

## BETWEEN THE BODY AND THE OTHER: A LAPLANCHEAN READING OF OLD AGE

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**ABSTRACT.** The present paper proposed a psychoanalytical reading of the old age based on the Jean Laplanche's Theory of Generalized Seduction. To this end, we retake the notion of drive reinforcement, present in Freud's theory, reinterpreting it from the notion of leaning systematized by Laplanche in order to think about corporal modifications and their effects on the libidinal economy of aging subjects. The authors defend the hypothesis of a possible reopening of the original situation in this moment of life, considering the corporal changes specific to the aging process, as well as the social and subjective meanings that we attribute to the various losses and changes experienced by the old women and men. We also discuss the several relationships between old age and otherness, original passivity and the mourning process. At the end, it is emphasized the need for further in-depth studies on this subject, signing the significant contribution of Psychoanalysis, especially about the psychical impacts in old age.

**Keywords:** Old age; generalized seduction theory; psychoanalysis.

## ENTRE O CORPO E O OUTRO: UMA LEITURA LAPLANCHEANA DA VELHICE

**RESUMO.** O presente artigo propõe uma leitura psicanalítica da velhice a partir da Teoria da Sedução Generalizada, de Jean Laplanche. Para isso, recupera a noção de reforço pulsional presente em Freud, reinterpretando-a a partir da noção de apoio sistematizada por Laplanche, para pensar as modificações corporais e seus efeitos sobre a economia libidinal dos sujeitos em processo de envelhecimento. Os autores defendem a hipótese de uma possível reabertura da situação originária nesse momento da vida, levando em consideração as alterações corporais próprias ao processo de envelhecimento, bem como os significados sociais e subjetivos que atribuímos às diversas perdas e mudanças vivenciadas por velhas e velhos. São abordados também as relações da velhice com a alteridade, a passividade originária e o processo de luto. Ao final, é ressaltada a necessidade de mais estudos aprofundados sobre o tema, assinalando a significativa contribuição da psicanálise, sobretudo no que tange aos impactos psíquicos da velhice.

**Palavras-chave:** Velhice; teoria da sedução generalizada; psicanálise.

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## ENTRE EL CUERPO Y EL OTRO: UNA LECTURA LAPLANCHEANA DE LA VEJEZ

**RESUMEN.** El presente artículo propone una lectura psicoanalítica de la vejez a partir de la Teoría de la Seducción Generalizada, de Jean Laplanche. Para ello, recupera la noción de refuerzo pulsional presente en Freud, reinterpretándola a partir de la noción de apoyo sistematizada por Laplanche, para pensar las modificaciones corporales y sus efectos sobre la economía libidinal de los sujetos en proceso de envejecimiento. Los autores defienden la hipótesis de una posible reapertura de la situación originaria en ese momento de la vida, teniendo en cuenta las alteraciones corporales propias del proceso de envejecimiento, así como los significados sociales y subjetivos que atribuimos a las diversas pérdidas y cambios vivenciados por viejas y viejas. Se abordan también las relaciones de la vejez con la alteridad, la pasividad originaria y el proceso de duelo. Al final, se resalta la necesidad de más estudios en profundidad sobre el tema, señalando la significativa contribución del psicoanálisis, sobre todo en lo que se refiere a los impactos psíquicos de la vejez.

**Palavras clave:** Vejez; teoría de la seducción generalizada; psicoanálisis.

### Introduction

Population aging<sup>4</sup> is a concrete fact that has mobilized, in recent decades, research and programs aimed at the elderly public. In psychoanalysis, we still find few references on the subject. France is one of the pioneers in the psychoanalytic study of old age, where the works of Bianchi (1993) and Messy (1999) stand out. In Brazil, it is possible to find consistent studies from the end of the 90s, mainly after the 2000s (Goldfarb, 1997; Barbieri, 2003; Mucida, 2004, 2009, 2014; Kamkhagi, 2008; Genaro Junior, 2013; Vilhena, Novaes & Rosa, 2014; Cherix, 2015). However, something of what Simone de Beauvoir (1990, p. 8) called a “[...] conspiracy of silence [...]” around old age is still present. The question that now seems to arise is not whether or not we talk about old age, but what and how it has been said.

In this sense, the present article seeks to give voice to a topic that has not been much debated when dealing with aged individuals: sexuality. Thus, it aims to propose a reading of aging from the Theory of Generalized Seduction, having as anchor the sexual<sup>5</sup> described by Laplanche (2015a): the perverse and polymorphic child sexuality elucidated by Freud.

The reading we will do will address, in a first moment, the place of the body in aging, using the concept of leaning systematized by Laplanche to understand the notion of drive reinforcement present in Freud's theory and their relations with otherne, sexual messages and passivity. Then, we will allude to the relationship between body and time, ending with considerations about grief and narcissism, pointing out the relevance of these concepts as theoretical operators for the study of aging.

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<sup>4</sup> We thank Prof. Paulo de Carvalho Ribeiro for interested reading and important contributions to the development of some ideas present in this text.

<sup>5</sup> We will use the word sexual always lowercase letter, despite the uppercase letter in the edition we use, to refer to the 'sexual' neologism, forged by Jean Laplanche.

## The aging body

In *Civilization and its discontents*, Freud (1996d) speaks of the body, more precisely of its fragility, as one of the three great sources of suffering. In turn, such suffering of the body manifests itself in different ways throughout the life of each individual and the history of humanity. Not only through malaise, but in many ways during life, the body is involved in potentially disturbing processes. In the course of aging, and especially in its most advanced stage, the corporal transformations serve as a stimulus to revisit the already existing narcissistic constructions.

We will start from the thesis that the excitations coming from the libidized body function as a drive source. Not only biological stimuli, but above all, and in a mixed way, the inscriptions made by the other on the body. Our hypothesis is that the permanent resumption of narcissistic constructions imposed since the first egoic constitution, which is confused with the work of translation/repression (cf. Laplanche, 1992b), acquires a new and specific character in old age, however very dependent on the first translations of the enigmatic messages inherent to the original situation of seduction, as proposed by Laplanche. From a clinical point of view, it is necessary to consider the plurality of ways in which this reopening of narcissistic translations can take place. What is the relationship between the reopening of the original situation in old age and previous translations?

### The truth of drive reinforcement is seduction<sup>6</sup>

When we propose to develop a reading of aging taking the sexual as a starting point, it is necessary to think about the specificities of its presentation in old age. From this, we seek to retake the notion of *drive reinforcement* proposed by Freud (1996e) in "Analysis Terminable and Interminable" and already worked on by Mucida (2004) and Santos (2016) about aging. It is important to point out that in this same text, one of the few in which Freud makes reference to issues specific to old age, we find one of his most criticized ideas on the subject, namely: the assumption that, in the case of very old people, there is "[...] an exhaustion of plasticity, the capacity for modification and further development [...]" (Freud, 1996e, p. 255) and that "[...] all mental processes, relationships and distribution of forces are immutable, fixed and rigid [...]" (p. 255), explaining such characteristics as due "[...] to what is described as force of habit or exhaustion of receptivity - a kind of psychical entropy" (p. 255-256). We will comment on this point later.

Freud launches the idea of drive reinforcement as a drive increment arising directly from the physiological processes of changing the body over time. Freud describes it this way:

Twice in the course of individual development, certain instincts [drives] are considerably reinforced: at puberty and, in women, at menopause [...]. The same effects produced by these *two physiological reinforcements of the instinct* [drive] [emphasis added] can be caused, in an irregular way, by accidental causes in any other period of life. Such reinforcements can be established by *new traumas*, forced frustrations or collateral and mutual influence of instincts [drives]. (Freud, 1996e, p. 239, emphasis added)

For the author, drive reinforcement is linked to the physiological character, that is why it occurs at puberty and menopause, moments in which the hormonal variation is quite significant. However, it is possible to displace its cause from the score made at the end of the quote: such reinforcements can occur through new traumas. It is the traumatic aspect

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<sup>6</sup> This elaboration, despite containing changes, takes up what was developed in Santos (2016).

that we seek to highlight when proposing a reading of the aging process anchored in the sexual.

In order to make the notion of drive reinforcement work, we will use the concept of leaning that Laplanche (1989, 1997) systematized from Freud, due to the fact that aging incites reflections on the relationships between the self-preservation functions and the sexuality, by emphasizing the approximations between the psychic and the somatic.

But what is this leaning? Laplanche (1997) defines it as a “[...] line of articulation [...]” (p. 15) between the fields of self-preservation and sexuality. This line, according to him, “[...] undoubtedly and advantageously substitutes the line of interaction between the soul and the body” (Laplanche, 1997, p. 26-27). According to the author, leaning would be at the origin of sexuality, but not only, since, more than an emergency line, it is described as a line of articulation. Such consideration is very dear to us, as it helps us to think about the relationships between sexuality, body and the changes experienced in aging.

In the origins, leaning would be characterized by the emergence of sexuality supported by self-preservation functions, obtaining its sexual status from the deviation of such functions, after the loss of the object of self-preservation - breast or substitute. The origin of sexuality would thus be marked by emergence and deviation; this deviation presented as a displacement, which is not, however, a total detachment. The line of articulation remains, so that, after emergence and the consequent taking away, sexuality will come, through a retroaction, to cover and support the self-preservation functions, in a movement that Laplanche (1997) called vicarious role of sexuality.

By systematizing and reinterpreting support, Laplanche (1997) sought to denounce Freudian biology, which proposed an endogenous origin for the drive, thus pointing out that its power would be in the fact that self-preservation necessarily implies the action of the other. It is this action of the other that will convey, like a noise, the infantile and unconscious sexuality of the adult on the infant's body:

It is this unconscious part of the other's message, conveyed in the tenderness behavior, in these *Zärtlichkeiten*, that creates, in its place of impact on the child's body and behavior, the starting point of leaning - if we want to keep that word. (Laplanche, 1997, p. 60)

Thus, self-preservation would not be the source of the drive, as Freud (1996e) reiterates in the quote about the physiological foundation of drive reinforcement. For Laplanche (1997), the true relationship between self-preservation and sexuality is based on the character of openness to the other that self-preservation has, considering that it could not support itself on the human baby. It is through this openness that adult care focuses on the child, mixing tenderness and enigmatic messages (messages compromised by the adult's unconscious child sexuality), which characterizes the situation of original seduction.

There is another aspect that is relevant for the application of the elaborations about leaning in understanding what happens in old age, considering the importance of the processes and corporal changes of this phase: when commenting on the subdivision of sexuality in stages carried out by Abraham, Laplanche (1997) recognizes the importance of certain physiological maturations. However, he emphasizes, and this is the point of our interests, that “[...] their greatest importance [...] is precisely that they polarize the adult's attention: their gestures, their messages, their fantasies” (p. 62). Would not that be the greatest importance of the physiological and corporal aspect also throughout life, the fact that they call the attention of the other, the look of the other, their care? In old age, this reality is updated in an incisive way, making the importance of the body and what occurs in it to

operate as an opening to the other, which happens in a particular way, about what we will discuss in the next section.

After briefly presented the notion of leaning, we propose the following interpretation, in order to relate it to the idea of drive reinforcement: aging could be conceived as an experience that, by highlighting the physiological and corporal issues, would make possible what Freud called drive reinforcement, which we understand as an attempt, on the side of sexuality, to respond to the shocks suffered in the self-preservation functions, through a retroactive movement; of a cover.

Such an interpretation, despite recognizing the importance of the physiological aspect in the drive reinforcement, locates this importance in triggering sexuality and not in the biological increase of what could be considered an innate drive. If biology is not a cause or a destination, however, it should be given a destination. Thus, when retaking the notion of drive reinforcement in Freud, we sought to emphasize the role of the corporal experiences inherent to this stage and its relationship with sexuality: just as in the origins, sexuality would come to cover these physical changes, often characterized by losses. This covering, in turn, can be a libidinal increase, a drive excess.

The most organizing or disorganizing destinations of this retroaction of the sexual over the self-preservative field would be determined, respectively, by the narcissistic and linking aspect, observed in the vicarious function of sexuality, or, on the contrary, in the disconnecting and attacking aspect of the sexual drive of death, observed on the side closest to seduction and enigmatic messages.

However, if it is not in the biological organism that we find the explanation for drive reinforcement or leaning, where can we find it? "Seduction is the truth of leaning" (Laplanche, 2015b, p. 61): it is from this statement that the traumatic character can be brought to the scene in reflections about aging. If seduction is the truth of leaning, we propose that it is also that of drive reinforcement. It is in the relationship with the enigma of the other that we find the reality of drive reinforcement; relationship that we defend to be significant in this stage, being able to characterize the experience of aging as a 'reopening of the original situation'. It is because it refers to the original times of seduction that aging is so difficult to assimilate.

If the notion of drive reinforcement brings, in itself, the idea of increased libido, it is necessary that we can understand this idea, and not only in its quantitative aspect. For this, we follow the indication of Freud (1996b) in the text *Types of neurosis triggers*, in which he addresses this issue, relating it again to menopause:

We can assume that it is not an *absolute* quantity, but a relation between the quota of libido in operation and the amount of libido with which the individual ego [I] is capable of dealing - that is, of keeping under tension, sublimating or employing directly. (Freud, 1996b, p. 254, author's emphasis)

It is evident from the quote that it is a relationship. This interpretation puts at stake not only a quantitative increase, but indicates that the psychic consequences of this increase would be determined by considering the other pole: the I. What Freud (1996b) proposes in this quote, as well as in *Analysis terminable and interminable* (Freud, 1996e), is that we must take into account both the strength of the drives and their internal attack as well as the capacity of the I to deal with this attack, either by keeping it under tension, sublimating it or discharging it directly.

We propose that this libidinal increase be interpreted, as Laplanche (1988) reads the economic aspect of the drive, as a drive requirement, that is, a work requirement imposed on the psyche. However, how to situate this requirement and how is it provoked? If the

physiological aspect is not enough to explain all this psychic movement in aging, it is necessary to place its cause elsewhere:

A shock in the body, coming from *elsewhere* and not from self-preserving operation, can trigger sexual arousal. The source becomes an exogenous shock, implantation of a foreign body. The question of origin tends to suddenly reverse this generalization, if there is no endogenous, finally, that does not include an implanted exogenous. (Laplanche, 1997, p. 48, emphasis added).

For that, we will try to understand what are the unique relationships of old age with otherness.

## Body and otherness

If we have discussed so far, the character of drive attack, of internal otherness, it is necessary to locate the origins of this attack. If seduction is the truth of leaning and, as we propose, of drive reinforcement (Santos, 2016), it is necessary to understand how otherness (internal and external) appears in this phase, since this is what seduction is about: a specific relationship with otherness.

It is not uncommon to find in studies on old age the description of uncanny, surprise and lack of recognition of oneself in the process of apprehending old age; idea that is evident in the work written by Simone de Beauvoir (1990). Recognizing the relationship between old age and otherness is relevant from the metapsychological point of view, which has been our focus in the present study, but is also interested in considering its social effects: "Before old age hits us, it is something that it only concerns others. Thus, it can be understood that society can prevent us from seeing our fellow men in the old" (Beauvoir, 1990, p. 10).

A statement like this brings us to the important contribution made by Laplanche (1993), in a note, in his text *Transference : its provocation by the analyst*, when he alludes to the ways in which the child, but also the adult, deals with otherness of the other, that is, "[...] the sexual enigma, provocative, traumatizing, of the adult" (p. 80). Such an enigma is marked by a true "[...] uncanny [...]" (Laplanche, 1997, p. 139) and attempts to control and translate it would be characterized by a double closure: one found in every form of translation and another, more radical, described as "[...] closure by confinement, by repression of the anamorphic residue of messages, that is, of what resisted to symbolization" (Laplanche, 1993, p. 81). And here he indicates a note, which we reproduce in full:

In the face of the other's otherness, the *methods of defense* are invariably the same: *attempted assimilation, denial of difference, segregation, destruction*. We find them, of course, in *attitudes towards cultural and ethnic differences*. But what all analyses of 'racism' lack is to take into account the internal cleavage inherent in the other in itself: it is this internal otherness that is at the root of the anguish in the face of the external otherness; it is what we seek to reduce, at any price. (Laplanche, 1993, p. 83, n16, emphasis added)

It would be possible to think, along with cultural and ethnic differences, age and generational differences, placing old age as one of the categories marked by this otherness before which we often resort to the defenses described by Laplanche, especially those involving segregation and destruction? Could this be a possible explanation for what Beauvoir called a conspiracy of silence around old age? We consider it important to bring this hypothesis into the discussion, because in it we seem to find a relevant explanation for the difficulty that we all feel in relation to old age, whether old or not: it is its alterity character that we resist.

And for the old women and the old men, how is otherness present? Mucida (2004), in line with other authors who study aging, says: “[...] old is always the other in which we do not recognize ourselves” (p. 102). It is from a mismatch that the perception of old age occurs: “Old age is then felt - even without a pathological accident - as a kind of mental illness in which the anguish of escaping oneself is known” (Beauvoir, 1990, p. 387). However, this perception is not enough to recognize oneself as old, nor are the signs of the body itself:

[...] we have to live that old age that we are unable to achieve. And first, we live it in our body. It is not he who will reveal it to us; but, once we know that old age inhabits it, the body worries us (Beauvoir, 1990, p. 369).

A source of concern from the moment of birth, the body is that which does not let the old man forget his condition. But if it is not him who reveals it, what does it do? “It is normal, since in us it is the other who is old, that the revelation of our age comes from others” (Beauvoir, 1990, p. 353). It is from the other that comes the recognition of old age, including the other from the mirror. It is the encounter with the enigma of the other and their messages compromised by the unconscious sexuality that has the true capacity to produce bodily concerns that can present themselves as a drive attack.

The relationship between body and otherness has been present since its origins, as it is on the body that the other will leave its first marks. On the baby’s body, in the process of becoming unified and recognized as its own, the adult will inoculate its unconscious sexuality, producing what will later become the object-source of the drive, our internal otherness. Therefore, it seems plausible to say, based on the considerations made by Beauvoir (1990), that old age updates something of the original situation, insofar as it is the other that reveals, always in an enigmatic way, something that starts to disturb inside, especially from the body. This foreign character of old age is what makes it such a difficult process to elaborate for so many people: “[...] we must assume a reality that is undoubtedly ourselves, although it strikes us from the outside and remains unapprehensible” (Beauvoir, 1990, p. 356).

All these elaborations allow to say, then, that the body presents itself as the ‘great depository of enigmas’ that are urgent for translation; and, in old age, for new translations. It is as if many of the translations carried out throughout life did not fit that body that is no longer recognized. Thus, the body seems to convey, at the same time, the need for translation and the possibility of it, because it is often through the body that something from old age can be learned and elaborated, as it imposes a work requirement on psychic life. However, if the body can incite or convey new translations, it also shows itself as a privileged place for the appearance of what could not be translated.

## **Passivity rediscovered**

Old age brings helplessness back in its most radical sense: that of the I in the face of the drive. We want to highlight the presence of passivity in the malaise produced by the aged body, but not only by its behavioral signs, given what Laplanche teaches: “Passivity, activity are not defined by the initiative of the gesture, nor by the penetration or by any behavioral element. Passivity is totally (*est toute entière*) in the inadequacy to symbolize what survives in us on the part of the other” (Laplanche, 1992a, p. 263). If we say that the recognition of old age occurs through a mismatch, we can understand, from the quote, that it is determined by the encounter with the most traumatic encounter with the other. What is found in old age is something of the inadequacy to symbolize.

The untranslatable, the repressed that will be deposited in each subsequent system [Laplanche quotes letter 52 and the psychic apparatus conceived as a succession of systems], is only the echo, the residue, of this untranslatable internal to the message itself. It is the *transcendence of the original situation - this relation of the child to an adult that means that he/she does not know* - that will be translated, transported, transferred with more or less remains, but never reduced. (Laplanche, 1992a, p. 269, author's emphasis, comments in brackets are ours).

Transcendence of the original situation, therefore: we are always faced with the enigma. In old age, the subject will have to deal with the enigma of the body. We do not say the enigma of the own body, that is, the enigmas deposited in the body by the other. Now, what signals are sent to the subject in old age? What do aging patterns bring back to the subject?

Desiring to be an adult, on the part of the child, has a lot to do with having an adult body and the qualities that the child does not yet have: strength, height, dexterity. A body that has access (including sexual) to other bodies; that has all the markers that it is no longer dependent on someone else. The desire to be old, however, seems to go against this childish narcissism linked to omnipotence. The ideals related to old age - wisdom and patience, for example - do not seem to be enough to make this state an object of desire as strong as adulthood. Even, many times, such ideals are on the side of the attempt to silence the sexuality of old women and old men. It is important to be cautious when dealing with speeches like this. Too much idealization or devaluation are both sides of the same coin, and, as Beauvoir (1990) points out, they serve as an instrument of social exclusion and, more radically, of dehumanization: "In any case, by virtue or by their abjection, the old people are outside humanity. It is therefore possible, without scruple, to refuse them the minimum deemed necessary to lead the life of a man [or woman]" (p. 10).

Thus, old women and old men would encounter a double passivity: on the one hand, passivity would be in the face of the dominant discourse, which tends to silence and dehumanize them through the claims of loss of productive and reproductive capacity; on the other, passivity in the face of internal otherness, which finds less resources in social discourses to assist in translations, favoring internal attack (Santos, 2016).

## The body and time

Laplanche (1992c) distinguishes four dimensions of time for humans: (1) Time considered at its cosmological level, dictated by the rhythm of the planet rotation/translation and its consequences; (2) The immediate animal temporality, which deals with the rhythmic perception of things; (3) Temporization, that is, the way in which the existing-human is situated in time; (4) the historicity that has to do with humanity as a whole.

What interests us about this differentiation proposed by Laplanche is to show that the passage of time in humans is not immune to the drive. Even though times (1) and (2) vary very little, what matters is the effect that time (3) has on the first two, which we feel is the same experience of time.

Our body is a marker of time. Its growth is quite standardized, which generates many identification marks. The phases of life are clearly articulated to these changes that are inscribed in the body. We do not hesitate to place this body time between the fields (1) and (2) proposed by Laplanche. However, it is from the psychic capacity to apprehend time - the field (3) - that such perceptions will be translated. To understand this, let us think about this Laplanche proposal:

It remains for us to interpret this sequence: present -> past -> future in the light of a translational-destructive theory of human existence, and rearticulate (*rattacher*) this movement, which generates diachrony, to this synchronous engine that is the original situation of seduction (Laplanche, 1992c, p. 334).

What the author is proposing is that our human condition imposes an articulation between our mode of psychic functioning and the perception of time, which would be external to ourselves. Our initial condition is that of the baby who does not have the necessary elements to translate what happens to them. This condemns them to the temporality of the afterwardness. We should always take up what happened to us to make sense 'only after' we have lived such experiences.

The first translations of messages from the other, which will constitute the original repression, is the proto-temporalization of the human being: "[...] a way of self-theorizing [...] to enter time through translation, which is in turn, a put-ahead and a leave-behind" (Laplanche, 1992a, p. 333). The translations of enigmatic messages are always articulated with the subject him/herself and his/her temporality. We could say that it is impossible to interpret the world without placing yourself in it, without situating it in the time of the world that we interpret.

Let us think of time (4), the time of history shared by everyone, as a source of messages that provide easy ways for translating what happens to us. The many narratives about old age, what is said and what is not said, the codes that guide aging: all this can serve, for good and/or evil, for the subject to find ways of translation for the aging body. At this later point in the translation, previous translations are called into question. And it is precisely at this point that we find the possibility of conflict: when the narcissistic translations hitherto made are not consistent with the translations required by the aging body. Here Freud's proposition (1996b) on the increase in libido becomes interpreted as a relation between the drive requirement and the capacity of the I to deal with such demand, based on the translation model proposed by Laplanche. Differences that appear in the clinic - the calm and anguished aging - demonstrate that this is not just the current as a source of anguish. The encounter with the aging body is, in fact, a reunion with the sexual that attacks the I, a reunion with something of child helplessness.

### **Self-mourning and narcissism**

What has been discussed so far leads us to the importance of considering mourning as an important process in old age. To think about some of its specificities at this moment in life, we quote Freud:

We know that mourning, however painful it may be, ends naturally. Having given up everything he lost, he will have consumed himself as well, and our libido will again be free - *if we are still young and vigorous* [] - to replace lost objects with new ones, possibly as or more precious than those. [...]. Mourning over, [...]. We will rebuild everything that the war destroyed, and perhaps on firmer ground and in a more lasting way than before (Freud, 2010, p. 188-189, emphasis added).

It is possible to derive what Freud says about the devastating effects of war for the effects - no less deadly - of old age. The observation highlighted by us, that the subject can replace the lost objects with others, if he/she is young and vigorous, brings a problem for this derivation. The aging body necessarily imposes a process of mourning. Therefore, the psychic capacity will be tested to the maximum exactly in its power to reconstruct something there where most of the culture has reaffirmed the end.

Laplanche (1992d) strongly articulates the analytical process and mourning. Both, according to the author, do a job of shutting down the libido and its objects. This holds true for the I, taken as an object of libidinal investment. It is necessary, little by little, to disconnect from the representations that supported the narcissistic fabric. Unraveling them is always a distressing process: how to rebuild an I in the face of the imminent end?

For Laplanche (1993, p. 81), “[...] there is no new translation without first reviewing the old translations, to destroy them for the benefit of a new translation”. This deconstruction that opens space for other possible translations, presents itself in a radical way in aging and reiterates the hypothesis of a reopening of the original situation, which we have defended throughout this article. The big question that arises, then, is: what types of closings can be made in the elaboration of the aging process and the questions it refers to - physical, affective losses, of the social place, of the known image, the approach of death itself and loved ones, in addition to so many factors that old women and old men are subjected to?

How to find translations more permeable to external and internal otherness? How to welcome the foreigner in itself, without having to deny its difference, confine it or try to destroy it? This is the work of analysis and also the work of life. If the time is no longer the same as it was in youth, this should not mean, so quickly, that there is no time. This is even one of the prejudices that serve to justify the non-adherence to analysis by older people: there is little time to make the necessary changes. If we find rigidity and inflexibility in some elderly people, we cannot do as Freud (1996e) and naturalize as the only experience. Keeping old women and old men in the same place, fixed, seems to have very precise social and also unconscious motivations: it is as if its alterity character, which is so frightening, could be located, controlled, static. It is not the death of aging individuals that most frightens them, but their ability to live; including, and especially, sexuality. In this sense, we agree with Mucida (2004) when he says that old age bothers because it unsettles. It unravels, decentralizes, reopens and confronts us with the stranger we always try to keep confined and excluded.

Now, it is not possible, nor prudent, to address all these issues without taking narcissism into account. After all, it is in relation to the I that the internal attacks are directed, while, on the other hand, its constitution as a psychic instance occurs precisely to contain this disruptive sexuality: “The frontiers of the I are, first of all, frontiers turned inland” (Carvalho, 2003, p. 47).

Narcissism can be understood as a libidinal investment in the I. Through this investment, the I can gain contours and unity, and then take on the task of trying to face the strength of the drives that constantly attack it. In this way, the I can be understood as the “[...] device that introduces a connection process in the circulation of libidinal energy, preventing it from flowing freely” (Carvalho, 2003, p. 47). We know, however, that such an attack presents itself as a constant and incessant threat to break through such barriers: “Thus, even the feeling of our own ego [I] is subjected to disturbances, and the boundaries of the ego [I] are not permanent” (Freud, 1996d, p. 75).

So far, our elaborations about aging have revolved around the conception of a drive requirement that, many times, presents to the subject as pure excess, encountering difficulties or even impossibility to be symbolized; a requirement that was shown to be linked both to bodily changes and to the peculiar way of presenting otherness and challenging the sexual enigma of the other, making the otherness felt overwhelmingly, in the deepest sense of strangeness. On the other hand, the presence of narcissistic wounds linked to changes in the image and functioning of the body, the social place of the elderly and the successive inevitable destructions caused by all these factors. If we combine these aspects with

socioeconomic and physical health issues, it is not difficult to recognize the situation of psychological fragility to which many old men and old women may be subjected. This leads us to the clinical relevance of all the theoretical constructions described here: it is not only in relation to the physical body of aged individuals that care must be directed. Emotional and psychological weaknesses greatly influence how each one can take care of possible physical illnesses that come with age. It is not uncommon for cases of late psychosis, depression and other forms of mental illness that appear in a more apparent and significant way at this time in life.

It is evident that there are different ways to deal with these narcissistic impairments and wounds in aging. Factors of individual and also social history significantly determine the degree of intensity of these possible impairments, or, as Freud (1996e) pointed out in *Analysis terminable and interminable*, of these changes in the I. As well as the strength of trauma and drives, the alterations of the I should enter the equation to think not only the limits of the analysis, but also possibilities of coping with the subjects in each circumstance of their life.

### Final considerations

If we organize the text, approaching the body as an opening to the other and its privileged place for the implementation of enigmatic messages and the drive attack, to then deal with the relations of old age with otherness and time, ending with mourning and narcissism, it is not without reason. Such a movement seems to allude to something of the object itself that we propose to study. Something that occurs in the body can only be learned from the relationship with the other - external and internal. This occurs less because of an understanding and assimilation than for a reopening that causes, however, destructions; by a confrontation with the enigma of the other and with the one who also inhabits us.

Choosing to talk about narcissism at the end repeats the movement that we need to make in our constitution, as indicated by Laplanche (1997a): before an opening, we need to make a closing. Nevertheless, old age calls us, as well as analysis, to think of other solutions: to support the enigma, to find translations, which are, yes, closings, but less rigid, fixed. Open to the other; the other itself. To this internal stranger, to welcome him/her in his/her foreignness: "[...] thus, it is through an always renewed effort, through a kind of unceasing conversion, that we need to try to think of ourselves as not being ourselves, our own center" (Laplanche, 1997a, p. 147). Accepting that one is another seems to be linked to the possible elaborations of old age. Is not there an important similarity here with the analysis work?

This similarity makes us question about a tradition, even present in Freud (1996a, 1996e), of contraindicating elderly people for analysis, or even underestimating them in terms of elaboration capacities, either by considering rigidity of habits and character or even because they think they have little time and energy to make the necessary changes.

It is necessary to question, in addition to the object, what is behind this prejudice. Is this motivated only by characteristics specific to old age or is it a difficulty of psychoanalysis? This difficulty must be overcome: it is necessary to put ourselves to work and make the theory work to understand the reasons why psychoanalysis collaborated with the silencing of old age in its theory and practice. Silence that has been broken timidly, but that already has its effects. Works such as Bianchi (1993), Messy (1999), Barbieri (2003), Mucida (2004, 2009, 2014), Kamkhagi (2008), Genaro Junior (2013), Vilhena, Novaes and Rosa (2014), Cherix (2015) and this article are just some of the examples of this still discreet movement, but of fundamental importance. An importance that we have tried to demonstrate throughout

this article, by pointing to the deep effects on the psychic dynamics of old women and old men, demanding from them an intense work of mourning and re-translation, so that it is possible for them to go through the experience of aging without succumbing to psychic illness. Indications that even allow to look at the ailments of the body not only as naturalized conditions, but as possible responses to the drive requirement, which can intensify in this moment marked by significant destructions. Therefore, more research on the topic is urgent and pertinent. Research that respects the pluralities and singularities of this experience, so that we can bring out this inhabitant of silence so foreign, although known, that is old age.

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