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Crises in Couples

EDITORIAL

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The idea of publishing an issue on *crises in couples* originated in a colloquium organized by David Benhaïm and Serge Arpin in Montreal in May 2012, under the auspices of the 80th Congress of Acfas, the French-language Association for Knowledge. Our rationale read as follows: "Considering that psychoanalysis is intended to be a response to the psychic discontent of modernity, its discovery is not limited to exploration of the intrapsychic life of the singular subject or to individual cures. In the course of a century of existence, it has generated innovations in the field of its practice and, despite great epistemological and institutional resistance, has expanded its knowledge of the unconscious by focusing on psychic phenomena that unavoidably escaped individual cures. Among these innovations, extension of the psychoanalytic method to the study of groups is one of its most fertile conquests, since it has permitted treatment of couples and families. The group is a methodological paradigm that enables us to analyze intersubjective assemblages and the emergence of specific unconscious psychic formations and processes that would otherwise be inaccessible. This passage from an intrapsychic perspective, centered exclusively on the subject, to an intersubjective perspective and the elaboration of new concepts such as group psychic apparatus, links, intersubjectivity, unconscious alliances and group illusion allow us to explore and treat the psychic life of groups, couples and families. In this context we examine clinical work on crises in couples to understand how couples arrive at crises by identifying some essential mechanisms. What occurs, viewed from an intersubjective perspective, in a couple that seemed to function more or less harmoniously for this couple to silently

become a couple in crisis? What may we learn from their passage from honeymoon to crisis? What does the latter involve? These are some questions orienting our reflection." The program included two components: the first, from psychoanalysis to literature and the second, from psychoanalysis to cinema. We print several texts presented at this colloquium.

In *The exigency of psychic work of a couple regarding their crisis*, Serge Arpin describes the constitution of the couple-object, its organizers and also different functions it acquires, functions that fail or disappear in the crisis.

The text *The limits of post-modern couples* by Nellie Hogikyan proposes, as it states, "to explore some lines of reflection regarding the subject of the crisis in couples, considering the limits of post-modern identity as presented in the recent film by Anne Émond, *Night #1* (Quebec 2011)."

Crisis in the couple, From love to unlove by David Benhaïm contrasts the Freudian conception of love, centered on the subject in love, with the conception that considers the dyad in love as a unit. This text shows how, after the fall of the couple illusion that unites and welds the dyad together, the crisis becomes a substitute for the disillusion with love.

Couple crisis in Thèra by David Benhaïm analyzes this novel by the Israeli novelist, Zeruya Shalev, whose trilogy: *Love Life*¹, *Husband and Wife*² and *Thèra*³, translated into French and published by Gallimard, dramatizes the decomposition of the modern couple and family.

These texts from the Colloquium are joined by those of other authors interested in exploring crises in couples who contribute new lines of thought that broaden and enrich our reflection.

In the text *Scenes, crises and hostility in the couple; with whom is their reconciliation?* Anne Loncan first defines the limits of the field of conflict, then examines its parameters and determines its degrees of intensity and temporality in order to address the question of its

¹ Shalev, Z., (1997 [2000]) *Vie amoureuse*, Gallimard, Folio n° 4140, 351 pages.

² Shalev, Z., (2000 [2002]) *Mari et femme*, Gallimard, Folio n° 4034, 498 pages.

³ Shalev, Z., (2005 [2007]) *Thèra*, Gallimard, Folio n° 4757, 667 pages.

meaning for the couple. This path then leads her to discuss conflicts in contemporary couples as externalized in therapy, and finally refers to their potential outcomes.

Couple crisis, couples in crisis, contemporary society in crisis by Éric Smadja begins by proposing a double enquiry into the essence of the couple and the notion of crisis. His socio-psychoanalytic perspective leads him to a reading of Occidental society and its spouse models, shedding a different light on crises in couples in contemporary society.

Psychic bisexuality in couple therapy by Élisabeth Gontier, Michèle Gersant and Philippe Robert is a clinical paper that, in its authors' words, discusses "the effects of taking into account psychic bisexuality in transference, countertransference and intertransference: to what extent may the combination of maternal envelopment and paternal firmness (Ciccone) support restructuring of the couple's links and encourage both partners to express psychic bisexuality, defined as tension towards what one is not (Danon-Boileau)?"

Crises in couples by Irma Morosini addresses the issue of the constitution of the couple, the initial illusion and personal and transgenerational ideals at the source of object choice, as well as the disillusion that results after the link is denounced. The author also discusses the problem of the therapist as a third whose function is to help the couple in crisis to overcome their confusions, misunderstandings and frustrations.

In *Betrayal in the couple, virtual relationships and psychoanalytic couple therapy*, Isabel Cristina Gomes and Lidia Levy investigate a specific problem of contemporary society: virtual relationships and virtual betrayal. This problem, according to the authors, creates a growing demand for psychoanalytic couple therapy. They illustrate with two clinical vignettes.

This issue includes an innovation intended to transform this journal into an instrument of consultation and work by couple and family psychoanalysts as well as by students that wish to become familiar with specific concepts in this field of psychoanalysis: the elaboration of a glossary specific to the psychoanalysis of couples and families:

Ezequiel Jaroslavsky develops the first concept: *the narcissistic contract*.

Finally, in the section on book presentations and reviews, David Benhaïm analyzes the book by Éric Smadja, *Couples in Psychoanalysis*.

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