NAMING THE NON-EXISTENT: MELANCHOLIA AS MOURNING OVER A POSSIBLE OBJECT

Dana Amir, PhD.


Abstract

This essay deals with one of the most fundamental distinctions regarding the psychic world, namely that between mourning and melancholia, as well as between normal processes of working through loss and pathological mourning – when pathological attachment to the lost object thwarts the possibility of separation from it.

The essay suggests a re-reading of Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia", interpreting melancholia as mourning over a possible object, as distinct from an actual one. In its attempt to comprehend the dynamic that persists between mourning over the possible and mourning over the actual, the essay presents us with two variations of pathological mourning, as well as a third variation, the melancholic, which may accompany each of the former variations and intensify their pathology.

Finally, the essay suggests a model of mourning which takes into account the dialogue with the possible object as a way of working through mourning over an actual one and protecting it from further loss.
`In my gaze I lost everything' writes the melancholic poetess Alejandra Pizarnik. `So far to seek. So near to know that it is no longer’ (Pizarnik, 2005).

What is the experience of loss? What is meant by `to know that it is no longer’? What is the difference between a normal process of mourning and a state of pathological mourning, or melancholia? The experience of loss is undoubtedly one of the most fundamental experiences of mental existence. The way in which this experience takes place, with its many variations, carries within itself not only the psychic code of coping with situations of loss, but also the psychic code of coping with the course of life as such. Perhaps because from the moment of his birth man engages in a countdown of his days. Perhaps because the work of self-emergence necessarily involves the diminution of the once complete mass of material; and diminution means loss, even when it is itself the very core of existence.

**Review of the Literature**

In his seminal article *Mourning and Melancholia*, which I shall discuss at length below, Freud compared a state of melancholia to a state of mourning, and indicated that the eventual ability of the mourner to liberate the lost object and, by means of this liberation, to invest his mental energy in new endeavors constitutes a `normal' process. Freud called this process of separation from the lost object `the work of mourning' (Freud [1915] 1957). The recognition that parting from the object of mourning is a condition of normal work of mourning has led to many theoretical attempts to understand and reconstruct this process. John Bowlby, the British psychoanalyst and psychiatrist, claimed that the process of reaction to loss took place in several stages, which were parallel to the primary stages of separation from a living object (for instance, of a child from its mother): a stage of shock and protest, a stage
of search for the dead and all its associations, a stage of the collapse of the existing
mental organization, and a stage of its rehabilitation (Bolby, 1980). Although Bowlby
himself did not regard these stages as constituting an inflexible structure, the
community of psychotherapists has tended to condition the so called `normal`
mourning process upon the transition from one stage to another. Bowlby's work has
been followed by much more complex models of working through loss. One of the
most important is the two-track model developed by Professor Shimshon Rubin of the
University of Haifa. This is a balanced two-track model which, as its name implies,
views the process of mourning as taking place in two parallel tracks. In fact, Rubin
describes the development of patterns of mourning along two axes, each of which is
multi-dimensional. The first emphasizes the functional sphere, and maps out the
functional symptoms related to loss. The second is more complex, and maps out the
inner world of the mourner and the representations of the lost object within him.
Rubin emphasizes, and proves in his research, that the experience of loss is a
prolonged experience which does not lead progressively to release but continues to be
a powerful existential focal point (Rubin, 1999).
Since various investigations of mourning patterns have repeatedly reached the
conclusion that what is considered normal in one culture is not necessarily thought
normal in another, scholars today prefer not to employ the concept of `pathological
mourning' in order to define deviations from accepted mourning patterns; the notion
of `complicated grief' is often preferred. My own preference to use the expression
`pathological mourning' in this article nonetheless, stems from the need to describe
various mourning processes not only from the point of view of their unique
characteristics, but also from the point of view of their ability to relieve pain.
Mourning for an Actual as against a Possible Object

It may be said that the experience of loss, any loss, has two main dimensions. The first is the actual dimension of loss. This dimension is responsible for the touchstone of reality, and for the echo of the absence from the objective world of the lost object from the moment of its death or disappearance. The second is the possible dimension of the experience. This dimension is responsible for the continuation of an internalized dialogue of the mourner with the object of mourning, despite and in addition to its objective absence. It is this dimension which is in charge of the capacity to identify in the absent object those elements which do not disappear once it is gone: those elements which were present as potential within its actual existence, and therefore are not annihilated when it itself is annihilated. The relationships between these two dimensions of experience, or between these two aspects of the self, are varied. When the actual is overly dominant within the self in relation to the possible it may be assumed that the psyche will be attached to the emptiness and non-existence, and will prevent its own rehabilitation by putting itself to death together with the beloved object. When the possible over-determines the actual, on the other hand, the psyche will become attached to the psychotic illusion that the lost object still exists. The preservation of this illusion will, of course, involve a certain degree of abandonment of the reality testing. In both extreme cases it will be impossible to work through. These are, in fact, two types of pathological mourning, though the second type would have manic characteristics, as if a melancholic inversion. However, I shall not only discuss the distinction between normal and pathological mourning, but also deal with the distinction between pathological mourning and melancholia. In this connection I intend to show that whereas pathological mourning,
however extreme it might be, is mourning over a real object, melancholia constitutes mourning over a possible object.

What is meant by `mourning over a possible object’?

In a state of melancholia an individual does not mourn over an actual object such as a job he has lost, or a beloved person who has rejected him. He mourns over the loss of a possible object, that is to say, the fact that he is incapable of working and of being loved. In other words, although the melancholic is apparently mourning over an actual object, in fact he does not distinguish it from the possible object; when the dividing line between the actual and the possible is eradicated, mourning acquires the quality of totality, that is to say it becomes melancholia.

What is the difference between the experience of being unloved and the generalized experience of being unlovable?

The feeling of being unlovable is not a simple aggregation of those moments in which we have experienced ourselves as unloved. It is, in effect, an integral whole which goes beyond the sum total of these moments, and becomes a sort of infrastructural experience, an experiential mold into which from now onwards all new experiences are poured, and in the light of which they acquire significance. In other words, it is an experiential mold which changes from an interim summing-up of isolated experiences to an equation which underlies the whole system of the psychic calculus from now on.

In this context the experience of selfhood is not an aggregation of individual assumptions --`X loves me', or `Y doesn't understand me just now’ -- but the integration of these assumptions into a generalized experience: `I am lovable', or, alternatively, `I am unlovable'. Between the two types of experience described, that of being `misunderstood' or `unloved' applies to the actual self, whereas `unlovable' or `incomprehensible' applies to the possible self. It is, in fact, an experience which has
undergone a transformation from the actual to the possible: it has been generalized and assimilated into the potential self as a constitutive experience.

When the actual has ceased to exist (for instance, in the case of death), the work of mourning is based on the supposition that the possible would continue to live. In the mind of a mother who lost her child, the child can continue to grow as a possibility, indeed as an infinite number of possibilities, although its growth is continuously shrouded by the knowledge that it is absent. Her possible motherhood might continue, even though her actual motherhood was cut short. For instance, she can console herself by writing to her dead child, by continuing her internal dialogue with him, even by posthumous reconciliation with him; On the other hand, if her motherhood is dependent on the actual rather than the possible aspect, when she loses her real child she loses her identity as a mother. Such a mother will find it hard to overcome her actual loss, because she cannot make the mental return-journey from the actual to the possible.¹

Here I come to the central issue in this article: death, and thereby the process of mourning, is to a great degree a process of return from the actual to the possible, just as birth is a transition from the possible to the actual. This may explain, for instance, the pathological mourner's attachment to mourning ceremonies as if they were an actual or concrete object. In fact, the concrete ceremonies of mourning take the place of the lost concrete object, and the psyche is unable to maintain a living dialogue with the possible dimension of this object (which is never eliminated as a result of its loss

¹ A patient whose young child recently died told me about a dream she had had. In that dream she was walking round children's shoe shops, choked with tears. She knew that her son was dead, but even so, she was looking for shoes for him. She tried to work out his shoe size had he still been alive. She told herself that if he died when he was four, and he then took size thirty, perhaps his size would now be 32. She went into a shop and chose winter shoes of that size for him. She knew that she would do the same every year; she would buy him new shoes every year, since within herself he would go on growing, and go on walking. I reflected upon the words "go on" and "growing", and their ambiguity. He is growing within her, and the more he grows the more he goes (on), since, concomitantly with this growth, the knowledge that he is going – i.e. going away – also grows and becomes a kind of presence, which goes on and grows within her life.
in reality). Let us consider, for instance, the mourning process which the mother of a child born disabled has to go through, not because she has lost him, but because he was born different than she expected. Such a mother's work of mourning is dependent on her ability to love the possible child within the actual one. In addition to mourning over what he is, such a mother can also maintain a dialogue with what he could have been, and thereby make her motherhood to this child, whose actual existence is so flawed, possible. On the other hand, the mother of a disabled child who does not succeed in conducting a dialogue with the possible child within the actual one, may well develop an obsessive attachment to his actual imperfection, refusing to allow him to develop, or a psychotic attachment to his possible dimension, spending her time and strength in an attempt to prove that he is capable of everything, and that if he only makes an effort he will be like any other child. Obviously, most ways of dealing with such situations do not come under either extreme category, but are found somewhere between them; still there is no doubt that the range of types of possible coping behavior falls between these two extremes.

Now, if we translate this discussion into the language of the psychic world, we shall reach the conclusion that the possible object is to a certain extent similar to what we call 'internalized' one. What, then, is an internalized object, and how does it differ from a possible one?

An internalized object is some part of the psyche, or a certain psychic element or experience which was once the reflection of an external object, but now gained an independent existence within the psychic space. The internalized object is, in fact, a type of memory, and this may be its main distinction in relation to the possible object. For, whereas memory results from actual experience, the possible precedes this experience. The possible is not an entity that was ever actualized, then annihilated and
now lives in memory; indeed, it was never actualized. Nonetheless – and here is where the essence of the link between them lies – the ability to internalize the lost object is connected to the ability to be in touch with its possible dimensions. Why? Because the very act of internalization is a sort of transformation of the actual to the possible; therefore, internalization itself constitutes a work of mourning, which involves readiness to disengage from and take leave of the actual. I am suggesting, in fact, that the ability to internalize is connected with the ability to identify the possible and to extricate it from the object: the ability to restore the object, in certain respects, from its actual to its possible condition. A person who lacks a sufficiently developed sense of reality and becomes attached to the possible at the expense of the actual, will not be able to complete processes of internalization; for internalization is a process which begins with the actual. Such a person will choose projecting instead of internalizing: he would project his own possible dimension on the actual dimension of the other instead of extricating the possible dimension of the other from his actual one. But neither would a person who is attached to the actual qualities of the object be able to complete its internalization. Attachment to the concrete, or the inability to disengage oneself from the concrete, will prevent him from achieving internal transformation of the object and extricating the possible from its actual dimension. Difficulty in internalizing will prevent then both of these persons from working through their mourning. In the first instance (attachment to the possible) the person would continue to carry on an apparently ‘real’ dialogue with the missing object, would refuse to recognize that it no longer exists, and would continue to revive it psychotically in a manner increasingly remote from the actual. In the other instance the person would become obsessively attached to mourning ceremonies, and would refuse to refrain from them, since their actual existence would ensure the continued
existence of the actual object, and their cessation might confront him with its definite loss.

A person who nonetheless succeeds in preserving the living, breathing dialogue with the non-existent object while aware of its non-existence will be able to use the internalized object – the mental transformation of the actual to the possible which has already been accomplished – in order to permit the object to continue to exist and flourish within himself, together with the ability to dissociate himself from its actual existence and from the ceremonies whose performance symbolizes its non-existence. Normal work of mourning of this kind will save the person both from declining into pathological mourning and from sinking into a manic state. In other words, it will save the self both from the obsession involved in attachment to the actual and from the psychosis involved in ignoring and alienating oneself from the actual.

In *Mourning and Melancholia* Freud writes:

> The distinguishing mental features of melancholia are a profoundly painful dejection, cessation of interest in the outside world, loss of 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 (Freud [1915] 1957, p. 252).

Freud maintains that mourning displays similar characteristics, with the exception of one: it does not involve the impairment of the self-image so characteristic of melancholia, even though it, too, is characterized by the diminution and ‘curbing’ of the ego as a result of single-minded devotion to mourning.

Freud goes on to say:
In what, now, does the work which mourning performs consist? I do not think there is anything far-fetched in presenting it in the following way: Reality testing has shown that the loved object no longer exists, and it proceeds to demand that all libido shall be withdrawn from its attachments to that object. This demand arouses understandable opposition – it is a matter of general observation that people never willingly abandon a libidinal position, not even, indeed, when a substitute is already beckoning to them. This opposition can be so intense that a turning away from reality takes place and a clinging to the object through the medium of a hallucinatory wishful psychosis. Normally, Respect for reality gains the day. Nevertheless its orders cannot be obeyed at once (Freud [1915] 1957, p. 253).

In other words, the recognition that the beloved object has indeed ceased to exist in actuality necessitates adaptation of the ego; and this adaptation involves gradual separation of the libido from all the memories and expectations connected to the object. However after the completion of the work of mourning the ego is again free and uninhibited. In melancholia, the loss is not necessarily an actual loss. It may be what Freud calls `a conceptual loss': for instance, the loss of the object as an object of love rather than as a real object in the world. Freud maintains that the patient himself is not always conscious of this loss. Frequently the patient knows whom he has lost, but not what he has lost in relation to him. Thus, it is reasonable to relate melancholia in some way to an unconscious loss of the object, as distinct from mourning, in which the loss is not at all unconscious.

I should now like to employ some of the hypotheses presented above in order to cast some light on a particular aspect of the difference between melancholia and
mourning. In the case of `the abandoned bride', for instance, which Freud adduces as an example of the object as an object of love rather than an object in the real world, melancholia can be related not to the fact that the loss is `closed off from consciousness', but to the fact that this is an example of what I have called above `the transformation from the unloved to the unlovable'. The abandoned bride has to cope not only with the actual loss of the object of her love, but also with what I have described as `the loss of the possible object'. In other words, she does not only have to cope with the loss of the (actual or imaginary) possibility that she could ever rehabilitate the object as an object of love, but also with the loss of the imagined possibility that she herself will one day again be worthy of and the recipient of love. This explains, for instance, the attenuation of the self-image which characterizes melancholia as opposed to mourning. Mourning is a state of injury to the actual. Melancholia, as against this, is a state of injury to the possible. Therefore melancholic loss is broader and more all-embracing than the state of mourning, and has implications both for the future and for the past. In other words, he who has to cope with the loss of a possible object has to cope not only with the loss of the future (which is characteristic of the state of mourning) but also with the loss of the past, since the loss of the possible paints the whole of the past in colors different from those which formerly characterized it.

In mourning it is the world which has become poor and empty; in melancholia it is the ego itself (Freud [1915] 1957, p. 254).

Since in mourning one is confronted with an actual loss, it is the actual world, outside the self, which is emptied of the object of loss. And since in melancholia the loss is of a possible object, it is the self, in which the possible exists, which shrinks and grows empty. Therefore, in Freud's words:
He is not of opinion that a change which has taken place in him, but extends his self-criticism back over the past; he declares that he was never any better (Freud [1915] 1957, p. 254).

That is to say, the melancholic person effects a transformation in the experience of loss which changes it from an experience of `there is not' to an experience of `there cannot be'. This generalization creates a vicious circle which eventually undermines the possibility of the creation of psychic space, since it uses the actual in order to deny the possible: it establishes a potential pseudo-space within which the game itself becomes an apparatus devoted to the destruction of the self instead of its growth.

This process explains the `self-impoverishment' which Freud mentions as characteristic of melancholia, as distinct from mourning: the vicious circle impairs the possible, just as the `virtuous circle' impairs the possible. The repeated generalizations, `I am unlovable', `I am untouchable' eventually become integrated into a `constitutive generalization', or meta-generalization, which signifies: `I am not capable of living' or `I am not worthy of living'.

Thus there are three variations of impairment of the normal work of mourning:

The first is expressed in psychotic attachment to the possible aspect of the object, and absolute denial of its factual absence. The second is expressed in refusal to give up the actual object, and renunciation of the living dialogue with its possible aspect; this is expressed in ritual-obsessive attachment to the external ceremonies of mourning as a substitute for the lost external object. The third variation, melancholia, may appear together with either of the others: in this, the actual is enlisted to negate the possible, by integrating the actual negative experiences in a way which turns them into infrastructural constitutive experiences – that is to say, they are transferred from the field of the actual to the field of the possible in such a way that the foundations of the
personality gradually disintegrate. This is a sophisticated practice which imitates the 

normal work of integration of the self (which generalizes individual experiences as a 

means of development of selfhood) and creates a simulated potential space within which the game becomes a mode of self-destruction. The first two variations belong to 

the category of pathological mourning; the third, on the other hand, belongs to the 

category of melancholia, which, as has been remarked above, can appear together 

with either of the other two variations and reinforce their pathological character. In 

Thomas H. Ogden's chapter on the work of mourning in his Conversations at the 

Frontier of Dreaming, he writes:

Mourning is not simply a form of psychological work; it is a process centrally 

involving the experience of making something, creating something adequate to 

the experience of loss. What is 'made', and the experience of making it – 

which together might be thought of as 'the art of mourning' – represent the 

individual's effort to meet, to be equal to, to do justice to, the fullness and 

complexity of his or her relationship to what has been lost, and to the 

experience of loss itself.

The creativity involved in the art of mourning need not be the highly 

developed creativity of the talented artist. The notion of creativity, as I 

conceive it here, applies equally to 'ordinary creativity', that is, to the creativity 

of everyday life. What one 'makes' in the process of mourning – whether it be 

a thought, a feeling, a gesture, a perception, a poem, a response to a poem, or 

a conversation – is far less important than the experience of making it.

(Ogden, 2001, pp. 117-118)

He concludes this remarkable chapter with these words:
An elegy does not begin with grief; it is an effort to achieve grief in the experience of writing. An elegy, unlike a eulogy, must take in and be equal to (which is not to say identical to) the full complexity of the life that has been lost. The language of a poem that is an elegy must be enlivened by the loss or death of the person or the aspect of oneself who is no longer. In other words, an elegy must capture in itself not the voice that has been lost, but a voice brought to life in the experiencing of that loss – a voice enlivened by the experience of mourning. The new voice cannot replace the old ones and does not attempt to do so; no voice, no person, no aspect of one's life can replace another. But there can be a sense that the new voice has somehow been there all along in the old ones – as a child is somehow an immanence in his ancestors, and is brought to life both through their lives and through their deaths. (op.cit., pp. 151-2).

This unique concept of the work of mourning is based on the assumption that the process of mourning involves the ability not only to lament what is lost, but also to create something new from that loss. This concept recognizes mourning as a creative, positive process, which continues what has in fact been lost, by concentrating upon what comes to life from death, and not upon what is lost from life. The process of re-establishment of the lost object is based to a great extent on the ability to repeat the primary processes of internalization of the object. In its essence, the process of internalization involves a return from the actual dimension of experience, which is a collection of external, factual, current data concerning the object, to the possible dimension, which includes the actual but is broader than it, since in addition to the factual data it also embraces an accumulation of all the
unactualized possibilities which characterize this object and differentiate it from every other object (Gilead, 1999)².

Melanie Klein, in her paper on mourning and its relation to manic-depressive states, points out that in the course of the normal work of mourning the mourner repeats diachronically all that he achieved in childhood (Klein, 1940).

Rephrasing Klein's important pronouncement in the language of this article, we may say that the more experienced a person is in developed processes of internalization, the easier it will be for him to deal with the work of mourning. Here, it is important to emphasize that I do not mean only the degree of internalization of the object of mourning, but the extent of the person's experience in processes of internalization in general. In other words, the more often and the more successfully the person has made his way from the exterior to the interior and from the actual to the possible in his own mind, the easier it will be for him to cope with the transfer of the lost object from the exterior to the interior, in the belief and recognition that the object continues to exist within him, and that its death removes it from the field of the actual but not from the field of the possible.

² Amihud Gilead, in his book Saving Possibilities (1999), proposes a new way of thinking about the ancient question of body and soul. While body and soul, on this approach, are not identical, they are united. It is as part of this complex union that the division between the psychological possible and the physical actual exists. While preserving the categorical distinction between body and soul, this division also ensures and confirms the necessary link between them. Gilead suggests to conceive of the psychological as belonging to the realm of the possible and the physical as ranging under the category of the actual. Since the actual is also possible, but not everything that is possible is actual – the possible is a broader category than the actual and includes the latter. Gilead, in this context, attributes singularity to the psyche only, not to the body and his writings deal extensively with the uniqueness of psychological possibilities (Gilead, 2003a). Unlike Gilead I would like to suggest that there is, within the psychological realm, the same division between the actual self, which is the actualized part of psychic life (whether conscious or unconscious), and the possible self – the specific part that is present in the psyche as an unrealized possibility.
Within the field of the possible dimension of the psyche many processes may continue to develop even after the actual loss of the object: it is possible to effect reconciliation, to feel compassion, to conduct a dialogue, and even to achieve a more mature level of significant relationships with an internalized, or possible, object and not only with an actual object. The process of mourning locates the object within the psyche, and thereby also protects it from further loss. Through the process of mourning over the actual loss of the object of love the self might achieve the experience that within its interior the object is protected from being lost because it is under the absolute control of the self. The consolation which the self can derive from this fact is part of what expedites and furthers the process of the work of mourning, and eventually characterizes the ability to take leave of the actual object.

In his book *The Matrix of the Mind*, Thomas Ogden suggests that since from its paranoid-schizophrenic standpoint the infant itself has no subjectivity, it does not conceive of the other as a subject, but only as an object. Therefore, the object of its aggressiveness is a non-human object, with no emotions or subjectivity, and, at this stage of its development, it does not fear death but disappearance (since objects never die; they disappear or are destroyed). Since at this stage of development there is no experience of historical continuity, and history is, in effect, re-written every minute, objects do not die, but disappear without trace not only from the present and future but also from the past. From the paranoid-schizophrenic viewpoint, the concept of death is less absolute than from the depressive viewpoint, for there is always the possibility of an omnipotent re-creation of the missing object. Therefore, as Ogden rightly maintains, the work of mourning is, in effect, a process of working out of depressive anxiety, and not of paranoid-schizophrenic anxiety. Depression and manic-
depression are thereby pathological states which are created out of depressive anxiety (Ogden 1986).

When there is no integration between the actual and the possible, the self has to choose between concrete attachment to the actual object in order to maintain its continuous existence and psychotic attachment to the possible object. In this situation the self would tend to project its own possible dimension onto the real object as a method of defending both the object and itself against the constraints of reality. Incidentally, most cases of obsessive love include alternation between these two possibilities, without achieving any integration between them: the obsessive lover is obsessively attached to the object of his love, and through this attachment retains its real continuity, but he is equally attached to his own possible dimension and projects it onto the reality of the other in such a way that he cannot take either the actual or the possible dimension of the other into account (as is to be expected in normal love relationships). The projection of his own possible dimension onto the other creates a combination of obsessive concrete attachment to reality and psychotic interpretations of this reality.

In relationships with the object of mourning, just as in relationships with the object of love, there are many different variations of the gradation described above. The work of mourning can undoubtedly be conceived of as a type of relationship, or as a model of object relationships. The more experienced the self is in integrating the external and the internal, the possible and the actual, the more capable will it be of effecting this integration in relation both to the object of mourning and to the object of love. The more developed the self is, the more effectively will it express its ability to

---

3 This mechanism is founded, for instance, on obsessive love and obsessive harassment, as well as imitative relationships in which the lover imitates the behavior of the beloved, and even aspires to become him, as a sort of assurance of his own existence within the object and of the object within himself.
transfer the object of mourning from a state of actuality to a state of possibility, and to conduct a dialogue with it in a way which takes into account the object's possible dimension, rather than merely projecting onto it the self's own possible dimension. This will enable a deep process of growth within the object relationship with the object of mourning, and will strengthen the experience of defending this object against harm.

As a result of the dynamic nature of this type of relationship with the lost object (as distinct from the static nature of the actual relationships which come to an end at the moment of its death), there will also come into existence a place for anger and pain, as well as love, as three-dimensional processes which therefore possess depth, limits, and significance. In comparison with pathological expressions of mourning and melancholia, which ignore reality and alienate themselves from it (and are, therefore, attached to the psychotic projection as a type of defense against reality) or become enslaved to this reality (and thereby lose the ability to maintain contact with anything beyond the actual), this model proposes a process of working through mourning which also involves the possibility of rehabilitation: a process whose borders are not those of memory, but those of imagination, and which involves the working through of relationships not only as they were but also as they could have been. The significance of such work of mourning is not hatred of or alienation from reality. It is the protective recognition that internal reality is always more extensive than external reality and encompasses it, and as such it always comprises not only the possibility to recognize, but also the possibility to repair.

Pizarnik writes: 'She spreads out in the paradise of her memory. She does not know of the terrible fate of her visions. She is afraid that she may not be able to call the non-existent by its name' (Pizarnik, 2005).
To name the non-existent is to converse with the possible object. If the paradise in which we are literally spread out – extended in space, present – only contains memories, the footprints of the actual, without the ability to call the possible by its name or to converse with it, in that case we have no fate other than death. In the words of T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, `That which only lives can only die' (Eliot, 1944). The fate of the person who converses only with the actual is to be silenced when the actual object is lost. As against this, he who allows himself lyrical conversation with the possible grasps eternity in the course of this conversation. It is our ability to name the non-existent which turns the absence of the actual into the possibility of eternity, or into an eternal possibility.

**Bibliography:**


