Death Drives and Clinical Work
Letter from the Editors

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Dans *Recherches en psychanalyse* 2019/2 (N° 28), pages 71a à 72a
Éditions Laboratoire CRPMS, Université de Paris

DOI 10.3917/rep1.028.0071a

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Les pulsions de mort en clinique
Éditorial

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This article is a translation of Éditorial [Translator: Beatriz Santos].

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Conflicts of Interest Statement
Beatriz Santos declares that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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This issue is composed of a feature section on the death drives, organized by Beatriz Santos and Eyal Rozmarin. When rereading Freud’s Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920), Jean Laplanche presents the theoretical advances of Freud in terms of a “new articulation, original and even unheard of, of the different modes of what is generally designated as the negative: aggression, destruction, sadomasochism, hatred” (Laplanche, 2013, p. 159). It is around these notions that the idea of the death drive takes shape, through a movement that advances freely, in the sense of free association according to Laplanche’s description – like a “pensée ‘pour voir’ made of returns, of repentance and denials” (idem). As if it were necessary to get lost in the winding paths taken by Freudian theorization to be able to get closer to what would be a reflection on the destruction of what is vital, or on the radical appeasement of all tension. A free thinking which creatively conducts both a work of metapsychological creation, via the introduction of this new concept, and the clinical orientation of the analysts who use it.

The death drive as both a theoretical hypothesis and as a clinical guarantee, according to the dialogue established between psychoanalysts Monique David-Ménard and Jamieson Webster in a recent issue of this Revue (Webster, 2018). The four clinical accounts of the death drive that we present here provide a valuable overview of the use of this concept in North America. The psychoanalysts who share their thoughts with us on this subject start at the origins of the concept – the works of Sabina Spielrein on destruction in 1912 and the Freudian elaborations on War trauma (1915 – to get to original themes in contemporary clinical work. The construction of an idea of masculinity and its link to violence in our society (Eyal Rozmarin), or the handling of aggressiveness in the analysis of children (David Lichtenstein) are two examples of this. In addition, these texts establish the cartography of another relationship to Freud’s work: other than the fundamental reference to Karl Abraham and his article on the two types of war neurosis (Adrienne Harris), we also have a return to less quoted Freudian developments regarding the issue of the death drive such as The Psycho-Analytic View of Psychogenic Disturbance of Vision (Jeanne Wolff-Bernstein).

Two articles follow under a heading Varia. Florian Houssier et al. presents an inter-institutional research about twinship and refers to a clinical situation where the place of the mother as an object of rejection and frustration is examined in comparison to the bond between twins (invested as a space of potential completeness).

And we close this issue with an article by Thomas Rabeyron which describes the current context of “therapy wars” or “psy wars” as it happens in Great Britain. The author critically discusses the widespread advocacy for cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) that takes place there. He returns to two studies illustrating a gap observed between the empirical results of research on patient management, as well as the lack of efficacy of CBTs found in the cases examined. These elements are presented with the aim of alerting health professionals in France to the consequences of the implementation of public health policies in the field of psychotherapy in Great Britain.

Bibliography: