

First International Conference on Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Aging

San Diego Psychoanalytic Center, January 19th, 2019

Psychoanalysis of Maturescence:

The Onset of Midlife and Beyond,

by Guillermo Julio Montero PhD

«Otherwise one is immortal for as long as one lives.» (p. 36)
«Getting old is unimaginable to anyone but the aging.» (p. 148)
Philip Roth (2001): *The Dying Animal*

Axis One:

From Mid-Life Crisis to the Uncanny and Universal Midlife Crisis

The concept of *mid-life crisis* was fully accepted by psychoanalysts from its very beginning when it was proposed by Jaques (1965). This is not the place to debate if he was right —or whether I agree with his ideas—, but he was wise enough to give a Kleinian and useful background to a psychological phenomenon. So far, everything is normal: a new —and successful — concept within the psychoanalytic framework.

But something strange happened with the idea of *mid-life crisis* because the concept immediately popped out from its psychoanalytic origin and spread throughout society —something rather uncommon. Popular culture made the rest, adopting it as one of its dearest ideas: films, novels, soap operas, cartoons, jokes, a lot of popular and artistic creations and media contents made the concept theirs. How can this be explained? Why did it occur and why is it still happening?

The disturbing evidence that something really special happens during *mid-life crisis* worked as a psychoanalytic interpretation and insight, and led society to appropriate this concept as the expression and natural way out of an *uncanny* evidence of the shadow of unconscious feelings that dwell within us. And here the word *uncanny* is the proper one because it places strangeness in the ordinary world —something oddly familiar rather than simply mysterious.

But this *uncanny* feeling is not enough to make the concept of *mid-life crisis* so popular. The power of the concept not only comes from its *uncanny* roots: it is enhanced and stressed due to its universality: everybody goes under an equivalent psychic state of mind at a certain age in the life cycle. It continues moving us in the same way that Greek tragedy does, created more than two thousand years ago. This is because of its universality: certain human conflicts have not changed; otherwise, they would have been played and enjoyed at the moment but immediately forgotten. From this vertex, *mid-life crisis* succeeded as a popular concept because of its twofold constitution: an uncanny feeling and its universality.

I believe that the power and pregnancy of the concept of *mid-life crisis* comes from the uncanny place within us where we —all of us— remain tied to biology —as if we were powerful minds trying to overwhelm and defeat the power of biology and its mandate, instead of assuming our humble and transient bodies, trying to find a meaning to nonsense while life lasts.

Up to this moment, I have linked the concept of *mid-life* to the concept of *crisis* as if they were just one —and they remain tied as if they were one from the beginning. Why does this occur? What is the *crisis* of *mid-life*? What would have happened if Jaques' concept were just *mid-life* or if he would have dealt only with *mid-life*? Possibly, nothing would have happened and perhaps the concept would have been forgotten. *Mid-life* is a stage of life —of course, a universal one— but it lacks the *uncanny* content of *crisis* —another universal. Both universals are needed to give the concept its power.

From this perspective, *crisis* may be the proper qualifying adjective for *mid-life*. But what does *crisis* mean? Is *crisis* the needed universal component for *mid-life*? I believe that *crisis* has a strong effect on the expression *mid-life crisis* because this qualifying factor is something that makes evident the enormous amount of psychic work demanded by specific unconscious feelings. Summarizing: *mid-life* is a stage of life —a long period of years— and *mid-life crisis* may be understood as the beginning of this stage of life called *mid-life*, such a common word as to discard the hyphen and simply consider it as midlife.

Axis Two:

Maturescence: The Onset of Midlife and Beyond and the *Invention* of Aging

(Deeper Level)

In my theoretical conceptualizations I consider midlife as the true beginning of aging. Of course, I consider the two intermingled sources and paths of aging: somatic aging and psychic aging. This paper tries to demonstrate that aging *happens* and *is experienced* from midlife onwards.

When I say that aging *happens* from midlife on I am referring to an impersonal source —surely related to the *uncanny* aspects of somatic life; and when I say that aging *is experienced* from midlife onwards I am referring to a psychic source —surely related to personal working—through inner resources. Both sides —the impersonal and the personal— are at work simultaneously when aging begins.

From a somatic perspective, there's a specific starting point for aging related to reproductive functioning loss or decrease. The psychological counterpart for this is what I have called *maturescence* (Montero, 2015). This starting point makes evident *important somatic*

landmarks linked to menopause in women and climacterics in men. These *important somatic landmarks* generate stimuli that require and promote the amount of psychic working-through that each individual needs to manage in order to make possible his ongoing process of psychic development, as Colarusso (1981) (1985) (1990) (1992) (1994) states in his deep and pioneering papers and books.

I consider *maturescence* as the proper word for this psychic process because it's a word that evinces an urge towards growth just as the word adolescence does, because *maturescence* also encompasses the opportunity human beings have for the renewal of their own subjectivity as well as for many other psychical features. The scope of this transcendent psychic working-through urge that occurs around peri-climacteric period in women and men is evident throughout what was known as *mid-life crisis*.

Reproductive functioning is important for this subject: my tenet is based on Freud (1914c) [p. 78] (1915c) [p. 125] (1916–1917 [1915–31917]) [p. 316] (1920g) [p. 45] (1933a [1932]) [p.95] when he considers that the human species comes to life to satisfy two main imperatives. The first one implies achieving self-satisfaction, what allows us a narcissistic acknowledgement through the bond with the self and with external objects, and the exchange with other generations. But we also come to life with another imperative: to reproduce ourselves as humans.

Freud (1920g) considers August Weismann's principles, who assumes that we are the carriers of an immortal substance, something that Weismann posed at the turn of the 19th century as the germ-plasm. This concept was reborn in the seventies with Richard Dawkins's (1976) theory of *the selfish gene*. Somehow if we succeed in transmitting the germ-plasm we assure the continuity of life. Thus, reproduction allows gaining a kind of warranty of symbolic immortality.

These two aims are the transcendental ones to be considered, but for the conceptualization of *maturescence* and subsequent midlife I take into account especially the second one: What happens when we are no more necessary for the aims of the species? What happens when nature doesn't need us anymore and we begin our long lasting effort for survival trying to permanently reach later stages of life? I believe we must consider that the true species' mandate is really different from the one we could *invent* —I would say between brackets— as human beings, because the species' mandate demands dying after we are useless for reproductive aims. However, instead of dying, we have invented *aging!*

It is evident that the human species makes *an enormous effort to live longer*. This happens because there was a moment when humans experienced the event that gave birth to what became the origin of psychoanalysis. There was a moment when instinctive, automatic and repetitive biological life —for millions of years always the same as for the rest of the species from ancient times till now— *began to be psychically represented*. And at that moment *psychic life* appeared.

Aging —as *the enormous effort to live longer*— emerged with psychic life. What we name *drive* in psychoanalysis is based on that representation, which is different from instinct. That representation also serves as basis for the enormous difference between the so called *animal* species and the *human* species.

All these ideas about the species' mandate lead us to a differentiation between the soma and the body. Soma is what gives stimuli whereas body is our soma invested with our own life drive. The soma *happens*, the body *is experienced*. The human species has a *body* because it can represent instinctual life. When instinctual representation became possible, the most astonishing and important realizations and achievements of the human species began, as well as its great tragedies and disasters.

Axis Three:

Drive increase and maturation

(Intermediate Level)

I suggest that true aging begins around peri-climacteric's psychic manifestations in men and women. My ideas are based on Freud's (1910c) [p. 133] (1912c) [p. 235] (1916–1917 [1915–1917]) [p. 402] (1937c) [p. 226] because on several occasions he maintained that around menopause and many times at the age of fifty in men, there is a drive increase that fosters a neurotic state of the mind (a *midlife crisis?*). Possibly, Freud was unable to link this drive increase with the instinctual source because at that moment the work of hormonal activity was not so clear. Research in this area was just happening or beginning a bit later than Freud's statements.

A drive increase during adolescence, due to hormonal upsurge, is easier to conceive, but how would it be possible to think of an equivalent drive increase around male and female climacterics, if hormonal activity is decreasing? I believe Freud's great intuition has to do with the outcome of somatic unbalance, and in this case we could refer to hormonal unbalance —if we want to detach a single variable. Unbalance always demands an extreme urge of psychic work. This takes place because *instinct* is a different concept from *drive*: *instinct* may increase or decrease, but the representation of this somatic activity has a psychic resonance that may be psychoanalytically understood as *drive* —and drives, once they are set into motion, always demand psychic work.

This astonishing Freudian intuition —drive increase during climacterics— is what let me to make an essentially Freudian conceptualization of maturation, forthcoming midlife and aging. From that moment on —after universal somatic climacterics and forthcoming psychological drive

increase— different vicissitudes present themselves for each individual. Everyone will work-through with his own inner resources this urge of psychic work that Freud named drive increase.

From this vertex I make Edmund Bergler's (1954) words my own. He defined midlife, long before Elliott Jaques did, as *a revolt against biology*, a fight against the biological mandate that shows the extreme urge of psychic work I have termed maturation. This happens because the individual *experiences* the need *to do* something, and I pose it as a universal because it is a measure of psychic work that may be really noticeable in those individuals with fewer resources for an authentic working-through process. Furthermore, it will be less noticeable in individuals who simply try to renew their lives taking advantage of the different vicissitudes this drive increase may foster towards new creative, positive and developmental paths. Again, following Freud, psychopathology shows *macroscopically* what development shows *microscopically*, but both core psychic processes are the same, regardless of how we name them. Some time ago, I referred to the midlife crisis and a midlife transition, for example, as being both ends of a continuum.

Axis Four:

What are we referring to when we speak about *death*?

(Upper Level)

Sometimes the notion of *aging* remains a bit misunderstood. But why is *aging* regarded as a problem? My answer is that it is so when it makes evident that the individual is not developing anymore and has stopped his growth. Otherwise, the passing of time and the different ages may be naturally lived because *aging* and death are our natural human destiny.

We have listened to our patients and ourselves many times, worried or scared about individual death. I wonder what we really mean when we say the word *death*. Why when a patient says any word we try to find its most unconscious meaning about what he is trying to convey, but when he utters the word *death* we take it for granted that he is speaking about what is called *death*?

Perhaps the true problem is not *death* itself. Following Freud (1915a) we know it would be hardly possible to represent it because psychic apparatus device makes the representation of personal *death* impossible. Again, I wonder what the patient really means when he speaks about death. Could it be possible that what the patient is referring to has a deeper significance?

Regarding this topic, I follow Ernest Jones's (1927) concept of aphanisis: the fear of the disappearance of sexual desire. I think that when the patient usually employs the word *death*, he is speaking about his fear of the disappearance of his own sexual desire and/or becoming unable of being desired. What happens if I can't keep on desiring sexually an object? And from the object

vertex: what if no object desires me anymore? This logic allows us the possibility of an interpretation about what really happens around maturation, when what we call maturation and forthcoming midlife begin. Aphanisis has always been there, but most importantly it bursts during climacterics drive increase —in men and women— because aphanisis tries to find a resolution to a tension that dwells within the individual leading to a psychic working-through process.

Recently I felt interested and attracted by several truths given for granted from a long time ago, and I tried to find its current validity. I found that there is a kind of «dictatorship of the living matter» —as I propose to call it. «Living matter» —*human beings* in this case— when they live their own lives, suppose, as if it were an illusion, that they *are* defeating death.

I was lucky enough to find Simon Critchley's (2009) book on the life histories of a lot of philosophers, more than two hundred. I realized that most of them had lived long lives, far beyond the age of sixty or seventy, and in many cases even more, reached their eighties and nineties. I was convinced that, having most of them lived two thousand years ago, they would have lived briefer lives than the ones they actually lived. I also found that in the case of the few who had died young, it wasn't because of illnesses but because they had been killed. Why do we then assume that we are defeating death, often listening that life expectancy has increased nowadays? Couldn't we suggest this as another fallacy of the «dictatorship of the living matter»?

Moreover, research carried out at Anglo-Saxon tombs by an Australian anthropologist Christine Cave (2017) who exhumed five hundred skeletons discovered that most of these skeletons had lived far beyond the age of seventy. Her conclusions were made possible by a method of her own invention that enabled her to determine the degree of teeth deterioration. We can conclude, therefore, that individuals who lived during the third and fourth centuries BC also had long lives.

This has led me to question the supposed truth that we have come close to defeating death, or, at least are succeeding in putting it off as much as possible. Perhaps the time has come to consider these *truths* from a humbler perspective, since they may work as false comfort to our narcissism.

The fact remains that death continues to plunge us into the equivalent abyss experienced by first human being, after he could represent his instinctual life through what we psychoanalysts understand as *drive*. We suffer from the same worries that that original human being felt —nothing has changed. And we suffer because *death* has no representation and will never have.

This is why within this Freudian (1927c) attempt of conceptualization of aging I highlight the Freudian concept of *the painful riddle of death* «against which no medicine has yet been found nor probably will be» [p. 16].

With this powerful metaphor, Freud is stating that *the painful riddle of death* has no solution. Everyone is individually free and open in his capacity and psychic condition to make it possible or not to cope with what is activated when we are no more necessary to the so called *plan* of the human species as we begin our aging process.

With this Freudian concept we have the possibility as analysts to be free from the need of attempting an answer to *the painful riddle of death*. Conversely, we can simply try to accompany our patients in finding their own paths with respect to this painful riddle; the same is valid with ourselves. Fortunately, this perspective lets us confront this issue with uncertainty and paradox working as the enigmatic components of *the painful riddle of death*.

Axis Five:

A Direct Understanding of Maturescence

I would also like to discuss both an indirect and a direct understanding of maturescence. Indirect understanding of maturescence means the confusion between manifest and latent contents of psychic processes and individual experiences. It is easy to find papers about losses during midlife; for example, the loss of parents, the so called empty nest syndrome, when children leave the parental home, the loss of a youthful body and many more. But these situations may also happen at different moments of the life cycle. Furthermore, they imply external and manifest evidences, implying the conscious way the patient has to tell us what is *happening* and *experiencing* with the best words he finds. Nevertheless, we as analysts must *translate* them into an interpretation referred to the true latent content which is different from what the patient says.

Thinking it from the logic of dreams, we rely on manifest dream content just as a hint, a faint light that guides us towards true latent dream thoughts but we don't give manifest content truth value. When a patient is speaking about his sorrow because his children aren't living with him anymore, we can think that there's a vertex from which he is referring to that sorrow. However, that situation is not directly related to his maturescence because that is only the manifest evidence, let's say, the indirect one. The direct understanding of maturescence, on the other hand, implies the consideration of what's happening with psychic expression of somatic phenomena related to climacterics in men and women and the possibility of working-through an outcome for *the revolt against biology*. This latter one is a deeper layer. This does not mean, however, that I suggest reproduction as the key; on the contrary, maturescence is a universal phenomenon that goes far beyond because it is linked to a process rooted in nature, a *somatic* process expressed in the *body*.

An individual may have had several children and necessarily will live the same process which will be noticed as well because it isn't related to whether or not he has had children but with the quantity of inner resources to work-through this situation, rooted in the revolt against biology and the fear of aphanisis —the psychic outcome for the loss of the possibility of the reproductive function.

You may think my ideas as fundamentally biological, leaving psychoanalytic thinking in the background. My aim, however, is quite the contrary because it is impossible to consider psychoanalysis without the biological ground that upholds it. There is no psychic life without the life of matter. Undoubtedly, there is a great resistance in the understanding of these aspects but as analysts we must go beyond what is understood as common sense. These resistances mix what *may happen during midlife with the specific and determining issues of the maturescent phenomenon*, which is universal.

I don't agree when anyone speaks of the empty nest syndrome or the illness, aging or death of one's own parents as midlife universal features. I am against these assertions because we can find people who have not had children and they will also live this maturescent working-through process with their resources. We could also find people who would have lost their parents a long time ago and not when these individuals are in their fifties: they will live the same process; even those who have had eighty or ninety year old healthy parents will live the same maturescent process.

I think there is a deep resistance to an authentic understanding of what unites us with our biological life, as if we continued to believe human beings had a soul split from the body, a soul that lives within a body, instead of thinking that we are a soma with a psychic life that has a relative autonomy, in many cases a marvelous autonomy, although in others it may be so frightening as to begin wars against other human beings.

A true specific metapsychology of maturation and the ensuing midlife is something we can infer and consider only after we can acknowledge the enormous *revolt against biology* that features maturescent working-through processing. And this *revolt against biology* is a universal. Only after this acknowledgement can we consider ideals, identifications, Oedipal conflict's renewal, narcissism and inter and intra generational vicissitudes.

From this vertex we can consider the full metapsychology of psychoanalysis but rooted in the somatic substrate that connects us with our species and with biology. Only from this acknowledgement we can think of the best human realizations, the fabulous human conquest of imagination, fantasy, illusion, hope, the human achievements of architecture, engineering, medicine, psychoanalysis itself, achievements in anthropology, history; as well as the big human tragedies to which we are accustomed, differently from what happens with the rest of the species,

because we must acknowledge that other species do not suffer from the same inter-species such fateful destinies as in many cases human beings experience.

It is also common to find people affirming that maturation occurs nowadays at a later stage of life than before. My answer to this assertion is also negative. I suggest that nowadays it is possible that maturation is more visible. However, being processes that constitute us as human beings, they are very ancient and dwell within us from time immemorial despite having become more noticeable due to current cultural and social conditions as a species. Nevertheless, I think that nothing could change in terms of the unconscious life of individuals in just fifty or one hundred years of history because it's so little time. If the evolution of human beings across millions of years is a brief puff, we can imagine how brief that puff would be when referring to be fifty or one hundred years.

In the beautiful documentary *The Midlife Project* (2013), the American director Lori Petchers's, interviews women regarding menopause to seek their opinions. The video begins with a woman that states the following: «As soon as you are not fertile anymore, it's like you become invisible». The great challenge of maturation is transforming reproductive invisibility into psychic work that could allow us to find a proper and individual answer, not a previous one taken from a book, a wise man, a religion, but simply an individual answer allowing us to decide what to do with this pretended invisibility alluded to in the documentary. Because invisibility is related to aphantasia, the fear of the disappearance of one's own sexual desire and the concomitant fear of not being desired by others. And this happens both in men and women.

Axis Six:

Odysseus and The Natural Position

I would also like to refer to what I have termed *the natural position*, which refers to the acknowledgment of uncertainty and paradox. There is an episode in Homer's *Odyssey* when Odysseus, on his way home to meet his wife Penelope and his son Telemachus, orders his sailors to tie him to the ship's mast and to put wax in their ears so that he alone may hear the sirens; the latter, however, are not sensual, voluptuous and beautiful women singing beautifully, but sea monsters. In the sirens' episode I find *the natural position*, or the strength to cope with *the painful riddle of death* without consolatory answers but trying to confront truth just as Odysseus did. He becomes our travel partner when we decide to directly and naturally understand, whenever we are ready, to acknowledge uncertainty as well as paradox within our own life and also within our human condition, which determines us and is permanently present. Odysseus pleaded with his men: «¡Please, untie me, untie me!». He was ready to confront in the most natural way *the painful*

riddle of death. In the middle and through that paradox and uncertainty Odysseus returned to Ithaca.

Profound questions about the meaning of life live within all of us but they are questions that I could never have answers to beforehand. Odysseus found his answer as we are obliged to find our own. If answers were provided, uncertainty would be lost and we would be deceitfully connected, with fullness ending in hollowness, emptiness and senselessness.

I recall Freud's (August 13rd, 1937) letter to Marie Bonaparte:

«The moment a man questions the meaning and value of life, he is sick, since objectively neither has any existence; by asking this question one is merely admitting to a store of insatiable libido to which something else must have happened, a kind of fermentation leading to sadness and depression.»

And with regard to the meaning of maturation, it is something that makes evident the drive increase process that Freud posed. When this drive increase is set in motion, individuals look for a meaning of what they are experiencing as if they were trying to solve *the revolt against biology*. And this is the reason why the question about meaning is raised consciously.

Psychic life is marvelous, psychic life is scarce; we suppose it only dwells in so called human beings. We must take care of and preserve psychic life but we will have a collective common future when we can understand where this psychic life comes from. My idea is that psychic life exists if we take nature into account and, as human beings, we cannot live as if we weren't a part of nature. From the understanding that we are part of nature a different future for humanity is possible.

Before maturation

Philip Roth follows his character David Kepesh from his youth up to old age in three successive novels: *The Breast* (1972), *The Professor of Desire* (1977) and *The Dying Animal* (2001). My comments, of course, do not pretend to summarize the novels referred to but rather take those elements that could prove valuable in order to consider my suggestions regarding maturation as the authentic start of midlife and old age.

As an adult, David is portrayed as an acclaimed professor and art critic, also famous for a television program on art. Roth presents his protagonist as someone worried since his early youth in the possibilities of desire and its immediate satisfaction, almost as if any other interest was secondary. David's sexual life undergoes many extreme situations at different periods, from total liberty to absolute impotence; precisely the latter led him on more than one occasion to consult a psychoanalyst.

Now in his forties, David seems satisfied with the stable relationship he has with Claire, with whom he has had no children. Unexpectedly, he receives a phone call from his ex-wife Helen, from whom he has been divorced for many years. He speaks with Claire and they decide to accept Helen's visit, who explains she is passing by and wants to visit David in order to introduce him to her new partner. Initially it is hard to understand the reason why Helen contacts David; the excuse is scarcely credible. Helen tells him privately how much she had suffered when she was young and now she is two months pregnant and does not know why but she does not want to continue with her pregnancy; her partner does not know this and she wants David's advice. She also tells him that she continued to have inner dialogues with him during all these years and that many times she had been on the verge of calling him. David, however finds her rather alien and strange.

Coincidentally, when Helen leaves, Claire reveals to him something he has not known up till now. To his surprise, she informs David that when she was ill some years ago and she had to remain in hospital for a day, she had, in fact, been pregnant with his child but she'd had an abortion. David feels completely disconcerted.

«Helen is two months pregnant, and I am the only person who knows. Claire has been pregnant, by me, and I've known nothing. I sense something very sad, all right, at the bottom of this day's confidences and secrets, but what it is I am too weak right now to fathom.» (p. 222)

At about that time, his father goes to see him at the same country home. It has been a long time since they have seen each other and it seems as if his father was saying goodbye not only to his son but to life as well.

After this emotional roller coaster, David seems to forego some fundamental aspects of his nature, evincing a psychological elaboration characteristic of maturation. In his own words:

«I tell you, I am a new man—that is, I am a *new* man no longer—and I know when my number is up: now just stroking the soft, long hair will do, just resting side by side in our bed each morning will do, awakening folded together, mated, in love. Yes, I am willing to settle on these terms. This will suffice. No more *more*.» (p. 200)

«Is there not a point on life's way when one yields to duty, *welcomes* duty as once one yielded to pleasure, to passion to adventure—a time when duty is the pleasure, rather than pleasure the duty...» (p. 253)¹¹

Somehow or other, the classic interpretation about midlife seems plausible with these elements: the preoccupation regarding offspring, the elaboration of returning to a love of his youth, the unveiling of important secrets, the concern about old age and the death of his own father, all this linked to a state of awareness of some of David's own limits, which paradoxically coexists with a new consultation to his psychoanalyst. But I believe this would *be an indirect interpretation of maturation*, as I have previously described.

During and After maturation

But everything changed for David when he was sixty-two years old. What seemed like a psychic elaboration completely disappeared, as can be corroborated in *The Dying Animal* (2001). In this novel, the acclaimed professor and art critic shows how he has lived during the past few years, denying everything he had affirmed in previous years. So, what happened in between?

David narrates how, in each of his courses, he targets one of his students in order to seduce her. He comments how he can recognize the one with whom he will succeed so that she can be completely forgotten after the academic year is over. Up to now, there is nothing exceptional or different to what David has experienced so far. However, the same thing does not happen in Consuela Castillo's case, a young Cuban who is seduced in the same way as the others but with whom he falls passionately in love as he had not done before. Consuela, in fact, signifies comfort in Spanish.

David, who always boasted that he could dispense with the women he got involved with now felt possessed by Consuela, without being able to think of anything but her, even having jealous attacks which he had never had before. His worry is if he will be able to continue desiring her and if she really desires him. This is what he really craves to know and which he continues to ask her time and time again. David is always worried because Consuela tells him «I adore you» instead of «I desire you», something which turns into an obsession which he cannot do without. Could we consider this as an example of the irruption of aphanisis in its maximum expression?

I will quote some paragraphs in order to discuss my idea that the characteristic drive increase promotes madurescent processing. Since the citations are in the first person, we have the privilege of hearing David's own voice in the following examples:

1. Consuela affects all his beliefs and his way of living. David maintains:

«The great biological joke on people is that you are intimate before you know anything about the other person. In the initial moment you understand everything. You are drawn to each other's surface initially, but you also intuit the fullest dimension.» (p. 15)

This paragraph evinces David's philosophy of life —of all his life—, who feels for the first time that something different is happening to him, unknown up to this moment. He needs the object of his desire, he cannot live without it. Could this affirmation serve as evidence of the drive increase that promotes a demand of psychic work that exceeds David?

2. Simultaneously, the imminent ruin of the *soma* tightens and transmutes into pain for the *body*, one of the characteristics I propose for the madurescent process:

«Yet what do you do if you're sixty-two and believe you'll never have a claim on something so perfect again? What do you do if you're sixty-two and the urge to take whatever is still takable couldn't be stronger? What do you do if you're sixty-two and you realize that all those bodily parts invisible up to now (kidneys, lungs, veins, arteries, brain, intestines, prostate, heart) are about to start making themselves distressingly apparent, while the organ most conspicuous throughout your life is doomed to dwindle into insignificance?» (p. 34)

3. In the midst of his pain, David does not kid himself because he understands the great difference between his aging and his lover's youth:

«Don't misunderstand me. It isn't that, through a Consuela, you can delude yourself into thinking that you have a last shot at your youth. You never feel the difference from youth more.» (p. 34)

4. The imminence of old age disconcerts David, despite the fact he can put it into words. Here are further examples:

«Can you imagine old age? Of course you can't. I didn't. I couldn't. I had no idea what it was like. Not even a false image—no image. And nobody wants anything else. Nobody wants to face any of this before he has to.» (p. 35)

«To those not yet old, being old means *you've been*. But being old means that despite, in addition to, and in excess of your beenness, you still are. Your beenness is very much alive. You still are, and one is haunted by the still-being and its fullness as by having—already—been, by the pastness.» (p. 36)

5. The limitations make themselves noticed, especially the change of subtle quality that make him distinguish pleasure from longing. Even though he can obtain pleasure, longing does not disappear or satisfy him. To what longing is he referring to? Could we bring up aphantasia once again?

«Because of our ages, I have the pleasure but I never lose the longing. Had this never happened before? No. I was never sixty-two years old before. I was no longer in that phase of my life when I thought I could do everything.» (p. 39)

6. Finally, he refers to what it means to grow old without an internal object that provides company and comfort:

«This need. This derangement. Will it never stop? I don't even know after a while what I'm desperate for. Her tits? Her soul? Her youth? Her simple mind? Maybe it's worse than that—maybe now that I'm nearing death, I also long secretly not to be free.» (p. 106)

But I would like to return to the initial question: What is David saying when he refers to his death? Could we think that psychically what can be represented is the fear of not being able to continue desiring as well as the fear of not being desired?

To conclude, with all these elements, how could we formulate *a direct interpretation of maturescence?*

The discussion remains open.

References

- Bergler, E (1954). *The Revolt of the Middle-Aged Man*. Grosset and Dunlap, New York.
- Cave, C & Oxenham, M (2017). *Sex and the Elderly: Attitudes to long-lived women and men in early Anglo-Saxon England*. *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology*, Volume 48, pp 207–216.
- Colarusso, CA & Nemiroff, RA (1981). *Adult Development*. Plenum, New York.
- Colarusso, CA & Nemiroff, RA (1985). *The Race Against Time*. Plenum, New York.
- Colarusso, CA & Nemiroff, RA (eds.) (1990). *New Dimensions in Adult Development*. Basic Books, New York.
- Colarusso, CA (1992). *Child and Adult Development. A Psychoanalytic Introduction for Clinicians*. Plenum, New York.
- Colarusso, CA (1994). *Fulfillment in Adulthood. Paths to the Pinnacle of Life*. Plenum, New York.
- Critchley, S (2009). *The Book of Dead Philosophers*. Vintage Books, New York.
- Dawkins, R (1976). *The Selfish Gene*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Freud, S (1910c). *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*. SE, Volume 11.
- Freud, S (1912c). *Types of Onset of Neurosis*. SE, Volume 12.
- Freud, S (1914c). *On Narcissism: An Introduction*. SE, Volume 14.
- Freud, S (1915a). *Thoughts for the Times on War and Death*. SE, Volume 14.
- Freud, S (1915c). *Instincts and Their Vicissitudes*. SE, Volume 14.
- Freud, S (1916-1917 [1915-1917]). *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. SE, Volume 16.
- Freud, S (1920g). *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*. SE, Volume 18.
- Freud, S (1927c). *The Future of an Illusion*. SE, Volume 21.
- Freud, S (1933a [1932]). *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*. SE, Volume 22.
- Freud, S (1937). *Letter to Marie Bonaparte*. PEP Archives.
- Freud, S (1937c). *Analysis Terminable and Interminable*. SE, Volume 23.
- Jaques, E (1976). *Death and the Mid-Life Crisis*. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Volume 46, pp: 502–514.
- Jones, E (1927). *The Early Development of Female Sexuality*. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Volume 8, pp: 459–472.
- Montero, GJ (2015). *Psychoanalysis of Maturation (Definition, Metapsychology and Clinical Practice)*. *The International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, Volume 96, pp: 1491–1513.
- Petchers, L (2013). *The Midlife Project*. Documentary at www.vimeo.com
- Roth, P (1972). *The Breast*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York.
- Roth, P (1977). *The Professor of Desire*. Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, New York.
- Roth, P (2001). *The Dying Animal*. Houghton Mifflin Company, New York.