

Jay Dittburner (Carleton University)

**Title:** Mourning and Melancholia: An Analysis of the Mothers of the Plaza De Mayo

**Abstract**

Mourning is an act or process that has been with us as humans since prehistoric times, yet it is something we often take for granted. In our secular, western world we often scoff at religious practices as unnecessary, superstitious, and unneeded in our age of technology and analytic thinking. Yet, mourning fulfills a necessary role in helping us cope with one of the major unknowable aspects of life; namely death and how to cope with the loss of a loved one. I want to explore the power of mourning (and as an extension the role of melancholia and resentment in states of mourning) and the role that collective mourning has in a society and community. I want to look at the example of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina, as they offer a unique few on death, on protest, and on mourning as simply they refuse to mourn, insofar as they refuse death itself in order to seek justice for their children and grandchildren that were victims of state sponsored violence during the 1970s and 1980s. In discussing this unique situation, I want to touch upon how in their refusal of death and thus refusal to mourn, are turning their loss into absence, and through this are in a state of melancholia, in Freudian terms. Yet, I believe this melancholia is ideal for their protesting, and while it is often thought to be an unproductive state of being, I want to argue in this case, and perhaps in cases of state sponsored violence and injustice melancholia is a better reaction to their grief and sorrow over traditional forms of mourning.

**Keywords:** Mourning, Melancholia, state-sponsored violence, protest, applied ethics

**Bio**

Jay Dittburner is a third year PhD candidate at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada whose work has focused on the relationship between memory, mourning, and the seemingly endless suffering of melancholia. Their works have looked at the relationship between trauma, hauntings, and injustice and currently they are working on issues of memorialization, curating difficult knowledge and how memory of survivors and victims affects the ways in which memorials are shaped and interpreted.

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