

JACQUES DERRIDA'S (ART)WORK OF MOURNING

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I mourn therefore I am. (Derrida)

[...] la vie est survie. (Derrida)

ABSTRACT. Derrida's highly personal mourning texts are collected and published in a unique book under the title *The Work of Mourning* edited by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, two outstanding translators of Derrida's works. The English collection is published in 2001, while the French edition came out later in 2003 titled *Chaque fois unique, la fin du monde* (*Each Time Unique, the End of the World*). In his *deconstructed eulogies*, Derrida, being in accordance with 'the mission impossible' of deconstruction, namely, 'to allow the coming of the entirely other' in its otherness, seems to find his own voice. In my paper, I will focus on this special segment of Derrida's death-work (cf. life-work); namely, on his mourning texts written *for* his dead friends, paying special attention to the rhetoric 'circling around' fidelity, friendship, and the other in his *textual* mourning.

KEY WORDS: mourning, eulogy, friendship, other, fidelity, survival

Introduction

'I live my death in writing'—Derrida claimed—in his last interview, which he gave in summer 2004, in the knowledge that he was dying of pancreatic cancer (Derrida 2007: 33). The key word, death (*mort*), resonates not only throughout that interview but also his whole *oeuvre*. In his writings—starting with *Aporias* and *The Memoirs of the Blind*, through *Glas* and *Specters of Marx*, to *The Gift of Death* and *Demewre: Fiction and Testimony* (only to mention the most famous works, apart from several of his short essays and interviews)—death is thematised. Derrida's obsession with death is well-known, well-documented, and analysed in recent critical discourses. It

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seems that in his works he was writing his ‘autobiothanatography’, as if he had been writing his own ‘death-story’ (cf. life-story, see Smith 1995: 73; Kronick 2000: 1013). Moreover, his texts are criss-cross haunted by spectres; the great phantoms or spirits of European thinking. The (textual) ghost, a *revenant*, being dead, cannot be killed, and therefore, it sometimes looks more alive than the living. In Derrida’s work one lives together with one’s ghosts, showing responsibility and respect for the other, for his name, signature, and his texts.¹ This paper will focus on a special segment of Derrida’s death-work (cf. Life-work), namely his mourning texts written *for* his dead friends, paying special attention to the deconstructive rhetoric circling around fidelity, friendship, and the other.

Joseph Hillis Miller also argues that mourning ‘as a conspicuous and enigmatic thread [...] runs [...] through Derrida’s work *in toto*’ (Miller 2009: 309). Due to the articulation of personal grief and loss, mourning is regarded as a dubious topic with its numerous discussions in sociological, anthropological, psychological, and psychoanalytical approaches. We would rather say that here we analyse Derrida’s *textual* mourning, his mourning texts dedicated to memories of his dead friends. Certainly, in his writings of mourning, his *deconstructed eulogies*, mourning itself is discussed and it is Derrida’s process (work) of mourning in these works of mourning that we shall discuss. In mourning, being in accordance with his mission impossible, the mission of deconstruction—namely, ‘to allow the coming of the entirely other’ in its ‘otherness’—Derrida seems to find his own voice (Derrida 2007b: 39). As Nicholas Royle remarks, mourning was Derrida’s ‘impossible’, ‘terrible topic’, and the statement taken as a motto to my text—‘I mourn therefore I am’—displays his perseverance on my/the chosen topic (Royle 2009: 135; Derrida 2007a: 17). Nevertheless, Derrida himself admits that there is something melancholic in his personality, saying that evidently he was ‘the most melancholic’ member of his generation (Derrida 2001: 215).

1 In their analyses, lots of Derrida-scholars and friends have recently called attention to Derrida’s death-drive, for instance, Robert Smith, Nicholas Royle, Michael Naas, and Joseph Hillis Miller, and I will greatly rely on their studies. However, for me the very first insight about the Derridean *hauntology* (Derrida 1994: 10) was given by Professor Gergely Angyalosi, who years ago was my teacher, then the supervisor of my doctoral dissertation, and now my friend. The latter statement sounds quite *spiritual/spectral* in the present context. The present paper was written as a part of my research ‘Rhetorical Context of Friendship: Derrida, de Man, and J. H. Miller’ which I carried out in the Netherlands where it was financed by a three-month visiting grant at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIAS) in the winter of 2010.

The Politics of Mourning

Derrida's highly personal mourning texts were collected and published in English in a unique book under the title *The Work of Mourning* edited by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, two outstanding translators of Derrida's works. The English collection was published in 2001, while the French edition came out later in 2003 titled *Chaque fois unique, la fin du monde* (*Each Time Unique, the End of the World*). This is the only book of Derrida's writing that has been published in translation first, though several of his mourning and commemorative writings had appeared as journal articles or in other collections. The totally different titles also indicate that the publication of the first, translated book was not Derrida's idea. The French collection—in this case, the original, being 'the return' of the translation—is enlarged with a foreword ('Avant-propos') and two other texts dedicated to Gérard Granel and Maurice Blanchot, who died in the time-gap between the publication of the two volumes. In his French foreword 'Derrida notes that he would never have dared to take the initiative of such a collection in France' and claims that it is the work of Brault and Naas, 'it is *their* book' (quoted by Royle 2009: 68, emphasis in the original). Naas remarks that Derrida wrote the preface to the French edition after he had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in the spring of 2003 and that he intended the work as 'a goodbye book' and his 'farewell' (Naas 2008: 230-231). And now, in 2010, six years after Derrida's death, in this book of the dead and in the puzzling (re)turning, the *revenant* is put on the stage.

The *Work of Mourning* contains fourteen texts which were written by Derrida between 1981 and 1999 to commemorate the death of his friends, several of them belonging to his own generation: Roland Barthes, Paul de Man, Michel Foucault, Max Loreau, Jean-Marie Benoist, Louis Althusser, Edmund Jabès, Joseph N. Riddel, Michel Servière, Louis Marin, Sarah Kofman, Gilles Deleuze, Emmanuel Levinas, and Jean-François Lyotard. The genre of the writings is difficult to define and the texts vary from eulogies and funeral orations to journal articles and letters of condolence. Due to these variations in form, some writings are really long—the Barthes, the Marin, the Kofman, and the Lyotard texts are the longest—while several others span of only a few pages. Besides simply reprinting several writings, the editors selected and translated texts that were not published before in English (cf. the Loreau, the Benoist, the Servière, and the Althusser texts), and the Jabès essay was not published at all. In spite of the difficulties to classify all these texts under one label and their lacking a 'single apt term', Brault and Naas insist on some genre-creating force at work in the collection. They think that Derrida reinvents the classical Greek genre, 'eulogizing the singularity of the friend, and that he has tried to inhabit and inflect both the concept and the genre of mourning differently' (Derrida 2001:

18). They also refer to the prototype of the Greek eulogy, Pericles' funeral oration, and immediately put it side by side with Plato's parody of the famous oration in his *Menexenus*. Actually, both of these classical eulogies are about political and public mourning, which is quite far away from Derrida's concerns in his 'work of mourning', though he does discuss 'the politics of mourning' in his other works, for instance, in *Glas* and *Aporias* (Naas 2008: 171). Moreover, Derrida quite enthusiastically analyses *Menexenus* in his *Politics of Friendship*. The Platonic 'dialogue' actually gives Aspasia's long funeral speech, while in the frame Socrates is gladly ironising to Menexenus about the virtues of the good eulogist who can produce good-worded doleful commemoration over the dead heroes, who 'beautifully' died for the motherland, Hellas.

In the English collection, the editors published a thorough introductory essay titled 'To Reckon with the Dead: Jacques Derrida's Politics of Mourning', in which they collected the most important *topoi* of the Derridean eulogy, the Derridean 'work of mourning'. The essay takes its motto from Derrida's *Politics of Friendship*, namely: '*Philia* begins with the possibility of survival. Surviving—that is the other name of a mourning whose possibility is never to be awaited' (Derrida 2001: 1; Derrida 2005: 13). That is, right from the very beginning of discussion, mourning is strongly related to friendship and survival; more exactly, friendship is dedicated to mourning *before* the actual death of a friend as if friendship had to *exist* in mourning. Let me quote the famous passage from the work of friendship:

The anguished apprehension of mourning (without which the act of friendship would not spring forth in its very energy) insinuates itself a priori and anticipates itself; it *haunts and plunges the friend, before mourning, into mourning*. This apprehension weeps before the lamentation, it weeps death before death, and this is the very respiration of friendship, the extreme of its possibility. Hence surviving is at once the essence, the origin and the possibility, the condition of possibility of friendship; it is the grieved act of loving. This time of *surviving* thus *gives the time of friendship* (Derrida 2005: 14, my emphasis).

On the one hand, the above quotation obviously shows that Derrida is balancing between the sensitive clichés of mourning/friendship and his true fidelity. On the other hand, with the usage of his keywords he relates the possibility of friendship to human time, death and survival.

The main question he asks in almost all the texts is what a friend should do after the death of the other: to speak or to remain silent. On occasion of his very first death, the death of Roland Barthes, he confesses, he had promised that he would never write a memorial or a funeral oration following death (Derrida 2001: 49). Then, in the case of the actual happening,

upon the death of a friend, he had to realise that speaking after the death of the other, speaking *for* the other, should be his duty toward the other despite it being 'an endless insult or wound' to him (Derrida 2001: 55). Joseph Hillis Miller, a living friend, remarks that in several of these occasions Derrida reacted in a hurry and started to write his memorials almost immediately (Miller 2009: 90-1). It is the friend, the survivor's duty to break the silence however he / she is overwhelmed with the breath-taking grief of the loss. Less than one day after learning about Althusser's death Derrida was reading out his text at the funeral and started with the expression of his doubts and apologies:

I knew in advance that I would be unable to speak today, unable, as they say, to find the words. Forgive me, then, for reading, and for reading not what I believe I should say—does anyone ever know what to say at such times?—but just enough to prevent silence from completely taking over, a few shreds of what I was able to tear away from the silence within which I, like you, no doubt, might be tempted to take refuge at this moment (Derrida 2001: 114).

It is hard to speak and even harder not to get the taste for it—especially, in fourteen or sixteen eulogistic pieces. In the Benoist memorial, which is titled 'The Taste of Tears' and centres on weeping through a reference to John Donne, Derrida emphasises that 'one should not develop a taste for mourning, and yet mourn we *must*. We *must*, but we must not like it' (Derrida 2001: 110). Although it is almost impossible to give the general characteristics of the Derridean eulogy, one feature is common to all his mourning texts: the writer's *tone* that grows out of his ethical responsibility for breaking the silence (more about *tonos* in Derrida 1999b: 117-171). Derrida's tone is arguably both the most remarkable aspect of these texts and the most problematic. Due to the rather unique context of composition, he is balancing between duty and pathos, yet cannot help being melancholic. In the dutiful saying goodbye to and good words on the dead friend—actually, he does it upon sixteen 'singular' occasions—the clichés and repetitions are unavoidable; and Derrida cannot do without them. The circular, or rather the spiral structuring of phrases, sentences and the outpouring of words characterise the eulogies. Miller also calls the attention to the stylistic repetition of words, taking it as 'mim[ing] the experience of being haunted by oneself' (Miller 2009: 61). In the mourning texts this 'circular improvisation' not only reflects the whirlwind and vertigo of the speaker's emotions but also his getting away with death—survival 'in *the spirit of [the] spiral*' (Derrida 2001: 90, italics in the original).

However, the recurrent rhetorical questions and the repeated clichés are counterbalanced with his feelings and personal memories, which makes the

Derridean eulogy radically different from other memorial works. In *The Work of Mourning*, Derrida recalls strikingly personal, special and sometimes intimate moments that he and the mourned person shared or knew. He remembers Sarah Kofman's girlish laughter (Derrida 2001: 174), the beautiful handwriting of Jean-Marie Benoist (Derrida 2001: 109), the remarkable signature of Michel Servière (Derrida 2001: 136), and Levinas's continuous 'allo, allo' on the phone he used to say, being afraid of being cut off (Derrida 2001: 206). He recalls a memory with Paul de Man about the discussion of the 'soul' (*âme*) of the violin, and now the metaphor (metonymically) speaks about his grief in his short homage written to de Man, 'In Memoriam: Of the Soul' (Derrida 2001: 75). He also recollects the private language game he had with Lyotard addressing each other with the formal *vous*, never *tu*, and the way how Lyotard lives on in their '*vous*'—as the title of the memorial, 'Lyotard and *Us*', indicates (Derrida 2001: 227).

Derrida was aware of the dangers of the 'genre' and struggled to avoid using the dead for his own advantage with the aim of giving proper credit to the other. As the editors emphasise, 'despite all the dangers of the genre, all the dangers of memory and recognition, Derrida remembers and pays tribute' (Derrida 2001: 8). The reader can wonder how the friend feels obliged to show his fidelity to the other in 'his' own commemoration, which is, at the same time, dedicated to the memory of the other. Yet, besides giving space to his/their personal memories, Derrida allows the others to speak in their own voices, citing lengthy passages from his dead friends' works. The act of quoting is somehow halfway between silence and speaking; as if the quoted words of the dead were resonating in the mourning friend. As Derrida formulates in 'his' very first death, upon the death of Barthes:

Two infidelities, an impossible choice: on the one hand, not to say anything that comes back to oneself, to one's own voice, to remain silent, or at the very least to let oneself be accompanied or preceded in counterpoint by the friend's voice. Thus, out of zealous devotion or gratitude, out of approbation as well, to be content with just quoting, with just accompanying that with more or less directly comes back or returns to the other, to let him speak, to efface oneself in front of and follow his speech, and to do so right in front of him (Derrida 2001: 45).

Derrida calls this 'excess of fidelity' to the friend, quoting his words, 'mimetism,' which involves the taking the dead into himself, while re-calling his voice from *within* (Derrida 2001: 38). His 'rhetoric of mourning' is characterised by this 'textual interiorization' that can be taken as the law of the eulogy (Derrida 2001: 21).

Instead of mechanical citing, which would take the other back to death/the dead, Derrida deconstructs the dichotomy of speaking and being

silent in his 'mimetism', intersecting the limits between his own voice and the inter-textual references to the other so that both should resound in reading. The reader can somehow have the feeling that he/she reads conversations, or long-lasting discussions between the living and the dead, and he/she is also invited in the interpretation of the long quotations. Moreover, when Derrida quotes the dead speaking of death, they seem to overcome their own death in their 'living', or 'surviving' words. 'My little white pebbles are only or mostly citations' (Derrida 2001: 230), Derrida says, and probably this metaphor gave the editors the idea of the dust cover of the book, where not a gravestone but white pebbles are placed on the burial site. These 'embedded' passages are the 'cornerstones' of the other, being cited so as to make the other live—textually. However, the citations and the texts of the other 'always already' are there to become white pebbles on one's grave (as Derrida himself said to Miller about his catalogued manuscripts that 'they look[ed] like so many tombstones' (Miller 2009: 80). In *The Work of Mourning*, the editors place another pebble on the symbolic grave-cover, citing Proust's statement about his calling the *oeuvre* a huge cemetery, in which the individual writings are like tombstones. We think, it is the right time/place to mention Kas Saghafi, who wrote the introductory biodata about the dead writers, contributing to the unique 'monumental' or monument-like quality of the book.)

The lengthy quotations are made in the name of friendship, in the name of the friend for the sake of his survival. The problematic relation between the name, the signature and death 'signs'/seals the whole work, now speaking about/for Derrida's philosophy as well. The proper name is the means of survival, but, on the other hand, together with the signature it also 'fore-shadows' the death of the person: 'the proper name speaks the singularity of death, and, in speaking, already repeats that singularity, already survives it' (Derrida 2001:14). In his eulogies Derrida frequently questions to whom or for whom he is speaking/writing now. Besides highlighting the importance of the proper name in addressing, he cannot help playing on, for instance, Joseph Riddel's puzzling name (cf. riddle in English, *ride* in French):

For of what, of whom, to whom, are we speaking, here, now, in his absolute absence, if not of the name, in and to the name, of Joe Riddel? Even during the course of life, of our lifetime as of Joe's lifetime, we know this and knew it already: the name signs death and marks life with a fold [*ride*] to be deciphered. The name races toward death even more quickly than we do, we who naively believe that we bear it. It bears us with infinite speed toward the end. It is in advance the name of a dead person. (Derrida 2001: 129-130).

The problem of the name is related to the secret of the signature as it, before the name, speaks of and pre-figures death. In the Servièrè-eulogy the signature is taken as ‘the monumental epitaph’ in advance and always already as ‘it offers assurances of this beyond the death that it recalls just as soon, the death that is promised, given, or received, the death that thus always comes before coming’ (Derrida 2001: 136).

The Poetics of Mourning

The question of the epitaph and its ‘allowing the dead to speak from beyond the grave’ is elaborated by Derrida, re-reading his dead friend, Paul de Man’s writings. Apart from the short eulogistic piece, ‘In Memoriam: of the Soul’, he published a book titled *Memoires for Paul de Man*, in which de Man’s favourite and recurrent metaphors or phrases are recalled or brought to light; all that Derrida attributes to his coming domain (cf. ‘de Man’). While the title, *memoires*, refers to the recollecting and autobiographical nature of writing, the subtitle with de Man’s name transfers the previous statement into the world of the de Manian texts and readings. Derrida analyses his dead friend’s ‘Autobiography As De-Facement’, where de Man discusses how one’s writing becomes a ‘monumental inscription’, making the writer a ghost or one of the living dead who addresses us as if his voice came from beyond the grave (de Man 1984: 67-81). Thus, the essay about the de Manian *prosopopeia*, of which reading ‘assumes face’, becomes the trope not only of reading but of recollection in mourning. Derrida also regards the figure as de Man’s ‘central metaphor’, which ‘looks back and keeps in memory, we could say, clarifies and recalls [...] everything’ (Derrida 1986: 27). The figure becomes de Man’s commemorative, or rather ‘sepulchral inscription’ and later/now Derrida’s monument.

In Derrida’s mourning, de Man’s texts also become the *prosopopeia* of the-voice-from-beyond-the-grave and the rhetoric of the allegorical remembrance. In his *Memoires*, Derrida also deals with the nature of true ‘mourning’ and ‘true’ remembrance while paying attention to the most important ideas and tropes of the de Manian *oeuvre*. The three lectures—‘Mnemosyne’, named after the goddess of memory, ‘The Art of *Mémoires*’ and ‘Acts’—are ‘sealed’ by the dead friend’s name as Derrida writes it *for* the dead de Man and in his memoirs his own work of mourning is expressed. In his citation, Derrida *mimes* de Man’s quotation marks put around mourning: ‘[t]rue “mourning” is less deluded [and] [t]he most *it* can do is to allow for non-comprehension’ (de Man 1984: 262, italics in the original). In the statement, the italicised *it* emphasises that true ‘mourning’ is only a tendency which actually denies the truth of mourning. Derrida also thinks that the Freudian ‘normal’ work of mourning is unsuccessful as it operates with the other’s interiorisation, that is, with the abandonment of the other’s other-

ness. Whereas true mourning is the impossible work of mourning, which will be successful if it fails: it is 'an aborted interiorization [that] is at the same time a respect for the other as other, a sort of tender rejection, a movement of renunciation which leaves the other alone, outside, over there, in his death, outside of us' (Derrida 1986: 35).

The problematic addressing of the dead, via the digression on Derrida's 'memoires,' leads us to his discussion of 'faithful mourning'. In the eulogies the dead friends are addressed but, Derrida emphasises, he is also speaking *to* and not only *of* the other. More precisely, he tries to speak to the dead in(side) himself, allowing the voice of the other to resonate in him. As he beautifully formulates in the funeral oration written for Althusser: 'At bottom, I know that Louis doesn't hear me; he hears me only inside me, inside us (though we are only ever *ourselves* from that place within us where the other, the mortal other, resonates). And I know well that his voice is within me insisting that I not pretend to speak to him' (Derrida 2001: 117). The editors of *The Work of Mourning* clearly see that in his eulogistic pieces Derrida turns to the other as if he/she was 'in us though other still' (Derrida 2001: 26). The dead is, at the same time, 'within us' and 'outside us', and in the Marin essay mourning is characterised with 'the unbearable paradox of fidelity':

Whatever the truth, alas, of this inevitable interiorization (the friend can no longer be but *in us*, and whatever we may believe about the afterlife, about living-on, according to all the possible forms of faith, it is *in us* that these movements might appear), this being-in-us reveals a truth *to and at death*, at the moment of death and even before death, by everything in us that prepares itself for and awaits death, that is, in the undeniable anticipation of mourning that constitutes friendship (Derrida 2001: 159).

'Alas', we think, *this* interiorization' ('whatever the truth' is) is the most important and most impossible feature of the Derridean work of mourning. Although he is clearly aware of the psychoanalytical discourses concerning the work of mourning and he frequently alludes to Freud's and Abraham and Torok's seminal texts, he is inclined to deconstruct the dichotomies of melancholia vs. mourning, and incorporation vs. introjection. According to Derrida, 'true or faithful mourning', labelled 'impossible', can only succeed when it fails, but 'it would have to fail [...] in failing *well*' (Derrida 2001: 144, italics in the original). This 'failing well', though it sounds as an aporia, is defined as the force and the law of mourning in the Marin eulogy (Derrida 2001: 144). In *Memoires*, Derrida also explains how the faithful mourning interiorises the other, making it/him/her part of us, while 'an aborted interiorization is at the same time a respect for the other as other [...] which leaves the other alone, outside, over there, in his death, outside of us' (Der-

rida 1986: 35). On the one hand, he really intends to keep the other *outside* in its alterity, on the other hand, he invites the other to come *inside* in its singularity. It is a double bind; yes, an aporia, and a(n im)possible task for the future that is promised in the (im)possible coming of the other. As at the end of ‘Psyche’ he says, answering his own question about the invention of the other in a pseudo-dialogue: ‘the other is what [is] never inventable and will never have waited for your invention. The call of the other is a call to come, and that happens only in multiple voices’ (Derrida 2007b: 47).

The images and figures of the other are haunting in all the eulogies, and the dead live in us in their images: in their texts, in photographs, in signature, and in our memories of all these. In the very first eulogy dedicated to Barthes, Derrida re-reads and discusses his friend’s last work, *Camera Lucida*, in which Barthes analyses photographs. The photograph—the haunting image of the other—becomes the return of the dead, the *revenant*, the spectral supplement of the revenant: ‘we are prey to the ghostly power of the supplement; it is this unlocatable site that gives rise to the *specter*’ (Derrida 2001: 41, italics in the original). In Barthes’ reading, the photograph is ‘always already’ speaking of death, of the future death of the model—of the *spectre* to the *spectator*—which makes ‘this catastrophe’ the Total-Image of Death (Derrida 2001: 54). In his *Camera Lucida* Barthes is mourning his mother and though he is speaking about the (dead) mother’s photograph (cf. the Winter Garden Photograph), he cannot reproduce it in the book as ‘it exists only for [him]’ (Barthes 2000: 73). In the Marin eulogy Derrida also writes about images of death, this time about paintings, the portrait, claiming that ‘the power of the image as the power of death does not wait for death, but it is marked out in everything—and for everything—that awaits death’ (Derrida 2001: 151). Reading and commenting on Louis Marin’s last, posthumously published book (*Des pouvoirs de l’image*), he re-defines death as ‘the most absent of absences’ (Derrida 2001: 154) and calls the attention to the threatening insight carried by his dead friend’s unique expression, ‘dead cadaver’ (Derrida 2001: 151). The metaphor indicates that in the images of the other you are ‘always already’ to think of his/her future death in ‘originary mourning’, since it is a friend’s duty.

Mourning the Other and the Self

Although the (possible) coming of the other *returns* in all the eulogies, it is most emphatically presented in the text ‘Adieu’, dedicated to Levinas. In 1997 another *Adieu à Emmanuel Levinas*, a book, was published, in which the original mourning text was published together with a long conference essay titled ‘A World of Welcome’ (Derrida 1999a). The mourning text in the collection is ‘truly’ *dedicated to* Levinas as it contains the longest quotations in the collection. Citing (immensely) from ‘the thinker of the Other’, Derrida

recalls Levinas's ideas concerning the urgency of my fidelity to the Other, to its singularity, and 'the traumatism [of/in the face] of the Other' (Derrida 2001: 208). The Other can teach me ethics, responsibility and can help me develop my relation to death—I can only experience death through the death of the Other:

The Other individuates me in my responsibility for him. The death of the Other affects me in my very identity as a responsible I... made up of unspeakable responsibility. This is how I am affected by the death of the Other, this is my relation to his death. It is, in my relation, my deference toward someone who no longer responds, already a guilt of the survivor (Derrida 2001: 205).

In the Levinas eulogy several previously introduced aspects are summed up and put in a different light: Levinas/the Other and his death taught Derrida to think about the world differently. With the death of the other, in its/his/her unique singularity, the whole world dies—'each time unique, the end of the world' (cf. the French title, *Chaque fois unique, la fin du monde*). Being 'the ultimate aporia', death 'names the very irreplaceability of absolute singularity' displaying that 'every other is completely other' (Derrida 1993: 22). On the other hand, death in its 'infinite alterity' is shown as the absolute, 'the wholly other' (*le tout autre*), since its secret is *revealed* in the *aporetic* formula—'every other (one) is every (bit) other' (*tout autre est tout autre*)—in *The Gift of Death* (Derrida 2008:82). In this work, following Levinas, Derrida elaborates on the interrelatedness of duty and responsibility towards the Other.

In his memorial book, Miller says that for Derrida 'mourning is a universal condition of human existence' (Miller 2009: 324), and that Derrida quite often claimed that his relation to himself was/is 'plunged into mourning', the mourning of the death of the other. In several of his interviews, he emphasises the continuity of the process of mourning featuring his thinking and writing: one of my mottos—'I mourn therefore I am'—is taken from an interview of his (Derrida 1995: 321). *Mournfully*, Derrida himself wrote his own eulogy of some short, life-affirming lines in quotation marks and in third person, and he asked his own son Pierre to read them out to his friends three days after his death. Thus, in accordance with the statement 'it is Jacques Jacques mourns for' (Miller 2009: 315), here is Derrida's last mourning text—dedicated to his dead 'self' in fidelity to the other:

Jacques wanted neither ritual nor oration. He knows from experience what an ordeal it is for the friend who takes on this responsibility. He asks me to thank you for coming and to bless you, he begs you not to be mournful, to think only of the many happy moments which you gave him the chance of sharing with you. Smile at me, he says, as I will smile at you till the end. Always prefer life

and never cease affirming survival [*la survie*: both survival and the excess of life]. I love you and am smiling at you from wherever I may be (Hill 2007: 11).

But we do not allow mourning to have the last word; we do not want the self-mourning Derrida to utter the/his last word ‘from-beyond-the-grave’. We prefer *citing* a lengthy passage from his last interview, in English titled *Learning to Live Finally* that is translated from a repeated statement of Derrida, *apprendre à vivre*, while the French title, *Porter le deuil*, means ‘to be or to go into mourning’. The French expression, *apprendre à vivre*, can also mean ‘learning oneself to live’ or ‘teaching another (or oneself) to live’; while the phrase *porter le deuil* carries the connotation of ‘carrying or bearing a child’ (Derrida 2007a: 61). The English title obviously alludes to ‘Exordium’ in *Specters of Marx*, that is, the expression itself becomes a *revenant*—a ghostly, a spectral statement (Derrida 1994: xvii-xx). In the interview, though Derrida admits, he has not learned how to live or die, he gives his testament on deconstruction, articulating the ‘ethics of the survivor’:

[...] survival is an originary concept that constitutes the very structure of what we call existence, *Dasein*, if you will. We are structurally survivors, marked by this structure of the trace and of the testament. [...] deconstruction is always on the side of the *yes*, on the side of *the affirmation of life*. [...] This *surviving* is life beyond itself, life more than life, and my discourse is not a discourse of death, but, on the contrary, the affirmation of a living being who prefers living and thus surviving to death, because survival is not simply that which remains but the most intense life possible. [...] When I recall the happy moments, I bless them too, of course, at the same time as they propel me toward the thought of death, toward death, because all that has passed, *come to an end*... (Derrida 2007a: 51-2, italics are mine)

The affirmation of survival is ‘(en)closed’ with the ‘usual’ three-dotted Derridean open ending, which here plays on the expression ‘come to an end’, allowing ‘end’ to be and not to be the final word.

Being the spirit of irony *per se*—the woman is supposed/doomed to be irony in discourse—we are inclined to finish this paper recalling, or rather ‘conjuring’, the only ironic spirit of the dead in Derrida’s work of mourning. In the end we (re)turn to Sarah Kofman (actually, we let her return), who in her life-affirming anatomy lesson teaches the reader to pay attention to the book so as to overcome death. In the commemorating writing titled, more exactly not titled, ‘.....’ (only a few dots mark the title), Derrida eulogises Kofman’s last and unfinished text, ‘Conjuring Death’. As Derrida emphasises, in Kofman’s writing this conjuring of death implies both ‘to conjure it up and conjure it away, to summon ghosts and chase them away, always in the name of life, to summon and chase away, and thus to pursue the other as the other dead’ (Derrida 2001: 171).

In his eulogy for Sarah Kofman Derrida refers to her analysis of Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Doctor Nicolas Tulp*.² In the painting not one of the doctors is looking at the *opened-up* corpse but at some papers held in their hands or at the book *open* at the foot of the body as if they rejected death, 'as if, by reading, by observing the signs on the drawn sheet of paper, they were trying to forget, repress, deny, or conjure away death—and the anxiety before death' (Derrida 2001: 176). The physicians focus on the *corpus* instead of the *corpse* and 'the image of the *corpse* is *replaced* or *displaced*, its *place taken* by the book' (Derrida 2001: 176, italics in the original). But—as Kofman via Derrida teaches us this 'double lesson'—this opening of the book does not speak of the fear of death, on the contrary, it happens in the name of life. Let her speak now:

The dead man and the opening of his body are seen only insofar as they provide an opening onto *life* [Derrida's emphasis], whose secret they would hold. [...] This opening of the book in all its light points back to the opening of the body. For the book alone allows the body to be deciphered and invites the passage from the exterior to the interior. [...] The lesson of this *Anatomy Lesson* is thus not that of a *memento mori*; it is not that of a triumph of death but of a triumph over death (Quoted in Derrida 2001: 180-181; Kofman 2007: 238-239).

The works of the (dead) writers, their bodies of work (the corpus) remain with us so as to be read and interpreted, though they cannot be totally understood or interiorised. The works keep their secrets and their questions, which, as we can read in the Foucault eulogy, 'keeps [them] in reserve in [their] unlimited potential' (Derrida 2001: 88)—the texts have their 'after-life' in their openness.

Conclusions

The above lesson also teaches us the preference of the immortal book to the mortal body since we live *in* and we live *on* by reading, and our survival depends on the good—and humble—readers. Although in the eulogistic pieces all writing and reading is claimed 'in general [to] work *at* mourning' (Derrida 2001: 142), in the last interview Derrida emphasises that every text should be taken as a singular event and that every reading should take place in its singularity. The writing should 'determine the reader, who will

2 I was so fortunate to see this remarkable painting in the Mauritshuis, in the Hague, the Netherlands in January 2010. Spending some time 'opening' it, I had to realise that the outsider of the painted scene, the viewer or the spectator, could not help looking at the dead body, 'the dead cadaver', while the book itself, being in half shadow, could be found only if the direction of the doctors' gaze was followed. Paintings, just like books, have their secrets.

learn to read (to ‘live’) something he or she was not accustomed to receiving from anywhere else. [...] Each book is a pedagogy aimed at forming its reader’ (Derrida 2007a: 31). In these few lines the reader receives a lesson, a lesson about the book that is to be opened to ‘live’ and *live on*. Ironically, the Derrida-other survives in his works of mourning (and for him the work of mourning came to an end) and now, it is up to his readers to go on mourning/reading. In *The Politics of Friendship*, he claims the reader, the good reader to be his friend—‘my friend is the reader’ (Derrida 2005: 70)—who in the never-ending interpretative process keeps his work/him alive. And such an ending, with the promise of his/their/our survival in readings, makes Derrida the spirit of *eu-thanato-logy*, who, even in his works on death and mourning, writes for the future—in the name of friendship.

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