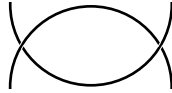


**ANZPA JOURNAL #20 December 2011**



## **ANZPA Journal #20 December 2011**

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ANZPA is an organisation of people trained in Dr. J.L. Moreno's psychodrama theory and methods, and their applications and developments in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. Ordinary members of the organisation are certificated as Psychodramatists, Sociodramatists, Sociometrists or Role Trainers, or as a Trainer, Educator, Practitioner (TEP).

The purposes of ANZPA include the establishment and promotion of the psychodrama method, the setting and maintenance of standards, and the professional association of its members. Members associate within geographical regions, through the *ANZPA Journal* and electronic publication *Socio*, and at annual conferences.

The *ANZPA Journal* has been established to assist in the fulfilment of the purposes of ANZPA through the dissemination of high quality written articles focused on psychodrama theory and methods, and their applications by practitioners in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Correspondence and submissions for the *ANZPA Journal* should be addressed to the editor:

Bona Anna

Email: <journal-editor@aanzpa.org>

Work: +61 2 98501819

Mobile: +61 0 451046928

Address: Centre for Research on Social Inclusion

C5C384 Macquarie University

New South Wales 2109

Australia

For more information and guidelines for journal contributions visit the ANZPA website <<http://www.anzpa.org>>.

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# Introduction

Welcome to the 20th edition of the *ANZPA Journal* (2011), comprising eight articles and five reviews.

Phil Carter's passion for bringing the life of the psychodrama stage to the written page abounds in the first article in this issue, *Enlivening the Psychodramatist as Writer: Lessons from Great Writers*. He draws parallels between illustrious literature and psychodrama, arguing that both intend to open the mind, psyche and body and uplift the human spirit. Using extracts from the works and lives of admired writers, he crafts an argument that posits them as treasures for the apprentice psychodramatic writer because they honour the truth of the story and engage readers as active participants in emerging human experience. The author invites boldness and leadership in written descriptions of psychodramatic work that 'live' for the reader.

The Morenian insight that anything that can be imagined can be created on the psychodrama stage is the inspiration behind Ali Watersong's article, *Surplus Reality: The Magic Ingredient in Psychodrama*. Using illustrations from her work, the author demonstrates the way in which surplus reality facilitates the development of spontaneity, brings about social atom repair and assists in the formation of a positive identity. It is inspiring to know that, through surplus reality, a person is able to enter the unknown, live out their fantasies and become the creator of their own life.

Katherine Howard's *The Dance of Relationship: Using Moreno in Workplace Injury Rehabilitation* explores the use of Moreno's methods in her work as a rehabilitation provider. Presenting two case studies as illustration, the author employs the metaphor of the dance of relationship to capture the way in which psychodramatic techniques transform difference and conflict into mutuality and cooperation, habitual coping roles into fluid and progressive functioning.

In an article published in the 2010 *ANZPA Journal*, Wendy McIntosh explored the significant impact of Moreno's work on the nursing profession. In this follow up paper, *Walking with Moreno Take Two: Integrating Theory and Practice*, she presents her utilisation of role theory in work with one nurse client. Mindful of Moreno's dictum for nurses to establish and maintain a reciprocal relationship, she demonstrates the client's progress as he develops insights and roles that will assist him to maintain adequate professional nursing boundaries.

According to John Farnsworth, psychodrama and electronic technologies are unlikely but compatible bedfellows. In *Psychodrama at Distance: Effective Supervision Using Communication Technologies*, he draws on vignettes and case examples to demonstrate effective supervision in the absence of a physical psychodrama stage. The author describes the way in which he uses all aspects of the psychodrama method via phone, email, digital and online communications to create progressive working relationships. He invites readers to reflect on the way

that psychodrama will be used in the emerging electronic worlds of the future.

In the following paper, *Healing Rifts: Sociodrama in a Maternity Community*, Don Reekie describes successful sociodramatic work that he undertook to address conflict in a hospital maternity community. He discusses the decisions and interventions he made and the responses of the participants involved, calling particular attention to the community members' written attestations regarding the positive ongoing consequences of the sociodramatic intervention. The author especially acknowledges the community members as co-creators of a new and progressive maternity culture.

Katerina Seligman contributes an article that also references the efficacy of sociodrama. In *Responses to the Threat of Climate Change: A Sociodramatic Exploration* she describes a sociodrama undertaken during a residential psychodrama workshop. Sociodramatic questions regarding the consequences of climate change were posed, and a range of subgroup responses were explored. The author describes the way in which the enactment facilitated role reversal and a deepening of the understanding of conflicting values in relation to climate change.

The *ANZPA Journal* is proud to publish Dr. Max Clayton's address to the 2011 Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association (ANZPA) Conference. In *A Creative Spirit at Work in Our Association: Then and Now*, Dr. Clayton discusses the value of the living encounter, being grounded in the present moment, doubling and role development, and goes on to highlight some of the founding principles and activities of ANZPA. He expresses deep appreciation for the commitment to the learning and fine practice of the psychodrama method in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand and the enlivening of the human spirit that has resulted, before turning to the matter of a vision that might carry the association and its members forward.

The North-West Psychodrama Association continues its republication of Moreno classics, this time *The First Psychodramatic Family* (2011 Edition) which is reviewed in this issue by Penny Beran. As well, several ANZPA members have recently been published. Ali Begg reviews Sandra Turner's *To Rakiura and Beyond*, Rebecca Ridge's *The Body Alchemy of Psychodrama* is reviewed by Annette Fisher, and Cher Willisroft reviews the edited volume *Sociodrama in a Changing World*, a chapter of which was contributed by Rollo Browne. Lastly a revised edition of *The Brain That Changes Itself* is reviewed by Dr. Neil Hucker.

Dr. Jacob Levy Moreno gave us the concept of the cultural conserve. The papers and reviews in the *ANZPA Journal* are part of our cultural conserve, revealing and recording some of the lively work that is carried on in the psychodramatic tradition since his time. It is hoped that they will be a source of interest, inspiration and lively conversation, and to borrow from Dr. Max Clayton's address published in this edition, will engender an enlivening of the human spirit.

*Bona Anna*  
Editor, December 2011

*The vision is of able men and women all over the place expressing themselves relevantly in the ordinary here and now situations in which they live and work. This expression may be in silence, in building, in planning, in negotiating, in teaching, or in play, but it will be a responsive and creative expression, an expression that brings joy to the human spirit, that uplifts the soul, that makes us feel part of the universe again.*

Vision Statement from the *Training and Standards Manual*, Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association (ANZPA) Board of Examiners (2008:2)



# Enlivening the Psychodramatist as Writer: Lessons from Great Writers

PHIL CARTER

## ABSTRACT

There is a wide roaming pack of existential fools, mavericks and strangers in strange lands. Some are writers. Some are great. The great writers have achieved a working practice of spontaneity, purpose and craft. They are alchemists working with the exhilarating power of production. They engage readers as active participants in the emerging human experience, not explaining things but crafting them in a way that the reader can experience them. Their works and their lives lived are treasures for the apprentice writer. This paper presents some of these treasures. It is designed for the psychodrama enthusiast who has been keen to bring the life of the stage to the page.

## KEYWORDS

production, spontaneity training, writers, writing

Over the past few years of obsession with writing, I have had a strong desire for my writing to be rich with the synchronicity, spontaneity and surprise that are achieved on the psychodramatic stage. I anticipated that psychodramatic sensibilities would inform my writing. I was not naïve. I knew work was required. Those in the know had written it in large letters, repeatedly and in blood: there are no shortcuts. I thought I understood. Then, there was the finding out of the awful truth.

*On a chilly morning in Russia in 1849, as vividly described by Henry Troyat (1946), a young Feodor Dostoevsky was taken from his dungeon to meet his fate. It could not be possible that he was to be executed. He had not been involved with a band of conspirators but a literary interest group. It would be exile to a Siberian labour camp at worst. He was taken to a field. There was scaffolding and a crowd and soldiers with rifles. Other*

*prisoners had been brought there. His colleagues. There was a priest and the priest led them to a place with three posts. It could not be possible that they were to be executed. He was a royalist. There was no conspiracy. He found himself standing next to his friend Mombelli. He had the impulse to tell his friend about the theme of a new story he had conceived of in his dungeon.*

I laughed. I was not alone. Here was another madman. I laughed and invited myself in to be part of this. These writers. This wide roaming pack of existential fools, mavericks and strangers in strange lands. I could belong to that. There would be pathways for me the apprentice, warnings of dead ends and cesspools, some tricks and tools. They had succeeded, and in that, they had achieved some working practice of spontaneity, purpose and craft. I wanted to learn from them.

I have become increasingly fascinated with these writers and the things they have said about their creative process. In this article, I offer a few insights I have learned in my encounters with them. I hope they will be useful to those who want their writing to have more life. The writing could be of story or it could be of your psychodramatic work. There is also much that is of relevance to production on the stage.

## **Inhabit**

When a role in the protagonist's world is first concretised on the psychodramatic stage, we often want the producer to chat with them, to be curious and interview them so we can appreciate their world. We benefit when the interviewing for role is spacious and details are made known. Writers are very involved in this endeavour. For example, the writer Toni Morrison describes to Koval (2001:353) that she wants:

*. . . to make sure that if I imagine a character and fully realise that character, I can look at the world the way that character does. And it's not a question of justification; it's a question of bearing witness to a certain kind of individual and getting it right. Whether they turn out to be mostly bad or mostly good — or usually somewhere in between — is due to the nature of their own experiences and their own background and what they thought about and what they've been able to imagine.*

The writer inhabits a character and dwells in their world. Sometimes, these are characters no one else has got to know. In psychodrama, we have the extraordinary gift of auxiliary work. I have got to say things, feel things and move in ways I would never otherwise have done. Likewise, writers of story get to journey into new worlds and new ways of being. Witness Irene Nemirovsky (2004:396) at fourteen:

*. . . settled on the sofa, notebook on her lap, she developed a technique inspired by Ivan Tur-*

*genev. As well as the narrative itself, she would write down all the ideas the story inspired in her, without any revision or crossing out. She filled notebook upon notebook with thoughts about her characters, even the minor ones, describing their appearance, their education, their childhood, all the stages of their lives in chronological order. When each character had been detailed to this degree of precision, she would use two pencils, one red, the other blue, to underline the essential characteristics to be retained; sometimes only a few lines. She would then move quickly on to writing the novel, improving it, then editing the final version.*

“Sometimes only a few lines.” Perhaps that could be called a role description. Perhaps, I could formulate a role description as a production with red and blue pencils. I might imagine myself as Irene, fourteen and on a sofa, ready to be entertained.

## Produce

All writers are producers. Not all writers inhabit a character as their main means to reach into a situation and see what happens. Some build their stories from dialogue. Stephen King can begin with something as minimal as two characters and a predicament stated in one paragraph. Some writers begin with the essence of the story imagined as a painting or heard as a piece of music. With the novel *As I Lay Dying*, William Faulkner said he “. . . simply imagined a group of people and subjected them to the simple universal nature catastrophes which are flood and fire with a simple motive to give direction to their progress” (Gorra, 2010:188).

In all these approaches, the writer is a producer, fascinated with their response to the thing produced. John Gardner (1983:142) put it like this. “So I propose in a piece of fiction that a certain man had three hundred sons, all redheads, and I muse on what that makes me say next.” *What that makes me say next.* What a wizard of a victim he is. What a freedom. Walter the psychodramatic producer says to the protagonist, “Go and be your granddaughter”. “But, I don’t have a granddaughter,” the protagonist says. “Do it anyway,” Walter says, “Let’s see what the future has to say about you”.

Sometimes, I touch the deep mystery of production and see it as an unfolding story of relationship. I imagine the first breeze on the new butterfly’s wet wings as a production. The wings wake up to their nature. And then there is a flight and that is another production which evokes yet further experience. I salute the psychodramatists who have added to the rich tradition of unscripted play upon the stage. I salute the writers who have danced their stories upon the page. I celebrate that these are not elite clubs.

Stage or page, anyone can join in and produce whatever their hearts desire or minds imagine. Take a blank page of the finest paper and your coloured pencils and we will call that the invitation to play. Perhaps, you might even do that now. Write of your experience or write of your fancy. Make an expression. And then

look and listen. Look, listen and know what it is that that expression evokes in you. And even if it is not what you want — even if it is that tired old critic that has been with you since the beginning of adventure — then have that critic choose a colour and make their response and then find out what that evokes.

Perhaps we could experiment with telling the story of a psychodrama from a voice other than a producer or a clinician. It could be told from one of the roles in the system. Notice the sensibilities that Toni Morrison (Koval, 2001:354) is entertaining in her story telling:

*In this book I didn't want to be the omnipotent voice and I needed someone else and I chose this woman, L., who was the chef in this hotel. But she had to live the whole thing, and so she's dead for some of the book . . . I needed the space. I needed to stand back from that voice. I wanted an 'I' that was not the author. I didn't want to confuse that voice with a character who actually functioned in that house and manipulated people and concludes certain activity. She's very much part of the narrative of that story. I was able in some books to have a tone that could work, like in Paradise I was able to do it. Even in Beloved I was able to have a kind of distant, all-knowing but comfortable, I think, voice that the reader trusted. But in some instances I don't want the reader to trust the voice. In Jazz I wanted a narrator that was wrong most of the time, or could make a mistake. The same thing here — I didn't want the reader to be that comfortable in that voice. I wanted the edge, so that the participation of the reader would be more edgy, more intact, in a sense.*

## Enter, You and Me

There is no spectator position in a psychodrama. There is no spectator position in the reading of a book. Like Toni Morrison, other novelists work very consciously with the craft of engaging participation from a reader. The book *The Story Begins* by Amos Oz (1999) fascinated me with its analysis of the different 'contracts' that writers such as Chekhov, Kafka, Raymond Carver and Marquez offer their readers. An extraordinary set of tricks and seductions. "The confounding of simple expectation — the *not* telling us what it was that Maisie knew — is a way to simulate the reader to a fuller exercise of his imagination: to make him *read* in a more exalted sense (*not* devour)" (Kermode, 1983:95-96).

A relationship is formed between writer and reader where both are active co-creators. It is a collaborative experiment. The reader enters into the truth of the fictional dream and the writer receives such a reader and commits to being with them. If the writer as an alchemist has invited readers to participate in the mystery of human consciousness, then we will want them to remain present for all stages of the cooking.

The skilful writer values the reader's willingness and trust so much, she must craft the writing so the reader gets to have the experience of surprise and the unknown. Such a writer does not want the reader to know about something. She wants the fingertips to touch it, the itch that has been at the bones to be scratched,

the eyes to pop open a new pathway to the heart.

If, as psychodramatists, we do not want our commentaries to be read as a linear plod or a dry analysis, if we do not want to find our writing has had the mystery squeezed out of it, then we must take up this awful challenge. It is not enough to write about surprise. We must be crazy ambitious enough to offer the reader the experience of surprise.

There are exercises designed for this ambition. This one of John Gardner's (1983:203) is a favourite. It opened me up to a whole range of ways of narrating a story so that the affective mood of the character can be experienced directly. "Describe a building as seen by a man whose son has just been killed in a war. Do not mention the son, war, death or the old man doing the seeing; then describe the same building, in the same weather, at the same time of day, as seen by a happy lover. Do not mention love or the loved one."

I wanted more than exercises. I wanted my psychodramatic warm ups to surrender and spontaneity to come to me as a writer. I wanted to cultivate an attitude to the blank stage of the page. Bob Dylan's (2004:56) description of his artistic gestation helped. "I trained my mind to do this, had cast off gloomy habits and learned to settle myself down . . . I began cramming my brain with all kinds of deep poems."

## Execute

*The priest on the scaffolding proclaimed to the gathered that the wages of sin were death. He offered his icy cross to the condemned. Dostoevsky could kiss his icy cross. The drums beat, the trumpets sounded and the first three prisoners were tied to the posts. Hoods drawn over their heads and the firing squad came forward. Dostoevsky was in the next row. He calculated he had five minutes left to live. He decided he would spend two minutes to say farewell to his friends, two minutes for his family members and one minute to cast a last glance upon the world.*

Do I need a gun to my head before I will say what I mean and write what must be written? I have heard the writers. "Just write," they say. "One word after another," says Stephen King. Others speak of rapture. William Faulkner describes "... that emotion definite and physical and yet nebulous to describe: that ecstasy, that eager and joyous faith and anticipation of surprise which the yet unmarred sheet beneath my hand held inviolate and unfailing, waiting for release" (Gorra, 2010:185-186). Many people split the experience into inspiration and perspiration and ask which is more important. I do not know if that split is accurate or useful for me. I prefer John Gardner's (1983:120) description of 'flow'. It feels like the psychodramatic stage:

*. . . the writer forgets the words he has written on the page and sees, instead, his characters*

*moving around their rooms, hunting through cupboards, glancing irritably through the mail, setting mousetraps, loading pistols. The dream is as alive and compelling as one's dreams at night, and then the writer writes down on paper what he has imagined, the words, however inadequate, do not distract his mind from the fictional dream but provide him with a fix on it, so that when the dream flags he can reread what he's written and find the dream starting up again.*

I did writing exercises where the output delighted and amazed me. I got down a paragraph in an inspired state. I even got a chapter or two and saw a novel. I wanted a novel. But it was not going to be achieved in one gulp of determination. Early success became a tyrant. I manipulated characters to serve some clever idea of plot or I hacked at the plot to suit some idea I had of a character. My ambition turned into a stubborn mule. The necessity for the effort to be sustained over months in order for the work to be done, activated other things and the pearly gates to inspiration closed. Here I was, a psychodramatist certified in a method explicitly dedicated to spontaneity, yet I was cast again and again upon the barren lands when writing. So, I crept back up onto my knees and had another go.

I look around for the voice that says "It's all in the warm up". I want to beat it to a pulp . . . because? Because it is dismissive, condescending, smug . . .? Let us call that the warm up. That is my warm up. Whatever I am warmed up to . . . it is mine. I expect at some point, by good fortune or not, through trying or not trying, that spontaneity will split me open, have my feet sunk into the earth and my fingers thrust up to drink in the skylight. So, there is some wild cocktail of hope and desperation in me but not enough coherence to give sufficient form to the something, whatever it is. I do not know. This is the place I find myself when writing at times. Just like this paragraph, not quite sensible.

I discovered a treasure, Dorothea Brande (1934). She offers spontaneity training for writers. She offers step by step instructions on getting discipline and inspiration into a cooperative working relationship. She asks that I become a stranger in my own street and put what I notice into definite words before I abandon it to the manipulation of the unconscious. Do that before the critic gets going, she says. Have a sleep or go for a walk. Do something repetitive and monotonous. And then come back and do what you must with the work and after that, let the critic do its fine job of editing and arranging. I took her advice and benefited. I knew that going about trying to obtain certain things through force of will would be the very thing that defeated my purpose. Brande guided me to settle into the unknown, to evoke stillness in the disturbed place.

I also received William Faulkner's advice. "A young writer would be a fool to follow a theory. Teach yourself by your own mistakes; people learn only by error. The good artist believes no one is good enough to give him advice. He has supreme vanity" (Gorra, 2010:188). A certain type of resilience and tough skin would be useful if I was going to be exposing myself and unwittingly participating

in follies and revealing deformities I did not know I had.

It appears a devotion has been developing in me. I ride this devotion through the creative process. I imagine I am like the young Bob Dylan (2004) in the gestation of his first song. He took many years gathering all the different elements that were needed for him to craft the song that he was wanting to perform but no one had written. One element was the song Pirate Jenny. He “. . . wanted to figure out how to manipulate and control this particular structure and form which I knew was the key that gave Pirate Jenny its resilience and outrageous power” (p.276). He “. . . began fooling around” and “. . . liked the idea of doing it but the song didn't come off. I was missing something”. Then the “. . . bells went off”. He remembered Suze and Arthur Rimbaud's words *Je est un autre* (I is someone else). There was a catharsis of integration with what he had embodied of Pirate Jenny, Woody Guthrie's union meeting sermons and Robert Johnson's dark night of the soul. He was “. . . straight into it. It was wide open. One thing for sure, not only was it not run by God, it wasn't run by the devil either” (p.293). For those who had not been looking, it appeared to be an immaculate conception.

## Emergence

The knowledge that all writers have put in gigantic struggles also calms me. I reflect on the difficulties I have had in coming up with role descriptions that are precise and individualistic and I have a gentler attitude and patience for the work needed. Examination of the history of storytelling has also generated a very useful perspective. Story telling has been moving from the form of epic tales and fables into the more psychological form of the novel. I like to see that our struggles with role description are within that wider movement. Perhaps it is an evolutionary impulse.

Of the characters in the early forms, Jane Smiley (2005:342) says “. . . their sentiments are high, low, exalted, tender, grand, unmixed. In other words, they are poetic sentiments spoken by poetically conceived characters — the wise father, the perfect friend, the beautiful and virtuous young woman. Much of the narrative is dialogue, but it is ideal rather than vernacular language”. In the novel, the characters are no longer emblems or symbols of something, not solely evil or solely good, but they are protagonists possessed of agency. The action occurs as a result of the psychology of the characters.

So, I say to my role description, “Go and be released into the luxurious truth of a whole paragraph. Give yourself a whole chapter. Indulge yourself with a whole novel if you must. Role theory, you need not be so lonely and carry such a burden of responsibility”.

The precision and craft we have built up in our dramatic production can infuse and inform our writing and vice versa. There is a dance between stage and page and we are the dance and dancers, we are the band, we are the music. When a book is read or a story heard, it becomes living again and there is the opportunity

for further acts of creativity. Bruno Bettelheim (1975:150) expresses the gestation of a fairy tale:

*... the folk fairy tale is the result of a story being shaped and reshaped by being told millions of times, by different adults to all kinds of other adults and children. Each narrator as he told the story, dropped and added elements to make it more meaningful to himself and to the listeners, whom he knew well. When talking to a child, the adult responded to what he surmised from the child's reactions. Thus the narrator let his unconscious understanding of what the story told be influenced by that of the child. Successive narrators adapted the story according to the questions the child asked, the delight and fear he expressed openly or indicated by the way he snuggled up against the adult.*

If psychodrama is tasting life twice, the second time with laughter, then let us taste again and then again and again. I set up some groups to make sociodramatic inquiries into the emerging story of the machine. I took some dynamics and characters from our findings and crafted a fable (Carter, 2010). The editor in chief of a computing journal said it was unusual but he liked it.

If we are bold, we will not become entrenched in the restrictive ideas of corporate academia. We will be leaders in the living descriptions of our psychodramatic work, descriptions that honour the truth of the story and offer the invitation to participate. Literature has the same intent as psychodrama: to uplift the human spirit, open the mind, psyche and body, and invite us all to be participants. Let us not walk blindly in the spiritual vacuum of our modern institutions, caught up in their survival mechanisms. At least, let us be undercover agents. And if we find ourselves to be cowards, then let us plead that we were just in it for the fun.

*In that field in Russia, the soldiers were ordered to lower their rifles. The hoods of the three men were taken off and the prosecutor stepped forth and read commutation of the sentence. A pardon, by way of the infinite clemency of His Majesty the Emperor. Feodor Dostoevsky was sent to hard labour. Twenty years later he told his wife that he could not recall any day as happy as that one.*

*His colleague, Grigoriev went insane.*

*Dostoevsky had material.*

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Phil Carter is a psychodramatist. He has a PhD in information systems and teaches research to postgraduate students at the Auckland University of Technology. He also offers training in leadership and group work. Phil can be contacted at <pcarter@aut.ac.nz>.

# Surplus Reality: The Magic Ingredient in Psychodrama

ALI WATERSONG

## ABSTRACT

Anything that can be imagined can be created on the psychodramatic stage. This is the magic that makes surplus reality a central aspect and powerful tool of Dr. J.L. Moreno's psychodrama method. Through surplus reality a person is able to enter the unknown, live out their fantasies and become the creator of their own life. Using psychodramatic work as illustration, Ali Watersong demonstrates the way that surplus reality facilitates the development of spontaneity, brings about social atom repair and assists in the formation of a positive identity. This article is adapted from the author's 2008 Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association (ANZPA) accreditation thesis, *The Magic of Surplus Reality: Developing Spontaneity and Bringing about Social Atom Repair*.

## KEY WORDS

as if, auxiliary ego, concretisation, imagination, locus nascendi, maximisation, neuroscience, protagonist, role reversal, social atom repair, spontaneity, status nascendi, surplus reality, systems theory, unconscious

## Introduction

The first time I hear the term 'surplus reality' is when I set out in psychodrama a photo of my mother holding me as an infant. My original experience of being desperately held by my terrified mother is transformed into one of re-mothering by 'The World's Best Mother'. This new experience of being held and cared for in secure, loving, confident arms shows me that it is possible to make new memories in the brain and the body.

In my work conducting psychodrama groups in the community I am stimulated by the power of surplus reality to bring to life a person's inner world so that their fantasies, hopes, fears, dreams, imaginings and unexpressed resentments are enacted on the psychodramatic stage. Women who attend these groups have frequently experienced some form of neglect, abuse or trauma in their formative

years and these core early relationships have become the template for future relationships. Neuroscience research showing that the physical brain structure is shaped by early interpersonal experiences, confirms Moreno's (1953) theories of personality formation and the impact of the original social atom. The social self is developed in response to the child's first social situation (Schoore, 1994). By entering into the realm of surplus reality and calling forth those things which lie outside normal life, old ways of functioning are examined and new roles and perceptions are developed. In surplus reality a person re-experiences the old conflict and develops a different warm up and new response, resulting in social atom repair.

As I apply psychodrama in my work I am developing my dramatic artistry and creative imagination. My ability to work with and play in the unknown is increasing. The more I use surplus reality the more I appreciate its magic and potential to transform and expand the human spirit.

## Surplus Reality and Moreno

Dr J.L. Moreno coined the term surplus reality to refer to the situation in a psychodrama where a person is enacting something that exists in her imagination and subjective reality. It involves the expression of those things that are above and beyond what is normally expressed in life. Moreno was influenced by Marx's concept of surplus value.

*Surplus value is part of the earnings of the worker of which he is robbed by capitalistic employers. But surplus reality is, in contrast, not a loss but an enrichment of reality by the investments and extensive use of imagination. This expansion of experience is made possible in psychodrama by methods not used in life — auxiliary egos, auxiliary chair, double, role reversal, mirror, magic shop, the high chair, the psychodramatic baby, soliloquy, rehearsal of life, and others.*

Moreno (1965:212-213)

Moreno (1972a) defined psychodrama as the science which investigates the truth by dramatic methods. This psychological truth consists of all aspects of a person's experience, her inner and outer worlds. Psychodrama provides the bridge between objective reality and this inner subjective reality. Surplus reality enables the invisible, intangible dimensions of life that have not been fully experienced or expressed, to be concretised and enacted. Past, present and future events that are a reality in the imagination can all be displayed in the present on the psychodrama stage. Moreno knew that he could not truly meet the psyche of the protagonist unless he lived in the surplus reality together with the protagonist.

Zerka Moreno (2000:18) values surplus reality highly. "The deepest catharsis in psychodrama comes from doing those scenes, those interactions, those moments that do not, cannot, and are not ever likely to happen in real life, for

whatever reason.” The use of surplus reality to express powerful emotions such as rage, provides an outlet that prevents acting out and frees up the underlying feelings of grief and longing in a catharsis of integration, as demonstrated in the following illustration.

### *Murdering Mother*

Sue’s childhood has been punctuated by frequent physical and verbal abuse and as a result her adult life is chaotic, characterised by rejection and self-destructive behaviours. She is very angry, but her anger has been turned inwards and expressed through depression and self-harming behaviour. In a workshop Sue warms up to her relationship with her dead Nana from whom she did experience love.

A scene is set out in the hospital where Nana is critically ill. Sue tells Nana that she loves her, something she was unable to do at the time. Sue’s mother minimises the seriousness of Nana’s condition and Sue becomes very angry. Her anger is maximised. The following dialogue takes place.

Sue            I’m disgusted. This is your mother. She’s really sick.  
Mother        She’ll be all right. Stop making a fuss. You’re just upset because of your mental illness.  
Sue            I hate you. You never wanted me. You always rejected me. And you’re doing it to Nana. She’s your mother!  
Sue            *turning to the director* . . . I want to kill her!  
Director       This is psychodrama. Anything can be enacted here. How do you want to kill her?  
Sue            I want to hit her with the shovel and then bury her!

The new scene is enacted. Props are organised to assist the safe expression of anger on stage<sup>1</sup>. Sue warms up quickly and experiences a catharsis of rage as she hits cushions held in front of the auxiliary playing her mother. She shouts at her mother. “It’s not me who’s mentally ill, it’s you!” She yells and screams and continues to hit her mother until she is spent. She enlists group members to help her bury the body. Turning to her Nana, Sue weeps as she expresses her grief. Nana embraces her, saying “I love you. It wasn’t your fault that your parents rejected you”. Sue cries with relief as she experiences in word and action her Nana’s love and acceptance.

In acting out her murderous fantasy in this surplus reality enactment, the protagonist is able to release and integrate violent feelings that have become frozen in time. Anger often overlays feelings of loss and dependency and the need for love and acknowledgment, because it is more accessible than vulnerability. The catharsis of rage allows the underlying grief and longing to be experienced and as a result, Sue experiences a sense of mastery and empowerment.

In a drama such as this, the sharing phase is important to assist the protagonist

to move from the surplus reality where she is in an altered state back to the here and now reality with the group. Sharing is a way to ground and reintegrate the protagonist, as well as a time for group members to de-role and connect up with one another.

## **Surplus Reality, Concretisation and the Auxiliary Ego**

Concretisation is the surplus reality technique that makes the protagonist's private world tangible by representing individuals, absentees, delusions, hallucinations, symbols, ideals, animals and objects on the stage in a concrete way. It allows the protagonist to experience physically what has been experienced psychologically. The psychodramatist says, "Don't tell me, show me". The task of the auxiliary ego is to portray the protagonist's perceptions of the internal figures dominating her world, so that they can be encountered externally. In talking about the function of the auxiliary role, Moreno (1965) stresses the therapeutic use of bodily contact to give the subject the warmth and immediacy of life, not only in words but in action. For example, if there has been an absence of care and nurturing in childhood a person may need to experience in surplus reality a 'new' mother or father who can hold and hug her, and act in ways she wishes her mother or father had acted (Moreno, 1972a).

### *Healing Dad*

Jane has difficulty speaking up in the group. She warms up to a scene when she is three years old. She is holding hands with her father as they walk down the street. She skips happily beside him. Suddenly he shouts aggressively at her to stop. She immediately freezes. With maximisation and doubling from the director she curls up in a foetal position, crying and terrified. This urge to curl up and cry is enacted fully. Jane is then invited to step outside the scene and choose an auxiliary to act for her in the scene. After a full re-enactment she warms up to comforting her child self. She eases the little girl's fears, holding her securely, stroking her and talking to her. Gradually the child relaxes.

In this scene Jane warms up to what Moreno (1972a) calls the *locus nascendi* and *status nascendi*, the place and moment when it begins. This is the magic of surplus reality. We can enact any moment in someone's subjective experience of life as if it is occurring here and now. Withdrawing and going silent in response to harsh treatment was Jane's childhood survival strategy. However this time Jane is not alone. With doubling and maximisation she expresses the fear and distress she could not bring out in the original situation. Maximisation is a technique that expands and intensifies experiences of the psyche far beyond what is possible in ordinary life. This new expression is more physiologically consistent than the adaptive coping response of withdrawal. The enactment in surplus reality has enabled Jane to give and receive love and care at a deep feeling level.

Jane is now free to be authentic with her father, Henry. A new scene is

produced involving him and his parents. His father died when he was six months old. His mother married a man who mistreated her and Henry. As Henry, Jane warms up and expresses grief to the father he never knew. Turning to Jane he embraces her saying, "I love you but I couldn't show you". In role reversal Jane weeps as she feels her father's love.

In this enactment, the use of surplus reality facilitates the exploration of multi-generational experience. With enquiry there is an expansion of thinking and feeling, and the beliefs, values and culture of the family system become clear. Systems theory is an integral part of Moreno's work. Once one part of the system has changed and become more spontaneous, there is the possibility of change and increased spontaneity in other parts of the system.

In surplus reality the borders between objective reality and fantasy are dissolved and the boundaries of sex, death and age are transcended. On the psychodrama stage Jane reverses roles with her father, experiences the world through his eyes and expresses the grief that he has been carrying his whole life. There is a further catharsis of integration that enables Jane to forgive and reconcile with her Dad. Social atom repair has occurred. One of the core therapeutic tasks of psychodrama is accomplished through surplus reality, and that is the development of a cluster of progressive roles to repair the lack of doubling and mirroring in the original social atom.

## Surplus Reality, 'As-If', Imagination and Play

The entire method of psychodrama is based on the principle of 'as-if' and the use of imagination.

*Psychodrama is a way to change the world in the HERE AND NOW using the fundamental rules of imagination without falling into the abyss of illusion, hallucination or delusion. The human brain is the vehicle of imagination. Psychodrama, in training the imagination, overcomes the differences which hinder communication between the sexes, between the races, the generations, the sick and the healthy, between people and animals, between people and objects, between the living and the dead. The simple methods of psychodrama give us courage, return to us our lost unity with the universe, and re-establish the continuity of life.*

Moreno's Magic Charter of Psychodrama (1972b:131)

Surplus reality is a way of extending and focussing the capacity for imagination and play. The development of the imagination transforms consciousness and contributes to the growth of hopefulness, originality, and the ability to entertain new ideas and enter into different realities than our own (Hosking, 1989). The psychodrama stage is viewed 'as-if' it was an imaginary arena in which anything, including the impossible, can happen (Kellermann, 1992). Entering into the world of make believe brings forth the quality that Moreno (1972a) called

dramatic spontaneity, that which gives newness and vitality to feelings, actions and words, and assists in energising and unifying the self. Moreno believed that humans are cosmic beings as well as social beings. In surplus reality the mythic dimension of life can be portrayed. "God is always within and among us, as he is for children. Instead of coming down from the skies, he comes in by way of the stage door. God is not dead, he is alive, in psychodrama!" (Moreno & Moreno, 1975: 22).

Play is an essential human quality and the ability to play is fundamental to healing. Winnicott (1971) argues that in play the child or adult is free to be creative and use the whole personality, and that through creativity the individual discovers the self. The emphasis on play, imagination, intuition and creativity in surplus reality gives psychodrama its magical quality, as illustrated in the following scenario.

### *Wonderwoman*

During a psychodramatic enactment, Stephanie becomes immobilised as she attempts to confront a childhood abuser. The producer's interventions and attempts to expand the system fail to warm her up in a different way, and she remains stuck. She is coached to call upon Zena Warrior Princess. Stephanie immediately comes alive saying, "I'll get Wonderwoman!" She finds a 'laser gun' and a colourful Wonderwoman cape to wear and organises a fleet of flamingos to be her army. After a vigorous struggle she fights off the perpetrator, expressing her rage and indignation as she does so. She then comforts her frightened child self. She cries as she makes a new relationship with herself, one that is nurturing and protective.

In this example the imagination and creativity of the producer stimulate those of the protagonist. In entering into surplus reality and enacting her fantasy Stephanie increases her playfulness, spontaneity and creativity. Fragmentation is the outcome when there has been childhood abuse, as is the case with Stephanie. As the psychodramatist, it is important to double, to enter the protagonist's world as a compassionate companion and to ensure that re-enactment is not a re-traumatising experience.

### **Surplus Reality and the Body**

There is a saying in psychodrama that the body remembers what the mind forgets. Zerka Moreno (1989) wisely counsels that the body is the royal road to the unconscious. In other words our bodies are communicating with us and others all the time but often we ignore their attempts at conversation. Through physical symptoms and signals the body expresses information that has not yet surfaced into consciousness. Unresolved emotional experiences may be somatised in the body. Concretising bodily experiences in surplus reality increases awareness and gives new insights, as illustrated in the following section.

## *The Drama of the Body*

In a psychodramatic enactment, Lesley feels tension in her head, neck and shoulders and her legs feel achy and weak. Each of these bodily experiences is concretised. Lesley's legs say, "I'm ready to run in case something bad happens!" She remembers that her father used to hit her on her legs when she was little and she would freeze in terror. Lesley is coached to express her feelings to her father, which facilitates a new warm up. No longer a powerless child, she integrates the painful childhood experience and processes it cognitively.

As a child, Lesley's impulse to run away is prevented and she has somatised the experience. Her body stores the fear and the memory of the urge to run, although this memory has not been accessible to her cognition. "The symptoms of trauma are the result of a highly activated incomplete biological response to threat, frozen in time. By enabling this frozen response to thaw, then complete itself, trauma can be healed" (Kellerman, 2000:30). Through surplus reality Lesley gives her legs a voice and is then able to release frozen feelings. Catharsis is an intense body/mind/emotion event. It breaks up body armouring and allows us to experience our bodies in ways that are more appropriate to the present circumstances.

Using surplus reality to enact what is in the body deepens a person's warm up and facilitates greater consciousness. It enables full expression and brings about greater vitality and creativity. By focusing on the physical, the action component of a role is given primacy which allows the feelings to emerge and the mind to be less dominant. Experiencing the world through the body and entering the realm of the emotional, metaphorical and sensory core of our being opens us to a wider range of possibilities. This is the magic of surplus reality.

These ideas are supported by a growing body of psychoneurobiology research into the relationships between the psyche (emotions, spirit), the nervous system (mind, neurons) and biology (body). Social interactions early in life result in the stimulation of both neurotransmitters and neural growth hormones that participate in the active building of the brain (Schore, 1994). Fear, stress and trauma all affect brain chemistry while trauma memory is stored in the body (Pert, 1999). New neuroscience research also provides evidence that the brain is malleable and is continually being rebuilt. For example, Cozolino (2002) maintains that the involvement of affect and cognition appears necessary in the therapeutic process in order to create the context for the integration of dissociated neural circuits. This can be said to be provided by the surplus reality of psychodramatic enactment whereby a catharsis of integration is achieved with the expression of feeling coupled with cognitive insights. Thus psychodrama with its emphasis on experiential learning in enriched environments provides new positive experiences that stimulate neural plasticity and assist the neural rewiring that is required for new learning. This is a rich area for further research. For example, McVea (2009) is involved in investigations into protagonists' change processes during psychodrama. The impact of psychodramatic enactment on neural functioning could also be investigated using brain imaging technology.



## Surplus Reality and the Protagonist

For most people ordinary living requires a degree of restraint and intense feelings tend to be toned down. The freedom from all ordinary conventions in the surplus reality enactment is one of the unique therapeutic potentials of psychodrama. Therapeutic change occurs through a corrective emotional experience as feelings are discharged, accompanied by cognitive insights. Trauma recovery and the undoing and redoing of past negative experiences are made possible through surplus reality. New memories in the brain and body are created as neural functioning is stimulated by the enriched environment in the psychodrama group. Surplus reality enactment increases spontaneity, originality and creativity and the development of a positive identity.

New progressive roles characterised by vitality and flexibility are developed as old roles are modified, old warm ups drop away and the person experiences new strength, creativity and self-acceptance. Warming up to a spontaneous state leads to highly organised patterns of conduct and the individual integrates her feelings, beliefs and actions. As her role repertoire expands with the incorporation of new progressive roles there is more flexibility resulting in more integrated functioning. She builds healthy relationships with people thus creating a new, more life-enhancing social atom.

## Surplus Reality and the Psychodramatist

In order to tap the healing power of surplus reality the psychodramatist must have the courage to enter the unknown. A central component of the training is the development of the imagination and the ability to play, so that the producer can participate wholeheartedly in the fantasy world of her protagonist. A person's bodily expression cuts to the core of her experience. Hence the producer of a drama must be alert to body cues and develop the capacity to notice the smallest movement or flicker of facial expression and bring it to consciousness. Surplus reality can also be used to expand a person's experience of the sociodramatic influences of gender, race, class, sexuality and able-bodyism.

The ability to access and stay alive to the roles of *magician*, *spontaneous actor*, *playful companion* and *believer in the creative genius* will enhance the potency of the practitioner. By using the dimension of surplus reality the psychodramatist is modelling a way of being in the world that unleashes a person's power to be spontaneous, and assists her to achieve her own creative potential.

## Surplus Reality Extended

Writers since Moreno have extended the concept of surplus reality. Blatner (2003) notes that the root of the word imagination is 'magic'. He encourages the psychodramatist to develop her role as magician by use of symbols, 'familiar' and incantations, to invoke magical powers by opening her mind to channel the

unnameable spirits of intuition and imagination. Blomkvist and Rutzel (1994) view surplus reality as an instrument of disintegration and chaos. In surplus reality one moves from the known to the unknown where the ego's ability to control and understand ceases. "When the drama enters the stage the protagonist and the director are in the hands of the drama and not vice versa" (p.238). The purpose of the psychodrama is not to find a solution but to allow full expression.

Kipper (2000) describes the Experiential Reintegration Model (ERM) that focuses on using psychodramatic enactment to alter a person's experiential pool. Undoing and redoing are fundamental surplus reality techniques which allow here and now changes to develop. Deliberately dissolving boundaries on the stage and temporarily removing the limitations imposed by time, space and actual reality results in powerful therapeutic effects. Hudgins (2002) developed the Therapeutic Spiral Model to assist in social atom repair with trauma survivors by using surplus reality to enact scenes of restoration and repair. Surplus reality allows for a broad systemic perspective on the socio-political culture in which a protagonist has developed. The spirit of patriarchy, of colonisation or of the Catholic Church, for example, can be concretised and enacted, bringing forth the values and ideas of the dominant culture that impact on a person's role development.

## Conclusion

The psychodrama method assists people to fully experience all aspects of their subjective and objective worlds. On the psychodrama stage they examine old ways of functioning, develop new ways of being, reorganise roles and bring about social atom repair. The magic of surplus reality lies in the use of the imagination and play in this endeavour. It allows us to go beyond the prosaic and mundane and dare to live out our fantasies and imaginings. Enactment in surplus reality wakes up the senses and brings us alive as we experience ourselves and others in the here and now. For a period we live in Kairos time rather than Chronos time<sup>2</sup>. As we experience our creative genius we develop new ways of being, we strengthen our ability to love and accept ourselves, we expand our capacity to give and receive love, and we increase our enjoyment of life.

Surplus reality in psychodrama addresses our deep hunger to explore creative potential by experiencing and expressing all that we are and expanding into the abundance of life.

## END NOTES

1. A range of techniques is used to assist the safe expression of anger and rage on the psychodrama stage: group members hold big cushions for the protagonist to kick, punch or push against;

batons or strips of sheeting with a knot tied at the end are used to smash the floor or a cushion; the protagonist is coached to breathe deeply and bring the sound out from the belly so there is no strain on the larynx; several people hold the protagonist firmly by the legs, arms and shoulders, so that she must use all her strength to free herself; the protagonist lies on a mattress on the floor while several people hold her down and she then fights them off; auxiliaries need to provide enough resistance safely so that the protagonist feels the constraint and fights hard but not so much that she cannot break free; group members double the protagonist as she expresses anger to avoid a warm up to shame.

2. The ancient Greeks had two words for time, *chronos* and *kairos*. *Chronos* refers to chronological or sequential time. *Kairos* means the right or opportune moment to act. It signifies an undetermined period of time in which something special happens. It has a qualitative eternal nature where awareness of everyday time diminishes and one is very present.

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Ali Watersong is a psychodramatist and counsellor in Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand. She works with individuals and couples in private practice and conducts experiential psychodrama workshops. Ali is currently president of the Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association (ANZPA) Canterbury Westland region. She loves the mountains and sea, making things out of wood and teaching guitar to small children in Lyttelton. Ali can be contacted at <[watersong@slingshot.co.nz](mailto:watersong@slingshot.co.nz)>.

# The Dance of Relationship: Using Moreno in Workplace Injury Rehabilitation

KATHERINE HOWARD

## ABSTRACT

Katherine Howard explores the use of Moreno's methods in what has become, in Morenian terms, a robotic workplace injury rehabilitation system. Presenting two case studies as illustration, she employs the metaphor of the dance of relationship to capture the way in which psychodramatic techniques transform difference and conflict into mutuality and cooperation, habitual coping roles into fluid and progressive functioning. This article is adapted from the author's 2010 Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association (ANZPA) accreditation thesis, *Spontaneity and Creativity at Work: The Application of Morenian Methods in Workplace Injury Management*.

## KEY WORDS

coaching, creativity, cultural conserve, doubling, injury, mirroring, modelling, Moreno, psychodrama, rehabilitation, spontaneity, role, role relationship, role reversal, role training, warm up, workplace

*Apart they long for each other,  
together they cannot stay.  
How to dance  
the impossible  
dance?  
Only in the  
dancing does  
the answer lie,  
only in the  
dancing does  
the question die.*

*Dance not for  
the question,  
dance not for  
the lie,  
dance for the dancing.*

Rama Malone (1995)

## **The Dance of Workplace Relationships**

I want to awaken you to the enlivening dance of relationships, awaken you to the possibility that, using psychodramatic techniques, spontaneity and creativity can transform difference and conflict into mutuality and cooperation. In particular, I want to focus on the relationships between people involved in the workplace injury rehabilitation system. In Australia, a government funded, highly regulated insurance system supports recovery from injury and return to work with an emphasis on minimal financial loss to the commonwealth, the employer and hopefully, the injured person. This tends to see stakeholders working collaboratively to achieve an outcome that has a financial rather than a human focus. As a result the system becomes robotic, the dance of relationships lifeless. I work as a workplace rehabilitation provider in this system. My role is to “forge a link” (Workcover NSW, 2009) between various stakeholders including the injured person, the doctors and the employers in order to achieve a desired outcome.

Ten years after I had begun to forge the links, I engaged in psychodrama training. I became excited about my developing understanding of the workplace injury rehabilitation system in Morenian terms, and my developing capacity to use psychodrama methods in the work. I realised that I required a robust framework for supporting the healing of the whole person as well as for understanding the motivations and roles of all the stakeholders. I needed a way to appreciate the dance of workplace relationships, and I found it in psychodrama.

## **Moreno: Illuminating the Dance of Relationships**

Dr. J.L. Moreno (1889-1974) believed that there is a spark of creativity alive at the centre of every being. He worked all his life to reclaim spontaneity in the face of the tendency for human systems to become lifeless.

### ***The Cultural Conserve, Creativity and Spontaneity***

Moreno’s cultural conserve “. . . explains how a creative, spontaneous act can become a culture which can then be frozen in time and lose much of its original significance” (Bannister, 1998:118).

*The greatest, longest, most difficult, most unique of all wars man has ever waged during his*

*career, sounds its call to you. It has no precedent, no parallel in the history of the universe. It is not a war against nature, it is not a war against other animals, it is not a war of one human race, nation, or state against any other. It is a war of man against ghosts, ghosts that have been called, and not without reason, the greatest makers of comfort and civilization. They are the machine, the cultural conserve, the robot.*

J.L. Moreno (1972:44)

This concept helped me to appreciate the way in which workplace rehabilitation, originally designed with good intent to support an injured person to recover and return to work becomes conserved, adhering to rules that are prioritised ahead of the creative human being as a whole. The central drive is to ‘manage’ injured people in order to ‘manage’ economic considerations. The spirit of the dance of human relationship is denied. The introduction of creativity and spontaneity into a system that has become robotic has the capacity to change the cultural conserve. As Moreno (1972) outlined, although creativity produces the ideas and the structure, there can be no enactment of creativity without the spark of spontaneity to enliven it. I have learnt that I can intervene in the cultural conserves of the workplace injury rehabilitation system when I bring spontaneity into my functioning.

### ***The Power of Mutuality in Relationships***

Mutuality is a Morenian term related to making “mutual choices or reciprocity in choices” (Hale, 1986). Where there is mutuality in human systems, there is a strong likelihood that outcomes will be achieved. As a workplace rehabilitation provider, my effectiveness lies in my capacity to forge relationships that build movement towards mutual goals. The outcomes are powerful when those mutual purposes focus on a warm up to vitality, health and quality of life in a holistic way.

### ***Warm Up to Progressive Role Development***

Mike Consedine captures the link between spontaneity and the warm up to progressive, creative functioning. “For me spontaneity is the urge to live — the spark inside which prompts us to move forward . . . The unconscious spark which propels us out of the conserve toward a freedom seldom experienced” (2004:39). “. . . where greater spontaneity is accessed . . . the role development that occurs is more lively and certain. The key finally may be, and most certainly is, in the spontaneity of the leader . . .” (2006: 66).

I have understood that to be effective in a robotic rehabilitation system I am required to warm up to leading the development of mutuality in the dance of relationships. The critical factor is my capacity to sustain my own spontaneity and role development in order to support progressive role development in others in the system. I am then able to introduce a timely Morenian intervention so that meetings occur and relationships develop which “propel us out of the conserve” and also achieve expected system outcomes.

### ***The Concepts of Role and Role Relationship***

The concepts of role and role relationship powerfully assist in the implementation of appropriate Morenian interventions in my work. Max Clayton (1993:11) writes “The purpose of the concept of role is to make meaning of our observation and experience of one another”. Don Reekie (2007) expands the concept to pose it as a dynamic system of role enactment with “. . . multi layered behavioural and cultural factors influencing the drama which plays out . . .” (p.47).

Reekie proposes that when we become aware of a person’s functioning in a specific context, we are enabled to identify their central organising factor, the “. . . heart of their way of being and becoming . . . we will have its guidance to make sense of all else in them” (p.47). Reekie goes on to describe roles as grouped into organisational gestalts. “The whole way of being that a person displays in a particular social context has organizing processes that may be thought of as gestalts. These processes are dynamic, with permeable, rather than influence-tight boundaries” (p.47). The three organisational gestalts correspond with Clayton’s (1993) three role categories of fragmenting, coping and progressive. We see the essence of progressive roles hidden within the coping roles and the drive of the central organising factor in the fragmenting roles. Using this framework, we are able to understand the way in which various roles relate to other roles in the internal and external worlds.

This thinking is particularly helpful in identifying the central concerns of all the stakeholders when assisting an injured person to restore health and work. I am able to analyse roles and role relationships by asking:

- What roles does a person play in this system?
- What roles does he or she value beyond all others?
- What are the relationships between roles in a person’s internal world and in the system?

With this analysis I am able to plan interventions that support the development of progressive functioning in the system. It is important to temper one’s analysis with the understanding that the analyser acts from her or his own central organising factor, which adds another dynamic to role relationships and the choice of intervention. This factor highlights the need for me to have a good level of self-awareness of the roles that I am enacting in the system.

### **Morenian Interventions**

As I have already described, the rehabilitation system in which I work operates in a competitive commercial environment. The cultural conserve tends toward rigid adherence to procedures and rules. The roles and role relationships are anything but a dance. Although the purpose is to support an injured person’s recovery and return to work, the lack of spontaneity and role flexibility inhibits thoughtful and creative responses to each unique situation. Moreno created



effective interventions such as doubling, mirroring and role reversal, role training, modelling and coaching to address robotic functioning. I apply them to produce a warm up to spontaneity and creativity, and thus support the development of progressive roles.

### ***Doubling***

“The stage of the double is the holding experience, feeling understood from the inside out. A person in this stage feels as if someone is accurately ‘picking up on’ their essence” (Dayton, 2005:435). Doubling enables the isolated individuals in the rehabilitation system, often but not always the injured person, to experience self-acceptance. Through my doubling of them, mutuality develops as clients come to know that they are not alone, that I understand and validate their experience. They relax in a relationship based on trust. Anxiety decreases as they access their spontaneity and enact healthy progressive roles such as the *active participator*, *assertive choice maker* and *empowered communicator*.

### ***Mirroring***

“The stage of the mirror is the beginning of seeing the self as a person unattached to another, someone in his own right, who occupies his own physical space” (Dayton, 2005:437). There are many moments of ‘stuckness’ for injured workers in the rehabilitation system. Mirroring assists them to see themselves more objectively, especially when feelings are intense and there is inability to move forward. It provides a sense of supported independence and the power that comes with that. As clients develop the capacity to ‘see’ themselves in relationship and in the system, they experience empowerment and progressive movement.

### ***Role Reversal***

“In role reversal the sense of self is intact enough so that we can temporarily leave it, stand in the shoes of another, and return safely home. It is a state of intersubjectivity, the state or process of being in relationship; a simultaneous recognition of one’s own self and the self of the other in dynamic relationship” (Dayton, 2005:439). My capacity to reverse roles has been critical when isolation and adversarial perspectives are part of the cultural conserve. I am able to appreciate the other’s concerns and utilise that understanding to build the mutuality that is necessary for progressive development.

### ***Role Training***

“Role training aims to bring about the development of specific, limited aspects of human functioning so that a person’s professional or personal goals are achieved more adequately . . . ” (Clayton, 1994:142). Armed with a role relationship perspective, I notice when the development of a specific role may be useful in the rehabilitation process and undertake role training in individual sessions prior to a crucial meeting. For example, I may notice that a client is unassertive in a

meeting and set out to role train the *assertive self-representer*. The rehearsal of progressive roles assists clients to maintain personal integrity and progress to mutual agreements during these challenging meetings.

### ***Modelling and Coaching***

The Morenian techniques of modelling and coaching may be used when the client cannot sustain a progressive role during a testing time in the rehabilitation process. These interventions require that I remain in touch with and nurture my own creativity and spontaneity. My modelling of progressive roles often inspires an isolated client to develop a new response to an old situation.

## **Dancing in Workplace Relationships: Illustrations from Case Work**

I present two critical moments from rehabilitation case work to illustrate the use of these Morenian concepts and techniques.

### ***Warming Up to Mutual Purpose: Dr. Tran***

#### ***THE SCENE***

The meeting takes place in a very small room at a suburban medical centre. There are five attendees crammed in. Thuong is the injured worker. He is a thin, gaunt-looking Vietnamese man in his 40s with minimal English. He has not worked or maintained normal life activities for two years since suffering back and neck injuries at work. The employer's human resources (HR) representative is a woman in her 50s, new to the job and eager to make a difference. The Vietnamese interpreter, a woman in her 40s, is very professional and determined to interpret without prejudice. She has told me privately of a previous negative experience with Thuong's doctor. The doctor himself, Dr. Tran, is a slight Vietnamese man in his 60s dressed in a neat, black business suit. I understand that he is a revered elder in the Vietnamese community, as well as having a reputation as a respected healer. I attend in my capacity as the workplace rehabilitation provider. The meeting has been convened to develop a stakeholder team approach to Thuong's health improvement and return to work in some capacity. The team will include all five parties present as well as any future treatment providers and the insurance company, who approves and resources treatment and interventions. Up until now, Dr. Tran has managed Thuong's injury. Thuong has therefore been somewhat isolated from other stakeholders in the system.

#### ***THE ENACTMENT***

Thuong sits in his chair, bent forward. He grimaces sadly and makes little eye contact with others at the meeting. His is a fragmenting role system, the *hopeless victim* and the *helpless complainer*. The employer HR representative has warmed up to

the role of *enthused persuader*. She is keen to convince all parties that Thuong can and should return to work under a regime of light duties and has prepared a list of these to present to the meeting. She is under pressure because the insurance claim is costing Thuong's employers dearly and they are insisting that he return. The interpreter remains throughout the meeting in her role of *impartial professional*. I begin in my role as *social connector* and introduce the parties to one another. Dr. Tran, seated behind his desk, immediately takes control of the meeting and announces that it is obvious that the worker cannot return to work. I note that he is enacting a role from his coping gestalt, the *arrogant controller*. His functioning undermines the intent of the meeting and seems especially aimed at intimidating and silencing the HR representative and myself. The mutuality that had initially sparked between me, the HR employer representative and the translator is quashed. The group norm that is developing posits the doctor as the sole authority in the room. We have all joined Thuong in his role of *hopeless victim*.

I warm up to my role of *competent professional*, and maintain eye contact with the doctor. I raise the possibility of alternative specialist opinions and complementary treatments. Dr. Tran sits erect in his chair and expands his chest. He maintains a defensive arrogance, looks me in the eye, and expresses himself. "I have been doing this work for 25 years and I am telling you that nothing will make a difference." I smile, maintain eye contact and double him. "Twenty-five years is a long time to be doing this work. It gives you a lot of experience and insight." The doctor smiles and nods in response. I continue. "I have been doing this work for nearly as long as you. I'm old you know! And even though I'm not a doctor, I understand that it can be very wearing and frustrating at times." Dr. Tran smiles more broadly, chuckles and then says, "It's good you are confident, but not as experienced as me!" We both laugh. I say, "It can be very hard work sometimes, but it is worthwhile to try and make a difference to people like Thuong". The doctor nods agreement. "Okay, let us continue the meeting and you raise the issues you think you can help with." I am aware that the doctor is enacting a progressive role of *willing participant*. He has warmed up to a progressive gestalt centred on his desire to provide excellent care for his patients and support them to live full, injury-free and pain-free lives.

#### THE DISCUSSION

The important aspect of this intervention was the warm up to mutual purpose. Dr. Tran was defensive and self-righteous regarding his management of Thuong's case and enacted familiar coping roles that undermined the development of mutuality at the meeting. The organising principle of the coping gestalt seemed to be his strong professional identity and status as an esteemed, wise community healer. He intimidated in order to remain in control and expected unquestioned authority. It was evident to me that Dr. Tran was a proud man, but one who in essence cared for his patients. When I role reversed with him I realised that he too felt helplessness regarding Thuong's progress. The anxiety created by the

combination of pride and helplessness led to an absence of spontaneity and the warm up to the coping role of *arrogant controller*. In the face of this challenging situation I maintained my warm up to the purpose of the meeting and to myself as a spontaneous and creative being. I doubled Dr. Tran's coping role which enabled him to let the anxiety and pride fall away, to be replaced by his deeply held core values of caring for his patient. He warmed up to a progressive role of *willing team participant*. This in turn connected him to the mutual purpose of the meeting, which proceeded thereafter to agree on an action plan for Thuong's on going rehabilitation and return to work.

### ***Doubling to Develop Mutuality: Willie***

#### *THE SCENE*

Willie is a slight Filipino woman who packs boxes on a warehouse assembly line. She is 45 years old, married with two teenage children. She maintains that were it financially feasible she would separate from her handsome husband, reportedly a philanderer. She sustains a longstanding shoulder injury and has recently been diagnosed with depression, although this has been pervasive for many months. We have been working together for a year now, and I have developed a strong positive mutual tele and trusting relationship with Willie and her doctor.

#### *THE WARM UP*

Willie has been asked to attend a meeting with her workplace managers to discuss her poor attendance at work and her poor communication with them. I have been asked to attend. Willie is anxious and worries that she will not be able to speak up for herself. She might lose her job and her income. I have trained and coached her in the role of *assertive communicator* and we have rehearsed the role in a meeting with her doctor. Willie maintains the role in this session with me sitting alongside her. The doctor tells her that she is lucky to have me as her rehabilitation provider. This further strengthens our positive relationship and my capacity to encourage her through more daring interventions.

#### *THE ENACTMENT*

The meeting is held in a large room at Willie's workplace. For reasons unknown, the employer sends along three managers. It appears that they are intent on reinforcing one another's authority. Willie is immediately intimidated. She is visibly nervous, trembles and sweats. I encourage her to speak out. She makes an attempt to explain her pain and her difficulties. She also alludes to her debilitating depression. The most senior manager, a portly man, interrupts Willie's expression. He does understand but insists that her work performance is not good enough. He relates in detail his own shoulder problem. He is keen for us to know that despite it, he performs as a clown at children's parties in his own time. I reflect on the roles involved in clown performance, thinking about the vulnerability and sadness that are present alongside the happiness and laughter. Willie makes

another attempt to put forward her case. Again she is interrupted, this time by another of the managers.

At this point I warm up to leadership. “Let’s try something,” I say. I move my chair into the doubling position, just behind Willie’s left shoulder. I speak to the three managers in the first person, as if I am Willie. I take up her bodily position. I express my pain, my loss of self-esteem and my feelings of hopelessness. I express my desire to return to my pre-injury life, a time when I valued work and home roles. The managers look bemused and then warm up to interest and empathy. I observe a tear in one man’s eye. It is the clown. I finish doubling Willie and move back to resume my own roles. Willie speaks out and repeats my words. The managers each respond to her with clarity of understanding and support. One suggests, “So what can we all do from here to work together to support you to attend work more consistently. Talk more with us and we can help you to get better”. The mood of the meeting lifts, and it becomes a cooperative, solution focused enterprise.

#### THE DISCUSSION

It was immediately evident on entering the meeting room that the employer had chosen to intimidate Willie into compliance. Prior experience told me that power-over tactics were the norm for managing wayward employees in this organisation. I viewed the cultural conserve as ‘We can get our employees to do what we want by force’. This warm up was non-reflective, almost robotic. I had observed Willie’s warm up. Her spontaneity diminished in the face of the senior manager’s conserved role, the *powerful robot*. As Willie’s anxiety grew and her spontaneity shrank, the manager’s role became stronger. It was as though the robot was feeding off her. At this point, the managers were on automatic pilot, incapable of reversing roles with Willie. Quick and powerful intervention was required in response. My action of physically moving into the double position, taking up Willie’s body posture and speaking and acting as her, broke the powerful meeting norms and challenged the robotic culture of the organisation.

I expressed Willie’s fragmenting gestalt, the *depressed pain-sufferer* as well as other roles. This action provided the managers with insight into Willie’s world, Willie the person as well as Willie the worker. In response Willie warmed up to a progressive gestalt, the central organising factor of which was the desire for a fully lived life. The managers were then able to role reverse with Willie’s essential being rather than responding to the behaviour that disrupts their business. When I noticed the tear, I knew that this doubling intervention had been successful. The senior manager was touched at his essence, the essence that remembers and understands despair and pain and the desire for a better life. He shifted his warm up. He became understanding and helpful. As the holder of the organisational power in the room, he had a potent effect on the other managers present. Progressive roles were enacted that enabled mutuality and cooperative relationship.

## Conclusions as the Dance Continues

I am moved and inspired when I read Zerka Toeman Moreno (2006:43) describe everything in her and Moreno's lives as ". . . grist for the mill . . . because Moreno's vision was so comprehensive. With him one worked all the time because life was constantly presenting itself to us. Everything was about relationships — ours to each other, extending out to our near and far social atoms". Despite working in a rehabilitation system that is anathema to Zerka's words, I too have a passionate belief 'that everything is about relationships'. The quality of those relationships is what matters. Morenian methods introduce the power of spontaneity and creativity into the dance of everyday workplace relationships. This power is generative, nourishing to all involved including the practitioner. It is a power that creates movement and the valuing of the essence of each unique being, much needed in any everyday relationship or workplace system.

*. . . guard me from the thoughts men think in the mind alone;  
He who sings a lasting song thinks in a marrow-bone;*

W.B. Yeats (1936)

In the face of robotic cultural conserves, Morenian methods recognise, treasure and nurture the creativity and power that is at the essence of every being. They cultivate and nourish the "song in the marrow-bone", the dance of relationship, a dance that Zerka Moreno notes is a constant work, an important work . . .

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Kath Howard is an occupational therapist who has worked as a consultant in workers compensation for 25 years. She has recently completed her accreditation as a psychodramatist, a training journey that began in 1999. She lives her life in many relationship dances that require many roles. Some of her favourites are grandmother, mother, sister to her oak tree 'silanagig', budding guitarist and flamenco dancer. Kath lives in the beautiful Blue Mountains of Australia and leads regular psychodrama groups there. Contact via email at <[taramoher@bigpond.com](mailto:taramoher@bigpond.com)> or website at <[www.actionmethodsforlife.com.au](http://www.actionmethodsforlife.com.au)>.

# Walking with Moreno Take Two: Integrating Theory with Practice

WENDY McINTOSH

## ABSTRACT

In an article published in the 2010 *ANZPA Journal*, Wendy McIntosh explored the significant impact of Moreno's work on the nursing profession. In this follow up paper she presents her utilisation of role theory in work with one nursing client who has transgressed professional boundaries. Mindful of Moreno's dictum for nurses to establish and maintain a reciprocal relationship, she demonstrates the client's progress as he develops insights and roles that will assist him to maintain adequate professional boundaries in the future.

## KEYWORDS

Moreno, nurse, nursing, patient, professional boundaries, professional identity, psychodrama, role reversal, role training, supervision, systems theory

## Introduction

In an article published in last year's *ANZPA Journal* (McIntosh, 2010) I explored the significant impact of Moreno's work on the nursing profession, as well as discussing the ways in which I have integrated psychodrama theory into my personal and professional life. The integration of theory with practice deepens my relationship with self, work and client. This article builds on the previous one by presenting my work with one client, work that was guided by Morenian role theory (Moreno, 1972). James<sup>1</sup>, a registered nurse (RN) was referred to me by a state nursing regulatory board, having been found guilty of professional boundary transgressions. My brief involved developing an educational plan with James, one that would assist him to maintain professional boundaries in his nursing work. Through our sessions James developed a greater awareness of the roles he enacted in his personal and professional life, especially regarding boundaries. At times he seriously questioned his ability to maintain his personal integrity while continuing to work as a nurse because his own warm up was at odds with the expectations of the professional nursing body.



## Nursing's Professional Boundaries

At an international, national and organisational level there are a number of codes and guidelines that assist nurses to develop and maintain professional boundaries with clients, client's families and colleagues. Every midwife, RN and enrolled nurse (EN) registered and endorsed to work in Australia must comply with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council's (ANMC) codes of ethics and codes of professional conduct (ANMC, 2008), as well as professional boundary guidelines (ANMC & Te Kaunihera Tapuhi O Aotearoa Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2010). This strict adherence to good professional boundaries has always been integral to nursing. The ethos is captured in the historic Nightingale Pledge.

*I solemnly pledge myself before God and presence of this assembly; to pass my life in purity and to practice my profession faithfully. I will abstain from whatever is delirious and mischievous and will not take or knowingly administer any harmful drug. I will do all in my power to maintain and elevate the standard of my profession and will hold in confidence all personal matters committed to my keeping and family affairs coming to my knowledge in the practice of my calling. With loyalty will I endeavour to aid the physician in his work, and devote myself to the welfare of those committed to my care.*

Lystra Gretter (1893, cited in Dock & Stewart, 1920)

I remember standing with my nursing peers at our graduation ceremony in Glasgow in 1983, reciting this pledge out loud. In hindsight I realise that I was naive regarding the pledge's actual requirements of me. The nursing tutors had been explicit about certain parameters of our professional nursing role. For example they advised, "Do not develop friendships with patients. Do not present the profession in a negative way. Always act with dignity and respect towards your patients, peers and colleagues". It all seemed crystal clear and beyond debate.

## Complexity in Maintaining Professional Boundaries

Since then, my experiences and those of my nursing colleagues have highlighted the complexities of maintaining professional boundaries. My interest in the topic sharpened as I observed the harsh side-taking culture that tended to develop when a colleague was known to have transgressed a professional line. Those on one side blamed. "S/he should be struck off the register. They should never work as a nurse again." Other colleagues would comment, "I guess this could happen to any of us. Let's support this nurse". I became aware of my own internal conflicts regarding the actions of colleagues who had transgressed boundaries. It took some time to recognise that I too had transgressed boundaries, imperceptively, almost without noticing. The line was very fine at times.

I was curious. Was the complexity, the struggle to maintain professional

integrity specific to nursing? Why, when the boundaries seemed so clear, did some nurses continue to violate them? These reflections motivated me to develop workshops focused on professional boundaries. In time this work was recognised by the state nursing regulatory board. Nurses found guilty of professional misconduct were referred to me for educational development, supervision or mentoring. It was with regards to this work that I encountered James.

## The Initial Encounter: James the Surfer

James made initial contact with me by telephone. He asked if I would assist him to complete an educational programme focused on patients' rights, ethics and professional responsibilities, required by the regulatory board in response to a misconduct hearing. James had relocated following the misconduct incident. The practicalities of sufficient contact hours, written assignments, travel and costs were therefore significant. We agreed to meet for an initial face to face discussion followed by two telephone discussions. As I reflected on this first interaction, I appreciated that, following Moreno's dictum to nurses regarding reciprocity (McIntosh, 2010), I had consciously set out to make the relationship reciprocal from the beginning of our connection. I warmed up to the role of *interested open host*. This role assisted me in future interactions when I challenged James regarding some of the professional decisions that he had made. I had established reciprocity, a mutually positive tele with James. I was not intent on punishing him, but rather he sensed that I would be working alongside him. For James, this was to be a significantly different experience of professional relationship compared to that which he had encountered with the regulatory body.

James impressed me with the warmth of his personality. He had a firm handshake and politely responded to the icebreaking questions about visiting the city and locating the meeting venue. As a further warm up, I invited James to tell me about his new position as a nursing manager and his current university studies towards a master's degree. James sat upright in a chair opposite me, attentive and comfortable. In response to my social investigation, he became a *willing interested engager* and *purposeful self-presenter*. I knew that an understanding of James' social and cultural atom would assist me to work more effectively (Clayton, 1995). This was where I really began to apply role theory with vigour. I wanted to know James, his world views and cultural conserves, so that I could develop a greater awareness of the place where his personal conserves and views might support or be in conflict with the professional cultural conserves of his role as a nurse.

James shared. He told me that he was married with two young children. He and his wife were busy with family, professional and community work. He said, "I don't reward myself with time out". I asked him, "What happens when you stop being busy?" He replied, "I give my children undivided attention. And I

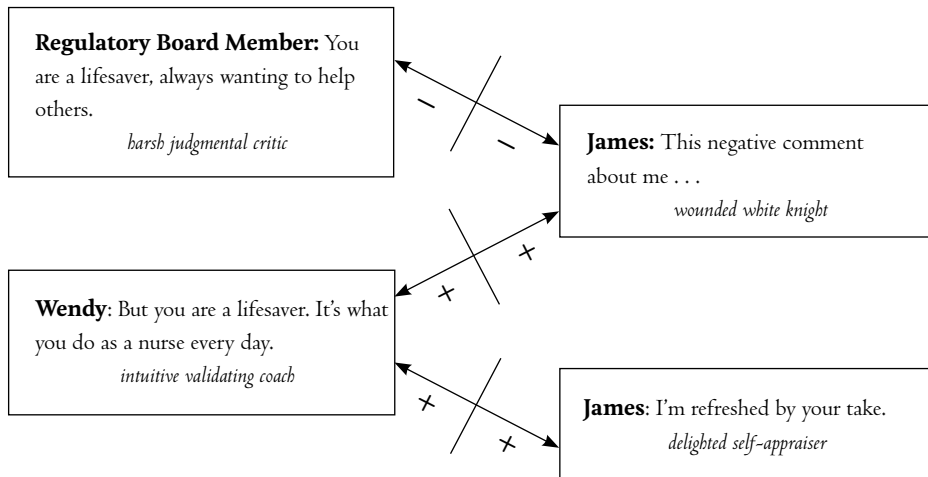
love surfing”. Suddenly James’ face lit up and his body relaxed. It was immediately apparent that surfing was a vital activity for James. I invited him to express his love of surfing, to imagine that he was on his surfboard and to become aware of his bodily experience as he surfed the waves. He expressed joy, freedom, spontaneity and aliveness. I doubled his experience and became more aware of the roles that James enacted. After this vignette we talked and it became clear that it had been some time since he had been surfing. We discussed the possibilities for him to structure surfing time into his busy life. As I engaged with James in this way, I was conscious that I was operating as a psychodramatist. I was interested in James the living person in the world, rather than James the carrier of a misconduct charge. I knew that for a complementary relationship to further develop between us, I needed to see him beyond the restraint of the problem based nursing framework that I was trained in. I needed to know what it was that gave James a sense of passion and life, the activities that warmed him up to vitality and spontaneity. My assessment of James’ role system during this interaction in our first meeting is presented in Table One below.

**TABLE 1: ASSESSMENT OF JAMES’ ROLE SYSTEM DURING AN EARLY INTERACTION AT THE FIRST MEETING**

<b>Overdeveloped</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>Embryonic</b>	<b>Conflicted</b>
periodically absent father	excited wild adventurer	willing interested engager	joyful vibrant surfer	ambiguous life-embracer
harsh judgemental critic	life-sustaining surfer	warm obliging participant	delighted self-appraiser	wounded white knight
	loving self-nurturer	purposeful self-presenter		criticised defender

James’ wife also worked as a health professional and together they had engaged in a variety of aid and community development initiatives in Australia and abroad. Here was another activity that enlivened James. I noticed his body relax even more and his facial expressions become more open. Both his parents had been school principals actively involved in community development projects and they had warmed James up to this way of life. However, in this moment he became defensive, relating his familiarity with what he called the “rescuer model”. During an interview regarding the professional misconduct charge, James had heard himself described by a regulatory board member as “a lifesaver, always wanting to help others”. He was deeply affected by what he perceived as “this negative comment about me”, warming up defensively to being a *wounded white knight*. In response I suggested that he was indeed a lifesaver and highlighted some positives aspects of this role, especially in relation to his clinical practice as an accident and emergency nurse. James’ visibly brightened. Later in the

session he stated to me, “I am refreshed by your take on the lifesaving model”. He had moved from being a *criticised defender* to become a *delighted self-appraiser*. The development of this role sequence is shown diagrammatically below.



## The Background Drama Unfolds

With me continuing to investigate the socius (Moreno, 1951) as an *encouraging supportive engager* and *wise life-giver*, James related the events that had led to his current situation. He was charge nurse in a hospital accident and emergency department (A&E) one busy day when a client, well known to the service, presented herself. She told James that she intended to take a medication overdose because she did not wish to “go through the anniversary of her marriage”. As James talked, I reflected on the roles he may have warmed up to as he engaged with this client, *empathetic therapist*, *guardian of life*, *soothing healer*. When the client absconded, James contacted the police who brought her back to A&E against her wishes. James had nursed two clients who had committed suicide and he had been the charge nurse at the time of one of the suicides. He was therefore very alert to the client’s safety, persuading her to stay in the hospital until she was assessed by the mental health team. At this point James’s tone of voice dropped and he said, “The referral system was not good. My faith in the service is not good”. Still concerned the next morning, James phoned the A&E department to discover that the client had been assessed by the mental health team as ‘no longer a high risk of suicide’ and discharged. James “still felt concerned about the client” and phoned her at home to leave a voice message. “I’m concerned, concerned that you didn’t tell the team what you told me, about the anniversary. Please ring the hospital.” An assessment of the roles that emerged during this interaction is displayed in the second table.

**TABLE 2: ASSESSMENT OF JAMES' ROLE SYSTEM DURING A SECOND INTERACTION AT THE FIRST MEETING**

<b>Overdeveloped</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>Embryonic</b>	<b>Conflicted</b>
desperate lifesaver over-concerned guardian soothing healer	collegial informer objective boundary analyst discerning life guard	concerned systems analyst empathetic therapist	enabling confessor	wishful rescuer disillusioned service provider helpless confessor

In regard to the nursing guidelines (ANMC, 2008), James had transgressed several professional boundaries:

- He had worried about the client whilst away from work.
- He had phoned work from home to enquire about the client.
- He had accessed the client's phone number but could not remember how.
- He had not documented his attempt to contact the client.
- He had not informed his healthcare colleagues although his wife was in the room when he made the phone call to the client.
- He had phoned the client from home, left a message about his concern and advised her that she should contact the hospital, but had not communicated this to the mental health team or the police.

## The Story Continues

James continued expressing himself to me. The client had subsequently made allegations regarding James' conduct to the district health authority, the police and the relevant regulatory board. She claimed that in his professional role as a nurse, he had phoned and harassed her more than once, stood outside her house and touched her inappropriately. James agreed that he had phoned the client once but denied all other allegations. As he related the events, he was clear and without conflict. Except for the one phone call, the police had investigated and dismissed all charges as unsubstantiated. As I listened, I led our discussion back to the two suicides that had a significant impact on James. James agreed that the suicides had had an enormous emotional cost. He maintained that he should have done more to assist, especially for the client who died whilst he was in charge. He was the *thwarted saviour*.

James and his colleagues did not receive debriefing or counselling following the suicides and through our discussions he recognised that he had been traumatised by the experiences. He felt tremendous guilt about 'failing' to save the clients. James warmed up to a previous situation that he had related during

his regulatory board hearing. He had recognised a female client, whom he had nursed previously, in an argument with a male person at a petrol station. James witnessed the male push the woman over and drive away in a car with others. James approached the female and offered assistance, either to phone the police or drive her home. On arriving at her home, her ‘so-called’ partner turned out to be this same male person who had pushed her over. He strode out aggressively and called to the woman regarding James. “Who’s he? What are you doing with him?” James encouraged the female to contact the police especially as there was a small baby involved. He also provided her with his home phone number. One week later the police contacted James. The woman’s male partner had made a complaint against him, claiming that James inappropriately touched the female. James provided his account of the evening and the police dismissed the case.

These stories illustrated James’ desire to ‘do good’, to rescue those in distress. In a sense he was more than a *life saver*. He was a *life saviour*. He went where angels feared to tread, but in so doing ignored professional boundaries and social protocols, and potentially put himself and his family at risk. In the second case he responded impulsively to the woman, while remaining blinkered to the wider system of domestic violence. Initially the woman was appreciative of James’ assistance but was bound to side with her partner eventually because her survival depended on it. Thus it was inevitable that James would become a target, cast as a perpetrator rather than a saviour in this system. My assessment of James’ role system regarding this incident is presented in a third table below.

**TABLE 3: ASSESSMENT OF JAMES’ ROLE SYSTEM DURING HIS INTERACTION WITH THE WOMAN AT THE PETROL STATION**

<b>Overdeveloped</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>Embryonic</b>	<b>Conflicted</b>
misguided police officer reactive protector thwarted saviour	judicious systems analyst	attentive citizen	reflective trauma survivor	failed redeemer hobbled prince charming

I thought about James’ social and cultural atom. I wondered about his original family experiences. Which role relationships was James repeating in over-reacting to others in distress, especially women? Was there a damsel in distress that he could not rescue, or was he the *damsel in distress* himself? When his parents were busy community workers, did he become a neglected son in need of rescue? Was this then replayed in his own role of father to his children, specifically the role of *periodically attentive father*?

James had felt diminished by the regulatory board process. The identity that was an integral part of his upbringing had been negated by regulatory board

members. This, he said, had affected his mental health. With the questioning of his professional integrity he now felt less allegiance to the nursing profession and had left the health district. Following the regulatory process, James had integrated significant changes into his practice, such as an open door policy, maintenance of visibility when working in his office and third person accompaniment when travelling with female clients and staff members. He had “checked out this place” (my office) before coming to the appointment. He had developed the role of *self-protective detective*.

James and I developed an educational plan that would meet the requirements of the regulatory board and also benefit him. James agreed to complete and send an essay reflecting on his experiences, and his learning about professional boundaries and the ways that he would integrate it into his practice. He also worked on questions and scenarios that focused on professional boundary issues, agreed to submit his written work for my feedback and to stay in contact with me by phone. James’ role development at closure is shown below in Table Four.

**TABLE 4: ASSESSMENT OF JAMES’ ROLE SYSTEM AT CLOSURE**

<b>Overdeveloped</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>Adequate</b>	<b>Embryonic</b>	<b>Conflicted</b>
lifesaver extraordinaire  tireless crusader	thoughtful lifesaver	relaxed self-appreciator  loving self-nurturer  self-protective detective  attentive father  enthralled surfer  objective reflector of practice	discerning systems analyst  realistic community developer  organised forward planner  committed self-healer	

## Reflections and Recommendations

The psychodramatic roles of *superhero* and *lifesaver extraordinaire* were core to James. As a community developer himself, he was able to fully embody them in his social roles as did his parents. To his cost however, these roles were in conflict with his profession role as a nurse working within a hospital system. As I reflected on our work together I identified a number of other interventions that may have helped James. I thought about broadening the content of his reflective essay to encompass the perspective of the client and the system, facilitating role reversal through writing. This may have assisted James to role reverse and come to know experientially the views of the other side of the coin, ‘the rescued ones’. As well,

role reversing with the health system, especially when he expressed himself from the role of *disillusioned care provider*, may have developed his role of *systems analyst* and even *profession protector*. This would have aided his warm up to, and understanding of, the objective and legislative frameworks that he must work within as a nurse.

James' story also caused me to reflect on the requirements of *A Nurses Guide to Professional Boundaries* (ANMC & Te Kaunihera Tapuhi O Aotearoa Nursing Council of New Zealand, 2010). A nurse is required to fulfil the role of providing care to and for clients. The guidelines for boundaries state, "The community trusts that nurses will act in the best interest of those in their care and that the nurse will base that care on an assessment of the individual's specific needs" (p.2). There is no prerequisite that nurses care about the clients they nurse. Yet when I asked student nurses about their motivations for becoming nurses many of them responded, "because I care about people". This may be causing nurses conflict between intrapersonal and interpersonal roles in the health system. James' experience, as set out in the table below using the Focal Conflict Model (Stock-Whitaker, 1989), may represent a broader professional concern.

**TABLE 5: JAMES' FOCAL CONFLICT**

<b>Disturbing Motive</b> I want to be able to care about patients.	<b>Reactive Fear</b> I will get into trouble if I do that.
<b>Focal Conflict</b> How can I be caring when the rules do not allow me to personalise relationships with patients?	
<b>Restrictive Solution</b> over involvement with client <i>boundary violator</i> complies reluctantly with regulatory board requirements <i>disappointed complier</i>	<b>Enabling Solution</b> professional supervision and peer involvement <i>objective reflector of practice</i> new career options <i>realistic community developer</i>

## Conclusion

When James warmed up to being an *entranced surfer* I was able to appreciate his work as a nurse in the context of his larger world view as a community developer, lover of life and proud father. Together we recognised the importance of a greater balance in his life, a balance between his work and his personal life, which significantly created time for him to surf in the ocean and experience his being as whole and integrated.

At the conclusion of our third and final conversation, James told me that he and his family would be moving overseas so that he could take up new career options. He reflected that he had learnt much from the work we had undertaken together, in terms of his roles and the conflicts between his personal world views and the professional boundary framework that guides nurses in Australia. He



recognised the importance of establishing clear boundaries in his professional life and in relation to time out for himself. This included spending more quality time with his children and wife. He identified strategies that he was putting in place for his new international role, which included regular debriefing sessions and the seeking of support from colleagues.

## END NOTES

I. In the interests of anonymity and the ethics of privacy and confidentiality, the name of the nurse has been changed.

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Wendy McIntosh (RN, Grad. Dip. MH, MN, PhD) is a mental health nurse working in private consultancy practice in Brisbane. She has been training in psychodrama since 1990. Wendy can be contacted at <[wendy@davaar.com.au](mailto:wendy@davaar.com.au)>.

# Psychodrama at Distance: Effective Supervision Using Communication Technologies

*JOHN FARNSWORTH*

## *ABSTRACT*

Psychodrama and electronic technologies seem unlikely bedfellows. As this paper demonstrates, they are, in fact, made for each other though surprisingly little has been written about their combined potential. Drawing on vignettes and case examples as illustration, John Farnsworth demonstrates how effective supervision can take place in the absence of a physical psychodrama stage. He describes the way in which he uses all aspects of the psychodrama method via email, phone, digital and online communications, to create warm, functional working relationships. Psychodramatists are invited to reflect on the way that psychodrama can and will be used in the emerging vibrant electronic worlds of the future.

## *KEY WORDS*

coaching, communication, distance supervision, doubling, email, internet, media, mirroring, new technologies, phone, psychodrama, relationship, role reversal, social and cultural atom

## **Introduction**

I have just finished a phone supervision session with an adult student living in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand's largest city. I am 600 kilometres away in Dunedin. He is excited about a big project he is developing on radio news announcing. He is a skilled professional broadcaster who knows his field far better than I. What he does not know is how to write up such a project, as his course requires, and he is very anxious about this. So, over the phone, by email, using the internet and even texting, I am assisting him — not only with his writing but his anxiety.

What better method to guide me in this distance supervision work than psychodrama? I can assist my writer by utilising warm up, role theory, sociometry,

social and cultural atom repair, doubling, mirroring and role reversal. I can call on the roles of teacher, facilitator, consultant and evaluator (Williams, 1995), all at distance, to do so. Even though we have never met, and may never do so, we have sustained an active and positive working relationship facilitated by modern communication technologies for over a year now. My client is enthusiastic about how much he enjoys this method of learning.

Our interaction is typical of my experience with distance supervision. Over the last twelve years I have experienced effective supervision at distance in clinical, educational and psychodramatic contexts, as both supervisor and supervisee. Interactivity over distance, away from the face to face, has expanded exponentially with the arrival of new digital technologies (Christakis & Fowler, 2011). In the supervision field, work can be undertaken through videoconferencing (Gammon et al., 1998), online teaching (Sullivan & Glanz, 2004), online counselling (Borders & Brown, 2005), email (Suler, 2001; Graf, 2002), telepsychiatry (Heckner & Giard, 2005), telephone (Manosevitz, 2006) and online supervision (GroupInterVisual). As well, there is distance psychology and psychotherapy (Hauke, 2009).

In this article I demonstrate the ways in which Moreno's methods maintain their effectiveness when physical distance requires the use of communication technologies. Setting, stage, auxiliaries and props may be absent but the central element remains, and that is the relationship. As on a stage, the relationship at distance can be assessed, developed, sustained and deepened through the psychodramatic method, through the maximisation of spontaneity and creativity. I use educational supervision for illustration because it vividly highlights how educational and clinical aspects of the method can be applied at distance.

When I am supervising at physical distance I pay attention to different relational cues than when I work face to face, so I do not become blind or deaf to the nuances of a supervisee's roles. In practice, different communication media shape the working relationship in distinctive ways. For example, it is more difficult to detect nonverbal communication in the blandness of electronic texts than to pick up the intricate hesitations and subtle tonal shifts in phone conversations. The many new media available, from Facebook to Twitter, even Second Life, each poses unique communication challenges (Anthony & Nagel, 2010; boyd, 2009) for supervision at distance.

## **Using Psychodrama to Develop Sound Principles of Distance Supervision Practice**

As a distance supervisor, I have largely been involved with professional broadcasters. They are a lively and highly engaged group of supervisees who are usually, though not always, good communicators. Many live in New Zealand but some are scattered as far as Vietnam, Egypt, Singapore and Britain. They range from broadcasting executives, journalists and film makers to radio station

managers, sales people and technical staff. My relationship with each normally lasts between one and two years, beginning with a teaching relationship and moving towards supervision of a major project connected to the workplace. By reflecting on our interactions, I have generated some sound principles for distance supervision using Moreno's theories and methods.

As I describe them, the most important principles include attention to the developing relationship, the importance of effective staging, the warm up to spontaneity and progressive role development, and attention to the verbal and nonverbal cues that constitute the relationship. There is also the use of role assessments these cues offer, and the continuous use of doubling, mirroring and role reversal to encourage sustained role development, whatever communication medium is involved.

### *Paying Attention to the Supervisory Relationship*

The key principle is the development of the relationship. If this is established effectively, it can withstand the limitations that sometimes arise through lack of face to face contact. It can also tie together interactions across all sorts of different settings and circumstances. In turn, this allows the supervisor to pay attention to the different kinds of cues and nonverbal signals available through a particular medium, and the way the medium itself shapes exchanges in the relationship. To take a simple example, the tempo of exchanges is much slower through the mail system than it is through email. Knowing this, a supervisor can be alert to the different lengths of silence that may signal an interruption or communication failure in one system as opposed to another (Suler, 2001). Breaks, of whatever length, can indicate the need for relationship maintenance or repair. On the other hand, when the tempo speeds up, this often suggests an intensifying warm up by each member of the supervisory relationship and a greater engagement with the task at hand. It may also communicate increasing spontaneity.

### *The Relationship is the Stage*

Building the relationship is important in another way too. The stage is a central component of psychodrama, generally considered as a physical space constructed in a quite specific way. What happens to the stage when there is no face to face contact and no common physical space? The relationship itself and the medium of communication act in this capacity. As a distance relationship grows, it develops boundaries regarding the interactions that take place within it. These become, in effect, the stage. The cues, gestures, interchanges and content, whether on paper, aurally or electronically, form the staging of the relationship. In this context, different communication media simply offer different opportunities for staging.

For example, when I read a supervisee's email, I recall the previous contact and relationship we have developed. More than that, the words on the screen, just like any conversation, offer clues to the roles mobilised by the sender in writing the email. These are also likely to prompt my own warm up and counter roles. Out

of these, I form a response which becomes my reply to the sender. I have warmed up to action and my reply, in the context of an email, is the action I take.

Through this one simple sequence staging has taken place, a sequence that develops from, and then continues to build, our relationship. And so it continues in the exchanges between us. The relationship itself is the stage, with all the existing and developing roles in both of us that constitute it. Knowing this, as a supervisor engaged with the psychodrama method, I can then draw on the instruments of the drama. I can assist the development of spontaneity and new roles through all the techniques available in psychodrama, from doubling, mirroring and role reversal to modelling, maximising and soliloquy. I give examples below.

### *Paying Attention to the Level of Warm Up*

The value of the relationship and the way in which it is conducted suggest two other important principles of distance supervision. As I have just suggested, one is to pay attention to the level of warm up to the relationship. The supervisor who stays alert to the cues as well as the content offered through different media gains valuable information about how a client's warm up increases or decreases, as well as to the direction of the warm up. I recently supervised a young broadcaster who, unknown to me, had suffered a harsh and destructive working relationship with her previous boss. The supervision was conducted through email and I was puzzled at first by the sporadic exchanges between us. Her warm up to writing assignments rose and fell. As the relationship developed I learnt that the irregularity of her contact reflected her waxing and waning confidence. The hesitancy, enthusiasm and doubt expressed in her emails at different times were manifestations of the conflicted roles she was experiencing. My response was to double her consistently. I contacted her regularly, inquired about her progress, and responded rapidly to pitfalls and difficulties that she reported. I articulated her unvoiced doubts and highlighted progressive roles that she displayed in the assignments that she sent in. By her third assignment, her grades began to improve, she started to show more assurance in her writing and, finally, took the risk to branch out on a research topic very different from the timid and conserved idea she had first proposed. It was only at the end of our working relationship, when she sent her concluding media diary that I appreciated her full experience from initial despair to her final enthusiastic engagement with a project that clearly mattered to her. She flowered from her initial role of *hesitant despairer* to become a *confident risk taker* and, eventually, an *enthusiastic engager*. It matched my own role as a *delighted companion* to her accomplishment.

### *Progressive Role Development*

To tell my young broadcaster's story, even in brief, is to point to a fourth principle of distance supervision, and that is the warm up to new role development. This, as her example illustrates, is related to the growth of spontaneity and to the

gradual reduction of anxiety in the context of an increasingly reliable relationship. Spontaneity, in this case, grew out of the development of the relationship and the application of the ongoing role assessments I undertook in response to her emails. These role assessments were based on the nonverbal cues contained in her emails, the lapses and surges in her communication, the restricted and minimal content she supplied, the uncertainty in her occasional requests for help, the concern and bafflement this evoked in me, her avoidance of phone contact and much more. Together, just as in a face to face session, she provided me with clues that enabled me to develop my continuing role assessments and what I hoped were my adequate responses, first through doubling and later through extensive mirroring, for example in her writing.

### The Challenges of Distance Supervision

Distance supervision poses some special challenges, some just to do with the distance and media involved. Distance allows the other party (or parties) simply to disappear into the ether if they choose, sometimes never to return. I am always disappointed when I lose clients to the tyranny of distance, without ever really knowing the reasons. Distance can equal total silence. When the supervisee does not respond to correspondence, emails and phone calls, or changes their address and phone number, then the relationship hangs in the air, incomplete and unsustainable. Anecdotally, distance teaching is notorious for its high failure rate and, in my experience the same is true of distance supervision.

For instance, I lost contact with a Maori broadcaster after only the most minimal relationship building. After almost a year of silence she recontacted me and we both warmed up again in a long phone conversation. I strongly engaged with her passion for programme development in the Maori Television Service, a passion which matched my own experience as a former broadcaster. Yet this warm up was interrupted a week later when she emailed to say that her completed assignments had mysteriously disappeared in a computer failure. We were back to the beginning and she has not been in contact since. In these circumstances it is difficult even to make an assessment, but I wondered about someone working in isolation, inadequately doubled because distance and lack of face to face contact prevented it. I wondered, too, about the role conflict she enacted, alternately moving towards me in the phone call and away again in the subsequent distancing email. I was left disappointed and incomplete as a consequence. I reflected on roles she enacted that oscillated between the *isolated struggler* and the *ambivalent connector* before she vanished altogether.

On the other hand, a distance supervisory relationship may begin, appear to wither and then resume unexpectedly. In the last two years, three supervisees have dropped out of contact and then re-emerged, to my delight, after some nine months of silence, keen to make up for lost time and interested to develop something new. In each case this amounted to a tacit acknowledgement of the

strength of our relationship despite the time and distance involved. In one case, the client reconnected to fulfil a commitment to a Pacific Islands broadcasting project which a chaotic work life in journalism had put on hold. She told me later that my strong warm up to assisting her develop this important, undervalued work was pivotal to her completing the project. Our relationship had persisted even through the silence.

## Psychodramatic Production at Distance

If staging can take place through distance supervision, can there be production too? The answer, of course, is yes. In educational supervision, the production is the work produced as part of formal course requirements. In clinical supervision it will usually be the new role development arising out of the engagement with clients and the working through of professional issues. In both, the roles identified by Antony Williams (1995) of teacher, facilitator, consultant and evaluator will be present. In either case, all the elements of psychodrama practice can be fully realised. If there is a warm up, then there are also phases of action, as I have described. Action opens up the possibility for the catharses of abreaction and integration. These are likely to be experienced far more silently in the context of distance work, but they can still be present. I explore this later. With educational supervision, both can become evident through the emergence of a new confidence, the expression of a sense of achievement, or through the integration of the skills of analysis, argument, enquiry and innovatory ideas. There is also space for sharing after the enactment, sometimes through a common reflection in emails or by post about the experience of working together. When there is production or enactment a supervisor can make use of all the techniques available in psychodrama. But what does it mean, for example, to model or maximise at physical distance? How can this be undertaken on paper, electronically or over the phone?

Modelling is a good place to start. When broadcasting supervisees send me their initial assignments, I notice that their writing reflects the worlds in which they work. Journalists' writing, for instance, may be vivid but it is also compressed. This suits their working environments but does not serve academic writing requirements. Footnoting and referencing often seem tiresome and pedantic to journalists but these form the mechanics of academic argument. I will often show them how it is done, rewriting, paraphrasing and adding quotes and citations, even though examples are available in course material. This is to model, both the role required, the *academic writer*, as well as the how and why of applying a skill to a specific situation. I may need to model again in a later assignment but, usually, it is enough to point to course materials. Such modelling, of course, involves role assessment along with doubling, mirroring and role reversal, so that the writer feels I am alongside them at those critical moments when support is needed. Role flexibility is required on my part, as I shift between the *empathic companion*, the *sharp-eyed lynx*, the *patient illuminator* and the *engaged guide*.

Distance supervision employs other psychodramatic techniques as well. I maximise, for instance, when faced with persistent spelling and grammatical errors, in a way that reduces the chance the error will be repeated. I highlight errors consecutively, with underlining, exclamation marks or comments. My aim is role development, enlarging in the supervisee the role of the *confident skilled academic writer*.

Coaching works in the same way. Marginal comments in essays, for instance, are a form of coaching. They explain a difficulty of expression, argument or writing and suggest ideas for improvement. I am surprised to find, for instance, that broadcasters often have trouble with paraphrasing. They will often add their own opinion when a summary is all that is needed. I draw their attention to this, itself a form of mirroring, and suggest how a sentence could be rephrased (modelling) or indicate the principle it is based on (coaching).

These interventions are all grounded in Moreno's method regardless of whether writing arrives electronically or in hardcopy. As interventions, these link the relationship to warm up, to doubling, mirroring and role reversal, to spontaneity and to potential new role development. They allow attention to be paid to the numerous cues displayed aurally and visually in each act of communication. The communication medium itself will indicate the cues that may need attention, so that the lack of face to face contact on the phone, for instance, can be supplemented by listening more closely to the subtleties of intonation, the pattern of breathing, the speed of speaking, the moment of calling, the background noises or distractions along with the content of the conversation. In fact, all of the paralinguistic signals around speaking and listening (Dalianis & Hovy, 1993). While these may not replace the much fuller nonverbal communication available in face to face interactions, they still allow for the relationship to be developed and for effective, creative supervision work to be done.

## Applying the Clinical Perspectives of Psychodrama to Educational Supervision at Distance

The central principles of relationship and role development are particularly important in successfully conducting supervision at distance. To recap, the issue is not the technology or medium that enables distance communication but the creation and maintenance of an effective working relationship (Moreno, 1977a). The supervisor's warm up, under these conditions, is most effective when it is to the relationship and not to the technology of email, the phone or the internet. These are the principles I illustrate in the vignette below.

The advantage of working like this is to allow the clinical perspectives of psychodrama to be readily applied in other, nonclinical settings. It is possible, for example, to pinpoint the development of new roles and chart the social atom repair that accompanies them. In turn, this provides a fuller, clinical picture of a supervisee's whole functioning and ties the development of academic skills firmly to an individual's progressive role system. This possibility arises from



Moreno's (1977b) emphasis on spontaneity and creativity, where a clinical assessment is less a diagnosis of illness and much more one related to an individual's whole, integrated functioning. For this reason, a psychodramatic approach to supervision is an excellent vehicle for bringing dynamic clinical thinking into areas such as educational supervision where it has not previously been considered.

### *Social Atom Repair with Dave*

As part of my role as an educational supervisor, I worked with Dave. He was an ambitious man, already possessing very good grades in an advanced business degree. He was a perfectionist who wanted to use the project writing, presentational and research skills he expected to develop for rapid career advancement and, I suspected, to impress others. Certainly, he began by impressing me with the ferocity of his peremptory demands about the exact way in which I would work with him and meet his needs. In fact, by six weeks into our projected year's work together, I was beginning to feel intimidated and inadequate. This was not eased by my realisation that his writing was actually not very good. It was filled with elementary errors, forceful statements lacking any credible evidence and difficulties of expression. I began to wonder how he had received such consistently good grades to date.

I wondered how we were to find common ground, especially when the first grades he received from me were barely pass marks. How, he thundered through the email, was I to explain my marking when he had done so well in everything else? I felt at a loss. Indeed, I was in danger of moving into some of my own coping roles, the *uncertain complier* (he must be right) or the *rebellious tyrant* (I'm the boss, just suck it up). Instead, I reflected again on the very simple shortcomings he repeatedly displayed. I explained to Dave in great detail the way in which I had arrived at my assessment at each point in his assignment so that he would fully understand my reasoning. I also expressed my view of his grading, my understanding of supervision and the way that I attempted to grasp, as best as I could, his ideas. To my astonishment, Dave responded with gratitude. No-one, it turned out, had ever explained ordinary English or academic writing to him. He had never known the reason for supporting a view with evidence, nor how to arrange one's thoughts to persuade or get alongside a reader.

From this moment, our relationship improved. Dave's role of *demanding bully* increasingly dropped away and a more progressive *inquiring, eager learner* came into play. For my part, I could gauge far more accurately how much, and when, to intervene in his future work. Of course, there were further tests and returns to less progressive roles, but the joint understanding we had established survived these. Dave's writing and presentation became more flexible, exploratory and, simply, more human.

How does Dave's case fit the model I have described? Dave initially approached me functioning from a coping system, moving against me in the powerful bully

role which threatened to activate my own coping roles. Needless to say, these were forged in my own family of origin where bullying adults were an unavoidable reality. Had I given way to my own coping roles, they would have produced parallel restrictive roles in both of us: compliance or authoritarian bullying on my side and deference or bullying on his. The relationship of authority and dependence would have been repeated, or fought over, throughout our time together. The key shift, however, involved me sustaining the progressive *compassionate observer* role towards myself and Dave. For me, it meant generosity towards my own reactive fears. For Dave it was in noticing and not rejecting my observation of the inadequacies of his writing, which was in fact mirroring. My allocation of low grades and comments accurately mirrored his inadequacies as a writer. This was a part of his functioning that he had long disguised by becoming a *blustering bully*. As Max Clayton (1992) notes, mirroring wakes an individual up to an aspect of their functioning. Implicitly, by explaining my thinking to Dave, I role reversed with him and then doubled the unexpressed role of the *isolated, needy child* in him. Once this had been addressed and worked through, the possibility of co-creation became a reality towards which we could both work. This was social atom repair at work in educational supervision at distance.

## Conclusion

Dave's case illustrates many of the aspects of distance supervision using psychodrama, doubling, mirroring and role reversal translated through the media of writing, email and phone calls. It moves rapidly from warm up to production and then to a catharsis of abreaction and integration, all assisted by instruments of the drama. Yet all of this took place without a physical stage but within a developing, tested relationship.

More broadly, Dave's case illustrates the way that psychodrama can be enacted effectively at distance in relation to a wide range of communication technologies. I have outlined its efficacy in distance supervision but its potential is as great for role training, sociometry, clinical practice or any other aspect of the method. New mobile digital technologies will only increase these opportunities. Smartphones, for instance, increasingly rely on digital devices to enhance their interactive emotional and relational worlds (Gee, 2010; Lasen, 2004). They actively invite psychodramatic participation in the ways I have described here. I can only urge psychodramatists to take up the promises and challenges offered by these vibrant, new electronic domains.

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John Farnsworth is a psychotherapist who uses psychodrama as part of his practice in Dunedin. He works with individuals, groups and organisations. He is also the programme leader for distance teaching for the New Zealand Broadcasting School's Bachelor of Broadcasting Communication. John can be contacted at <[johnf@earthlight.co.nz](mailto:johnf@earthlight.co.nz)>.

# Healing Rifts: Sociodrama in a Maternity Community

*DON REEKIE*

## *ABSTRACT*

Don Reekie was contracted by a New Zealand District Health Board to facilitate the healing of rifts among practitioners in a hospital maternity community. In this article he describes the efficacy of sociodrama in this work, particularly focusing on his decisions and interventions, and the responses of the participants involved. Reference is made to community members' written attestations regarding the positive ongoing consequences of the sociodramatic interventions. The author particularly acknowledges the community members and key players among them, as co-creators of a new maternity culture.

## *KEY WORDS*

communication, crisis management, hospital, lead maternity carer, midwifery, obstetrics, organisation, psychodramatic methods, role training, sociodrama

## **Prologue**

I present to you a courageous maternity community who set out to heal rifts between their member groups, hoping that sociodrama might provide the elusive answer to their problems. My commission with them lasted eighteen months and well before it was over they had begun to report publicly the difficulties they faced and their remarkable successes following one day of sociodrama. They presented at international conferences and wrote their story in journals, notably the British Medical Association's journal. They aspired to share with the broader community of health professionals the dramatic improvement in delivery of service, quality and safety that can be gained from improvements in relationships and communications.

## **Settings**

Competition and suspicion between midwives and doctors has a long global

history. Medical practitioners gained ascendancy in the Western world, with midwives widely regarded as the handmaidens of obstetrics. A unique twist was given to this situation in New Zealand by the 1990 Nurses Amendment Act, which authorised midwives to provide lead maternity care equal to medical practitioners. Mistrust on the part of many medical practitioners intensified when midwifery education no longer required a nursing qualification as a prerequisite. The 'new breed' of midwives was highly equipped for their task in the eyes of the midwifery profession, but did not conform to traditional hospital or medical culture. In the words of journalist Leah Haines (2009) "Health and Disability Commissioner Ron Paterson described the difference as obstetricians taking a 'risk-averse, interventionist approach' and midwives 'a less-interventionist approach, to allow the normal physiological process of labour to proceed'".

The tensions played out in maternity care contexts, often resulting in poor professional relationships and a search for remedies. A public report by the hospital with which I was involved, presented to delegates of an Australasian women's hospitals' conference, owned that "For a number of reasons . . . it was clear that relations between the various providers of care at their hospital were at an all time low . . . a group of 27 independent midwives wrote to the Managers of the Maternity Hospital expressing concerns and requesting a meeting. This was the first move towards positive communication and reconciliation. The response was, in public hospital terms, unconventional . . ." (Thomas & Stacey, 2002).

## Beginnings

It was a Lead Maternity Carer (LMC) midwife who suggested a sociodramatic intervention with the entire maternity community. The community's agreement told me the level of their desperation and courage. The clinical director was passionate about bringing compassion and good relations into hospital practice. He advocated openness, mutual respect and cooperative practice, although some of his colleagues regarded his vision with suspicion. The hospital general manager was collaborative and widely trusted as having her 'feet on the ground'. She and her staff valued the clinical director highly.

As an observer I sat in on a senior staff meeting that included LMC midwives, the District Health Board (DHB) head of obstetrics, DHB members and Maternity Consumers Council (MCC) representatives. All were committed to progressing collaboration although there was no specific mention of the planned sociodramatic intervention, nicknamed by then the Big Day Out. I met with the clinical director and hospital manager on a regular basis thereafter.

## Decisions

In order to assess and plan, I met with a number of small groups. The first, a representative microcosm of the organisation, urgently wanted improved services

and collaboration but could not see a common pathway forward. A group of midwives was keen to have a Big Day Out while a group of obstetricians was intent on stopping it, fearful that a facilitator without understanding of “surgical crises at 2am” would make matters worse.

Following are the areas I assess when making decisions about sociodramatic interventions and the conclusions that I came to in this case.

1. Discomfort, Vision and Hope (See Camson, 1995; Dannemiller, 1997; Dannemiller & Jacobs, 1992)

*The maternity community was in severe discomfort. Each group held to its own visions.*

2. Strength of Relationships

*The leaders were creative and courageous with mutually positive relationships with one another and each stakeholder group.*

3. Appropriate Authority

*There was no doubt that the DHB had authorised and expected the professionals to produce effective collaborative practices.*

4. Proximity, Purpose, Identity and Values

*Proximity between the groups was apparent but they had splintered into distinct identities. Values varied but each was predicated on the good of mother and child. The groups lacked a focus on a common purpose and needed to develop mutual trust.*

5. Legitimising by Marking: Outsiders to organisations, including facilitators, are aliens and need to be legitimised by a respected leader to be accepted<sup>1</sup>.

*I proposed that the hospital manager open the Big Day Out.*

6. Diagonal Slice Representative Microcosm: A diagonal slice group as a microcosm of a community provides a useful representation and can precipitate an expectation that percolates through the community.

*My meeting with such a group revealed that there was a desperate longing for common purpose and identity.*

7. A Further Decision Centred on Attire

*I wore suit and tie. I had heard speculation that I would be a ‘touchy feely’ character wearing crystal beads and kaftan.*

There was full acceptance that all groups in the maternity community including mothers, LMCs, pediatricians, DHB members and MCC members would be at the Big Day Out. Ahead of the day, I had invited each professional group to write a collective statement about their particular contribution to successful maternity, and their understanding of other groups’ contributions. I believe this assisted the development of appreciation and amenability within and between the groups.

## Big Day Out

*In this section I will narrate the sociodrama in present dramatic tense as it unfolded, interweaving italicised asides to the reader throughout.*

The venue for the Big Day Out is in a conference centre away from the hospital. I set out an elongated oval of a hundred chairs in its large room. Over the next twenty minutes seventy participants arrive. We start promptly. I am acutely aware that everyone sees me as 'on trial' but even with their doubts they want the day to work. I am deeply conscious of this work's importance, the common valuing of mother and baby, and trust myself and the group. In consultative mode, the hospital's general manager sits beside me and introduces me. Her 'marking' me is crucial to my being accepted by some participants.

*I have previously applied sociometry, sociodrama and role training in large organisational groups and I am certainly not daunted.*

I begin. "Let's put out three chairs. This is a chair for a baby, this a chair for a woman, this a chair for a man. Now let us have a few minutes silence and recognise that what we are about today is the sacred moment of birth that centres on these three people." The silence is palpable. I let it continue. After a little over two minutes I say, "This is what this day is about, the success of this moment, the birth of a baby".

I continue. "Okay, we will clear these chairs to bring other chairs onto the floor. We are going to follow a woman through her pregnancy from the moment of conception to the moment of birth. What is it we know she is likely to ask? Who will she ask and what information will she be given? Let's start when she knows she has conceived." Participants put out chairs to represent the various people responding to the mother-to-be, the midwives, GPs, mothers of mothers, friends and obstetricians. Some participants sit on the chairs and represent the people they have named. Sometimes others volunteer to sit for those named. Others suggest alternative responses. By the close there are about forty-five peopled chairs.

*You may notice that I removed the chairs for mother, baby and father. I had considered maintaining an empty chair as a focus for a typical mother, but deemed it unnecessary as this drama is about the carers' responses and their differences. I know my beginning has made 'mother' vitally present. This large group was unfamiliar with role enactment and even a light exploration of typical though diverse responding was likely to evoke powerful experiences.*

Halfway through this process an LMC midwife suggests a question that an expectant mother might ask, and then provides a midwife's answer. An obstetrician intervenes to provide what he sees as the 'correct' answer. Their colleagues know these two have had a fierce conflict in the past over a mother's care. The group freezes. Anxious glances flit around the room. All eyes turn towards me. The room is electric.

I kneel beside the man, a little behind his shoulder. I ask, "Are you willing to have me coach you?" He shifts uncomfortably, says "Yes", adding "But what does that mean?"<sup>2</sup> I say, "You've listened to what she said and you've given your opinion. You've given your advice, making a suggestion. You have a different view of things".

He agrees. I go on. "How about you try this way. First you make quite sure you know what she has said. You need her to know that you want to discover whether you heard her correctly. So, tell her what you believe she said". He proceeds to do this. "Now ask her 'Have I heard you correctly?'" He does that. To his surprise she says, "No. That isn't what I said. It's certainly not what I meant".

I coach him further. "Now you say to her 'I mustn't have heard you correctly. Could you please tell me again?'" He does this. As she tells him what she has said the whole group breaths out and then in. I say to him, "See if you have got what she is intending to say. Find out by telling her what you've heard". He retells and she agrees he has "pretty well got it". I say to him, "But you have a different opinion to her. You think you understand what her view is, but yours is different". He agrees, "Yes, that's right". I say, "So now tell her that you have a different opinion to hers". He does. "Now go on from there and tell her how she might view it differently. Give her your reasons for taking a different view". After that I ask the midwife to repeat to him what he is proposing. He agrees she has heard him correctly. She states her position while acknowledging the usefulness of some of the points he brings forward.

The room is crackling with amazed excitement. Eyes acknowledge others across the room. Faces signal something is changing. He is not as far away from her as he had thought. The participants are beginning to believe change can happen.

For weeks afterwards they say to one another, "That was the moment!"

*When the group froze, I was alert and free. My mind focused on the relationship between two people and their community. The requirements of my professional association, The Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association, are strongly alive in me. "The producer trusts being with themselves moment by moment and has a sense of adequacy through experiencing their spontaneity and creativity. This is in contrast to feeling powerful as a result of the impact of their knowledge of techniques and theory on a . . . group" (ANZPA Board of Examiners, 2011:11).*

The group has focused intensely on a typical woman's pregnancy. The session concludes with enthusiasm high. They speak of seeing one another somewhat differently now. There is astonishment that they can discuss this area with strong commitment but without antagonism.

Tea break taken, I invite the participants to form small groups with others they identify with, discuss their communal goals and write them on large sheets of paper. Then in new mixed groupings I ask them to record ideas for achieving those goals. The statements viewed, participants gather to discuss the morning's achievements with a neighbour. I share my intention to explore typical scenarios in the life of their hospital throughout the afternoon. There is a buzz of interest.

In the afternoon I produce rolling sociodramatic enactments with role training elements. We set out typical scenes where tensions occur. Many are in the labour room in the middle of the night. One after another, staff members come forward



to review a scene. Each one receives acknowledgement. None is alone with their experience. Others become actors for the first-actor, often playing a member of their own profession and at times standing in unfamiliar shoes. They role reverse between the characters of the scene. Audience members make recognition and offer commentary. They suggest alternatives and step into scenes. Coaching, with mirroring and brain storming alternatives in action, open up new possibilities.

A midwife describes feeling demeaned when an obstetrician arrived at her request and “He took over”. She sets the scene, which others enact with her. Mirrored in a re-enactment she witnesses herself standing aside subserviently when receiving the doctor, which results in an authority vacuum. Through role training she develops her professional autonomy. As an *efficient hostess* she can now summarise the situation, stating the specific assistance she seeks. Obstetricians, anaesthetists and midwives become her obstetrician and all are easily cooperative. Her authority meets his appropriately.

A scene where a doctor feels it necessary to be authoritative in guiding a mother provokes speculative alternatives from several doctors in the audience. Midwives and mothers spontaneously enact radically different approaches. The doctor experiments without shame, finding ways to communicate that are open and satisfying.

At the end of the Big Day Out the sharing and discussion is positive and optimistic. The participants commit to a regular maternity community forum. There are no other promises but many expressions of a willingness to experiment.

In the weeks that follow, the hospital manager and the clinical director hear many reports of success. The maternity community members are cooperating with good humour in challenging situations.

## Learning through Crises

As a result of the achievements of the Big Day Out, the maternity community forum was established. Built on goodwill and experimentation, it met monthly. My role was to coach the chairperson and group members, either by their or my initiative. When a community overcomes significant challenges, as this group had done, there is then further development. They learn to trust their efficacy, grow towards openness, realise individual capacities and strengthen interdependence. All these developments were furthered as the forum faced and overcame a series of crises in the following months.

### *First Crisis: Representation of Mothers*

The manager invited two mothers to the first forum meeting, known to her through successful resolution of complaints. After speaking of their birthing experiences, in one case with bitter comment regarding a midwife, they excused themselves and left early. The midwife was present and raised her concern at mothers attending professional consultations. Several agreed that lay people could

gain or contribute little to medical discussions. Others expressed discomfort at such restrictiveness. My view was that mothers should be forum members once they were representative of a wide range of birthing experiences. A mothers' forum was formed with help from the local Parents Centre and Plunket group. A research midwife skilled in liaison worked with them and representatives of the mothers' forum attended the maternity forum from then on.

### ***Second Crisis: Cultural Accessibility***

The maternity day clinic, which had worked hard to become culturally accessible, proudly reported their improvements to the forum. However, at the following meeting the Pacific Island Midwife Advisor reported that Pacific Island mothers experienced the clinic as alienating. I coached an uncomfortable forum group to choose a small group to meet with the clinic director. They would also open discussions with the midwife advisor and a group of Pacific Island mothers to find ways of extending the gains already made. The forum accomplished this successfully.

### ***Third Crisis: Recognition of the Midwifery Profession's Training***

A midwife, reporting a new edict requiring validation of competence from the DHB's anaesthetics department for midwives to administer epidurals, urged the forum to gain acceptance for midwifery's own professional training and validation practices. The forum agreed and the hospital general manager raised the matter with the CEO of the DHB, its departments of midwifery and anaesthetics and its solicitor. Through December and January efforts to gain approval from all parties dragged on. I coached the manager and clinical director regularly, urging them to push the system. I asserted that the fledgling forum's trust levels would fracture if it did not receive a response within two months. Eventually the DHB accepted the proposal and the forum members discovered that their consultations and actions could make a difference.

### ***Fourth Crisis: Working with Power Differentials***

In response to a health professional's proposal, a senior DHB leader explained in a kindly and conciliatory way what he considered were the real needs of a situation. I intervened instantly, inviting the senior person to explore available options. I suggested he begin by taking the view that the other person might be differently informed, rather than inadequately informed. I coached him to appreciate her view as having intent and purpose. I pointed out that a communication offered in an explanatory form cannot avoid being dismissive. In this instance the group saw that there was substance and usefulness in the proposal, in spite of the senior man being closer to the centre of power, policy and history. At the next meeting, the chairperson caught himself offering an explanation before checking out intent and purpose. He was quick to use the learning from the previous forum, recognising the dynamic and retracing his

steps. The readiness of those with greater power to bend their habits to an openness that values contributions from everyone led to robust participation.

Forum members themselves were more conscious of their success in forming action groups with report times that reviewed, developed and reformed their collective practice. Notable among them was an autonomous quality improvement team. These small groups not only accomplished their tasks, they built close, strong relationships between the professional groups.

## Reflections

This is the only time an organisation has engaged me specifically for sociodrama. I approached the work expecting that the maternity community members were intelligent, compassionate, sensitive to the human spirit and committed to mothers and babies. I appreciated that birthing affirms life and accepts the reality of death. I took a whole group focus with values central to working with relationships. In becoming an audience to a staged drama of their community's life and then actors in that story, the community members oscillated between participator and spectator. They were courageously experimental, opening up to consultation and care with one another.

Psychodramatic wisdom indicates that when a community intent on building cooperative practices becomes an audience to itself, it inevitably lays bare its shared life and variety of values, re-experiences its tensions and takes hold of hot coals of conflict. In my work with this community, I set out to promote respect for others' priorities, consideration for their disparate motivations, and the discovery of shared values. I did not invite a sociodramatic question, but one was implicit. How can mothers, LMC midwives, hospital midwives and hospital medical staff work together effectively? The answer has been lived now for a full decade. I am confident that this community, reviewing and visioning together will potentiate its identity, its belief in a future and its realisation 'We are in this together'.

## Epilogue

The hospital's first public report to delegates of an Australasian women's hospitals conference affirmed the efficacy of sociodrama in bringing about dramatic improvement on every measure.

*A facilitator was employed who by training and experience with sociodrama, using psychodramatic methods, was able to guide a conversation including everyone's personal experiences, values, and attitudes. Replay of actual or typical incidents were set out and preferred practice explored. The focus was on the rights of the mother and baby and the role of the professionals to see this as a priority. It was seen by all as a success in opening the channels for communication.*

Thomas & Stacey (2002:5)

It is not very often that a client group attests to the efficacy of sociodrama in an international journal. In their writing, these authors noted that many were fearful in the lead up to the Big Day Out. However:

*Participants role-played labour room crises, slowing down time to allow exploration of interactions, behaviours, beliefs and difficulties in communication. At times, the tension was electrifying . . . A midwife, role-playing an obstetrician, declared . . . Now that I know we share values, it will be much easier for us to work together in the future' . . . a monthly, multidisciplinary Maternity Forum — helped by the same facilitator — was agreed. Forum members continued to confront and modify beliefs about others' behaviour and received and acted on feedback about their own. The first Forum was characterized by more conflict and heightened emotions. Feedback from the facilitator allowed us to recognise our behaviour and explore the often-false beliefs underlying our reaction.*

Youngson, Stacey & Wimbrow (2003:398-399)

*Our experience suggests that understanding your own and others views and beliefs; valuing others' contributions and being open to challenge are as important to quality improvement as the possession of robust data if the aim is to make changes to working practices that lead to significant improvements for patients . . . Effective leaders focus efforts on creating new experiences that challenge personal beliefs and lead to new behaviours and new results. In adulthood, personal beliefs are relatively fixed and require a significant emotional event to change. In the role-play workshop and subsequent forums, we intervened in a dramatic way to expose conflicting beliefs and create new, shared experience that reinforced common goals and collaborative behaviours. None of this is for the faint-hearted! Courage was required to manage high levels of interpersonal conflict, anger and blame but the expression of strong emotion was a necessary part of the process in changing beliefs.*

Youngson, Stacey & Wimbrow (2003:400)

The positive outcomes of the Big Day Out were even reported in the *New Zealand Listener* eight years after the event.

*. . . something extraordinary happened. Relationships healed, caesarean rates fell to 15%, and babies . . . went from having some of the worst health outcomes immediately after birth to having the best in Australasia.*

Leah Haines (2009:14-15)

I have been in somewhat of an ethical conundrum regarding my wish to name this maternity community. On the one hand I have had to consider the confidentiality requirements of the *ANZPA Journal* while on the other my ethical duty to reference writers. The community deserves to be heralded strongly. A Crisis in Maternity Services: The Courage to be Wrong was their article leading into the 2004 Quality and Safety in Health Care Conference. The courage to be wrong is a proud and honourable watchcry for this healthcare community. They

determined to be open with clients and wider communities regarding their failures and successes. This ethic led them to banish blame with naming and shaming, and to create a community that takes responsibility for each failure through thorough, open enquiry and shared learning.

The community is richly entitled to be proud of the achievements of the Big Day Out and the developments that followed it. Everyone contributed with vigour and unrelenting determination. Hospital and community midwifery leaders made wise and powerful contributions. The hospital's general manager and her clinical director deserve particular mention. The mothers' forum was a great strength. The maternity forum worked diligently to create a positive culture. More recently the forum itself has been retired, and management structures and personnel have changed. The community's goodwill and mutual trust though have stood the test of time. New challenges and initiatives will no doubt continue to occur.

## Postscript to the Epilogue

I was delighted to receive acknowledgement of article drafts and a personal endorsement from a key participant in these events. Speaking of the results of the sociodramatic interventions, he writes:

*The goodwill and collaborative relationships in maternity persist strongly to this day, as do the excellent clinical outcomes. Almost all of the same players are still there. I have resigned from the DHB and had a touching farewell from people connected with the maternity service. About 25 met for dinner, including many of the participants in the original big day out. The self-employed LMC, who initiated the joint letter to management, and was so courageous in the big day out, became my daughter's midwife. The things I learned from you have been widely applied and taught to others.*

R. Youngson (Personal Communication, 2011)

## END NOTES

1. In ethology I learned that troop and pack animals will accept aliens only when marked by their leaders, who physically put their scent on them. I have noticed that people are only likely to accept and receive from an outside facilitator or trainer if their organisation's leader has properly introduced and taken responsibility for them being there.
2. When working sociodramatically, we have the resource of Jacob Moreno's (1977) spontaneity development theory to assist us. He provides clues to making incisive assessments of the underlying motivations of role interactions. Sociodramatic attention is primarily focused on the whole group, its interactive networks, cultural patterns and common and disparate values. A specific interaction may invite a zoom in on an individual for open investigation. The approach taken by the director will determine the likelihood of an open response. The director's ability to recognise the level of spontaneity and the phase of spontaneity development to which the person

has returned in response to their social context, will assist in the engagement of that group member. In this instance I approach a competent senior health professional and also view him as functioning at a role taking level and in the developmental phase of the matrix of all identity, where he echoes a preverbal world of experience. I move gently alongside to enter his universe, recognising his vulnerability. For further elucidation, see Reekie (2007, 2009 & <donreekie.com>) and Turner (2008).

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Don Reekie (MA, TEP) has been a psychodrama trainer in Auckland, Christchurch and Brisbane, an executive member of the Psychodrama Institute of New Zealand (PINZ), the Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association (ANZPA) and its Board of Examiners. Don was a founding director of the Human Development and Training Institute, a benchmark in New Zealand counselling training that recently celebrated its 21st birthday. Don and his partner Gwen, also a psychodramatist, live most of the year in Christchurch and part of each year in Queensland. Don can be contacted at <[gwendon@ihug.co.nz](mailto:gwendon@ihug.co.nz)>.

# Responses to the Threat of Climate Change: A Sociodramatic Exploration

KATERINA SELIGMAN

## ABSTRACT

Katerina Seligman describes a sociodrama undertaken during a residential psychodrama workshop, whereby sociodramatic questions regarding the global threat of climate change were posed, and a range of subgroup responses were explored. She begins with her personal story of exploration regarding climate change to warm the reader up to the sociodramatic enactment that follows. The author describes the way in which the enactment facilitated role reversal and a deepening of the understanding of conflicting values in relation to climate change.

## KEY WORDS

climate change, environment, global warming, Moreno, psychodrama, role reversal, sociodrama, subgroups

*I have a multitude of friends. Most of them aren't born yet.*

Joanna Macy

*No problem can be solved with the same consciousness that created it.*

Albert Einstein

## Climate Change: The Personal Story

During 2009 I devoted almost all my waking moments to studying climate change. It was both an exhilarating and a depressing journey — exhilarating because it brought me in touch with highly educated and environmentally conscious people, depressing because I had to face the real possibility that the natural world that I love so dearly is under even more serious threat than I had previously imagined. As a nature lover I am deeply saddened that we stand to

lose a great number of living species as a direct result of climate change. Many of the world's populations, among them the poorest and least responsible for global warming, stand to lose their water supplies. Some of the world's largest cities are threatened by sea level rise. The number of climate refugees could be in the millions or even billions. These are just some of the very disturbing predictions currently being made by climate scientists.

As a response to this disturbing information I became involved in political actions to encourage our government to take the matter seriously and to raise public awareness about the urgency of the issue. Drawing on my science background, I joined with a colleague to conduct a number of local seminars entitled *The Basics of Climate Science*, in the hope that participants would understand the science better and therefore be more likely to take actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. I also made efforts to reduce my own personal carbon foot print. Rather idealistically, I decided to stop flying since air travel produces vast quantities of harmful emissions. Then I received news that my mother was dying and I felt I had no choice but to fly to Melbourne to be with her in her final hours. I decided to travel to our psychodrama trainer development workshop by land-based public transport. This took two days of travel by bus, boat and train, and cost more than twice as much as a budget airfare. It was an enjoyable experience but I nevertheless decided to fly home. I went to my local supermarket to buy a bottle of wine. Faced with the choice of buying local wine or purchasing wine from the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand, I chose to buy the latter knowing full well that it had travelled hundreds of kilometres to reach the supermarket shelf. I annually consume many times my body weight in food which has travelled environmentally damaging distances to reach me. With this awareness, I entered the Eat Local Foods Challenge sponsored by our district council, and for 5 weeks I tried to eat only foods grown and produced within a 200 kilometre radius. This meant giving up coffee, chocolate, most grains and many other food items. I failed to eat 100% local, but nevertheless won the competition! Since then I have definitely incorporated some new buying and eating habits into my daily life. However I have also reverted to eating some foods which have travelled many kilometres to my table. This is one of the conundrums that I face on a daily basis. My somewhat inadequate attempts to change my own behaviours have clarified for me the huge challenges that we, the global community, face in making adequate responses to the unprecedented crisis of climate change<sup>1</sup>.

## **A Group Focus on the Environment**

With these issues and questions in mind, I decided to address the environment and climate change during a four day residential psychodrama workshop in October 2010. The group was open to psychodrama trainees as well as others wanting to experience the psychodrama method. As climate change is a social



issue I knew that I would be working sociodramatically to explore our collective as well as our individual responses to this situation.

Sociodrama is an application of the methods created by Dr J.L. Moreno. Moreno viewed sociodrama as a way in which to engage people in specific dramatic activities in order to evoke discussions, explorations and enactments of solutions to issues of conflict (Kellerman, 1998). Sociodrama is a “group approach . . . of analysing and treating social problems” (Moreno, 1977). “The sociodrama . . . starts from within the audience present and is calculated to be educational, clarifying and energising to all members. It serves as a stimulus to spontaneity, creativity . . . and empathy, and as a check and balance to cultural tensions . . . arising from local or world-wide events. It is a means for social catharsis and integration” (Moreno, 1993:88).

In the workshop’s promotion I included an emphasis on opening to, and being nourished by the natural world. Potential participants knew there would be specific time for meditation in a natural environment during the workshop. The group members thus arrived warmed up to some degree to an environmental focus. I chose to focus on climate change itself on the third day of the workshop because this coincided with a global day of climate action on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the 10<sup>th</sup> month 2010, coordinated by the organisation 350.org.nz.

## Warming Up the Group

Introducing the group warm up, I spoke about my own journey of discovery about climate change and invited responses from the group. One participant likened society’s ‘head in the sand’ response to global warming to an active addict’s denial of their addiction, but on a much larger scale. She referred to the work of Anne Wilson Schaef (1987,1988) and expressed the view that society is in a state of collective denial regarding the destruction of the planet’s natural systems. As with an addicted person, this denial and other unconscious defence mechanisms are allowing our destructive behaviours to continue. In response, other participants reflected on the parallels between the more commonly recognised drug and process addictions, for example alcoholism and workaholism, and the ‘cultural addiction’ we have to the excessive use of fossil fuels and other environmentally harmful behaviours.

Building on this theme, we set out on the sociodramatic stage the five stages of addiction recovery, pre-contemplation, contemplation, planning, action and maintenance (Prochaska, DiClemente & Norcross, 1992). Participants reflected on their experiences of effective and ineffective interventions with addicted people in relation to the five stages. One participant highlighted the need to make interventions which are appropriate to a person’s consciousness when facilitating the movement from one stage of recovery to the next. For example, if a person is at the pre-contemplative stage, only interventions that will assist them to begin to contemplate the existence of their addiction are appropriate.

## Distress and Empowerment

After these somewhat theoretical considerations, the focus became more personal. I asked participants to share with one another, in pairs and then in the whole group, their own personal experiences and responses to environmental degradation. In the group sharing participants spoke deeply about:

- Frustration with flat mates who wantonly waste electricity.
- Memories of deep grief experienced during childhood after watching the movie *Watership Down*.
- Grief in response to special natural places that have been seriously degraded or are threatened with degradation.
- Distress at the continued loss of endangered wild life.
- Anguish when viewing scenes of mudslides obliterating whole villages.

One group member wept and expressed feelings of grief, fear and helplessness in the face of the environmental threats the world is currently facing. Some group members responded with similar distressing emotions, while others became guarded and self-protective, expressing resignation. I found this an appropriate time to bring in the work of Joanna Macy (1991). Macy maintains that distressing feelings, experienced in response to major global threats, demonstrate the capacity to have compassion for all living things and the planet itself. The distress, she claims, is a normal and necessary aspect of the move towards empowerment, rather than a sign of personal weakness or neurosis. This positive mirroring validated the experiences of some group participants and enabled them to become more thoughtful, while still valuing their emotional responses.

Macy's work has been enormously validating and empowering in my personal climate change journey. Allow me for a moment to interrupt my description of this group session to elaborate on some of her thinking. Macy notes that people who question the sanity of what we are doing may be viewed as negative, neurotic, morbid, boring or crazy. In her view, the acknowledgment of grief, despair and fear for the future is a kind of social taboo which means such feelings are rarely expressed directly. The dread remains on the fringes of awareness, too deep to name, too fearsome to face. As a result there is an impoverishment of emotional and sensory life, and a block to our capacity to process and respond to information. Our imaginations, which are needed for fresh visions and strategies, are impeded. She suggests that rather than grabbing for sedatives, ideologies or simplistic solutions, we learn to look at things as they are, painful and overwhelming as that may be. She postulates that no healing can begin until we become fully present to our world, until we learn to sustain the gaze. Many of us fear that confrontation with despair will bring loneliness and isolation. To the contrary, Macy notes that in the letting go of old defences truer community emerges. We are empowered to move towards effective action.

Anyone who has experienced psychodrama to any depth will be aware of the parallels between Macy's ideas and those of J.L. Moreno. Moreno encouraged

people to move away from robotic, conserved ways of doing things. His methods stimulate the imagination and encourage in depth feeling and truthful expression. Psychodrama has the effect of unifying our beings. We come out of isolation, healing and strengthening our relationships past and present, and as in Macy's work, developing a true sense of community.

## A Sociodrama Focused on Climate Change

The in depth sharing described above warmed the group members up to the sociodrama which followed. I asked participants to reflect on emerging questions and after some sharing and discussion the group identified two sociodramatic questions, which were written up on a whiteboard.

- How can we live effectively and vibrantly in an insecure and uncertain world?
- How can I use my abilities effectively to influence cultural change towards creating a sustainable world?

I invited participants to step onto the sociodramatic stage and express their values in response to the issue of climate change. As the first participant took up this invitation, the others joined her in entering the world of the particular subgroup that she was representing. They took up the roles inherent in its culture, exchanging thoughts and feelings and becoming conscious of the values of that subgroup. After a short while, a participant moved to separate herself and represent a different subgroup and once again was joined by the others to explore the thoughts, feelings and world view of that new group. Other subgroups emerged in a similar way, in an atmosphere of high spontaneity and involvement. Each subgroup was named as it emerged. In identifying a new subgroup, participants did not always express their own values but attempted to represent other groups that they had observed in society. As the director of the sociodrama, I took care that participants avoided stereotyping. I coached the participants to leave their usual world view aside and to enter the world of each subgroup as genuinely and deeply as possible, to gain a real sense of the experiences, motivations and value systems that are alive there and thus begin the process of role reversal.

The following 10 subgroups emerged during the sociodrama and were recorded on the whiteboard:

- *Environmentally Aware, Limit-Setting Comfort Preservers*: I'm doing my bit. I already recycle, use energy efficient light bulbs, cycle when I can, and I'm not willing to inconvenience myself or my family any further.
- *Believers in Human Superiority and Progress*: Human intelligence puts us above other living things. Human technology, progress and growth are invaluable and are to be pursued and applauded.
- *Philosophical Fatalists*: The planet and life on it will go on in some form or

- other and it doesn't matter if humans and other life forms don't survive.
- *Survival Oriented Pragmatists*: We need to learn to grow our own food, and develop small self-sufficient resilient communities within towns and cities so that we have the best chance of survival when the climate crisis and peak oil really hit home.
  - *Carefree Hedonists*: There's no point worrying. Might as well just have a good time. The powers that be/governments/scientists will sort it out.
  - *Scientific Realists*: Unless we all take drastic action immediately, life as we know it will come to an end. But there is no point in frightening people.
  - *Spiritualists*: Surviving humans will transcend this existence and move to a higher state of consciousness.
  - *Environmental Activists*: Humans are a part of an interconnected ecosystem and the world needs each person to take responsibility for their own environmental footprint and to act politically to raise awareness in other individuals, organisations and in policymakers.
  - *Day to Day Survivors*: Surviving day to day reality is challenging and all-consuming enough. I have no time or energy to even think about anything else.
  - *Naïve Nature-Loving Enthusiasts*: This group comprises children and adults who are excited about the natural world and care for it.

During the setting out of subgroups, participants were highly animated and thoroughly involved. With the high level of warm up, we could have continued bringing out more subgroups. We could also have enacted role reversals between subgroups. However I decided to bring the enactment phase of the sociodrama to a close, as I wanted to avoid too much complexity and the potential for chaos on the sociodramatic stage. I reflected that we had achieved the sociodrama's purpose, which was to engage in an in depth exploration of the different world views that exist regarding climate change.

## Waking Up to Personal Values and Role Reversing with Others

The group then embarked on the sharing phase of the sociodrama. Some participants shared that experiencing and naming the subgroups resulted in them waking up more fully to their own values regarding this challenging issue. Some participants shared that they had a deeper understanding and acceptance of others, whose values they had previously rejected. Some expressed surprise at the degree of animation and involvement they had experienced.

It was clear that the process of taking up the roles of other subgroups required participants to reverse roles very fully with people who hold different world views. Although they did not come to final answers to the sociodramatic questions that had been posed, the participants had made beginning steps

towards appreciating, in a real and lively way, the complexity of the cultural responses to climate change. Group members had begun to engage with the sociodramatic questions posed during the warm up. How can we live effectively and vibrantly in an insecure world? How can I use my abilities effectively to influence cultural change towards creating a sustainable world?

Several weeks after the workshop one participant reported that she felt much less reserved about discussing climate change with friends and family. "I've been holding on to expressing how concerned I feel so it has had definite effects on my awareness and expression." Another participant commented on the "total" way in which she was involved and enlivened during the enactment. She reported that she is now much readier to take action in her own life. Others reported an increased awareness in their daily activities such as conserving fuel and recycling. I was heartened by these small shifts as a result of the sociodrama, whilst also remaining aware that much larger scale solutions are also needed.

## Fostering Sustainable Behaviour

Since the workshop, I have become enthused by the idea that behavioural change happens when people make a small commitment, because this 'changes the way they view themselves' (McKenzie-Mohr, 2010). Person to person contact and zero pressure or coercion are essential ingredients in the process of creating new societal norms. Moreno's work clearly has a part to play in this regard. Psychodramatic and sociodramatic enactments enable people to sustain their gaze on uncomfortable cognitions and emotions, to examine the roles they themselves play, and to role reverse with negatively valued roles. They assist people to develop progressive roles and identities, and thus contribute towards new values and progressive societal norms. As psychodramatists and sociodramatists, we are in a powerful position to facilitate movement towards a more sustainable society.

## Conclusion

The responses to the global threat of climate change are varied. There is a need to enter into the world of those who hold views and values that are different from our own, and to stay in emotional contact with them. It is through having the courage to experience our responses to uncomfortable realities and to role reverse with others who have different responses, that we are able to influence societal norms towards a paradigm shift which would offer hope for our endangered planet and the future generations who will inherit it.

## ENDNOTES

1. This article originally included a two page literature survey on the psychological responses to

climate change and a one page appendix that briefly and simply summarised the generally poorly understood basics of climate science. If you would like copies, please contact the author (see below).

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Katerina Seligman (M.Sc., Dip.Ed.) is a practising psychodramatist and trainer educator practitioner (TEP). She is also a playful grandmother and great-grandmother involved in political activities aimed towards securing a self-sustaining natural world for her family and friends, many of whom are not born yet. She maintains equanimity by means of a daily meditation practice and by staying connected with her psychodrama and activist peers. Katerina can be contacted at <katselig@xtra.co.nz>.

# A Creative Spirit at Work in Our Association: Then and Now

DR. MAX CLAYTON

## ABSTRACT

This keynote address was presented by Dr. Max Clayton to the 2011 Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association (ANZPA) Conference *To Be And To Create, That Is The Challenge* in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand. Dr. Clayton discusses the value of the living encounter, being grounded in the present moment, doubling and role development, and then goes on to highlight some of the founding principles and activities of ANZPA. He expresses his deep appreciation of the commitment to the learning and fine practice of the psychodrama method in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand and the enlivening of the human spirit that has resulted, before turning to the matter of a vision that might carry the association and its members forward.

*Here we are right now you and I  
We are here to meet one another  
To create a living encounter  
A meeting that will touch each one of us here  
Touch hearts and minds in such a way that there is an opening  
Enlarging of perceptions  
Enlivening of vision  
Refreshment of the soul*

The emphasis on a living encounter is by no means new. It was central to the first psychodrama workshop in New Zealand, a workshop organised by Lorna McLay in August 1974 through the University of Auckland, central to the first training in Perth in 1972, to Jacob Moreno's teaching, and to ancient teachings. You have often been taught the value of the encounter in the here and now, have no doubt enlarged your ability to create lively meetings with others. I trust you experience satisfaction through this. Yet there is more to discover, much more to

experience, and this will continue to be so as long as you and I continue to evolve. Please join with me in yet again warming up to the encounter, in realising afresh that every real encounter is a new event, that there is always more light.

This has always been emphasised in our work. It was highlighted in the Auckland workshop in 1974 through presenting the human being as spontaneous, and the spontaneity factor as central to human living. I affirmed that every human being is seething with spontaneity, that every person is born with some spontaneity, that recognition of this increases the interest in meeting anyone, increases the respect for the other person and furthers the warm up. I used the phrase 'seething with spontaneity', and I remember Deborah Pearson taking this phrase on board, laughingly saying out loud "seething with spontaneity". I wanted those in the workshop to feel youthful, to become like the pure clear water at the base of a waterfall, to live life to the fullest. The words of the poet Mitsuo Aida make sense to me.

*Faces of those who live life to the fullest are so beautiful  
I want my face to be beautiful, too*

These words touch me, awaken me to the beauty of living life to the full, to the value of such beauty, the beauty of me living my life to the full and of you living your life to the full. To see the spontaneity of each other person, to take into oneself the beauty of that spontaneity is to experience a love of life, to be motivated to live. These are my opening remarks, a few hints about this keynote address. At the end of it I trust you will have generated an okay experience. My hope is that you will be aware of several experiences, a sense of being present, grounded in yourself in the here and now and conscious of what will enable you to be this way. I am hoping that you will be appreciating the foundations, the foundation values of our organisation and the actions taken to express those values. I am also hoping that you will be filled with a vision, a vision with respect to the next steps in your life.

## **Being Grounded in the Living Present**

Being grounded in the living present! What is that? What does it mean? It means to be! It is associated with stillness. It is in the stillness that the senses speak to you and I. In the stillness the eyes see. They see the details, the small movements, the subtle shapes, the soft pastel shades. To be still, and in that stillness to receive the myriad of shapes and colours, is to pass through a door into the land of surprise. You may very well say to yourself such things as "Oh, Jackie seems different today! I wonder why I haven't noticed that before". Or "Will you come and live with me?" Or "Will you marry me?" Or "I feel accepted". Or "I am connecting with him and I remember what he said last time we met". Such surprising experiences arise when you are still. The other person stands out so much more clearly than before. The



sense of feeling is awakened, emotions are heightened. There is a greater sense of closeness, of connection and an experience of vulnerability. Can I continue to be here? And the things the other person does and says are remembered. Little things are etched into the memory and afterwards all kinds of things flood into your mind without there being any sense of a memory test.

There are so many senses that seem to come to life when you are still. There is the sense of life, that sense of life that you thought would never come back, life awakening in different parts of your body giving a sense of thankfulness for being alive, a sense of youthfulness, and wondering where did my playfulness go. There is the sense of movement, stimulated by connecting with the being of another person. You become aware of the movements of your own body, of small movements of this person you are with. You become aware of mutuality, of mutual acceptance in the relationship, of the strength of feeling in the relationship, and of the ebb and flow of the feeling. You also discover that you are affected by what is between the two of you. You come to know things about what is being born between you. You come to know that this in-between thing is real. But where has this in-between thing come from? It must have come from somewhere, but where? You do not know where it has come from. But you do know that something real has emerged. Something has come out of me. Something has come from this other. And the two have met. As you continue to be present there is the dawning of perception, as if the light of the sun has shone into your being. You discover the beating of your heart. You discover that the influence of old thought patterns is gone and you feel relief, a kind of a sense of freeing up. You begin to imagine new possibilities, what the two of you might do together, and what you might discuss. Yes indeed! You come to recognise the source of what is evolving between you. It is you! It is this other precious being!

Such a recognition does wonders for the psyche of a human being. A sense of self-esteem blossoms, the knowingness that I AM OKAY. Any sense that life is mundane or boring drops away. Life is poetry! Fresh images of oneself can now emerge, images that previously seemed far out, grandiose, ridiculous. Here is an image that may appeal to you. It is another image from Aida.

*You are the warmth of a pillow  
That's been sitting for hours  
Breathing the fresh illumination  
Of the afternoon sun*

I like that! You are the warmth of a pillow. What about saying to yourself "I AM the warmth of a pillow?" This might be a good way to get yourself on the map, a good way to free yourself of some old worries such as "Will the other person like me?"

*I am the warmth of a pillow*

*That's been sitting for hours  
Breathing the fresh illumination  
Of the afternoon sun*

Why not accept this? Why not chew it over and take it into yourself? Make a meal out of it? Keep saying it over to yourself just as Eric Berne advised us to repeat "I'm okay!" Please realise what it means to be grounded in yourself in the here and now. Being there you brighten the space around you. Being there you warm the hearts of those who know you. Being there you bring peace of mind to others. For me the practice of being present lies at the foundation of human life.

## **Being Present, Doubling and Role Development**

Being present is an aspect of every part of life. Today let us look at its connection with doubling and then its connection with role development. Let us start with doubling. What is it? What is the foundation of doubling? What attitudes, values and actions are required? And what do you as a double accomplish? Doubling means tuning in, attuning with a whole human being, with actions, feeling, emotions and values. And what is the foundation of doubling? The foundation is you. You, willing to be with this other person. You, warming up to a living encounter. You, becoming still so that your senses become alive. Tuning in as a double requires a great deal from you. A primary requirement is to approach a person fresh and new, making yourself completely naive so that everything is a surprise such that your experiences are first time experiences. Old experiences, evaluations, or opinions are dropped, dropped into the sea of forgetfulness. Your childlike simplicity rules.

Of course there is the first time you warm up to being a double, and later on numerous occasions when you fall short of the ideal. Your commitment to becoming a fine double is severely challenged and from time to time you may want to quit. You become aware of prejudice as old evaluations come to the fore conflicting with your lively expressiveness. Or you find yourself rejecting something about a person. The realisation dawns that you are involved in a lifetime work, that refining the sense of seeing and feeling does not have an end point. Yet as you continue to practise you know that your capacity to be is greater, that there are moments when you embrace the being of this person, when you become accepting without any conditions. All of this effort keeps you on the edge of your resources. You may well wonder if all the work you have done is necessary. Yet the life that emerges as a result of your effort is astounding. The enlivening experiences that have emerged in countless encounters, in work with individuals and groups in so many contexts give vitality and inspiration. I have witnessed this happening over and over again. I have discovered this for myself.

There have been countless occasions in personal development groups, in work with individuals and in training workshops when I have been overjoyed. I have

experienced such a sense of fun in response to the creative expression. Right now I am remembering something during one of the workshops at Orewa. I have warmed up the group to being a double and to being doubled. There are an odd number of people in the group and Rex Hunton has accepted me as his double. I walk alongside and slightly behind him as he goes outside the building. He jogs through the garden and I jog with him. He runs faster and I run faster. He runs fast across a pile of rubbish and my feet hurt since I have no shoes on. He runs faster, across the road, onto the beach and I keep up. He looks like he is enjoying himself. He makes some sounds. He expresses more as we run along the beach. He turns round and walks back to the venue. He continues to express himself and I express myself in tune with him. Afterwards he lets me know that at first he wanted to burn me off, to show that he was faster than I. And then he accepted me as an expression of him. I sure enjoyed this time with him. I enjoyed tuning in with his movement, his emotion, his sense of life, the sense of a two way connection and the subsequent sharing with him.

So what is being accomplished here? From my point of view we are getting to know one another much better. I know that at the beginning he wants to defeat me, that I am not accepted as a double. Then I know that he does accept me, that he tunes in with himself and begins to tune in with me as himself, that he gains a greater sense of himself and feels accepting of himself. He is okay and others are okay. In order to bring this off Rex and I achieved a good deal. We both experimented, explored, did something we had never done before and generated new experience. Did we touch something in ourselves that related to the non-verbal, that time before we had a conceptual language? Did we gain a greater sense of trust? Did our self-esteem increase? I know that all of these are true for me. I dare say that they are also true for Rex. In a similar manner trust and self-esteem have also come into being for many others through your immersion in their lives. Involving yourself in such a practice is a living reality, a reality that brings life both to the person being doubled and the double. Let us cease approaching it as a technique! It is a life-giving aspect of the psychodramatic method.

Now we shall turn to the business of role development. What is role development? What is its significance? What stimulates you to enlarge your functioning? What enables you to sustain new action? Role development is activity that catapults you into effective living. It is an activity that carries you forward such that at least some familiar actions fall away, some thought patterns drop into the background and your functioning takes on a new form, a form that stimulates a lively social system, one that is commensurate with your dreams. Any role development that adds to your lives I call progressive. I like this term because it conjures in me a sense of meaning, a sense of moving forward, an experience of being part of an evolutionary stream, of contributing something, however small that may be. Progressive role development occurs in a multitude of social contexts. It takes many forms since it is a response to a particular situation. It is a response to an unrepeatable moment, and the actions, feeling,

and emotions take on a unique form. The form is not conserved. It is vibrant and vital, adding much to human experience. One person is in their own home reflecting on their life, seeing that they have been rejecting aspects of themselves for a long time and at the same time realising that some of their ideas are okay. A decision is made to accept themselves. An experience of lightness comes about. Another person is in a coffee shop discussing their work with a friend. The friend listens sensitively showing great respect. Confidence emerges with respect to the work situation.

These are brief moments in which a person is taking seemingly small steps, yet they are significant steps leading to the emergence of new abilities. There are countless brief moments in which a person moves toward life, such as beginning to take a new attitude towards oneself or relaxing while driving on a busy road. Or not answering back so quickly. Or realising that other people are not enemies. Here are some other examples of folk working to get ahead: refining something that is already working well, spending less time working on a computer, spending more time organising one's day, resolving a conflict about taking time off. This is all progressive role development. Some folk demand large changes in the functioning of those near to them. They dismiss small changes as if they amount to nothing, adding to the distress of a loved one or a colleague and perhaps adding to a sense of inferiority or uselessness. If you happen to be like this please reconsider! Everything starts small. Big transformations involve much work. Nevertheless big changes do take place.

I have recently seen that inspiring movie *The King's Speech*, being privileged to witness King George VI working away, moving away from himself and his coach a number of times, but in the finality not giving up and becoming able to inspire his people. What a wonderful thing that so many people have crafted a significant role. Someone develops the functioning of a well-organised designer, another becomes a concert pianist, another a very effective negotiator. Such creations add to the quality of life, not only to the life of other people but also to the creator of the new role. I have in mind that all of you have added something very okay to other folk and have been possessed of a vision of human life being transformed. I would like to have a chat with you about what keeps you going, what stimulates you, what enlivens your spontaneity. The thing that enlivens me is remaining present with a person. When I am present I am aware of my surroundings. I take into myself new experience. I receive what is coming toward me. And then something comes to birth. It is interest, genuine interest. I experience a connection. My involvement grows. When you remain present you receive. You take into yourself all kinds of things to do with your surroundings, the larger environment and the person or people you are with. You discover that you are getting to know a person. You discover that the person you are with is different from you. Their attitudes, emotions, feeling, values and actions sit there on their own. And I hope you experience a shock. That experience of shock is so important. The sense of shock alerts you to the reality of the situation, that you

are indeed with a person who is very different from you. Yet you stay there with this person. You remain present. You are with this other being who is not you.

Of course there is the sense of meeting them. You know you are learning. Your mind will be disturbed, even offended. You are entering another world. Your own practices are no longer in charge and you may experience a sense of guilt. There are many things that distract you, testing your capacity to remain present. When you are able to sustain your presence the relationship comes alive and affects both of you. Your acceptance goes toward the other person and they are immediately affected. Their feeling goes out toward you and you receive a multitude of gifts. At the point when there is such a meeting, sustaining stillness is a key factor. When you are still there is no attempt to work out what everything means. You are there bringing about mutuality, being an auxiliary. You are putting yourself into new territory. You know it is impossible to work it all out, at least not yet! You are involved in a learning process, with what Kurt Lewin characterised as the first stage of learning. You are letting go of what you knew before. You have not yet comprehended this other reality. You are being turned upside down. Of course you experience confusion. It is too soon to resolve the confusion. You may very well be relating to a person who is warmed up to an early time, a time when there is no conceptual language. Your work is to tune in to that non-verbal time. It is not your work to identify the role or the roles, to attempt to put a name to a role, for that is both inappropriate and impossible. Your work is to be present. To be receptive. To experience. To be able to be there.

What I am presenting to you has implications for the teaching of role theory. In reviewing the teaching and learning that has already taken place, and being aware of the functioning of practitioners and trainers both here and in other countries, I see what looks to be the main challenge. In past years many actions have been taken to impart role theory. This has included coaching to identify roles and to create role names that are both accurate and enlivening. Looking back I see that the coaching has lacked something, namely insufficient emphasis of being with a person, on the experience of being there, of sensing who this person is for a long time, coming to know their motivation, longings and dreams. When you are with a person over a significant period of time impressions form. You create language for the impressions of a person's character, their overall lifestyle, their interests and achievements. You perceive adequacy, over-development and under-development, conflicted aspects, functioning that is against life and also absences.

What I am seeing here is similar to the teaching of Eric Berne. He emphasised being with a person for a good length of time and approaching the identification of games only after the creation of a working relationship and after repeated enactment of patterns of interaction. Perhaps the wish to quickly name a role has arisen to create safety. That certainly makes sense to me. To continue to be with a person without understanding them stimulates the mind to produce frightening fantasies and works to destabilise realistic thinking. An anxious mind

works to achieve safety. It goes against a principle of learning that a good length of time is required. Accepting the time required to identify a role reduces the frustration experienced in the learning of role theory and the sense of failure that has been expressed by quite a few. There are so many factors that have influenced you in your own practice. I have pointed to some influences that interfere with remaining present. These influences create the different skews in the warm up. These skews cut across being still and through this slow down the building of mutuality. Yet there is a reality that is always next to you, namely that you can take charge. Each one of you is able to review your own practice, be measured as you continue to refine your work, to know in yourself that your being present is valuable, that it creates mutuality and adds to creative living.

I have endeavoured so far to highlight important aspects of our work, to lend meaning to what you have learned, to your practice and to the commitment you have made to open up to life. I trust you will see value in what you have created, and continue to express the vital attitudes and actions that build a creative identity. The next part of my address deals with the foundations of our organisation.

## **The Foundations of Our Organisation**

My idea is to highlight some of our activities and the foundation principles, the things on which our psychodrama association has been built. This, naturally, has involved a selection process. The selection is mine. Many valuable events are left out and so my hope is that memories will be stimulated and many subsequent conversations held. I hope that in your conversations during the conference you will open up many other events that I have not mentioned.

### ***Commitment to the Learning and Fine Practice of the Psychodrama Method***

There is something that stands out for me in our association. It is the commitment to learning and the fine practice of the psychodramatic method. Engagement with well-organised and lengthy training has been a core aspect in our psychodrama organisation. There is a conviction that an effective training process is required and that this applies not only to those working toward certification but also to practitioners and trainers. An experiential learning process has been considered the most effective and there has been a commitment to experiential learning. This has resulted in the awakening of spontaneity, significant role development and integration of theory and practice. In the course of experiential training workshops and training courses, working relationships have been built. Trainees have encountered one another, experienced acceptance, rejection and neutrality, felt intense emotion and have worked to resolve conflict. Likewise the relationship between trainees and trainers has evolved. Refinements in both teaching and learning styles have been made, ensuring easier relationships between trainees and trainers. The work done to bring about a fine professional standard has

borne fruit. We have witnessed significant social and cultural atom repair, life-giving work with individuals and groups in many contexts, evidence of adequate work in supervision sessions, in social and cultural atom assignments, written theses, lectures and presentations, planning and organising.

The realisation of the value of fine training and excellent work did not come about by chance. It has been influenced by so many great teachers and practitioners. Some of them taught Lynette Clayton. Some of them taught me, and a much larger number have inspired you. Let us be grateful! Jim Enneis, head of the Psychodrama Section at Saint Elizabeth's Hospital and other staff members taught Lynette during internships of two years, and after she accepted a staff position became her colleagues. She experienced the effectiveness of the method for herself and for a wide range of people. How important that is! Jacob Moreno and Zerka Moreno taught me the psychodramatic method between 1967 and 1973. I was fortunate to be able to put my learning into practice during weekly sessions at Saint Elizabeth's Hospital and in a counselling centre in Washington D.C. By the time we commenced work in California early in 1971 and later in Perth, we were committed to establishing standards of training and practice, initially adhering to the standards of the Moreno Institute and subsequently preparing a new set of standards for the Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association.

The creation of standards that influences fine practice is significant. This has helped to build a strong identity, one that brings a sense of pride. It has resulted in the establishing of consistent training in the nine major training institutes, as well as in trainer workshops. *The ANZPA Training and Standards Manual* embraces a systems approach. The individual creates a system of roles in response to other individuals. Interactional role systems and networks of relationships are formed. The creation and maintenance of these standards has been a mighty task. We have received much from this dedicated work implemented by the members of the Board of Examiners. Quite apart from the formal standards enunciated in the training manual, there have been other factors influencing high standards. Trainees have thrown themselves into the work, sometimes to a surprising extent. I remember being actually thrown by a trainee. I was an auxiliary in his drama in Auckland. He warmed up to rejecting me. I flew through the air after he threw me over his head. This was in 1975. All the trainees really worked in the first training group in Auckland in 1974, involving themselves as protagonists in every session as well as in subsequent teaching and discussion. There are four people who were part of that 1974 workshop who are still very active in our association. I am sure they remember how involved they were. Let me tell you who they are! They are Dale Herron, Valerie Hunton, Chris Hosking and John Barton. Perhaps you could jog their memories and get to know something of their experience.

Similarly those who were part of the first training group in Perth in 1972 loved the method, involving themselves in the learning more and more. There have been so many events involving great commitment. The organising and

conducting of group sessions, completion of written assignments and practical assessments, developing an identity as a psychodrama practitioner, role trainer, sociometrist, and sociodramatist, functioning as a president of the association, as a member of the executive or board of examiners, or as journal editor. Many of you have done work to develop regional associations creating day long presentations of the method or evening presentations. This has added to our identity as an organisation. A work of great significance has been the creation of conferences. This began with the inaugural conference in Canberra in 1980 and continued with conferences in all of the regions. Conference committee members and other workers have contributed their considerable abilities in ensuring that each conference is unique. What generosity of spirit has overflowed! And what benefit we have received! Each conference committee has involved conflict between its members, sometimes taking them to the edge of their resources. Yet each conference has opened up well, the creativity displayed at the opening very moving. Many of the conflicts have been resolved and many relationships strengthened. You have served on the ethics committee and your work has resulted in refinement of our ethical standards and a clearer approach to possible breaches of our standards. All of the intelligence and effort that each of you has demonstrated is evidence of your commitment to learning and fine practice. I congratulate you.

### *The Enlivening of the Human Spirit*

All of this work has come into being through enlivenment of the human spirit. This is the next foundation reality I want to highlight. I recall my first meeting with Moreno. He is greeting a group of us at his psychodrama theatre in New York. His obvious happiness immediately affected me. His expression of delight with the method he created and his characterisation of spontaneity brought to me the sense of having arrived. I knew what I was going to do. I would learn psychodrama. Later I imagined creating a psychodrama centre in Perth. This would involve community groups and training groups conducted in a psychodrama theatre and other areas. This lifted my spirits no end. And the centre actually came into being. The Wasley Centre began in 1975, and in 1976 the theatre was opened. I was convinced that eventually a centre would be established. There was no money, yet I knew the ability was there to conduct dynamic sessions and small steps were taken to build something. Lynette Clayton and I departed from the United States in 1971, commenced work in Perth in the Spring, founding the Psychodrama Institute of Western Australia at the end of the year. We commenced our first group work training course in February 1972 and a psychodrama training group shortly afterwards. These were small but very significant steps. There were prophets of doom who advised us that we would not succeed. There was significant opposition. I remember experiencing great fear as I drove to the printer with the copy of the first institute brochure. My fantasy was that I would be arrested and land up in court. Somehow I stood my ground.

The ability to stand our ground was a critical factor in establishing this work.



A very small number of people enrolled in our first psychodrama group, but our vision was clear, the sense of life, the enthusiasm, the sense of the value of awakening spontaneity sat there in the foreground and the concern about numbers fell away. There were moments when I did occupy myself with numbers, the numbers of people enrolling in an event and the income that would be generated. However, I was taught not to worry about numbers but to involve myself with whoever was there, to realise that this was realistic and that word would spread. The first educational sessions about human development attracted many people. Very encouraging! The psychodrama groups hardly attracted anybody. Yet we did okay conducting the sessions and continued to organise psychodrama groups. The number of people enrolling increased, and then it exploded! Was it the method? Was it the quality of the work? Was it the time we were living in? Whatever it was group members gained, their spontaneity increased, life was lived more fully.

I want to emphasise this matter of numbers. One influence is the experience of a number of people. Some of you have made efforts to form psychodrama groups, yet the number of people responding has been disappointing. Others of you have wanted to attract younger people, have worried about our association, its ageing membership and the paucity of youthful members. There is no place for worry. Anxiety must never be in the driver's seat! Worry does not give good guidance. Worry narrows down the psyche and as a result many abilities are curtailed or distorted. Worry interferes with imagination. The vision clouds, weakens the will, interferes with decisive action. We are living in the here and now, in the living present! When no-one enrolls in a group it is a choice time to re-evaluate your sociometric position, work out why you are not attracting people and do something about it. When you see our more elderly members, relate to them as best you can and then get on with your own life. Worrying about the future weakens an individual or an organisation. Coming to grips with whatever is real and truthful brings strength. Whatever is there in the present is real. The future has not happened yet and the truth is, you and I cannot control it. What we can and must do is continue to live, continue to express, continue to refine ourselves and learn to live with this.

So much for the foundations of our association. Now let us come to your vision. Let us come to the business of the next steps in your life!

## **A Vision That Carries You Forward**

I must say that for me addressing the matter of a vision is a daunting task. Each one of you is unique. Each one of you wakes up to something that brings life to you, something carries you forward and it is different for each of you. What can I say about your unique vision? At the same time I know that I know something! I know that when I included in our training manual certain words, I felt alive, well motivated. The words are "Without a vision the people perish". I sure know

something about what that means. I have experienced life without a vision and also life with a vision. The experience is quite different. At this point in my life I am aware that there is something motivating me, and when I explore the motivations I get to know myself better. My awareness enlarges and there is a sense of knowing where I am going.

I have in mind that this is a vision. You here today do not know all of the content of my vision but you do know that I have a vision. Likewise I do not know all the detail of what makes up your vision but I do know that each of you has a vision. There are times when you may not be aware of its content and that the connection with your vision is weakened, yet it is still there. I know that there is something that carries you forward. You are here today. You are contributing much. This real thing in you sure touches me and I am thankful. I do not imagine that your vision is going to die away. I have in mind that it will continue to grow and carry you forward. So far as your future and the future of our association is concerned I do not know whether it will increase its effectiveness, or its prestige, or in size. However, I am confident about some things. My confidence is based on you, on your ability to be, to relate, to add to life. I am confident that the day will see you and I enlarge our warm up, encounter many spontaneity tests, increase our spontaneity, decide which sessions to attend, learn, make fun, and that this will continue in the conference and through the year.

## Some Concluding Remarks

Speaking about myself there are many works planned for the year and I am sure looking forward to the unfolding of the plan. A number of people will be adding to my life and work. The main person is Chris Hosking, my friend, companion, fellow trainer and other things, those of you I work with, organisers, members of training events, friends, tourist guides and so on. And I am warmed up to you. I wish you well in your planning, in the execution of your plans, in your involvement with your friends and companions, your fellow workers, the people you counsel, teach, and coach, and everything else.

Please go well!



Dr. Max Clayton (Psychodramatist, TEP) is an honorary distinguished member of the Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association (ANZPA). He has worked intensively in the psychodrama field for many years as a clinician, an individual and group supervisor, and a trainer on the teaching staff of the Australian College of Psychodrama.

He is the author of several books on psychodrama.

# Book Reviews



## ***The First Psychodramatic Family* (2011 Edition)**

By J.L. Moreno, Zerka T. Moreno  
and Jonathan Moreno

The North-West Psychodrama  
Association, UK

2011

Originally published 1964 as  
*Psychodrama and Group Psychotherapy*

*Monograph No. 40* by Beacon House, New York

ISBN 978-1-4467-7784-8 available at

[www.lulu.com/product/paperback/the-first-psychodramatic-family/15445776](http://www.lulu.com/product/paperback/the-first-psychodramatic-family/15445776)

Reviewed by Penny Beran

*The First Psychodramatic Family* was first published in 1964 as No. 40 in the Psychodrama and Group Psychotherapy Monograph Series. The authors were J.L., Zerka and Jonathan Moreno. Biographer Rene Marineau (1989:140) describes the work as “the very personal account of the use of psychodrama in Moreno’s own family”. This 2011 edition is published by the North-West Psychodrama Association with Zerka Moreno’s permission and blessing.

At the beginning of *The First Psychodramatic Family*, an explanatory note suggests that this is a poetic and aesthetic story. Historical accuracy is not the aim. I returned to this statement each time I became aware of an inconsistency. As I read the book it occurred to me that there could be several lenses through which to view the notion of the first psychodramatic family. I recommend that you read these anecdotes and narratives as if coming to Moreno and his family for the first time — in *this* moment.

The opening segment prepares the reader to meet the first psychodramatic family. Do we not do this each time we are present in a psychodrama session, as a protagonist, a member of the group, as auxiliary, as director? The family on the stage is there in this moment, in this way. We experience this scene for the first time. We experience this family for the first time. Each of many moments is a first time for this family. But this is perhaps a wayward interpretation and, referring to the book’s title, Moreno really did mean that there will always be but one first family. For Moreno, his family is forever the first psychodramatic family. “It is

forever first because psychodrama is here forever” (p.9). The chapters and segments that follow reveal how J.L., Zerka and Jonathan used psychodrama within their family, sometimes with a learning outcome for Jonathan and sometimes not as planned, prompting J.L. or Zerka to reflect on the way they used the method.

As I began reading I wondered about the author of each section. Is it J.L., Zerka or Jonathan? Gradually an overview emerged, a way of appreciating the whole of this 136 page book. It is like a collage. There are many carefully selected individual ingredients and their textures and sources vary. The book contains some original writings by Moreno and Zerka, poems, anecdotes, facsimiles in the form of extracts from professional journals, newspaper articles, photographs and drawings. As with a collage, the viewer can stand back and take in the whole picture or choose to zoom in on one element for further exploration.

The structure of the book creates a loose chronological path for J.L., Zerka and Jonathan and the three together as the family. It starts with J.L.’s birth (or the myth thereof), through his time in Vienna, migration to the USA, meeting Zerka, the birth of Jonathan, professional work at St. Elizabeth and Beacon, establishing the first psychodrama stage in America, visits to Russia, a return visit to Vienna and his meeting with Roosevelt. Interspersed with records of events are reflections on war such as “Can you tell me Doctor Jonathan How we can prevent the next world war?” (p.70); sociograms of the sociometric influences among school children; the advent of *The Living Newspaper*; the invitation to J.L. and his decision not to become a USA state senator; what Freud actually said in response to J.L.; the relationship between psychoanalysis and psychodrama — psychodrama “will step out and take over” from inside the Trojan Horse of psychoanalysis (p.101); commentary on Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and the existentialists.

J.L. Moreno wrote letters to various participants involved in the Eichmann trials in 1961. He made recommendations to the Israeli court as to how to carry out and conclude their trial so that “the true and hidden experiences are brought before the conscience of the world” (p.103). J.L.’s dialogue with Thespis, the reputed inventor of Greek tragedy, illuminates the study of theatre, the development of psychodrama and the role of the protagonist as the one who agonises for the audience. The dialogue uses Arthur Miller’s *After the Fall* as the vehicle for discussion.

Zerka’s poems are self-disclosing regarding the impact of the loss of her arm and her hospitalisation for other ailments. She does not sound sorry for herself and yet I glean a sadness and grief. Her poems of Jonathan’s early years have a spirited lightness and clarity. The poems about her and J.L. introducing Jonathan to the psychodramatic ways of seeing the world, relationships and experiences are entertaining and informative. At the dinner table the child Jonathan role reverses with his mother to become “not only his own therapist, but the therapist of his mother as well” (p.79). At school he replies to the teacher’s query as to what his father does. “He mends broken women!” (p.69). At other times Jonathan

is the double, the godhead, the mirror.

The purported megalomaniac aspect of J.L.'s character is displayed in riddles and paradoxes. His megalomania is known well "but the legend of his modesty is little known" (p.13). He had published anonymously. Others took his ideas. He fought to prove his authorship. He claimed that "ideas, once they are born, belong to the universe, and no one has the right to buy and sell them on market; they belong to universality" (p.14). Anecdotes throughout the book reveal a more strident expression of authorship of one's own life. "We will never give up our expectations to become the centre and ruler of the world ... At the end of time there will be I, the creator of the world" (p.24).

The title of the book provides many points from which to launch further exploration of Moreno, his family, the psychodramatic method and the development of the use of the method in the context of historical circumstances. The efficacy of the therapeutic theatre can hardly be stated more movingly and powerfully than as "the vehicle for transformation from an irreversible to a reversible universe" (p.21). "There are certain moments when we have to halt the flow of the worthlessness of life and call a stop to the stupidity of being dead while alive" (p.42). J.L. knew the challenge required for spontaneity to flourish and that can encourage us to also rise to the occasion. "Whenever I enter a situation which requires psychodramatic treatment I ostensibly undergo a 'transformation'. I feel disturbed, uneasy, as if trying to live up to the challenge of the moment and to the greatest expectations of the group" (p.43).

Many of us involved with psychodrama are curious in some way about Moreno and his family. My father was born in Vienna in the same year that Moreno rented the space for the theatre of spontaneity, the Stegreiftheater, and my mother the year after. Both my mother's and father's parents lived in the same district of Vienna as Moreno's family. So I feel quite a connection with the background, culture and circumstances of Moreno's European life. I have a fantasy that my grandfather himself might have wandered into the Stegreiftheater.

Marineau's 1989 biography of Jacob Levy Moreno complements the Moreno family's own writings. He explores the legends and myths of Moreno's birth and childhood. "Moreno, it is important to remember, was the first name of Jacob's father. In a way ... Jacob did establish a new dynasty" (p.10). *The First Psychodramatic Family* confirms this in many ways. Venture forth into this Alice In Wonderland to see how.

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*Penny Beran is a Sydney based psychodrama trainee. She can be contacted at <penny.beran@unswalumni.com>.*



## ***To Rakiura and Beyond***

By Sandra Turner

Southern Colour Print, Dunedin, NZ

2011

ISBN 978-0-473-18201-4 available at

<[torakiuraandbeyond.com](http://torakiuraandbeyond.com)>

Reviewed by Ali Begg

For me, *To Rakiura and Beyond* began as a sensory experience. This slim 99 page paperback looks good and feels good with its colourful cover and silky, high quality pages. Short chapters with poetic or descriptive titles are sprinkled with poems and italicised quotes in large print. A great warm up. Soon I was immersed in Sandra Turner's cancer journey, her experiences of living with cancer rather than battling it. I was in tears at times and full of wonder at the strength of the life force in others. It was an honour to share this author's well written story, in which she has opened her life to others. The book is especially aimed at those living with cancer, and their families and friends, but as a reflection on what is important and how to live well when life throws a curler, its appeal is much wider.

*To Rakiura and Beyond* is not a psychodrama book as such but it is written by a psychodramatist, and one who is a member of the Australian and New Zealand Psychodrama Association (ANZPA) at that. Concepts that psychodramatists relate to are visible despite their skilled translation into everyday language. Sandra is the protagonist and director of her own life drama while enabling others to be auxiliaries and protagonists as well. Relationships are central. The author displays an ability to maintain a positive relationship with self, which enables her to manage experiences that none of us would choose. She is able to reverse roles with those around her, family, friends, clients, other patients and even a woman walking down the other side of the road. She shows compassion and understanding for health professionals who at times let her down. Few have the ability to express their experiences with the clarity and poetry that Sandra exhibits as she concretises her unfolding journey in words. Poignant vignettes are spiced with metaphor. She demonstrates her ability to live in the not always pleasant here and now reality and still maintain hope. Healing does not necessarily mean cure, nor recovery require the absence of disease.

After an introduction, Part One provides details that are particular to the author but that convey the universal. The reader is taken through the shocking first three weeks, the immediate crisis of diagnosis, how to manage work, feelings of unreality, the responses of those around her, the poems written for her and

the changing diagnosis. Then there is the Medical Day Unit and chemotherapy, a bone marrow biopsy, “an unpleasant little number”, as well as the management of those who want to help or think they have the answer. Choosing companions for the journey “to Rakiura and beyond” is a challenge to be faced. The title’s meaning comes with the reading. There is also surprising understanding and help from “the mouse”, coping with vulnerability, a new perspective on funeral notices, links to the past through the story of her grandmother’s “Daphne Odura” and to the future as the author faces grief with her daughter. Life is thrown into clear relief when under threat.

The second part of the book addresses the impact of the illness on professional life. The question “How are you?” from a client takes on new dimensions. Sandra addresses many of the dilemmas that arise regarding the continuation of much loved work as psychotherapist, supervisor and trainer in the face of a life threatening illness. Questions emerge. How to decide when one is well enough, or not well enough, to work? Which new clients should be taken on when the future is unreliable, and what to tell them? These ethical dilemmas are not easy and are relevant for anyone working with people in therapeutic relationships. I found Sandra’s exploration of this area refreshing and helpful for situations I face at times in my work as a doctor.

Part Three, titled Facing Jerusalem addresses mortality and spirituality, inevitable concerns when living close to death. What about prayer? What to do on the ‘bucket list’? The book’s final section summarises advice for living well, in which the author’s hard won wisdom is set out in 18 clear points designed to help others through their journeys. There are questions as well as advice and no avoidance of the reality of suffering.

Throughout *To Rakiura and Beyond* Sandra Turner manages to convey a great deal with a few carefully chosen words and examples. She acts as a guide for others who enter similar territory. And we all enter that territory at some stage as we or those close to us face medical intervention and life threatening illnesses. I highly recommend this book to anyone interested in exploring the deeper issues of life that living with cancer brings to light.

*Ali Begg is a Christchurch based psychodramatist, family doctor and medical educator with a special interest in cancer, particularly the work of Ian Gawler. Her mother and sister died of cancer and through her work Ali has been involved with many people living with cancer. Ali can be contacted at <abegg@cyberxpress.co.nz>.*



## ***The Body Alchemy of Psychodrama***

By Rebecca M. Ridge, PhD

BRIO Books, Minneapolis, MN, USA

2009

Available at <[www.bridgebodyalchemy.com](http://www.bridgebodyalchemy.com)>

Reviewed by Annette Fisher

Dr. Rebecca Ridge has been practising the psychodramatic method for 30 years. During this time she has also studied, taught and incorporated a broad range of somatic therapies into her work. This book is the culmination of her therapeutic practice, academic studies and extensive research. It is presented as a text book-cum-manual to assist psychodrama practitioners develop and integrate their abilities in somatic therapies.

The author addresses and references the alchemy of mind and body, psychodrama, somatic therapies and neuroscience fully. Her central hypothesis is that by integrating an ability to work with the body, a practitioner increases their effectiveness as a therapist, particularly in the area of healing and transformation. The theme running through her writing is that psychodrama and somatic therapy combined will assist the protagonist and the director to gain a deeper understanding and expression of the 'self' or psyche/soul.

Dr. Ridge makes many important points regarding the current recognition of J.L. Moreno's intellectual stature. He is acknowledged as the founder of the humanist movement, his views regarding the transcendence of time, space and reason, sociometry, tele relationships and spontaneity now scientifically backed by neurological research. His seminal ideas regarding role development are widely supported by neuroscientific brain imaging. Moreno's original conception of the psychodramatist collecting physical and emotional information as experimental data is matched by current research into brain functioning, where 'mirror neurons' have been discovered. These are the neurons whereby we gain the ability to experience compassion and to role reverse.

In Chapter One the writer provides us with an interesting history of alchemy, going back beyond Ancient Egypt, Arabia and China to the Iron Age. Dr. Ridge describes how alchemy, which has a strong link with metallurgy, was a predecessor of modern science. As well, there is a description of alchemy's use in psychotherapy. Jung, who rediscovered alchemy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, drew on Greek mythology, Hinduism and Buddhism. Along with a case study, the author presents a clear description of the connections between alchemy, body responses, healing, transformation and the work of the psychodramatist.

Chapter Four is a scholarly work on sociometry, in which the author refers to



the writings of Anne Hale and Moreno's *Who Shall Survive*. She makes a connection between body alchemy and the development of tele. Dr. Ridge discusses research that links current attachment theories with neuroscientific discoveries related to the measurement of psychological development. She concludes that there is a connection between specific somatic activities that stimulate brain development and an increase in positive tele relationships between group members that lead to enhanced group cohesion.

Descriptions of yoga, shiatsu and cranial sacral therapies, grounding exercises and the importance of boundaries when working with the body provide further background to the use of somatic therapy in psychodrama. The author includes suggestions regarding the application of postures and specific exercises that can be used during a psychodramatic session.

The book goes on to present a well-researched foundational history of body work. Dr. Ridge describes somatic therapies and their interface with psychodrama. Activities are presented to assist the psychodramatist to work with both the mind and body of their clients. The area of touch and its importance in the therapeutic process is discussed. This comes as a breath of fresh air considering all the social forces that make touch problematic in contemporary society. She advocates that the psychodramatist develop an awareness of their own body and learn to read intuitive and neurological responses, so that they are able to develop a positive relationship and abilities to double and 'tune in' with the protagonist.

An accurate history of the development of psychotherapy and the linking of Moreno's theories with current neuroscientific knowledge is very satisfying for the psychodramatist. The writer has respectfully acknowledged Moreno's contribution and has documented the developments in psychodrama and somatic therapy up to the present. This has been done in a scholarly fashion with many references. A concern is that the manual aspect of the book may lead to the unwitting misuse of the activities. In employing them, practitioners who have not been adequately trained in body work may create an unexpectedly deep warm up that leads to fragmentation in a group. One hopes that by the time a psychodrama trainee becomes certified, they have an ample understanding of the warm up process, a well-grounded somatic knowledge and the experience to work with the evolving warm up. A psychodramatist with adequate role development will gain much from using relevant activities from this book.

*The Body Alchemy of Psychodrama* will be a stimulating read for psychodramatists, sociodramatists, role trainers and sociometrists, and is a must for psychodrama libraries. In reading this book one is awakened to the importance of a holistic body mind approach, which adds further dimensions to the practice of the psychodramatic method.

*Annette Fisher (TEP) is a psychotherapist and psychodramatist working with individuals and groups in private practice in Canberra, Australia. She can be contacted at <annettef@pcug.org.au>.*



## ***Sociodrama in a Changing World***

Edited by Ron Weiner, Di Adderley and Kate Kirk  
Sociodrama and Actions Methods Training, UK  
2011

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<[www.lulu.com/product/paperback/sociodrama-in-a-changing-world/15062909](http://www.lulu.com/product/paperback/sociodrama-in-a-changing-world/15062909)>

Reviewed by Cher Williscroft

Senior sociodrama trainers from the United Kingdom, Ron Weiner, Di Adderley and Kate Kirk have collated an impressive collection of 34 articles on the history and development of sociodrama and its theory, practice and application, through the lens of four key themes: So What is Sociodrama? (Theory and Practice), Sociodrama in Cross Cultural Work, Sociodrama in Organisations and Sociodrama in Education and Training. The editors succeed in their goal of providing a “wide ranging collection of views on the current debate what is Sociodrama?” with articles gathered from practitioners and trainers living and working in 13 countries from all four corners of the globe. Each contributing author works at the cutting edge of sociodramatic development in their own country and has an impressive background of teaching and practice. There is a variety of different approaches, with some articles predominantly theoretical, some historical in flavour, some sociological and others case study centred.

As a sociodramatist Trainer Educator Practitioner (TEP) who has studied and practised in the Southern Hemisphere, I was astonished by the diversity of theory and practice in evidence around the world. The differences between countries and between practitioners and trainers are much more evident than the similarities. For instance, as the editors point out, the separation of psychodrama and sociodrama is more apparent in Europe and North America than in other parts of the world, where the two methods are more complimentary specialisations deriving from the same rootstock. Take Rollo Browne (Australia), for example, who describes both protagonist centred and group centred sociodrama where the “social and personal are inextricable” and the warm up is unified by a “sociodramatic question”. By contrast Atonina Garcia (USA) stresses the importance of clear boundaries between psychodramatic enactments, where players “assume hypothetical roles spontaneously, not their personal roles”. To add a little spice to the debate, Maurizio Gasseau (Italy) gives two clinical examples of what are described as “sociopsychodrama enactments” that consist of the development of a sociodramatic conflict which is resolved with protagonist centred psychodramas.

Many readers will be inspired to discover such a large community of sociodramatists living and breathing sociodrama into schools, management, theatre, communities, villages, universities, families and organisations, and applying the method with inspirational variety, depth and dedication. I was humbled and impressed by the work sociodramatists are doing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in collectively bringing about “change for the whole of mankind” (Moreno, 1934).

While the book unifies sociodramatists around the world as contributors, each chapter stands alone with little attempt at integration. The editors’ welcome and introduction chapter assists the reader to make sense of the diversity by presenting an overview that pulls the disparate threads together. However, some of the articles lack cohesion in style, format and presentation. It is as if each author has been given an open slate on which to express whatever they want about sociodrama in their country. Some chapters are dry, theoretical and hard going. Some lack order, purpose, are too long or too short, or contain diagrams that are difficult to grasp without more commentary. On the whole, the book would have benefitted by more stringent editing or writing guidelines. The huge variety and often disparity of concepts, theory and practice, together with different writing styles and formats, produce a disjointed experience for the reader, rather than a sense of unification.

Several chapters are juicy with well set out case examples of sociodramatic enactments where the reader can easily imagine being there on the stage. I greatly appreciated the articles that contained actual descriptions of sociodramas, such as Rollo Browne’s (Australia) Sociodrama with a Marketing Team, which is a well ordered piece of writing in a corporate setting. Eva Leveton (USA) writes an inspiring chapter about working with different tribal cultures, including the attitudes and methods that have helped her in her work over 50 years. Her description of a role reversal between two tribes in a “culture drama” is stirring. Marcia Karp (UK) describes a sociodrama of the Greek financial crisis where the group was the protagonist. Some lovely gems for the practitioner are found in Irina Stefanescu’s (Romania) sociodrama produced for a pharmaceutical company and in Marjut Partanen-Hertell’s (Finland) clear outline and discussion of a sociodrama in an environmental context. I enjoyed the short but effective chapter by Smaroula Pandelis (Greece) on how sociodrama was used to teach a leadership course at a university. One of the editors, Kate Kirk introduces a different style by adding an insightful step by step “sociodramatic commentary” to her description of a workshop for those working with young people with Asperger’s Syndrome.

I read all 34 articles before discovering the short abstracts of each at the end of the book. Readers would be advised to turn to this useful index of subjects and keywords by chapter, and pick and choose those articles that interest them. A contributors’ biography with contact details, provided at the beginning of the book, is also a stimulating testament to the work that is being achieved by the sociodrama world community.

I am sure anyone interested in sociodramatic work in conflict management, teaching and education, team development, change management, cross cultural understanding, peace and reconciliation, community and organisational development, and political change on small and large scales will find the work of those who have contributed to *Sociodrama in a Changing World* heartening, educational and inspirational.

## REFERENCE

Moreno, J.L. (1934). *Who Shall Survive? Foundations of Sociometry, Group Psychotherapy and Sociodrama*. Beacon House, New York, USA.

*Cher Williscroft is a sociodramatist, TEP and managing director of Conflict Management Ltd (NZ). She conducts training in Aotearoa New Zealand and is a staff member of the Wellington Psychodrama Training Institute (WPTI). Cher can be contacted at <cher@conflictmanagement.co.nz>.*



### ***The Brain That Changes Itself: Stories of Personal Triumph from the Frontiers of Brain Science* (Revised Edition)**

By Norman Doidge, MD  
Scribe Publications, Melbourne, Australia  
2010

Reviewed by Dr. Neil Hucker

When I first heard the title of this book last year I immediately thought of J.L. Moreno's (1978) Canon of Creativity, that circular/spiral relationship between the conserve and spontaneous new role development. With my underlying biological orientation as a psychiatrist I am always on the lookout for developing perspectives on the foundational biological processes of spontaneity, creativity and role development. How does the brain work? And how does it accommodate on going progressive change that facilitates continuous development of roles and the self?

For a long time the brain has been viewed as developing a fixed and conserved structure. Its various functions are seen as localised in particular areas to provide and use discreet, un-transferable processes. This view of the neurological brain does not accord with my psychodramatic experience. Although my understanding of conserved role functioning fits, the spontaneity process and the creation, training and integration of new roles does not.

*The Brain That Changes Itself*, written by psychiatrist and researcher Dr. Norman

Doidge, focuses on the developing science of brain neuroplasticity. This term designates the brain's ability to re-wire its neural circuits and creatively adapt its functioning, a process I associate with Moreno's role development. No wonder I had such a powerful positive response to the book. The many aspects of brain neuroplasticity that the author details are in accord with the spontaneity process in psychodrama.

The book is presented in eleven chapters with two appendices on cultural modification and the neuroplastic implications for progress. Dr. Doidge provides extensive references and research studies, and the accompanying notes are very readable and informative in their own right. The chapters progress from descriptions of the purely physical disorders of brain damage and developmental dysfunction to research that is being undertaken on neuroplastic transformational change. These changes can be demonstrated in basic functions such as perception, memory, learning, thought and particularly behavioural action. The author describes the way in which, through intensive action retraining and repetition of underdeveloped neural circuits, old and new functions can spontaneously adaptively develop and take over very adequately.

Dr. Doidge then moves onto more psychological and social functions that I correlate with Moreno's concept of role. The importance of the imagination in role development, even at a physical action level, is given a wonderful biological perspective. I was excited to discover that neuroplasticity can explain the means by which social atom repair, produced in the surplus reality of a psychodrama, is spontaneously integrated by the brain. Finally the author discusses the significance of the discovery of stem cells in the brain. The presence of these omni-potential foundational cells of the body in the brain indicates that not only can conserved brain circuits and their resultant overt roles change, but that new action circuits can be created and trained.

*The Brain That Changes Itself* is a very useful, significant and enjoyable book. Particularly it provided me with more understanding to glimpse the possible biological roots of spontaneity — neuroplasticity. I rarely read books for a second time. This one I did. For those of you with a developed biological understanding and those coming to grips with the new psychotherapeutic neurobiological expectations, this book is an informative, absorbing, helpful and important read. Even Moreno's idea of the conserved psychosomatic roles is up for re-evaluation.

And oh, what a wonderful cover!

## REFERENCE

Moreno, J.L. (1978). *Who Shall Survive? Foundations of Sociometry, Group Psychotherapy and Sociodrama*. Beacon House, New York, USA. (Original Publication 1934)

*Neil Hucker is a Melbourne based consultant psychiatrist and psychodramatist. He can be contacted by post: Dr. Neil E. Hucker, 26 Clota Avenue, Box Hill, Melbourne 3128, Australia.*

# ANZPA 2012 Conference



**Duchesne College, University of Queensland,  
Brisbane, Australia**

**4pm 19<sup>th</sup> January – 3pm 25<sup>th</sup> January 2012**

Pre conference workshops:  
9am - 9pm 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> January

Post conference workshops:  
9am - 9pm 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> January

Conference:  
9am - 9pm 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> January

AGM and Life of the Association  
9am - 5.30pm Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> January