shifting the narcissistic dimension of melancholia to an empathic dimension is an indication that Butler remembers the overlooked ambivalence of melancholia. Indeed, Butler first aims to rethink the mourning process around the theme of “dispossessed” and to elaborate on melancholia within the framework of an alternative ethical-political understanding by reconsidering the punitive structure of 'melancholia-based subjectivity' with the ethics of vulnerability that she puts forward. Furthermore, Butler’s questioning of getting out of the victimized subject position that Levinas’ universalism can create reveals that she is aware of the persecutory nature of melancholia and makes an effort to overcome it. Finally, Butler invokes Freud's concept of "mania" in an attempt to eliminate the punitive nature of melancholia, to direct its inwardly destructive energy outward, and thus to reframe melancholia as a political tool. However, even this final attempt to escape the punitive nature of melancholia again cannot yield to fully escape melancholia's destructive impact. Butler's theoretical framework positions melancholia as a political potential arising from the inability to mourn, which contradicts Butler's idea of overcoming loss through mania. This contradiction leads to the shaking of the theoretical foundation that Butler has established so far. As a result, instead of achieving a transformation, the efforts to overcome melancholia only reproduce the same cyclical structure and undermine Butler's mourning politics characterized by melancholia.

The results of this thesis are important in terms of contributing to the understanding of Butler's various attempts to address melancholia from a more liberating perspective within the framework of alternative ethical-political knowledge while

being aware of its punitive nature. They also show that melancholia creates a vicious circle and constitutes an inconsistency in Butler's politics of (un)mourning.As a result, it is clear that melancholia is a determining factor in Butler's theoretical framework and that Freud's understanding of melancholia provides continuity in her intellectual thought. Butler not only addressed Freud's concept of melancholia as an individual phenomenon, but also functionalized it in social and political contexts. Reshaping this concept in different periods, Butler used melancholia as a fundamental tool of ethical and political criticism. Indeed, *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind* (2020), Butler still maintains a commitment to 'melancholia-based subjectivity,' which she approaches with Freudian inspiration.

The "foreclosed," "unspeakable," and "dispossessed" mourning processes imposed by normative conditions strengthen the structural role of melancholia in the formation of subjectivity and lead to the acceptance of a 'melancholia-based subjectivity.' This change in Butler's understanding of mourning can be evaluated as a change directly related to the inability to mourn, that is, the reasons for the emergence of melancholia. Butler's constant effort to offer a new understanding and changing of mourning and melancholia can be seen as an attempt to break out of the vicious circle created by melancholia and to save her own theoretical framework. However, it can be said that these attempts are not enough to save Butler's theory and in some cases create serious contradictions in her theory.

In line with this thesis' findings, I agree with the theory of melancholia as unresolved mourning, which can be a useful tool for examining not only gendered subjectivities but also the identity formations of other minority groups that have emerged through identity politics movements. However, Due to its specific nature, I disagree with the idea that Freudian melancholia, as theorized by Judith Butler, can be used as a political agency. In addition, this thesis' findings may provide a perspective for future studies to consider and find solutions to the problem in Butler's efforts to constantly offer new understandings of melancholia. It may also open the door to a deeper inquiry into whether melancholia contains a potential for resistance. Besides all this, perhaps, in Braidotti's words, common vulnerability should not be associated with a negative foundation based on the melancholia of unpayable existential debts (2014, p. 116).

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Bu tez, Judith Butler'ın teorik çerçevesinde, özellikle Sigmund Freud'un melankolik özdeşleşme yorumundan beslenen melankoli mefhumunun şekillendirdiği özne kavramı üzerinden melankolinin kurucu rolüne odaklanmaktadır. Melankoli mefhumunun, Butler'ın teorik çerçevesinde nasıl bir rol oynadığı sorusuna yanıt arayan ve bu sorudan yola çıkarak Butler'ın etik ve politik teorilerinde 'melankoli temelli öznellik' kavramının nasıl bir süreklilik oluşturduğunu ve bu sürekliliğin Butler'ın teorik dönüşümleriyle nasıl bir ilişki içerisinde olduğunu incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu nedenle Butler'ın teorik çerçevesinde melankolinin merkezi bir kavram olmasının ne ifade ettiği sorusu da bu tezin sorularından biri olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır.

Tez Butler'ın eserleri arasında teorik bir süreklilik olduğunu ve bu sürekliliğin temelinde 'melankoli temelli öznellik' çizgisinin yattığını iddia etse de bu sürekliliğe rağmen, Butler'ın teorik dönüşümlerinin, melankoli yani tutulamamış yas anlayışındaki değişimlere bağlı olarak tematik farklılıklar içerdiği de vurgulamaktadır. Bu bağlamda tez, Butler'ın toplumsal cinsiyet, akrabalık ve yaralanabilirlik üzerine teorilerini, melankoli ve onun etik-politik yaklaşımlardaki rolü açısından incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Butler'ı melankoli çerçevesinde değerlendirmek, onun teorik temellerini ele almayı mümkün kılmakta ve teorik çerçevesini eleştirel bir sorgulamaya açmaktadır. Butler'ın melankoli üzerinden kat edilmesinin nedeni ve önemi bu noktada ortaya çıkmaktadır.

Tezin amaçlarına ulaşmak için, Butler'ın etik ve politik düşüncesinde merkezi bir yere sahip olan melankoli mefhumuna odaklanmak yerinde olacaktır. Melankoli tarih boyunca çeşitli disiplinlerin incelemelerine konu olarak birçok bilme biçiminin

alanına nüfuz etmiş, Antik çağ'dan günümüze kadar, hakikat ile kurulan bağın değişimine eşgüdümlü bir biçimde birçok başkalaşım geçirmiş ve böylece kat edilemez, tümüyle işaret edilemez haliyle, çelişkili duran birçok duyguyu ve nosyonu bünyesinde bulundurmaya kadir bir haldir. Bu kadir hal, Batı kültürel geleneklerinin karanlığa çok sayıda olumsuz çağrışım yüklemesine rağmen kara safralılığın Aristotelesçi anlayışa dayanan deha fikriyle yüzlerce yıl boyunca sahnede kalmasın arasındaki gerilimdir. Bu kadir hal, kökeni Orta çağ'da onun bir günaha karşılık gelecek biçimde "acedia" olarak değerlendirilmesi ve Modern çağ'da bir dışarıda bırakılma haline dönüşmesi ile onun yarattığı mizacın genellikle bir hastalıktan ziyade, olağanüstü kişilikler olarak ortaya çıkarabilmesi arasındaki farktadır (Teber, 2009, s. 117-128). Bu gerilime uygun bir biçimde, melankoli, tarih boyunca birçok paradigmadan geçerek dönüşüm yaşasa da farklı dönemlerdeki anlayışlar birbirini tamamen dışlamadan, modern melankoli kavrayışına çeşitli şekillerde sızmıştır. Sigmund Freud'un melankoli üzerine geliştirdiği görüşler de bu anlayışların izlerini taşımaktadır.

Modernitenin en temel sorunlarından birinin, kayıplarla—bu kayıpların yeni bir boyut, kapsam ve niteliğiyle—baş etme çabası olduğunu gösteren pek çok kanıta istinaden Freud'un I. Dünya Savaşı'nın dehşetleri belirginleşmeye başladığında geliştirdiği melankoli teorisi, modern bir metin olmasının (Flatley, 2008, s. 31) yanı sıra melankoliyi sistematik bir biçimde kaybın hanesine işaretleyen ilk metindir. Freud'un yas sürecini anlamlandırma çabası ile bir karşılaştırma noktasına ihtiyaç duyarak melankoliye başvurması, melankoliyi "kayıp" çerçevesinde şekillendirmesine yol açmıştır. Freud, melankolik şair Rilke'nin zihninin yas tutmaya karşı gelişinden yola çıkarak, *Mourning and Melancholia* (1957a)'de, melankoli ve yas arasında temel bir ayrım olduğunu fark etmiştir. Her iki durumda da değer verilen bir kişi veya nesnenin gerçek veya sembolik bir kaybı söz konusu olsa da melankolide, kayıp hem kişi hem de çevresindekiler için belirgin değildir. Kayıp ölümle bile gerçekleşse ve kişi kaybın farkında olsa dahi kişi, kaybedilen nesnenin önemi veya yarattığı rahatsızlığı bilinçli olarak tanımlayamaz (Freud, 1957, s. 245). Bu noktada şöyle de diyebiliriz, melankolik kişi neyi kaybettiğini bilse dahi, o kayıp ile neyi kaybettiğini anlamlandıramayabilir (Freud, 1957, s. 245). Bunun ortaya çıkardığı sonuç: Kaybın acısıyla baş edemeyip bu acıdan kaçma karşılığında

melankolik kişi, dışsal gerçekliğin büyük bölümünden koparak kendi yaşamının önemli bir kısmını kaybeder. Melankolik kişinin içsel dünyası, nesneyi kaybetmenin gerçekliğini ve acısını kabul etmektense onu hayali bir şekilde esir tutma arzusu tarafından güçlü anlamda şekillendirilir. (Ogden, 2009).

Freud'un, *Mourning and Melancholia* adlı metini ortaya çıkarma süresince savaşın yıkıcı etkilerine tanıklık etmesi, onu haz ilkesine dair görüşlerini yeniden değerlendirmeye ve dönüştürmeye sevk etmiştir (Roudinesco, 2016, s. 174-176). Bu bağlamda, Freud, uygarlığın oluşumunun insanlığın agresif eğilimlerini veya ölüm içgüdülerini ortadan kaldırmadığını, savunmuştur (Freud, 1955). Bu dönüşüm, Freud'un melankoli anlayışında köklü bir değişimi işaret etmiş ve *Mourning and Melancholia* (1957a) geliştirilen melankoli kavramsallaştırmasına yeni bir bakış açısı sunmasına yol açmıştır.

Freud *The Ego and the Id*'te yas ve melankoli arasında kesin bir ayrım yapmaz; bunun yerine, tüm kayıpların bir tür özdeşleşme veya içe alma sürecini gerektirdiğini öne sürer (Butler, 1990; aktaran Flatley, 2008, s. 48-49). Nesneden kopma ve nesne onarımı içeren basit bir süreç olarak yası ele alışı artık yetersiz hale gelmektedir. Freud'a göre, kaybın yaşandığı bir süreçte artık melankolik unsurlardan tamamen arınmak mümkün değildir; yas, benliği dönüştürmeksizin gerçekleşemez. Freud, bu düşünceyi daha ileriye taşıyarak, benlik karakterinin, kaybedilen nesnelerin kalıntılarının birikimiyle şekillendiğini öne sürer. Bu bağlamda, benlik, geçmişteki kayıpların izleriyle içsel bir yapı oluşturur ve böylece yas süreci bireyin kimliğinde ve öznelliğinde kalıcı bir dönüşüm yaratarak (Flatley, 2008, s. 49) ona melankolik bir öznellik kazandırır. Butler'ın Freud'un melankoli kavrayışından dayanak aldığı 'melankoli temelli öznelliğin' düşünsel zemini bu anlayıştır.

Freud yas tutanların kaybedilen nesnelere, neden ve nasıl bağlı kaldıklarını açıklayabilecek yeterli bir teoriye sahip olmadığını kabul etmiştir (Clewell, 2004, s. 58). Bu kabulün arkasında teorinin sınırlarının olmasının yanı sıra, Freud'un uygarlığa dair edindiği fikirler rol oynamıştır. Freud, insanlığın değerlerinde görülen kaybın savaş öncesi ideallerin yanılsaması olduğunu belirtir ve artık bu yeni değerlerle bir kaybın yasını tutmayı önermez. Bu bağlamda Freud, savaşın etkisiyle

yas teorisini saldırganlık kavramını içerecek şekilde yeniden geliştirmiştir (Clewell, 2004, s. 59).

Melankoliğin kendine yönelik saldırganlığını "eleştirel ajan" olgusu ile açıklayan Freud *The Ego ve the Id*'te bu olguyu "üst benlik"olarak kavramsallaştırmıştır. (Clewell, 2004, s. 59-60). Bu bağlamda tezin kurgusu gereği, Butler'ın siyaset teorisinde 'melankoli temelli öznelliğin' kurucu oluşuna üst benliğin ikircikli yapısı üzerinden eleştiri yöneltileceği için bu noktada melankoli ve üst benlik arasındaki ilişkiye odaklanmak yerinde olacaktır.

Freud'un yapısal modeline ve vizyonunun karmaşıklığına bakıldığında, üst benliğin çift kutuplu bir doğaya sahip olduğu ortaya çıkar: bir yanda üst benlik sosyal bir yapının ifadesi olarak ödipal kompleksin mirasçısıdır; diğer yanda ise melankolik yıkıcılığı ve antisosyal eğilimleri taşıyan bir yapıdır (Freud, 1961b, pp. 51-55). Freud, melankolik üst benliğin yıkıcı doğasını şöyle açıklar: Üst benlikte hâkim olan şey, adeta ölüm içgüdüsünün saf bir ifadesidir ve bu, benliği sıklıkla ölüme sürükler; ancak benlik mani durumuna geçerek bu zorlayıcı gücü savuşturabilirse bundan kaçınabilir (Freud, 1961b, p. 52). Üst benliğin hem yaşam hem de ölüm dürtülerinin etkisini taşıdığını ima eden Freud, üst benliğin onarıcı ve yıkıcı yönlerinin, bu iki dürtünün birleşiminden doğan dinamikleri temsil ettiğini vurgulayarak onun çelişkili doğasına dikkat çeker.

Bu noktada *The Ego and the Id* (1961b)'de üst benliğin yapısına ölüm dürtüsünün dahil edilmesinin, melankolinin dinamiklerinin anlaşılmasında köklü bir paradigma değişikliğini temsil ettiğini vurgulamak gerekir. Bu yapısal değişim ile melankoli ve yas terk edilen nesne-katekslerinin tortusu ile yaşayamanın bir hali olarak eşitlenir ve yas tıpkı melankoli gibi yalnızca bir kaybın işlenmesi değil, aynı zamanda benlikte kalıcı izler bırakan içsel bir mücadeleye dönüşür (Clewell, 2004, s. 43). Freud'un "bir yas olarak benlik"[22] kavramını ele alışı, kaybedilen kişinin ve geçmişin taleplerinden bütünüyle bağımsız bir kimlik oluşturma arzusunu temelden sarsar

[22] Bu kavramın ingilizce metnindeki ifadesine yer vermek, bu ifadenin içerdiği çoklu anlamı işaret etmesi bakımından önemlidir. Kavram İngilizce metinde şu şekilde ifade edilmektedir: "The ego as an elegiac"

(Clewell, 2004, s. 43). Zira Freud'un melankoli teorisi, asimilasyon süreçlerinin nasıl işlediğini ve bazı kültürleri karakterize eden melankolinin özellikle belirli sosyal gruplarla nasıl ilişkilendirilebileceğini düşünmek için kışkırtıcı bir model sunmaktadır (Eng & Han, 2003, s. 344).

Butler, Freud'un *The Ego and the Id (1961b)* eserindeki yas ve melankoli kavramsallaştırmasını dayanak alarak, melankoliye dair birbirine paralel fakat iki farklı politik perspektif sunan bir yaklaşım geliştirir. Bunlardan ilki, *Gender Trouble* (1999) ve *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997) adlı eserlerinde ele aldığı, toplumsal cinsiyetin melankolik bir zemine dayalı olarak inşa edildiği görüşüdür. Diğeri ise, *Antigone Claims* (2000), *Precarious Life* (2004a), *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005), *Frames of War* (2009) ve *The Force of Nonviolence* (2020) eserlerindeki söylenemez ve mülksüzleştiren bir kaybın etrafında şekillenen yas ve kırılganlık kavrayışını geliştirmeye yöneliktir.

Butler'ın *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997)'da iktidarın öznenin iç dünyasındaki etkilerine ve *Gender Trouble* (1999)'da toplumsal cinsiyetin performatif doğasına ilişkin yaptığı analizler, melankolinin toplumsal cinsiyet kimliklerinin oluşumunda oynadığı rolü anlamak için önemli bir temel sağlamaktadır. Bu iki çalışmanın oluşturduğu teorik çerçeve, toplumsal cinsiyetin hem dışsal performanslarla hem de bastırılmış arzuların ve kayıpların içselleştirilmesi yoluyla şekillendiğini göstermektedir. Bu düşünsel temelden hareketle, Butler, Freud'un melankolik özdeşleşme teorisine dayanarak kavramsallaştırdığı toplumsal cinsiyet melankolisi yorumu ile öznenin fail olma potansiyelini araştırarak kaybın toplumsal ve siyasal önemini vurgular. Melankoli ve heteronormatif yasaklar, bu bağlamda yalnızca birey üzerinde baskı oluşturan patolojik yapılar olarak değil, yeniden yorumlanarak dönüştürülebilecek dinamik süreçler olarak ele alınır. Butler, bu süreçte yasakların ve kaybın tekrarlanmasının, bireylerin kimliklerini yeniden kurmasına ve normatif yapıları sorgulayarak dönüştürmesine imkân sunduğunu gösterir.

Butler'a kadar melankoli anlayışı, yasaklanmış arzular ve kayıp bağlılıklar üzerinden derinlemesine ele alınmamıştır. Bu durumun arkasında, tahmin edilebileceği gibi—şüphe götürmez bir biçimde—içinde yaşanılan toplumsal cinsiyet rejiminin baskısı

yatmaktadır. Butler, "heteroseksüel matris" tarafından dışlanan kimlikleri merkezine alarak, görmezden gelinen yasaklanmış arzuları gün yüzüne çıkarma girişiminde bulunup Freud'un melankoli teorisini, yasaklanmış eşcinsel bağlılıklar üzerinden son derece ilham verici bir şekilde yorumlamıştır. Bireyin içsel olarak deneyimlediği özdeşimler, arzular ve yasaklar, aslında toplumsal normların bireyin psişik yapısına işlenmiş bir yansımasıdır. Dolayısıyla, Butler, içsel dünyanın heteronormatif matrisle örtüştüğünü ortaya atark toplumsal kurguların bireyin psişik yapısına nasıl işlendiğini gözler önüne serer. Nitekim, toplumsal normlar belirli arzulara, kimliklere ve ilişkilere yasal statü tanımaz, bu da kayıpların melankolik bir biçimde içselleştirilmesine yol açar. Yas tutulamayan bu kayıp, kişinin psişik yapısına işlenir ve egonun temel bir parçası haline gelir. Nihayetinde, bu yasaklı ve yas tutulamayan melankolik nesne, psişik-toplumsal öznenin yapısında yer edinmiş olan eşcinsel aşktır. (Butler, 1997, s. 27).

Butler; Freud'un, vicdanı, zamanla içselleştirilmiş yasakların etkisiyle benliği azarlama alışkanlığı geliştiren bir yapı olarak tanımlamasına karşın Freud'un normal suçluluk duygusu ile melankolik üstbenlik arasındaki ayrımını yeterince dikkate almaz. Vicdan, kişinin toplumsal normlara uyum sağlaması için işlev görse de, melankolik üst benlik bu işlevi aşarak daha yoğun ve sürekli bir içsel eleştiri ve baskı mekanizmasına dönüşür. Butler'ın yorumunda ise Freud'un bu ayrımı bulanıklaşır. Nitekim, sahiplenilemeyen ve tamamlanamayan yas, öznenin potansiyelini algılama yetisini sınırlandırır ve dolayısıyla öznenin içsel gücünü zayıflatabilir. Bu durum, öznenin hem içsel hem de dışsal dünyada nasıl davranacağını ve eylemlerini gerçekleştirme yetisini doğrudan etkiler. Bu tamamlanmamış yas süreci, kaybın öznenin refleksif düşünme yetisinin sınırlarını belirleyen döngüsel bir yapıya dönüşmesine yol açar. Böylece kayıp, öznenin düşünsel sınırlarının sabit kalmasını sağlar ve bu sınırlar, her seferinde yeniden üretilir. Kayıp, fark edilip işlenemediği için, öznenin kimliğini ve potansiyelini sürekli olarak koşullandıran ve sınırlandıran bir bileşen haline gelir. (Butler, 1997, s. 23). Bu durum da melankoli üzerine inşa edilmiş politik çıkarımlar güçsüzleşebilir.

Toplumsal cinsiyet düzenleme sistemi ve zorunlu heteroseksüellik melankoli aracılığıyla ortaya çıksa da, belirtilmelidir ki tüm cinsiyetlendirilmiş özneler

nihayetinde melankolik değildir. Kişi kaybedilen nesneye duyduğu bağlılığı zamanla gevşeterek yeni bağlar kurabilir (Freud, 1957, s. 255). Böylece, "heteroseksüel matris"te kaybın yerini tutabilecek yeni nesnelerle ikame sağlanır. Ancak eşcinsellik tabusu, aşk duyduğu hemcinsini kaybeden bir kişinin, bu kaybın yerine geçebilecek yeni bir hemcinsle ilişki kurmasını da yasaklamıyor mu? Nesnesini kaybeden eşcinsel arzu sürdürülemez ve kişi bu yasaktan kaynaklı yeni bir karşı cinsten nesne bulamadığı için yas süreci sekteye uğrar (Butler, 1999, s. 88). Yası tutulamamış sevilen ve gittikçe kaybedilen nesneler bir tortu halinin alır ve bu tortu dağılmayan hüznün "arkeolojik kalıntısı"na dönüşür (Butler, 1997, s. 133).

Melankoliyi tetikleyen nesneler arasında toplumsal ayrımlar yapmak kaçınılmazdır, zira her kayıp aynı anlam ağına yerleştirilmez ve her yas aynı toplumsal kabulü görmez. Kaybedilen nesnenin toplumsal statüsü, öznenin melankolik bir varoluşa sürüklenip sürüklenmeyeceğini belirleyen asli unsurlardan biridir. Dolayısıyla melankoli, yalnızca bireyin ruhsal dünyasında yaşanan içsel bir durum olmaktan öte, iktidar ilişkilerinin ve toplumsal hiyerarşilerin yansımasıdır. Hangi kayıpların yasının tutulmasına izin verildiği, hangilerinin yasının baskılanarak görünmez kılındığı; toplumsal yapının hangi öznelliklere değer atfettiği ile doğrudan bağlantılıdır. Bu nedenle, melankoli aynı zamanda toplumsal tahakküm ve dışlanma mekanizmalarının incelikli bir biçimde işlendiği politik bir zemindir.

Melankolide kaybın inkâr edilmesi, kaybın bütünüyle ortadan kalkmasını sağlamaz; aksine, kayıp psişik alana yerleşerek varlığını sürdürecek yeni bir form bulur. Daha net bir ifadeyle kaybın içselleştirilmesi inkâr sürecinin bir parçasıdır. Eğer nesne artık dış dünyada var olamayacaksa, psişenin içinde varlığını sürdürecektir (Butler, 1997, s. 133). Bu bağlamda, kaybedilen nesneye karşı çift değerli bir duygu oluşumu kaçınılmaz hale gelir. Melankolik özne, yitirdiği nesneye hem derin bir bağlılık hem de öfke besleyebilir; bu duyguların bir arada var olması ise psişik bir gerilime yol açabilir. Benlik, kendi içinde bir bölünme yaşayarak kaybedilen nesneye tutunma arzusu ile ondan vazgeçme baskısı arasında sıkışabilir. Bu haliyle melankolik kişinin kaybedilen nesneye dair çift değerli duygusu, baskın toplumun tanımadığı ya da onaylamadığı bir kaybı sürdürme arzusundan kaynaklanan toplumsal çatışmanın bir sonucu olarak düşünülebilir (Eng, 2000, p. 1278).

Butler'a göre, heteronormatif düzenin dışladığı kayıplar, kamusal alanda yas tutulabilecek bir dil bulamadığında melankoli yalnızca bireysel bir patoloji olarak değerlendirilemez. Bu tür melankoli, çağdaş bir toplumsal sorun olarak ele alınmalı ve politik bir kimliğin inşası için bir model olarak okunmalıdır (Butler, 1997, s. 139). Butler'ın melankoliyi etik bir direniş ve politik müdahale aracı olarak tanımladığı durumlarda, melankolinin doğasında var olan ambivalansın göz ardı edilme riski mevcuttur. Butler'ın melankoli yorumunun, Freud'un melankoli teorisine bağlı kalması, üst benliğin çifte doğasının melankoliyi kaybedilen nesneye duyulan özlem ile bu nesnenin reddi arasında süregelen bir çatışma olarak konumlanmasına yol açar. Bu ambivalans, melankolik öznelliğin merkezinde yer alır ve özellikle azınlık kimliklerinin yalnızca dışsal baskılara değil, aynı zamanda derin içsel çatışmalara karşı da direnmek zorunda kalmasına yol açabilir. İçsel çatışma, bireysel düzeyde olduğu kadar toplumsal düzeyde de yıkıcı sonuçlar doğurabilir ve buna karşın bir direniş potansiyeli de taşıyabilir. Dolayısıyla melankolinin olumlu ya da olumsuz kategorilere yerleştirilmesi mümkün değildir. Benliğin, toplum tarafından dışlanan bir nesneyi içselleştirerek ona sahip çıkma çabası, iktidarın normatif taleplerine karşı örtük bir direniş biçiminde okunabilse de melankolik öznellik üzerine kurulan bir direniş, her zaman güçlendirici bir nitelik taşımaz aynı zamanda yıkıcı bir nitelik de taşıyabilir.

Melankoli, Butler'ın hem kimliğin hem de itaatin kuruluşuna dair geliştirdiği bu erken kuramsal çerçevenin merkezinde yer alır. Zamanla, melankolinin gölgesi onun kırılganlık, yas ve tanınma kavramlarına odaklandığı sonraki çalışmalarına da taşınmıştır. Her ne kadar Butler, çalışmalarında melankolik boyun eğişten uzaklaşarak yeni bir etik-politik alan yaratmayı hedeflese de teorilerinde melankolik öznellik hala kurucu olmaktadır. Ancak tutulamamış yasın nedenlerine dair bir farklılık ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu kavrayış Gender melancholy teorisinde "foreclosed" yas iken "Antigone Claims" ile beraber bu duruma "unspeakable" yas anlayışı da eklenir.

Antigone's Claim (2000)'in girişinde, Butler, feminist politikaların devletle işbirliği yapma eğilimine karşı Antigone'nin bir karşı figür olarak ortaya çıktığını vurgulayarak siyasi muhalefetin yasal şikayetlere indirgenmesinden, yani siyasetin

hukukileşmesinden duyduğu rahatsızlığı dile getirir. Antigone'nin devlete karşı direnişi, Butler'a göre, demokratik bir toplumda devlet desteğini aramaktan daha etkili bir muhalefet biçimi sunmaktadır (2000, s. 1-2). Butler'a göre, Antigone'nin eylemi, yalnızca etik veya politik bir simge olarak değil, mevcut toplumsal normların sınırlarını zorlayan bir figür olarak değerlendirilebilir. (Butler, 2000, s. 29). Bu bakış açısına göre Antigone'nin bir politik figür olarak işlevi, temsil sınırlarının açığa çıktığı radikal bir olasılığa işaret eder (Butler, 2000, s. 2). Nitekim Butler, Antigone'un yalnızca devlete karşı bir siyasal muhalefetin simgesi değil, aynı zamanda"muhalif saflığın değil, skandal derecede saf olmayanın siyasetin temsili olduğunu öne sürer (Butler, 2000, s. 5).

Antigone üzerine geliştirilen analizde, Antigone'nin direnişi basit bir şekilde egemen güce karşı "saf" bir muhalefet olarak değil, egemenliğin dili ve normlarıyla iç içe geçmiş bir eylem olarak sunulur (Butler, 2000, s. 5). Antigone karşı çıktığı güçle karmaşık bir ilişki kurararak, egemenliğe dışsal bir alternatif yaratmaktan ziyade, egemenliğin dilini ödünç alıp bu dil içinde direniş göstererek gerçekleştirmesi egemen dilin içindeki bir çatlağı ortaya çıkartır. Butler'a göre bu bir muhalefet politikasıdır, ancak bu muhalefet saf bir karşıtlık ilişkisi içinde değildir. Antigone'un, Kreon'un normlarını kullanarak, onun oyun alanında ona karşı çıkmasıdır. Bu, normatif güçlerle iç içe geçmiş ve bu güçler tarafından şekillenen ve bu haliyle temsiliyetin ve normatif yapının sınırlarını ihlal eden bir direniş olarak okunabilir (Butler, 2000, s. 5-28).

Butler'ın Antigone karaterinde aradığı şey nedir? Antigone'un duruşu, akrabalık ilişkilerinin sabit ve değişmez olmadığını, aksine toplumsal normların, cinsiyet kimliklerinin ve politik düzenin dinamik bir şekilde yeniden müzakere edilebileceğini gösterir. Bu figür, egemen yapılarla yüzleşirken bu yapıların sınırlarını esnetir ve alternatif bir toplumsal tahayyüle kapı aralar (Butler, 2000, s. 38, 76, 82). Butler'ın Antigone da aradığı şeylerden biri elbette budur. Ancak Antigone'u melankoli ve yas üzerinden okumak Butler'ın Antigone'da aradığı bir diğer şeydir.

Antigone'un melankoliye temelli öznelliği, akrabalık yapılarındaki bir krizin alegorisi olarak karşımıza çıkar. Nitekim, o yalnızca bir ölünün ardından yasaklanan

yası nedeniyle melankolik öznellik sahip değildir aynı zamanda yasak bir aşkın yarattığı konuşulamaz bir yas nedeniyle de melankolik öznelliğe sahiptir. Normatif olanın, toplumsal yapıyı sabit ve değişmez bir hakikat olarak sunması hem yasak bir aşkın yarattığı melankoliyi hem de bir ölünün ardından yasaklanan yası ortaklaştırmaktadır. Bunun nedeni, Antigone'un yasını tutmaya çalıştığı kişi, onun yasak bir aşk duyguğu kişi ile aynıdır. Bu kesişim, cinsiyet melankolisi ile yas politikaları arasında bir köprü olarak konumlanır ve "dışlanmış" aşklar ile "söylenemez" yasları ortaklaştırır.

Butler'ın melankoliye olan bağlılığı, melankolik öznellik aracılığıyla kimliğin ve öznenin kurulumu üzerinde yoğunlaşırken, yasın politik işlevini ve direniş kapasitesini toplumsal bağlamlarından soyutlama riskini taşır. Bu yaklaşım, yasın kolektif ve siyasal boyutlarını gölge düşürebileceği gibi, aynı zamanda Antigone'nin talep ve eylemlerinin barındırdığı paradoksal gücü de silikleştirebilir. Dolayısıyla, yasın bir direniş pratiği olarak gücü, toplumsal yasaklarla çatışma içindeki performatif boyutundan soyutlanarak teorik bir melankoliye hapsolur. Tam da bu noktada Butler'ın yasın kolektif ve siyasal boyutları üzerine düşündüğü yaralanabilirlik anlayışına geçmek elzemdir.

Çağımızda politik, ekonomik ve sosyal koşulların yol açtığı eşitsizlikler, iklim krizi, yoksulluk, göçmen karşıtlığı, cinsiyetçilik, homofobi, ırkçılık ve emek sömürüsü gibi çok boyutlu krizler nedeniyle yalnızca melankoli veya yas için değil, yaralabilirlik üzerine düşünmek ve akademik çalışmalar yapmak için de bir nesne kıtlığı yoktur. Nitekim *Aydınlanmanın Diyalektiği'*nde, yine örtük bir Freud referansıyla, yas halinin, uygarlığın yara izi olduğu ifade edilir" (Erşen, 2017, s. 31).

Butler *Frames of War*'da "ontoloji temelli yaralanabilirlik" ve "siyaset toplumsal temelli yaralanabilirlik" kavramlarını "precariousness" ve "precarity" kavramlarıyla karşılamıştır (Yılmaz, 2022, s. 200). "Bir ontolojik önkoşul olarak, "hayat, tanımı gereği kırılgandır: Bilinçli olarak ya da kazara silinebilir; sürekliliği hiçbir şekilde güvence altında değildir. Bu bir bakıma hayatın bütününün bir özelliğidir, kırılgan olmayan bir hayat düşüncesi yoktur." Diğer yandan siyaset temelli yaralanabilirlik, yani güvencesizlik, "belirli toplulukların toplumsal ve ekonomik destek

şebekelerinin eksikliğinden mağdur olduğu ve yaralanmaya, şiddete ve ölüme ayrımcı biçimde maruz kaldığı" siyaset temelli bir durumdur (Butler, aktaran Yılmaz, 2022, s. 200). Butler'ın yalnızca bu ifadelerini bakıldığında bile; yaralanabilirliği, melankolik öznellik ile yas tutma kavramlarının üzerine oturtarak etik bir direniş ve politik bir potansiyel olarak işaretlemesi hiç şaşırtıcı değildir. Hatırlayacak olursak Butler, Freud'un melankoli kavramını kimlik inşası süreçlerine taşıyarak melankoliyi öznelliğin yapısal bir parçası olarak görerek ona ontolojik bir temel atfetmiştir. Öte yandan melankolik öznelliği "heteronormatif matris" tarafından dışlanmış bağlılıklar ve kayıplar açısından düşünerek, ayrımcı bir yas tahsisinin ve normatif yasaklamaların sonucunda, her cinsel kimliğin bu melankoliden eşit bir biçimde pay almadığını öne sürüp melankoliye toplumsal bir temel atfetmiştir (Butler, 1999, s. 81-82). Göz ardı edilemez bu benzerliğin nedeni ise her iki kavramın da birbiriyle bir ilişki içinde olmasının ilerisinde ontolojik veya toplumsal temelli bir "kaybın" etrafında şekillenen nosyonlar olmasıdır.

Butler'ın Levinas ve Foucault'nun geç dönem eserlerinden ilham alan yönelimi, yas tutmayı altüst edici bir güç olmaktan çıkarıp, "mülksüzleşme" teması etrafında yeniden ele alır. Bu süreçte Butler, daha önceki çalışmalarında kabul ettiği melankolik öznelliğin yıkıcı yapısını sorgulamaya açar. Artık önceliği, baskıcı normların performatif olarak yeniden anlamlandırılması değil, insanın evrensel kırılganlığını kabul ederek, daha az şiddet içeren bir siyaset geliştirmeye yöneliktir (Butler, 2004a, s. 16-18).

Butler'a göre, sarsıcı toplumsal krizler sonrasında, şiddeti bir envanter olarak kullanmak yerine, unutulmayan kayıpları içselleştirmek ve bu kayıplarla özdeşleşmek, yalnızca bir yas hali değil, aynı zamanda kaybın siyasallaşması için bir imkân olarak değerlendirilebilir. Butler için kayba gösterilen bu içsel sadakat, bireylerin birbirine olan derin bağımlılığını ve insanın kaçınılmaz yaralanabilirliğini ifşa eder. Kırılganlığın kabulü, bireyleri yalnızca acı etrafında birleştirmekle kalmaz; aynı zamanda dayanışmayı ve karşılıklı bağımlılığı temel alan yeni bir cemaatin doğuşuna da olanak tanır (Butler, 2004a).

Butler'ın kırılganlık etiği öznenin sınırlarının yalnızca başkalarının varlığı ve etkisiyle belirlendiğini öne sürerek ilişkisel ontolojiye dair radikal bir yorum sunar.

Buna göre, kişinin kendisini sınırlı varlıklar olarak deneyimlemesi yalnızca bir kurgu ya da daha kötüsü, kibirli bir yanılsamadır. Bu haliyle ilişkisel varoluşun rıza dışında şekillenmesi onun kırılganlık etiğinin temeli haline gelmektedir (Butler, 2009, s. 48-49). Bu noktada, Butler'a göre yas gibi "mülksüzleştirici" deneyimler, öznenin kendi içindeki belirsizliğe ve tanınamazlığına karşı duyarlılığını artırarak yeni toplulukları ve yaşam biçimlerini bir araya getirebilecek ortaklık iddialarının temelini oluşturmaktadır (2004a, s. 30).

Butler'ın melankoli temelli yas ve kırılganlık kavrayışının başkalarının acısını anlamaya dayalı bir siyaset geliştirmesi bir risk taşır: yas süreci, bireyi toplumsal dünyadan koparıp siyasallaşmayı engelleyebilir. Yas, yalnızca kaybedilenin acısını değil, kendi kırılganlığımızı ve çaresizliğimizi de ortaya koyar; bu haliyle yas etik bir kaynaktan çok, bireyi kendi içine kapatan ve eylemsizliğe sürükleyen bir kapanışa dönüşebilir. Her ne kadar yas, etik anlayışın başlangıç noktası olsa da, ancak onun—Freudyen—melankolik yankıları ve kırılganlığımızı açığa vurma potansiyeli, onu sağlam bir temel için yetersiz kılabilir (Ruti, 2017). Buna ek olarak Butler'ın yas ve kırılganlık siyseti aklımıza şu soruları getirebilir: Öteki ile kurulan bu ilişki ya da kırılganlık neden şiddetten arınmış bir etkileşime zemin hazırlasın? Neden yas gibi mülksüzleştirici deneyimler, marjinalleştirilen veya zulme uğrayanlara karşı bir cömertlik geliştirilmesine vesile olsun? Bu sorular, Butler'ın yas ve melankolik öznelliği merkeze alarak geliştirdiği kırılganlık etiğinin belirsizliğinde, onun üstü örtük fakat gerçekleştirilmemiş etik-politik vaatlerinden biri olarak ortaya çıkar. Tam da buna engel olmak adına Butler'ın melankolinin narsistik meşguliyeti başkalarının kırılganlığına bir dikkate dönüştürülebilirse, yeni bir anlayış için bir çıkış noktası olabilir görüşü karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Butler'ın bu reçetesi, yas etiğinin ortaya çıkabilmesi için, melankoliye olan saplantının başkalarının kırılganlığına yönelik bir dikkate dönüşmesi gerektiğini savunur (2004a, p. 30). Melankolinin narsistik boyutunun empatik bir boyuta kaydırılarak bir etik ilkenin ortaya çıkma potansiyeline odaklanan bu düşünce, Butler'ın melankolinin göz ardı edilen çift anlamlılığını hatırladığını gösterebilir.

Butler'ın, melankolinin çift anlamlılığını aşma girişimi ile melankolinin cezalandırıcı yapısını yeniden ele alıp yas sürecini "mülksüzlük" teması etrafında yeniden

düşünerek melankoliyi alternatif bir etik-politik anlayış çerçevesinde ele almayı amaçladığını hatılayabiliriz. Buna rağmen bu durumun Levinasçı temellerinin yaratabileceği "mağdur özne" konumu melankolinin zulmedici yapısını tekrar doğurabilir. Ancak Butler'ın, *Giving an Account of Oneself* (2005) eserinde Levinas'ın evrenselciliğinin yaratabileceği mağdur bir özne konumundan çıkmaya yönelik sorgulaması, onun melankolinin zulmedici doğasının farkında olduğunu bir kere daha ortaya koyup bunu aşma yönünde bir çaba gösterdiğini tekrar ortaya koyar. Bu çabalardan biri olarak Butler *The Force of Nonviolence* (2020)'da melankolinin içe dönük yıkıcı enerjisini dışa yönlendirmek ve böylece melankoliyi politik bir araç olarak yeniden çerçevelemek amacıyla, Freud'un "mani" kavramına başvurur.

Butler (2020), marjinal grupların "dispossessive" yas deneyimi ile oluşabilecek cemaatin, melankolinin zıddı olarak görülen ancak onun ayrılmaz bir parçası olan mani üzerinden yeniden değerlendirilebileceğini öne sürer. Butler (2020) maninin politik potansiyeline işaret etse de buna dair bir kavramsallaştırmaya ya da bir direniş modelinin hatlarını çizmez. Ancak bu yalnızca melankolinin ve onun diğer yüzü olan mani kavrayışının yanı sıra onun entelektüel ve düşünsel pozisyonu ile de ilgili olabilir. Nitekim o politik yapıları ve normları net sınırlarla tanımlanmış bir programa dahil etmez; bunun yerine, normatif düzenlemelerin belirsizliğini açığa çıkararak dönüşüm alanları yaratmayı hedefler. Tam da bu nedenle Butler'ın melankoliye dayalı öznellik anlatısının yarattığı belirsiz durumu Butler'ın teorik hedefi ile uyumlu olduğu şeklinde bir değerlendirme de yapılabilir. Ancak manik kişi, nesne kaybının anlık olarak üstesinden gelerek, keyif verici bir cesaret ve özgürlük hissi yaşayarak bir politik eyleyiciliğe sahip olsa da burada iki temel sorun ortaya çıkar. İlk olarak, Butler, melankoliyi, kaybın üstesinden gelinmeyerek tamamlanmamış bir yas sürecinin ifadesi olarak ele alır ve bu sürecin politik bir direniş olanağı sunduğunu savunur. Buna karşın, mani üzerinden düşündüğümüzde, Butler'ın kaybın üstesinden gelen "iyileşmiş" bir öznenin yas çalışmasıyla benzer bir süreci öngördüğü anlaşılır. Bu durum, bir yandan Butler'ın yasın "foreclosed", "unspeakable" ve "dispossessed" bir haliyle tutulamayarak melankolik bir siyaset yaratma fikrini temelden sarsar ve onun şimdiye kadar ortaya attığı teorik çerçevesinin altını oyar. İkinci olarak melankolinin zıddı olarak ifade edilen mani kavrayışına göre manik insan bir yandan hem çok neşeli bir ruh hali içinde iken diğer

yandan da hareketlerinde o denli kontrolsüzdür (Freud, 1957a, p. 254). Butler melankolinin acımasız ve yıkıcı tarafını mani ile dengelemeye çalışırken bu sefer de kontrol etmesi güç bir olgunun yıkıcılığı ile karşı karşıya gelebilir. Nitekim, acı veren ıstıraplarla dolu melankolinin Ben'den kendisine çektiği ve bağladığı karşı-işgallerin bütün yükü serbest kalır ve manik biri, kendisine çok acı çektiren nesneden kurtuluşunu, aç bir adam gibi yeni nesne işgalleri arayarak bize gösterir (Freud, 1957a, p. 254).

Butler'ın yasa ve esasında melankoliye dair sürekli yeni bir kavrayış sunması onun melankolinin yarattığı kısır döngüden çıkmak için kendi teorik çerçevesini rehabilite etme girişimi olduğunu düşündürebilir. Ancak bu girişimlerin Butler'ın teorisini onarmaya yetmediği kimi durumlarda onun teorisinde çelişkiler yarattığı söylenebilir. Bu çelişkiler, Butler'ın yaralanabilirlik siyasetine dair bir bağdaşmazlığı anlamamıza olanak tanıması açısından önem taşımaktadır.

B. THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU

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Bölümü / Department : Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi / Political Science and Public Administration

TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (**İngilizce** / English): The Idea of Melancholia in the Thought of Judith Butler: The Politics of (Un)Mourning Between Foreclosed Attachments and Dispossessed Lives

TEZİN TÜRÜ / DEGREE**:** **Yüksek Lisans** / Master ☒ **Doktora** / PhD ☐

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