Contents

Acknowledgments page ix

Introduction

Death in theory 5
Death in the clinic 9
The structure of the book 12

Chapter 1: Against death: Freud and the question of death’s psychic presence 15
The case against representation 15
The desiring machine (hits the wall of reality) 24
The I of the beholder 26
The case against fear 30
Doubt and hesitation 37

Chapter 2: “Most of the time life appears so uncertain to me”: Death as a concern in Freud’s life 40

Chapter 3: The dream of death: The Interpretation of Dreams 46
Opening: Death representable and irrepresentable 46
Dying the death of the other 50
Non vixit 52
Dying in one’s dreams 56
Finally he melted away 56
A castle by the sea 59
Autopsy-choanalyzing oneself 62
How much time? 64
I must not go yet? A visit to the underworld 67
Concern for others 67
Limping, pale, and seriously ill. Irma 69

Chapter 4: To dream, perchance to die: A further exploration of The Interpretation of Dreams 75
Death and ambition 75
The man with the beard 76
Non vixit 77
Rome 78
“I must not delay any longer” 81
Table of Contents

Chapter 5: Death and anxiety

Chapter 6: A struggle with the concept of death: “Thoughts for the Times on War and Death”

Chapter 7: Driving death away: Freud’s theory of the death drive

Chapter 8: Death and culture: Death as a central motif in Freud’s cultural and literary analyses

Chapter 9: Avoidance and reduction of death in psychoanalysis
Table of Contents

Intermezzo: Dying without death—Mourning and Melancholia 183
Treating death as a problem of the ill and elderly 189
“So what?” 189

Chapter 10: The post-Freudians in the labyrinth of death 191
The Kleinians 191
The Kleinian understanding of the fear of death 193
The theory’s application 195
Erikson 197
Kohut 201
Jung 204
Winnicott 206

Chapter 11: Lacan 208
The symbolic, the imaginary, and the real 209
The symbolic 209
The imaginary 211
The real 213
Tragic paths and the death drive 215
The nature of desire 216
Das Ding 218
The concrete fear of death 219
Conclusion: Talking about death 220

Chapter 12: Attempts at reconciliation 222
Rank and Becker 222
Piven 224
Lifton 225
Death equivalents 226
Yalom and clinical approaches 228
Facing the abyss and surviving it 230
Existential psychoanalysis: Handling otherness 232
Bridges to one’s past 233

Chapter 13: Sources of the clash: The conflict between analytic ideas and concern with death 236
Where does the problem lie? Some analytic tenets that hinder the integration of death 236
The deterministic-mechanistic model 237
The focus on the past 238
The detachability of affect and content 238
The interdependence of psychic events 239
The instinctual model 240
The focus on presence 240
Explaining the external in terms of the internal 241
The analytic perspective on reality 242
The focus on relational aspects 243
Recoiling from the “high”: Against philosophy 243
Generality versus idiosyncrasy I: Universal explanations 245
Therapeutic pessimism 246
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aspects of death that lie—or do they? Beyond psychoanalysis</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death and the meaning of life</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analytic sensibilities helpful to the integration of death</td>
<td>248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Freudian pessimism”</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truth and illusion</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generality versus idiosyncrasy II: Idiosyncratic explorations</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 14:</strong> Death in life</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death in praxis</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The psychic life of death</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death anxiety and the thought of death</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On not knowing death: Defenses and distortions</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death as a dynamic absence</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be with not-to-be</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of death and the encounter with it</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Final thoughts</strong></td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>References</strong></td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Index</strong></td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>