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EDITORIAL

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This issue begins with an article which explores Orna Guralnik's thoughts about the American TV programme *Couples Therapy* in which she is the lead couple psychotherapist. We have seen therapy sessions depicted on TV before, notably on *In Treatment* in which Gabriel Byrne played the part of an individual psychotherapist, mostly shown in his consulting room seeing patients, or in his own supervision. The difference with *Couples Therapy*, of course, is that this isn't fictional. The couples are real and Guralnik is a psychoanalytic psychotherapist practising in New York. It is for this reason that Guralnik likens the programme to documentary film making.

It is interesting for us to think about why therapy with couples is of interest to the viewing public now. We might say that the search for love and the obstacles to it have always been of interest. We see, after all, stories of love told in novels, pictured in films, and heartbreakingly captured in music.

But this is a programme which specifically shows couples being asked to explore their adult search for love or hopes for a creative relationship in the context of their childhood experience of feeling understood, loved, and/or neglected. It asks couples to look at how "ghosts" (Fraiberg et al., 1975) from their past pull them together and apart and it is focused on changing these relational dynamics.

In this way it shows the work couple psychoanalytic psychotherapists routinely do to help couples disentangle the knots which they can find themselves repeatedly caught up in.

It is a significant moment for psychoanalytic couple psychotherapy when the work we do reaches mainstream TV, and it seemed so obviously relevant to include Guralnik's thoughts and academic work in this journal. Guralnik is a public figure who is in demand and I was grateful to her for supporting the journal and speaking candidly with me about the fascinating and thorny issues which showing therapy on TV entails.

In our conversation we spoke about three broad areas which were focused first, on the success of the programme in a time of so-called "therapeutic culture"; second, the radically altered psychoanalytic frame; and finally, the importance of culture, history, and politics in psychoanalytic theory and practice seen in Guralnik's published work.

This sets the scene for the next article by Leezah Hertzmann. This article is based on a Tavistock Relationships public lecture and focuses on a theme which is thematically linked to Guralnik's work; the damaging and silencing power of shame.

Hertzmann describes how internalised homophobia and shame are maintained in the psyche by the superego. Heteronormativity is communicated by

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family, peers, culture, and media and is internalised by the child, thus influencing how they relate to their own heterosexual and homoerotic desires. This heteronormative bias can be seen in psychoanalytic theory and practice, but heteronormativity has, Hertzmann points out, now been revised in psychoanalytic theory. Hertzmann discusses the unconscious dynamics involved in internalised homophobia, which transforms love and desire into hate and what she calls personal indictment. She refers to the couple's superego which has malign and benign functions which can be projected onto their therapist. These projections need to be addressed by the therapist so that patients are not left alone with a hostile superego.

Hertzmann uses clinical material to show how we, as therapists, can carry shameful secrets which, if unexamined, might interfere with our capacity to work with shame. Moreover, therapists may bring to the work their own internalised homophobia and heteronormativity which needs to be recognised so that their patients do not re-experience hurt, rejection, and unresolved grief about living, as Hertzmann eloquently says, an exiled version of themselves.

Like Hertzmann's work on sexuality, Ann Hardy's on neurodivergence points to the importance of psychoanalysis not trying to "cure" difference and promoting normative notions of health and creativity which might shame people into hiding their authentic selves and unique experience of the world.

Hardy describes a couple whose only and much-loved child had special educational needs and disabilities which put significant stress on the couple relationship, leading to a rigid and defensive projective system. Hardy reflects carefully on her own transference and countertransference, because she has an autistic child and had also recently separated from her child's father.

She shows how couple therapy enabled "Tim" and "Amanda" to give voice to shameful or fearful feelings about their daughter's future and the capacity for creativity between them. In the course of this work their daughter was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and "Tim" was diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome (AS) and attention deficit disorder (ADD). Hardy describes how she helped them explore the transference relationship between them and the projective processes which were keeping them stuck. Tim's ADD diagnosis actually brought a sense of recognition and acceptance of his difference, and the therapy loosened the roles they had inhabited, deepening the reflective space between them.

Hardy is courageous in acknowledging the possible presence of unconscious envy as this couple moved towards more mutual curiosity and movement out of being stuck when her own relationship had ended. She also invited the couple to read her article prior to publication, thus ensuring consent was obtained. But she considers the dynamic and ethical implications of disclosure to them and to her readers carefully. And here we see a link to Guralnik (disclosing her work and therapy on-screen) and to Hertzmann (who writes about feelings of shame in supervision).

The importance of challenging hegemonic norms continues with Lena Barth's article about family creation via sperm donation and the importance

of accepting diverse family models that do not conform to a heteronormative image. Barth cites patchwork families, polyamory, surrogacy, co-parenting, transgender individuals, and same-sex couples which show the diverse ways families can be formed. Whereas Hertzmann and Hardy present clinical case material, Barth introduces us to a qualitative research study (based in Germany) on lesbian couples and solo mothers who use sperm donation to create their family. Barth discusses the concept of family and provides a historical overview of changing family forms in Germany. She notes the way in which accessing donor sperm moved from being seen as "morally unworthy" to legal, and she discusses the way in which it has been opened up to heterosexual, homosexual (her research focuses on lesbian couples), and solo mothers. Barth describes relevant research on the psychodynamics of starting a family through sperm donation for lesbian couples and solo mothers, and presents the results of qualitative interviews with twenty-four participants.

Her article describes the way in which new family forms offer a fertile ground for projections which reveal intolerance for ambiguity and are devaluing. There is, Barth says, a significant research gap about diverse models of family and parenthood, despite the increase in fertility treatments worldwide. Her research addresses the silence around this topic and challenges the stigma which might arise in the face of alternative family forms and relationships of care.

In Krisztina Glausius' article (which is based on a Tavistock Relationships public lecture) we move from qualitative data back to clinical material and evocations of unresolved grief and love in literature. Glausius takes us into the heart of how therapists use their countertransference to understand the transference relationship between the couple or the couple–therapist relationship. She describes what one might tune into at any one time, quoting from the work with the "Webbs" to show how Pincus (1960) chose to listen to the husband's placatory manner and his transference relationship to her as a clue to how little help he expected from anyone. In this way deep contact was made with his internal world, which was the lens through which he saw his marriage.

Glausius reminds us that there is a compulsion to repeat our past unless we have worked through it. She illustrates this by drawing on Jane Austen's *Persuasion*. It is the therapist's job, she says, to occupy a third position and to look at the projective and transference processes which trouble couple relationships. Glausius cautions against the overuse or underuse of countertransference and emphasises how important our own therapy is for knowing what belongs where. The enactments which we might get caught up in are sympathetically described and Glausius shows how reflecting on these enactments can be used to progress the work.

Couples cannot, she says, recognise and analyse the dynamics at work between them and work through it with their partner. But *Persuasion* is, Glausius says, a story about developing the capacity to think, not unlike the working through which takes place in therapy. Glausius describes what

we might think of as depressive concern in the characters in *Persuasion* as they look at mistakes and missteps in their relationships and grow in self-knowledge.

Here we might see a link between Guralnik, Hertzmann, Hardy, and Glausius in that while feelings of shame paralyse, mourning opens up the possibility of movement towards life. But, as Glausius says, this often requires the help of a psychic detective and a shared commitment to truth.

This commitment to truth can be seen in Julia Segal's article which details therapeutic work with a couple where one has a terminal diagnosis. She describes "Rose" who needs to talk about her husband's diagnosis of multiple systems atrophy and a near death incident, while her husband does not want to. But this is exactly what the therapy with Segal enabled them to do: to talk about how they felt about dying. A confrontation with death changes one's internal world and Segal focuses on how the end of life precipitates paranoid–schizoid and depressive anxieties. She reviews classic psychoanalytic texts on death and historical views on working with people at the end or later stages of life.

The couple she describes were able to share their guilt, fears, and wishes with her, thus making them less taboo and shameful. "Rose" reflected on the death of her parents showing how a current loss catalyses earlier experiences of loss, and talking this through with Segal led to a more forgiving relationship to herself. Childhood fears about dependency are also stirred up affecting how illness or being a carer is experienced. Segal shows how ambivalent and unwanted feelings can be acknowledged as ordinary, albeit extremely painful. This reparative work in therapy can ensure the survival of the good internal object and couple relationship.

Like Hardy, Segal obtained consent to publish this work. The couple wanted their story to be told and Segal shared the article prior to publication. In both Hardy and Segal we see a collaborative approach to improving practice where couples are invited to see us at work (thinking). This links to Guralnik who can also be seen at work (thinking in supervision and sharing her own vulnerabilities).

This emphasis on being seen is the focus of Ortal Kirson-Trilling's shorter clinical discussion article on the mirror role and its presence or absence in childhood and in couple relationships. Kirson-Trilling draws on Winnicott to think about what it feels like not to have been seen; when looking and seeing is narcissistically inflected. She describes Winnicott's distinction between perception and apperception. Whereas apperception is an experience of looking as growth enhancing, perception offers no recognising response and feels like a distortion.

In the adult couple relationship, partners can look without seeing each other. Kirson-Trilling evocatively describes how working with narcissistic couples can feel treacherous when mirrors feel like distorting fun-house mirrors. She describes case examples of how feeling unmirrored can lead to annihilation anxiety and attack. Like Glausius she also describes being able to acknowledge a mistake (or enactment) and to use it to progress the work.

However, Kirson-Trilling also writes about how transformational it can be for a couple to be with a therapist in a couple state of mind (Morgan, 2019) offering an experience of something they have never had before. She describes finding the male partner in the couple (with a feeling of "there you are"), enabling their female partner also to truly see them which is ultimately transformative for them both.

In both partners there might be a plea for contact and fear of an annihilating misrecognition which Kirson-Trilling empathically illustrates. Like Glausius, she uses her countertransference to listen to a tune that lies silently beneath an attack, thus contacting the need to be seen and, as she says, come into being.

Kirson-Trilling ends with Winnicott's "It is a joy to be hidden and a tragedy not to be found" (1963, p. 186) and this sentiment could be seen as thematically uniting the articles in this issue. That is, some articles describe in different ways the importance of feeling seen in an atmosphere of kindness and tolerance of difference (whether this is about sexuality, neurodivergence, different family forms, or conflicting views about the psychoanalytic frame). Other articles show us at work as we try to hone our clinical antennae or lose our analytic footing, as we try to help couples face death, or try to say to a couple fearful of exposure "There you are; I see you." Each article invites us to respect our need for recognition and courage to encounter unwanted feelings or thoughts without the silencing power of shame.

In our book reviews section we see a similar emphasis on tolerating difference. David E. Scharff reviews *Illicit Monogamy: Inside a Fundamentalist Mormon Community* by William R. Jankowiak and invites us to study cultures which are alien to our own so that we can reflect on our own socioculturally embedded moralities and consider alternative social arrangements for living. This book offers an anthropological study of polygamous marriage in a fundamentalist Mormon community which teaches loyalty to the group and to the plural rather than to the romantic principle. Scharff points out that the stresses and contradictions in this system are outlined, but he also highlights areas he would like to have seen addressed more. However, Scharff concludes that the book will be valuable to therapists working with someone who has grown up in this culture, and more generally because it encourages us to reflect on our own normative assumptions about models of love and of family life.

Judith Pickering offers an overview of *Psychoanalytic Approaches to Forgiveness and Mental Health*, edited by Ronald Britton and Aleksandra Novakovic. Forgiveness, she says, is a vitally important subject, especially at this historical moment, and she values this book for its moving collection of articles. The writers, she states, address the heart of therapeutic work with couples and families where an incapacity to forgive is linked to an incapacity to fully love. Pickering offers a concise and evocative overview of each chapter, showing how they draw on literature, philosophy, poetry, and drama, as well as clinical theory. Pickering concludes that this book will enrich our work as therapists and guide us in tackling thorny psychological issues of revenge, grievance, the developmental capacity for forgiveness, and feeling forgiven.

In our arts review section, Ann Hardy evokes for us the experience of going to the DIVA exhibition at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. She writes colourfully and playfully about the exploration of feminine power, wisdom, and creativity on show beyond what she calls the "mother, Madonna, and whore female trinity". DIVA presented, she says, a view of the feminine which challenged the prevailing norms girls grow up with in which to be feminine is to be modest, quiet, and considerate. The word "diva" and the alter-egos they represent are reclaimed with pride in this exhibition and, in turn, Hardy invites us to celebrate our own inner diva.

Stephanie Bushell provides a very sympathetic review of two films, *The Blue Caftan* and *Past Lives*, and draws a thematic link between them. This link is, she says, about what might happen when an established married couple encounter a third object infused with fantasy and projection. The fantasy thirds, as Bushell calls them, do not destroy the couple relationships depicted, but instead are opportunities to work through and mourn losses. Bushell convincingly shows how in each film a deeper and forgiving connection between the couples is traced as they dare to know themselves and each other more deeply.

Each contribution to this general issue invites us to understand and be enlivened by developments in the field of couple and family psychoanalysis and I hope that you enjoy entering into this lively conversation.

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