

Book review

by Liz Marks

Focus on Psychodrama: The Therapeutic Aspects of Psychodrama

By Peter Felix Kellerman

I found this book a challenging, well-written and thought-provoking read. The introduction provides a useful overview of the chapters.

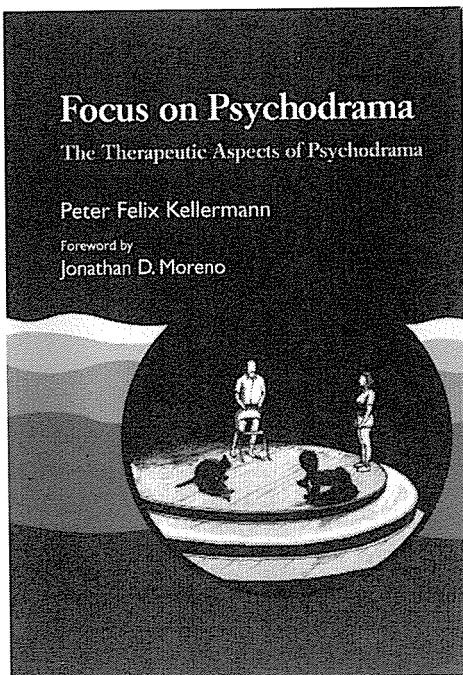
After an initial chapter defining psychodrama, the second chapter entitled 'Theory' is 'an attempt to develop a solid foundation upon which psychodrama techniques can be properly based'. This was originally published as a journal paper. I found it disappointing, concluding that it more truly lived up to its original title: 'An Essay on the Metascience of

Psychodrama'. To my mind a solid theoretical foundation would discuss Moreno's theories, perhaps comparing and contrasting them with other related or relevant theories. This was not the case. There was no discussion of role theory or any of Moreno's theory of child development, for example.

The next two chapters describe professional roles of Psychodramatists and skills needed by them, and the influence of charismatic leadership on the process of psychodrama.

It is only in the fifth chapter that Kellermann finally presents 'a model for understanding the therapeutic aspects of psychodrama'. This is central, providing a rationale and overview for the subsequent chapters. I would have warmed up to this book more readily if I had turned to the fifth chapter immediately after reading the introduction.

This chapter presents research literature on therapeutic aspects of group psychotherapy. There is also some discussion of what different schools of psychotherapy regard as the most effective factors in their therapy. The author sets out what he regards as the main therapeutic aspects in psychodrama, linking his conclusions with the research literature. I found this promoted my thinking regarding therapeutic factors in psychodrama. Subsequent writing addresses each therapeutic aspect in turn. There are



chapters on catharsis, action-insight, tele, as-if, acting out and magic.

In the introduction, Kellermann describes this book as 'an attempt to present a systematic analysis of the essential therapeutic ingredients in psychodrama' (p13). The title of the book and this description of it strongly influenced my initial warm-up. I hoped for a book that would focus immediately on the therapeutic aspects of psychodrama in an organised fashion. Instead, many chapters are revised versions of previously published journal articles, interspersed with new material and a summary of the author's doctoral thesis. Perhaps as a result, the focus on 'therapeutic aspects of psychodrama' appears in some chapters as a loosely woven thread, an afterthought to an already completed tapestry.

This book is written from a broad knowledge base and I found much of it interesting. However, I was not always in agreement with what was presented. Consequently, my thinking was provoked and the writing functioned much as a good auxiliary would. I value that it made me reflect on many aspects of psychodrama.