

# AANZPA Journal #23



December 2014



# **AANZPA Journal #23**

## **December 2014**

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The AANZPA Journal is published by the Australian and Aotearoa New Zealand Psychodrama Association (AANZPA Inc.).

AANZPA is an organisation of people trained in Dr. J.L. Moreno's psychodrama theory and methods, and their application and development in Australia and New Zealand. An ordinary member is certificated as a Psychodramatist, Sociodramatist, Sociometrist, and/or Role Trainer. A TEP is a Trainer, Educator and Practitioner.

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

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

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# Editorial

Welcome to the 23<sup>rd</sup> edition. The Chinese phrase on the cover says: 百花齊放– bǎihuā qífàng – let the hundred schools contend. It refers to a golden age of thought during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods of ancient China. An artist in Taiwan did a calligraphy of these four characters especially for the journal. The contributions in this edition demonstrate a richness of thought, a daring to put these ideas into practice and to describe the results. There are differences in style, tone, authority and understandings of theory. The multiple sets of ripples in a pond are an image of the hundred ways we connect. Interpenetration can be perceived; each set of ripples taking the other into itself. Notice multiple occurrences of the AANZPA symbol.



A submission for the journal is assessed by the ambition that the writer has for it. When an important addition or refinement is offered to psychodramatic theory and the writer wishes that to be applied in practice, then that is a serious ambition. More work may be required than what the writer initially envisages: perhaps not enough work has been done on finding language that will reach and impact on the readership; perhaps the readership is not known enough; perhaps there has not been enough done in testing out the proposed approach. A submission with a different motivation does not need to be judged by such criteria. For example, a paper inviting readers to become part of a new and innovative inquiry may be quite short and speculative in nature.

The practice of previous editorial teams has been to develop a collegial approach by assigning an editorial guide to accompany the writer. Typically, the editorial guide becomes very familiar with the writing making it difficult for them to assess how the written work will impact on a new reader. It is then necessary to seek wider feedback.

Many have considered over the years whether the journal can be peer reviewed and if so, what that would mean. There is no one global definition of peer review except that the field itself defines what it means

by that. In this edition, submissions have been reviewed by at least two peers. Not all submissions have been accepted. Some contributors been advised to do further work. Careful consideration is made to link the writer up with useful guides, advisors or supervisors. From this perspective, we go beyond what is considered sufficient for peer review in other journals and fields. I would like to think that, as a result, we are collegially informed and community developed. I seek to have our processes in the journal in alignment with our ethos to build reciprocity in our relationships, for us to be robust, sensitive and creative in our expressions with each other. I expect people interested in how that works for the journal will seek conversations with me and others involved. I will report back to the Association on how we are going in this.

Members of AANZPA have been building up their collective practice wisdom in many different ways: in training, in writing together, in work, at workshops, in various meetings, and at the annual conferences. I consider the whole of AANZPA membership as the editor's advisory board. I will endeavour to match people best able to do the work. When you are considering writing something for the journal, it may be useful to consult with myself or others at an early stage, to be thoughtful on who might effectively accompany you as you warm up. We may assemble a team, different people brought in to assist with specific things at different times.

As most of us are aware, there is no short route in writing. We work on a new piece of writing and find out all over again – it is not straightforward. There is the gestation period and the production period. More often than not it takes multiple passes. Much loved passages must be thrown out. Sometimes something is not right but no matter how much one attends to it it is not fixed. The writing must be put aside and perhaps months later, when it is cold, the deficiency is apparent. As in all things, years of experiential learning are required to develop the various competencies involved in producing effective and satisfying writing.

Sometimes more work is required to connect our writing with what has already been written on the topic. In AANZPA, we have 23 years of journal and a large library of theses which are available online to all members. Work needs to be done by writers to see what has already been written about in their topic area. There can be good profit in seeing how psychodrama theories and approaches connect in with and share common ancestry with others. The three publications on J.L. Moreno that are reviewed in this edition make it very clear that a visionary and a genius do not make a saint. Let's be alert to reifying J.L. Moreno and willy-nilly claiming things as unique to him or psychodrama when they are not.

In the journal, as in any writing, there are words on a page crafted in anticipation of a relationship with readers. To be successful, a shared language is required. When we have our reader in mind, then our organs of perception get going, our language wakes up. In psychodrama we have words – spontaneity, tele and role for example – that have special relevance and meaning to us. If we want to reach people outside of psychodrama, then we might need other words. For instance, we might find words such as light, spirit or resurrection work more effectively than the word spontaneity.

Vivienne Thomson has been working for precision in thought and language in role theory for many years. In this edition, she describes her collected experience in the important area of conceptualising, describing and naming a role. There are some clear guidelines and illustrations that will be of practical assistance to trainers, trainees and practitioners. Again, the psychodramatist is urged to dwell in the unknown space of the emerging relationship and have it impact on them.

Kate Cooke is also doing innovative work with role theory. She takes us on an intimate journey with a client diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder, revealing how an intrinsic badness developed. Kate integrates concepts from psychiatric perspectives with psychodrama.



Hamish Brown presents a fascinating illustration of working with a very large group working out a decision making process for governance of a large geographical region. Hamish integrates the experience he has had in organisations with psychodramatic theory and practice. His premise is that relationship building and

reciprocity can occur in any political organisation, independent of political structure whether it be hierarchical, consensual or democratic. This is very good news to me. I find I am calmer. I need not be so worried about trying to fix the political structure before I can find ways to engage in relational work and be involved in effective decision making.

Hamish has applied elements of sociometric theory to the field of facilitation. If facilitators take that up and incorporate it into their theory and practice, then that would be called psychodrama being a reference discipline. Another aspect of Hamish's writing that is very attractive, and what I want to encourage for other contributors, is the collegial tone.

Jerri Bassi also invites us into an ongoing inquiry and experimentation in innovative work. Jerri's work is with how small figures and video can be used to understand and illustrate our method. This may be to funders, prospective group members, interested people or the participants themselves. Jerri's ongoing work highlights certain principles of production that don't just apply to the psychodramatic stage, but operate in different media such as the written word and film.

I was particularly delighted to come across the poem *The Empty Page* by Elizabeth Nannestad. Elizabeth has been involved in psychodrama for several years. It is a brilliant illustration of the experience of a writer facing the empty page. *The Empty Page* portrays the visceral experience of trepidation and warm-up to the potential in the emerging production: horror, surprise, curiosity, love, tenderness, grief. I hope this poem may provoke psychodramatists to surrender to the empty page as they do to the stage. I hope this poem will incite the imagination of the psychodramatist. The psychodramatist will see how their production competencies and sensibilities can be transferred and applied to other media. This will be a very different warm-up to writing for some. If so, please be kind to yourself. It is the beginning.

The exegesis form is welcome in the journal. The exegesis is used by different academic disciplines where an expression in an artistic form is made and then there is some explanation involving theory. The reader can have such a full and satisfying experience when the writing invites them into experiencing the thing that is being discussed. This may be done as a poem or a drawing. Sometimes powerfully as a story. The psychodramatic method is visual and sensual. It involves all the critical senses of the human being in relationship with others. Nothing is left out. If we see value in this for our writing, if we are ambitious and imaginative enough, and determined enough, then let's see if we can produce that in our writing. We do not just explain and use case study illustrations. We dare to invite the reader into an experience. Perhaps the reader also works to form the clinical analyses and interventions. The reader also works at the theoretical implications. The reader, as engaged audience member, is but a step away from the stage.

There is an opportunity in the AANZPA Journal for psychodramatists who love story and drama and want the reader to get the experience as well as the explanation. This may be in a narrative approach. Or perhaps a critical hermeneutic approach where the researcher's experience is the research sensibility. There is an opportunity for psychodrama writers to offer leadership in terms of academia. It is not that we simply comply with existing norms. We may take initiative to challenge others with a fresh

standard, a new ambition; something unique to psychodrama, what distinguishes us from other modalities and approaches. A readiness for the valuing and practicing of relational living in the unknown emerging moment. Get the writing fit for that. The visuals, the story, the aesthetics. The attractive pull of beauty is a core mechanism in our method that is fully understood in its living. Let's see if we can enthuse and integrate our expressions of practice and theory with the aesthetic element.

Simon Guernsey describes his work on the use of story in working with organisations. He has offered the full version of the story, in this case a fairy tale, intending the reader to have a lived experience of the work he is describing. It is an experiment. I hope also that it will help restore dignity to the word 'story' that has had negative connotations stuck to it.

I hope the vision, daring and tenor of the contributions in this edition will stimulate the imagination on the different ways aesthetic elements can be integrated into the theory and practice of psychodrama, and particularly, in the writing of the work.

Science? Yes, we want it. I was curious to what had resulted from Charmaine McVea's work presented in the 2007 edition of the AANZPA journal. She invited people to get going with ways to evidence and understand their psychodramatic work. I had a conversation with her about her work and how science and rigour may be nurtured and progressed in AANZPA. This conversation is presented in this edition.

It should be clear by now that there are many types of articles that can be published in the journal. Perhaps, you wish to have a conversation with a group of people on a topic and have that published. You may wish to present the work of another person in our organisation (without waiting for it to be posthumous.) You may take an article written before and revisit it. You may write a letter to the editor on some aspect of our writing, journal or something published in it. Please take initiative and engage your imagination and craft the writing in a way that is congruent with you and the spirit of your relationship with AANZPA.

In this edition, we have a tribute to Joan Chappell compiled by John Faisandier and Vivienne Thomson. It is very moving to experience people's gratitude and love. This is the very life we are working with. It uplifts the spirit and gives our whole organisation dignity. I have enjoyed being the editor immensely. I love getting alongside people, to tune in with their work and passion and see how that may get expressed in the journal. I feel a great settling in me when I realise we are all in this together, it is not just up to me. There have been difficulties and differences in expectations and communication styles. I look forward to learning from you. I feel very

encouraged. I anticipate there will continue to be a flourishing of a hundred flowers.<sup>1</sup>

Many thanks to Liz Marks, the publication representative on the Executive, for her immediate response of complete support and eagerness for this adventure. Gratitude to Selena Reid for so willingly taking on the complexities and responsibilities of distribution of the journal. Warm thanks to Chris Hosking for her humour, careful consideration and insights. Appreciation to Gillian Rose and Bona Anna for the guidance from their prior experiences as editors. Thanks to Vivienne Thomson, Hamish Brown, Peter Howie, Jerri Bassi and numerous others who I have called out to for help and guidance.

Philip D. Carter  
Editor  
December 2014



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<sup>1</sup> The hundred schools phrase was resurrected by Mao and made into a couplet 百花齊放，百家爭鳴; bǎihuā qífàng, bǎijiā zhēngmíng; Let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend. It is interesting that the cultural revolution followed. Interesting that the original Spring and Autumn and Warring States period was followed by the imperial Qin Dynasty with its brutal enforcement of unification and standardisation. So the societal movements, like the lineages of families, and the expansion and contraction of individual hearts, the breath in and out, and the evolutionary intents of longer gestation that have wave lengths as broad as galaxies, so...

*People need to be educated; but education means here more than mere intellectual enlightenment, it isn't a matter of deficiency of people's intelligence only and it is more than a matter of emotional enlightenment; it isn't a matter of insight only, it is rather a matter of the deficiency of spontaneity to use the available intelligence and to mobilize their enlightened emotions. But such a program of preparedness requires an effort without precedent, the training and retraining of people on a world-wide scale along spontaneity lines, it requires action research and action methods continuously modified and sharpened to meet new inner and outer environments. (Moreno, 2010, p. 25)*

Editor's note: In the spirit of the message, I have updated the original 'Man' with 'People'.

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*...action research and action methods  
continuously modified and sharpened  
to meet new inner and outer  
environments*

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Moreno, J. L. (2010). *The theatre of spontaneity*. UK: The North-West Psychodrama Association. (Original work published 1924).



I facilitate groups of people commonly regarded as long-term psychiatric patients from a variety of cultures, socio-economic situations, and with a variety of diagnoses. This on-going group is funded by regional health authorities and referrals are received via multidisciplinary teams across Wellington, NZ. The 2 hour long sessions are divided into 8 week cycles which allow people to enter and leave the group. Some people remain in the group for longer periods of time, some for several cycles.

I became aware I needed to address how the group was regarded and utilised by the local medical profession. I asked myself how I might discuss the group in a way that would lessen fear and that would inspire a sense of participation for referrers.

I was seriously thoughtful, as I wanted to protect people in the group from their fears of critical mental health workers.

Thinking sociometrically, I considered funders, referring clinicians, myself as a contracted psychodramatist, and clients along with the clients' relationships with the other professionals with whom they were involved.

There was an emotional release for me, as I experienced the freedom of sociometry. I was able to view the complexities as a map, choosing where and how to navigate forward.

In a colleague's office I saw a set of small figures and had the idea that I could make use of them to represent group members. The notion of

demonstration became dramatic and I saw that these 3D objects offered opportunities for an audience of referring clinicians to develop their own imagination. Projecting their own imagination onto a collection of figures representing the group would engage them in a psychodramatic process. Their experience would become more potent than any pre-existing fears.

My own excitement came to the fore. I was thrilled, playful.

Presenting to psychodrama peers at our regional currency meeting, I gained useful mirroring of my deep respect for group members and how I could bring a small figure alive with personality through description and demonstration. People were inspired.

I was surprised, as I had been somewhat naïve as to the value of such a production.

## **Presentation to a clinical team**

Two weeks later I presented to one of the local clinical teams. We discussed the group for some time. As they began to develop questions, I emptied the box of small figures onto a table and asked folk to pull their chairs closer.

We had our warm-up and now we moved to action, with the client group as the protagonist.

As I responded to their questions by setting out scenes with the figures, I witnessed a high level of involvement and participation, people were alive and curious. My warm-up had considerably increased and I knew that I conveyed both information and experiences from the client group. Participants were keen for a follow up meeting in the future, so I let them know I was planning to extend my thinking into making a video and would bring this to them.

## **Video Interviews of clients**

For some months previously I thought about videoing group members' stories and delivering their messages to mental health services as a way to communicate the value of attending a psychodrama group. Along with group members, I wanted to ensure ongoing State funding for the provision of groups to mental health consumers. We discussed this idea in the group and group members expressed their wishes as well as past experiences of being part of research or client studies. One client, who was a mental health worker, recalled an incident where their own personal case material was used in a presentation to a staff group in which they worked.

I was alerted to the importance of respect and privacy in a way I had never imagined.

Mustering courage I organised a temporary recording studio in my office. I spent time considering a process for doing the filming that would work best for the participants. I set up the room with a camera and each person came in one at a time whilst the others chatted and drank coffee together in another room. Group members were excited and gained confidence from being with each other in this way.

They were very keen to be interviewed on camera, to talk freely about their experiences of being in a group and about the use of the psychodrama method. All participants gave their permission for me to use the footage with the agreement I would re-contract with each person were I to use footage at a new event.

The value of role reversal, being in the “others’ shoes”, was repeatedly highlighted. They saw the value in seeing themselves and their situations from different perspectives. In reviewing the footage, people appreciated themselves and their own clarity. They were also relieved to see certain expressions edited out as the whole event was unscripted and spontaneous.

I realised that I was continuing to act as director, editor and creator of aesthetic production.

I became aware that watching videos of people speaking to a camera created too much emotional engagement with the individual on the screen. It became dyadic, slightly narrowed down and no longer psychodramatic as people “talked about” their experiences.

Something extra was required but I had no idea what was to come.

## **Presentation of video to clinical teams**

After the previous session with the first staff team where I used only the small figures I now had the edited video interviews. For the next team presentation I decided to make use of the small figures on a table in conjunction with the TV screen so that the figures would add another dimension to the video interviews. I used the figures to further demonstrate to staff our group process, sociometric relationships, and role theory.

I was very pleased with presenting the interviews and how they were received. One staff member from overseas thought the interviewees were the mental health staff! I became freshly aware of the power of editing, focusing on clear expressions rather than the highlighting of pathology.

The use of the figures assisted the audience of clinical staff to see the dynamic aspects of group process and psychodramatic production, as well

as seeing the intra-psychic psychodynamics of the individuals attending the group. I was able to answer questions using the figures to produce a response, extending our conversation into action.

I really enjoyed highlighting how simply setting an object on the psychodrama stage immediately increases any chosen protagonists internal creative capacity.

I came away with the idea of making use of the figures to illustrate the narrative of the interviewees within the film itself. Listening to their descriptions of psychodramatic scenes, I realised that I could make more of the experience of enactment. I could see that any audience watching the recording would benefit from seeing enactment take place at the same time as listening to the interviewee.

As I extended my capacity to play with the figures, film and editing in the computer, I also discovered how to make brief animated films. I envisaged that these innovations could assist the viewer to be systemically engaged in a group process in a systemic way as well as to be emotionally engaged with the story teller/interviewee.

I then wondered if psychodramatists could warm themselves up to sharing their stories to the same extent as these clients were warmed up. I considered consulting with other practitioners as to how to make use of film to communicate and express what psychodrama is to them.

## **Presentation to AANZPA conference participants**

I warmed myself up to a conference session where I would show the interviews plus my new plaything of filmic representations.

I giggled and laughed at the various edits, enjoying the spirit of the work gently growing.

At the conference, I presented the interviews layered with descriptive animations, synchronised with the voice of the interviewee, which offered the audience a playful vision of how psychodrama worked for people in the group.

I then offered to interview conference participants, which was a delightful experience. Fellow practitioners were invited to speak freely to the camera and our group about their experiences and understandings of psychodrama. People responded positively to the process. Some practitioners raised concerns regarding the ethics of using video material.

I felt an emerging apprehension and have carefully considered this voice of caution.

I approached the editing of this new series of interviews with a similarly thoughtful sensitivity, following the theme of using visual imagery and stop-motion photography to highlight the narrative of practitioners.

In order to share the footage with participating practitioners across the world, I experimented with posting edited footage on YouTube under private settings so that only invited parties could gain access. This footage included both clients and practitioners describing their experiences of psychodrama, along with plenty of playful imagery, the use of the small figures and editing.

I invited participants to make comment on the private YouTube channel with the intention of initiating an online dialogue. Most participants responded to me personally, highlighting the following points:

- developing scientific interest in the aims of using such techniques would support the efficacy of psychodrama
- new people may be attracted to psychodrama after seeing interesting video material online
- ethical dilemmas of recorded material may put client and practitioner at risk. Outline these risks early on in any project
- AANZPA practitioners can collaborate on such a project
- this experimental process may inspire new interest groups within the Association
- people were often surprised that they actually liked themselves on video even though beforehand they thought they would feel differently
- video material helps identify role development
- use of film for trainees could assist development of self-awareness
- videoing work may be an adjunct to supervision
- the use of imagery reinforces the imagination for participants and audience alike
- people who have no experience of psychodrama gain a window into the method before committing to a personal development, therapy or training group.

Thanks to everyone who participated and especially to those who continue to mirror, double and teach me how to bring myself forward.

## **Forward to the future**

One purpose of this work has been to build sociometric connections between people through the making of film and discussing the use of filmic and other resources. An interest group is forming around this area of work.

An emerging idea from the ethical points raised has led me to edit video material that doesn't show a person's face, only voices illustrated by images. I am very interested to know what people experience watching this. You are invited to become involved in this work. Please view video

material and contribute by leaving comments on this channel [www.youtube.com/user/jerribassi](http://www.youtube.com/user/jerribassi).

My intention is that we extend this work sociometrically across AANZPA and, where possible, psychodrama communities worldwide. Standing face to face with each other offers opportunities to reverse roles, to enjoy fresh innovative ideas and to discuss future applications of psychodrama.

For me this exploration is about maintaining a creative flow in one's life and work, to experiment, to follow an idea from a small beginning without knowing where this might lead, considering who might be affected. It is about allowing the process of spontaneity and creativity to become experience; it is the canon of creativity in action.

I am enlivened, filled like a flowing river, even though I might be perturbed by sudden bends and swirling eddies. I take time to regroup in the slow calm places. I am inspired with the multi-dimensions of our experiences, how we step into the unknown in order to explore psychodramatic scenes and I am excited as I discover how to represent these layers visually in film.

I love the simplicity of the Spanish term "puesta en abismo" which I translate as "to place in space". It's what I experience with the first creation on the empty stage.

*Jerri Bassi is a psychodramatist/educator with AANZPA and a registered psychotherapist living and working in Wellington, New Zealand. Among other things he is interested in how sociometric awareness can lead to psychodramatic action. at home, thoughtfully with his toys, he loves in deeply the wild air and encountering the of our world.*



*significant  
When not  
playing  
breathing  
of nature  
immensity*

# The Hauraki Seachange Project:

## A Case Study of Collaborative Decision Making in Multi-Stakeholder Facilitated Groups

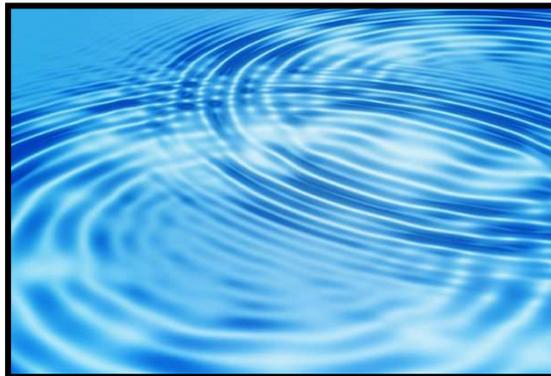
Hamish Brown

### Abstract

Creating opportunities for a community to resolve issues that affect it is an exciting and empowering notion. Central to this is a sociometric challenge. This paper describes how a large multi-stakeholder group was facilitated in a decision making process. We present the reasoning behind the use and selection of sociometric criteria and describe the application of sociometry in this facilitated process. A liberating notion is that people can work collaboratively to reach alignment regardless of what their organisational structures and decision making modes are.

### Key Words

Collaboration,  
decision making,  
facilitation,  
multi-stakeholder,  
sociometry.



### The Initial Meeting

My colleague Peter Lawless and I are invited to a meeting of the marine planning team in Auckland. When we arrive we discover that the team includes planners for the Waikato Regional Council and the Auckland City Council. They envision a massive stakeholder-led planning process and want us to assist them. Our job is to facilitate a process to choose a stakeholder working group (SWG) that will have a central role in making all the decisions related to planning for the future use of the Hauraki Gulf, New Zealand. We are confronted, as they are, by the sheer number of

organisations involved and the complexity of the project. However we know, from previous experience, some of the essential sociometric ingredients for success and we agree with some excitement to facilitate three days of group process that will assist the people of the Hauraki Gulf to choose and mandate it's SWG. This paper is our story of that process.

### ***Seachange Hauraki***

The Hauraki Gulf comprises 1.2 million hectares of ocean. \$2.7 billion in economic activity flows through the use of the area each year. It is home to a rich diversity of seabirds, whales, dolphins, fisheries, and has unique undersea habitats. Over 2 million people living in the Auckland and Waikato regions are affected by the use of the Hauraki Gulf. Some 400 organisations of all sizes and kinds have a direct stake in decisions relating to the use and preservation of the Hauraki Gulf. How do these 400 organisations choose 14 people to make all the central decisions relating to the marine spatial planning process initiated by Auckland City Council and Waikato Regional Council in partnership?

### ***The Hauraki Seachange Project***

We suggest that we can facilitate an adequate social process to create the best opportunity for an effective Stakeholder Working Group to be chosen by conducting two fora or large gatherings and one workshop over a three month timeframe. We are committed to the notion that any and all stakeholders who have an interest in becoming involved in the process of choosing the mandated representative SWG will have the opportunity to do so.

We design one forum in Auckland and one in Thames followed by a workshop halfway in between. The two fora are promoted to over four hundred stakeholder organisations and also publically as the beginning of a bottom-up multi-stakeholder marine spatial planning process. Each forum is attended by about one hundred and twenty people.

## **The Forums**

The Auckland Forum is set in a huge round room on top of the Auckland Museum. Windows all the way around give a panoramic view of the Hauraki Gulf and its connection to Auckland City. As people arrive at 8:30am they are directed to first meander through an exhibit fortuitously on display of the many species of marine life that live in the Hauraki Gulf.

The seating is set up so that all one hundred and twenty people are sitting in a large three quarter circle with chairs two deep. All participants can see each other across the room. The opening speeches by a few key people who hold positions of authority set a tone of meaning and significance for what we are hoping to achieve. The steps in the overall process are set out: participants in this forum will select representatives to attend an upcoming workshop where they will determine who will be the members of the SWG. The role of the SWG and its independent chairperson is clarified. Having warmed up to the purpose, we focus on the work of the day.

We ask every person to stand up and introduce themselves including the organisation they are from and its connection to the work. This takes quite a bit of time but it is important



for the group to get to know who is present. The project leader from Waikato Regional Council then makes a presentation introducing some of the detail of the use and associated issues with the Hauraki Gulf.

What is evident in the room as people introduce themselves, is how passionate they are about their use of the Gulf and how much this is expressed as a tendency to position themselves and advocate for their cause. There is a positive feeling of anticipation in the group as we break for morning tea.

Our thinking is that the SWG needs to be small enough that it can operate as a consensus-making group. This means no more than fourteen people because as the number of relationships grows, the complexity of each person being genuinely involved and visible increases and the potential to get bogged down in a consensus mire or skip over the top in 'pseudo-consensus' mode increases. Further, these people will not develop the social cohesion necessary to make consensus decisions if they operate as advocates for particular subgroups. So our process is designed to have this broad public stakeholder group identify the best possible people from the community to make the decisions on behalf of all of them. We identify that the people selected will meet two key sociometric criteria: 1) they will be held in the highest regard by the widest range of people across the community; 2) they will have the capacity to continue to connect with

others when difference is being expressed. We design our whole process with these criteria in mind.

### ***The Process***

During morning tea we have fourteen round tables set up in the room. We assign people to tables that create a good mix of different viewpoints. We ask them to talk together about the issues that bring them to the forum. We ask the people at each table to frame some overarching vision statements for the future Gulf they would all like to see. When we have the group share their visions for the Gulf, two things are evident: 1) even though many tables have antagonisms represented, all could name visions that all agreed to; 2) across the room the visions from various tables are remarkably similar. Everyone identifies that the Gulf has to be healthy if it is to continue to provide a living, be a place to play and have thriving wild life. People are surprised to discover that a unifying vision is acceptable to all and that the commercial aims are linked inseparably from the environmental values.

We ask people to gather at the outside edge of the room and say: *“Please consider that the most important thing to discover today is what stakeholder sub-groups exist here. From these you will choose people to represent you at the workshop in a month’s time and that group will choose the SWG from among their number. There are four hundred organisations represented in the room. We need to form stakeholder groups that make sense to you. We want any of you that feel inclined to name a stakeholder group that you feel is important and needs to be represented in the process to name it now. Then take a position at one of the tables, as we do this we will begin to form groups. If someone names the stakeholder group that you want to belong to you go and join them at a table.”*

People excitedly begin naming subgroups – *“Commercial fishing”* – *“Recreational fishing”* – *“Island dwellers”*...

As this continues we say, *“You will see that this is a matter of forming a picture of the whole social system with the right degree of granularity. With so many stakeholders we could form one hundred and twenty groups, equally we could form one group of people committed to the future of the Gulf. The right number of sub groups is the number that makes useful sense of the complex system represented here today.”*

We end up with fifteen stakeholder groups.

As each of the stakeholder groups form at a table, people appear to feel very much at home. We notice they are linking with people who think similar things to them and see the world somewhat how they see it. They

begin discussing the issues they feel strongly about and which also contain the differences represented by the various sub groups in the room. Believing that this will lead to a debate about the issues rather than a focus on selecting who best can form the SWG, we surprise them. We ask each subgroup to begin mapping the organisations that are connected to their sub group; any group whether positive or negative should be represented on their map if there is some kind of relationship between them. People get to work on this task. We introduce the notion that if we put all the maps together we will have a pretty complete picture of all the organisations with a stake in the future of the Hauraki Gulf. We notice that generally these maps only represent positive connections.

Next we introduce the criteria for choosing the people that will become members of the SWG: 1) they are held in the highest regard from the widest range people across the community, and 2) they have the capacity to stay connected with others when differences are being expressed. These people will be our 'Wise Heads'. We ask each stakeholder group to name people and position them and their links on their maps. They then select no more than two people they believe met the criteria. These two people will be the ones with the most positive connections on their maps. They do not have to be present at this day but they have to meet the criteria.

Many groups have difficulty getting down to just two people but all manage two or three. These are the people who will attend the workshop one month later.

We repeat this process in Thames with another one hundred and twenty participants. In Thames they are very passionate about being listened to initially and want to discuss the issues and the rationale for the process we have designed. This appears to us to reflect both a greater awareness of facilitated process and associated issues of power, and also a greater anxiety about the opportunity for them to become genuinely involved. The sixty five people selected by these two fora make up our workshop to be held one month later.

### ***Discussion***

We know that since we live in a democratic society people will readily warm up to advocating for causes, as this behaviour is effective in democratic societies. The people attending are also largely the people that have had long experience influencing decision makers in council, local government and national government. We also know that the SWG won't function effectively if it operates in a democratic fashion. Advocating, negotiating, voting and compromising to arrive at solutions will not

produce an innovative or strong enough outcome. If the group operates this way it will become fractured into subgroups that will be oppositional and that the alignment necessary to produce outcomes will get blocked. Unless the people in the SWG are highly regarded by the community at large, the decisions of the SWG will not hold the respect required and thus the outcomes from the SWG will not be considered a broad mandate from the community. Because the decisions the SWG makes will not represent any one position held by any one stakeholder group, the SWG members will have to stay engaged with their various communities so that people outside the SWG understand and appreciate the conclusions it is reaching. So our task is to assist the large group in finding the people that could operate this way and to warm them up in such a way that they know this was who they needed to choose for the SWG.

This leads us to developing our two key sociometric criteria. The main focus is to warm up the large groups of participants to choosing people who are capable of reaching consensus on contentious issues. The Hauraki Gulf community needs a group of people that could genuinely represent all the key issues and positions to each other while building enough social cohesion that they will be able to grapple with those issues and come to consensus decisions. Working to develop social cohesion and recognising criteria for choosing and rejecting is essentially a facilitated sociometric process.

Many people in the room are highly regarded as advocates – they have built strong reputations as effective change agents. These people are highly regarded by those within their stakeholder groups on this criterion. However this same criterion makes some of them the most highly rejected by members by other stakeholder groups.

The large group process we use is designed to warm the whole community up to a different way of working, where they can thoughtfully assess who could provide leadership based upon these new and different criteria. This warm-up will assist the work of the SWG once it is formed, as there will be awareness in the community of the task required of those they have mandated to be in the SWG.

For these reasons, we consider it vital in the fora that people started thinking about the whole system of relationships and thinking of the work of the SWG outside of the normal battle lines. It is also vital that we did not support the warm-up to debating the issues.

## **The Workshop**

The workshop is set in a rectangle shaped room just large enough for the 65 participants and 10 council staff to sit in a circle with a small space in

the front for speakers. The day is opened with a mihi welcome and karakia prayer. The independent chairperson for the SWG is introduced and makes an opening address about how he perceives the SWG.

Outside in front of our room is a larger rectangular grass courtyard. After the opening we all go outside and construct a geographical map of the Hauraki Gulf like a postcard that fits the rectangle area. Each person locates themselves on the map by standing where they live; and in turn yells out their name and location. We then make a line of people north to south and fold it in the middle so that each person ends up in a pair with those farthest north paired with the farthest south. People introduce themselves in these pairs and talk about what brings them to this meeting. Next each pair joins with another pair and they are invited to discuss the key issues they perceive face the Hauraki Gulf. Each quartet then meets another quartet and they are invited to discuss the clusters of issues they notice in the conversations so far. Each eight joins another eight and the groups of sixteen find a place to sit. They are asked to develop a set of four high level issues statements that contain all the issues present in the gulf. These issue statements are a way to name and include the substantive concerns across the whole group.

Our dual intent is that this is an initial beginning of framing the scope for the marine spatial planning process and that it gives the participants a chance to make new relationships across the stakeholder groups, including experiencing how each other person acts as a member of a working group.

After morning tea, we reconvene in the room and describe the stakeholder groups that have been formed in each forum. We then describe how we have grouped these stakeholder groups into eight clusters that fit together. We ask them to choose a cluster where they feel most at home.

### ***Who Created These Cluster Groups?***

At this point someone objects to the fact that we have created these clusters. There is quite a high degree of anxiety in the group about our creating clusters and people express concerns about the process. As we talk about it, it becomes clearer that people are relating to concepts that the councils have introduced. The council project team have invited people into a bottom-up process in which the participants will be free to think 'blue sky' about any issues they perceive and at the same time, set a timeframe of two and a half years. We describe how this is actually a mixed model rather than a bottom-up model because a two and a half year time frame creates a restriction that means a totally bottom-up process (which

takes five to ten years) is not possible. Participants express that their trust has been damaged and we take time appreciating this.

We describe how we have created a process that will enable this group to choose the best possible people for the SWG and that we have given advice to the council's project team that a SWG consisting of twelve members chosen at this workshop, representatives from two Iwi<sup>1</sup>, an independent chairperson and a facilitator, has the best chance of doing the work required of them.

The group spends some time enquiring into what clusters we have created before choosing the cluster they feel most at home belonging to. They have accepted our process. The clusters have emerged from the stakeholder groups the forum participants have formed and our change is a change in granularity not content. We do not invent new cluster groups, however we do connect some of the stakeholder groups together so that we can give more space to the forming of the SWG membership. If we had an additional day we would have been able to involve the group in making clusters.

Interestingly two people choose clusters that are very different to the stakeholder groups they have been selected to represent. This appears to be an attempt to manoeuvre into clusters where they will more likely be chosen for the SWG and highlights to us a strong sense of the underlying concern that a genuinely collaborative process cannot possibly generate outcomes that will work for everyone.

The cluster groups then meet, introduce themselves to each other and discuss the issues statements that have been developed in the morning. Our main intent is that each group gets to know each other sufficiently well that they can successfully choose their SWG member later. One key issue for us as facilitators is that for our sociometric process to be at all effective, the selections people make have to be based on meaningfully knowing each other. The council project team initially allocated one day for the SWG selection process. They accepted our proposal that three days were needed to ensure there was enough time and social process for the choices made at the end of this workshop to be meaningful. Three days still creates some process constraints however we felt confident the stakeholder group could achieve the central task of choosing its SWG membership intelligently in the time frame of three days.

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<sup>1</sup> Iwi are Maori tribal groups and bicultural partners with the Crown. In this case, the Crown is represented by the councils which it mandates. They have an obligation under the Treaty of Waitangi to include iwi in decision making processes that relate to the natural resources (Taonga) of New Zealand.

### ***Sociometric Process of Choosing the SWG***

Once back in the whole group, we invite each cluster in turn to be the focus of the whole group. We invite any person from the cluster that wants to be selected to be on the SWG to put themselves forward and to speak about why they would be a good member of the SWG. Once we have all the people who have self-selected from one cluster group standing up in different places in the room, we invite the other participants not from that cluster to “go stand next to the person they will most value having on the SWG”. This results in group members standing around each cluster member that has put themselves forward; enabling us to count the number of choices and work out the two potential SWG members most highly valued as wise heads, by the wider group, from each cluster.

Once we have done this for all the clusters we send the cluster groups away to select one SWG member from the two chosen by the wider group. This process ensures that two criteria – 1) the people most highly regarded by the whole community; and, 2) the best possible representative of the cluster of stakeholders - are central in the choosing process. We reconvene mid-afternoon once the cluster groups have chosen. In the meantime we have placed twelve chairs in a semi-circle in the middle of the group space. The Iwi participants have developed a separate process to choose their two members of the SWG at a separate hui (meeting).

The eight people are presented by their clusters to the whole group and the group is asked “*Is anyone not OK with these eight members being on the SWG?*” The group celebrates that the SWG is in the process of being formed. The participants are valuing that the process that is producing these eight people is robust and they are able to choose them unconditionally. These eight people then take their chairs in the centre.

Our hope is that every member of the SWG will have the full support of the whole group present. Our process is designed to make enough sense of the complexity present that people can say yes to each person even though it might not be a person they would choose themselves. This is a sophisticated collaborative process made possible because of the sociometric understanding of the group. It is not truly a consensus building process – we would call it a highly collaborative democratic process because even though we are not deciding by voting and there is not 100% agreement for the first eight people, there has not been an overt power of veto set-up. If, for example, one person objects to a selection, our plan is that they be listened to and we use a sociometric process such as a continuum to test the degree of alignment in the whole group to their concern. While we will be able to assist the whole group to explore the response they have to the concern, it is unlikely (although not impossible)

that the group will allow a small group of say five to stop the selection of someone the rest of the group is happy with. More importantly, sufficient social cohesion has developed that people are valuing the process and the members that the process is producing and celebrating.

We ask the whole group to consider the eight chairs currently filled and to now think about what gaps they perceive for the SWG to work effectively and have effective representation of all the central issues. Then we initiate a process of proposing. Each cluster group gathers together in a different area of the room, except those people already chosen for the SWG. They are able after discussion to name an issue that needs representation and a person that would best sit on the SWG for this issue. As people make proposals we have the whole group stand on a continuum from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. In this way the group can assess the degree to which each proposal is accepted by the group.

The group is serious-minded about this; people are proposing only issues they feel are very important. We do not have to deal with many people advocating for their private agenda as the group is well warmed up to the task of choosing the best possible SWG for the whole community.

Only one proposal is not accepted 100% by the whole group and this is made by a woman who had been chosen at a forum to attend, representing a particular stakeholder group and who then made the decision to join a radically different cluster in the workshop. It becomes apparent the wider group rejects her more than the issue she is raising. At the request of some group members, we test the issue by asking the whole group to stand on a continuum in relation to the issue she is raising without reference to who will sit on the SWG to represent that issue. From this we get much greater acceptance that the issue matters to the group. The group is able to unanimously accept all the proposals for the last 4 seats on the SWG except for this last one.

In regards to the final issue, the group is conflicted and no one is able to propose a solution that is acceptable. We elect to leave this unresolved question in the hands of the independent chair as he considers the makeup of the whole SWG group. This is



indicative of an autocratic process rather than a democratic or consensus building approach and the independent chair is clear he wants to make a decision with the current members of the SWG fully involved.

We celebrate and end the process of forming the SWG.

## **Discussion on Decision Making in Groups**

In our work, we have observed that there are fundamentally three decision making modes – autocratic, democratic and consensual. These modes are not intrinsically good or bad. However they are almost always a consequence of the structure that is in place. The structure defines who can authorise which decisions and what processes will be involved. For example, a voting process on a committee means it's a democratic structure. Whereas large stratified organisations, such as government departments are structurally autocratic; that is, every manager needs to be aware of what decisions they are authorised to make and which they must escalate to their manager.

While consensus decision making is intrinsically collaborative it is not primarily about everyone agreeing. It is an agreement to keep working with a decision until it will work for everyone. Consensus decision making means that all participants have the power of veto. Because of this power of veto it is not acceptable to fall back to voting when people cannot agree. It is necessary in a consensus decision making context that people are committed to reaching agreement and this means working actively to create proposals that may be acceptable to all. For these reasons, being involved in consensus decision making requires the participants to have developed the capacity to hold the point of tension between what will work for them and what will work for the whole social system. This self-awareness does not necessarily develop as a result of being involved in consensus decision making processes. When social cohesion is low, consensus is either very slow or unworkable because people tend to fall back to a veto position rather than coming forward to attempt to understand the perspective of the other.

It is always possible to design a facilitated process to assist those affected by the decision to be involved in contributing to making it, regardless of how the decision is actually authorised at the end of that process. We define collaboration to mean the process of facilitating involvement in decision-making by those affected. Often, as in this instance, when working collaboratively, people can be fully aligned with the decisions that are made, regardless of the mode of decision making.

The collaborative principle that people can work to reach 100% agreement (alignment) regardless of the decision making mode is evident in the case study described above in four ways.

Firstly, the mode of decision-making. When the councils promised a 'bottom-up' process people broadly assumed that this would mean decisions would be made by a consensus of the stakeholders. However in deciding a two and a half year time frame the council also created a constraint and modelled that actually they were authorised to decide. This is not at all problematic from our point of view. A two and a half year time frame means we must focus more tightly on the scope of the work to be done and be very clear about who is making which decisions at each point. However it was problematic that the council set up a conflict in that people were invited into a process and told they would decide, then later once they had accepted the invitation found out that it was not completely true. This kind of confusion in decision-making is frequently experienced as damaging to trust and it has been our experience that if it happens more than once without being repaired, people become disengaged. We believe it happened in this instance because the council was unaware of the conflict it was creating between time and process. The misperception that every decision must be made 'bottom up' by a consensus of the stakeholders was based on a belief that this was the only way to generate engagement. In our experience however people are excited about getting involved in decisions that affect them and the best way to facilitate this involvement is to be absolutely transparent about the nature of the involvement being offered and the decision-making process in each case.

Secondly, being transparent about what decisions are on the table and which are not. We provided advice to the council's project team about the number of people that could be in the SWG. This was accepted and we designed a process that would achieve this outcome in the time we had negotiated. This means that while the stakeholder group decides who is in the SWG they don't get to decide how many people are in the SWG. In this case, we provided advice based on extensive experience of SWGs, both successful and unsuccessful, that run in other parts of the country. We believed deciding the group size in the fora or the workshop that followed, would have been a considerable distraction. We could have contracted to assist the group to make this decision but it would have taken considerable extra time and we did not consider this would have increased engagement in the process or resulted in a better outcome and it may well have resulted in an unworkable outcome, if, for example, the workshop group settled on a sixty-five member SWG. Some people did express the perspective that they should have been making this decision as a

stakeholder group; generally however people accepted the approach we took.

Thirdly, the decision about the final seat on the SWG could not be decided on the day and was left in the hands of the independent chairperson. This was a shift from a democratic collaborative decision making framework to an autocratic collaborative decision making framework. In some respects it is not ideal. It would have been better if the group on the day could have resolved all the issues associated with forming the SWG and we ran out of time to do this. However, the group present did mandate the independent chair to make this final decision. It was important that this decision was left in the hands of the independent chair rather than the hands of the SWG because the partly-formed SWG cannot be impartial about the membership of the SWG. We have found that it's important not to idealize complex social processes because personality dynamics in social systems mean that very often solutions are not perfect and the real test is in whether the SWG holds the mandate of the community it represents.

Lastly, the councils reassured the fora groups that the outcomes of the SWG work would be taken on board. This is because while they had set up the SWG process to resolve the issues, they had no legal obligation to implement its conclusions. Transparency and the assurance that the work will be taken seriously are essential parts of successful collaborative processes when the decision making authority does not rest with the group.

## **Conclusion**

This paper has described a facilitated large group process of considerable complexity. We believe creating opportunities for the community to resolve issues regarding the use of public spaces is an exciting and empowering notion that involves the sociometric challenge of choosing the best people to work on behalf of all of us. We are delighted to be involved in developing ways that this can be done effectively and contributing to the underlying theoretical framework that guides how things can be done effectively in the group.

We have been inspired by Moreno's work on sociometry. Between 1932 and 1938, Moreno directed action research at a residential school for delinquent girls. In 1937, he launched the journal of Sociometry and by 1942 had opened the Sociometric Institute. These provide the background to his (Moreno, 1953) seminal sociometric work *Who Shall Survive?* His central notion is that we will not survive as a species until we develop the social capacity to keep including each other in the face of our differences.

We believe that developing this capacity is the central concept of Moreno's 'Sociatry'<sup>1</sup> and that the work described in this case study is an example of it. We hope that as the work of the SWG resolves many of the issues on the use of the Hauraki Gulf over the next two years, that people will feel more engaged in the community they are creating.

### **Reference**

Moreno, J. L. (1953). *Who shall survive?* New York: Beacon House.

*Hamish Brown and his colleague Peter Lawless are a part of the team of five that founded Phoenix Facilitation Ltd in 2008 based in New Zealand. Hamish is a Psychodramatist and TEPiT on staff at the Auckland Training Centre for Psychodrama. He has been working as a consultant and training group facilitators for 18 years. He can be reached at [hamish@phoenixfacilitation.co.nz](mailto:hamish@phoenixfacilitation.co.nz)*



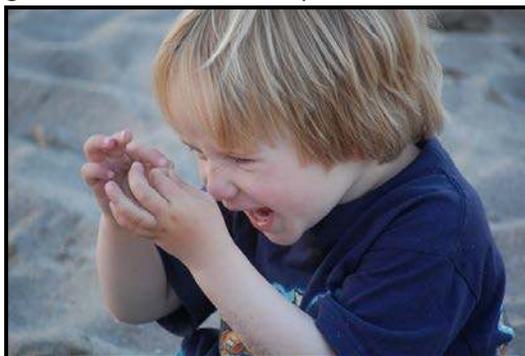
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<sup>1</sup> Moreno's formulation for the treatment of society.

# Reflections on Role Theory

**Vivienne Thomson**

I am a child playing in the sand arranging and rearranging the sand to create forms that are my own form of art and meaning. I am constructing and deconstructing, involved with the texture of the sand, the tactile sense of the grains passing through my hands. I notice how the sand moves in response to my touch and the weight or wetness of the mounds. Sometimes the grains sparkle and I am reminded that sand is essentially glass and a central component in the manufacturing of steel. My father



works with both glass and steel – he is a sculptor and engineer. It is not lost on me how significant he is as an ever present influence on me; and my mother, too, who is a source of inspiration for my creative endeavours. All the world is in a grain of sand. The simple

act of playing in the sand gives me pleasure. Others watching are also enjoying the naïve play. It is even more fun when I am with playmates engaging in the sand play when the results of our collective endeavour expand, our ideas transform as we connect with each other and our constructions meet up. Our delight is mutual.

The metaphor is an apt description of me at work with role theory.

I use the metaphor also to demonstrate many of the principles I have reached as a psychodrama trainer. In this article I will expand on some of these; namely, recognising the essential nature of role and conveying this when describing and naming a role.

Over many years I have been involved with other trainers, practitioners and trainees to hone our abilities in developing role descriptions and role names that are accurate, precise, useful and even inspirational. This has

involved me in a great deal of reflection on my reading and discussion with my colleagues. In AANZPA we are in a process of evolving and refining some of the theory of psychodrama. To date there have been a few articles written about role theory that open up points for consideration including calling it “role dynamics” as has been suggested by several others (Blatner, 1991; Reekie, 2007). Role dynamics conveys much more of the freshness of the subject and hints of the work involved for a theoretician – much like the description from the sand pit. My aim here is to stimulate further engagement about role dynamics as they influence psychodrama theory and our practice.

### **The work of being present with**

Max Clayton (2011) says of meeting a person, “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.” (p.85) This is directly applicable to a director at the beginning of a session with a protagonist or interviewing for role.

As I wrote the first paragraph of this article I became aware of what was motivating me. I got to know myself better and my awareness enlarged as I made connections with people and places at different times in my life. I felt fluid, flooded with my experiences as a four year old playing in the sand, in the present my hands moving spontaneously. I had a rush of images as I made mental associations that I have come to know of through science, art and general life. I also felt my relationships with people significant to my experience. I am moved by all of these connections. It is a wonderful experience as well as an odd sensation as I feel the atemporal nature of existence where, for a moment, there is a union with the cosmos in which the divisions of present, past and future are dissolved.

My experience is summed up by Zerka Moreno (2006) who says, “In psychodramatic terms, the role is a final crystallisation of all the situations in a special area of operations through which the individual passes in interaction with others who play complementary roles.” (p. 234.) While a role is situational as it emerges in response to a particular time and place and relationship, it is also developed across time and space as well from accumulated experience both real and cosmic. Moreno (1946) described four universals: time, space, reality and cosmos. Each of them are significant to role dynamics. The experience of being is profound and it is this profound experience that we describe in terms of role.

## Common practice and my true purpose

General practice in psychodrama is to describe role using two-word descriptors, a noun + adjective to encapsulate a person's role functioning. The noun is one that describes the action e.g., a nurse describes a person who is nursing, a teacher is a person who is teaching, a dancer a person who is dancing, etc.

Relating to me as an author in this journal publication, some people might have described me as an article writer. Such a role name is factual enough and conveys meaning that most people could understand because it relates to our common or collective experience. Moreno categorises this kind of role as a social role. When I read the descriptions of social roles in Moreno's writings e.g., nurse, teacher, etc, they mostly describe what I consider to be functions, professions, position titles or jobs. As such they are defined less by the individual and more by the social context and the group the individual is a member of. For example, in general terms, to be a nurse is to be a member of the nursing profession, which requires the attainment of particular standards of skills and abilities recognized through registration. The position of nurse has a prescribed job description that specifies expectations and accountabilities, behaviour, attitudes, frames of reference and relationships. Biddle and Thomas (1966) state, 'The term role is often used prescriptively, as referring to behavior that somehow "ought to" or "should" be performed; and "expectations," "role expectations," "standards," "norms," and "rules" are others.' (p. 26). The focus is on what the person is doing. Typically, when a role is described this way it becomes stereotypical and devoid of individual expression.

"Every role is a fusion of private and collective elements; it is composed of two parts - its collective denominators and its individual differentials." (Moreno, 1953, p.75) In a two-word descriptor the noun refers to the collective denominator i.e., what is in the public domain and generally known. The individual differentials are typically conveyed by the adjective and describe the personal expression of the individual e.g., judgmental critic, self conscious dancer, gentle nurse.

When I read two-word role names they often appear to be the result of much intellectual effort suggesting quite a degree of objectivity of the person doing the describing. In text, two-word role names are regularly capitalised, highlighted in italics and/or quotation marks somehow attributing them with significant meaning. When they appear like this I get the hiccups each time I read them as the two words upset the flow of language when they are dotted throughout. I also feel physical pain as the essential creativity of the person being described is usually reduced to

some superficial behaviour or banal activity. The descriptions are both partial and miss the life experienced by the observer as well as the richness of the protagonist's experience.

## **Morenian focus on dreaming again and living creatively: Principles, prompts and pitfalls**

You will have heard these quotes from Moreno: "Psychodrama is the drama of the soul" and "Role is the functioning form a person takes." Putting these two statements together I deduce that role is an expression of the soul; the presence of the I-God. Capturing this in a two word descriptor is no mean feat! This is where I get into trouble as I don't want to set any of us up and make it impossible for us to name roles.

Sometimes I have pondered why I have been bothered. You'd have to care or believe that role dynamics are important otherwise the process of naming roles would become a bit tedious. Presumably you and I share the at least the following reasons for naming and analysing roles:

1. to develop clinical acumen by gaining clarity about the systems in which a person exists and the dynamic of their personality
2. to produce satisfying enactments that have dramatic impact and aesthetic quality
3. to develop relationships based on self-awareness and awareness of others
4. to develop spontaneity and creativity.

I'm with Moreno (1946) when he stated, "Our goal is not to analyse the patient, but to help him dream again" (p. 5-6). To achieve this successfully a psychodrama director will have integrated role dynamics as an overarching theory embracing concepts of spontaneity, tele and sociometry and how these are brought to life on the stage. In his recent article, Don Reekie (2013) said, "I am convinced that Moreno's ideas penetrate and open up the heart of humanity and its nature. None of his concepts, theories or methodologies are truly meaningful in isolation. The entire panoply is essential to comprehending each part. Each is inseparable from the whole. Each is dependent on all the others together. We cannot comprehend 'role' without 'canon of creativity', the 'four universals', the 'phases of spontaneity development', and all the rest." (p. 56). Achieving this degree of integration and finesse as a director requires a great deal of practice and application, including analysis. Naturally my reactions have caused me to be more thoughtful and developed in me an appreciation for what is involved in developing adequacy as a role theorist. Some practices that have assisted me include:

- recording verbatim and naming the roles
- freezing an interaction/enactment and identifying different components of the roles
- focusing on one moment in an interaction/enactment and brainstorming role names or brainstorming adjectives and nouns
- creating similes or metaphors for what is observed/experienced
- drawing role diagrams and analysing roles following an enactment
- taking a role name and enacting that by exaggerating non-verbal expression and movement or sculpting the body to convey meaning to an audience member
- doing spontaneity training activities, e.g., playing Red Rover or In the Manner of the Word<sup>1</sup> also assist as they require attention to warm-up and congruence of expression, plus they're fun to do.

I have found that worry tends to stifle whereas playfulness tends to stimulate the imagination helping the process of generating role descriptions and names to flow more readily.

How we conceptualise role affects our functioning as role theorists both in terms of being a director and also in the naming of roles. There are a number of observable aspects of a person's being that can provide significant information that help to identify a role. A good place to start is to identify different components of a role.

There is a well-quoted saying that a role has 3 components: thinking, feeling and action. Viewing a role this way tends to separate the role from the context in which it emerges. It is worth expanding the set of components of a role to include the context as a fourth. In particular the role relationship the person is in at the time as this is a significant factor influencing the person's functioning. The components of a role are:

Thinking     A broad area that includes the person's values, tenets, beliefs, constructs, conceptualisations, motivation, view of

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<sup>1</sup> Red Rover: Two teams of equal numbers stand facing each other on opposite sides of a room. Each team huddles together to decide a role for a member of the other team to enact. The team then chants, "Red Rover, Red Rover, come over, come over name as a role name." This can be enhanced by giving more contextual description that enables other team members to act as auxiliaries. The person chosen crosses the space fully in role. When they reach the other side and the team is satisfied with the enactment they become a member of that team. The process is repeated taking turns until all team members have swapped sides.

In the Manner of the Word, a person privately chooses an adverb (a word that describes how something is done). The audience members call out different actions the person must enact without speaking. This continues until the word is guessed. The person who guesses the word correctly then becomes the next actor.

	the world, ideology, frames of reference. A technique for identifying a person's thinking is to consider how they would finish this sentence: "The world works best when..."
Feeling	The person's emotional experience, their emotional state and expression. Tele is a significant aspect of this component as a person's emotional life is greatly affected by the two way flow of feeling between people. So too is the person's sociometric status i.e., their position in a group and the criteria on which they are chosen or rejected.
Action	The person's behaviour, what they are actually doing physically, including speech and non verbal communication, or the task they are carrying out.
Context	The situation in which the role is evident and indicates the relationship(s) and role system that warms the person up in a particular way.

For example, in a discussion about a protagonist's role functioning following an enactment, group members observe the outer expression of the person. We note that she is armoured and tight around her chest as if she is wearing a breastplate. We recall a comment earlier in the enactment that she was carrying a bazooka. Relating to her in this scenario we conclude that her heart is in the background. Naming the role would require appreciation of whether her expression is motivated by fear and is to protect herself or whether she is hard hearted or heartless motivated by a desire to hurt the other person. Whatever, a breastplate and a bazooka are instruments of war so the role system enacted is likely to be one featuring power, control, fear, violence of some kind and impotence. I would expect these to be reflected in the role names.

Being an astute observer you may notice a person's pallor, heartbeat, gestures, movement, muscle tone, tension, blood pressure, breathing, posture, temperature, etc., as all these provide data about the nature of a person's warm-up. So too does their turn of phrase, voice tone, degree of passivity and degree of freedom. All of these provide information, along with the context that are indicators of a person's essential being.

In another situation the protagonist is described as a drowning man. In this example, the role name is a metaphoric description of the situation rather than an accurate description of the man's motivation or intent. In still another situation, the protagonist is described as being an innocent victim. While it is important to convey the contextual component, role descriptions reflect the person's motivation and their own agency, their orientation to life in their own right – their essence. Agency lies within a

person rather than being the consequence or result of someone else's action or as a result of a situation, e.g., drowning man, innocent victim.

Descriptions also encapsulate more than the task or activity the person is involved in. For example, in the scene mentioned above a man who is drowning is in the final throws of dying and yet in these final stages of life he could quite likely not be surrendering or giving up which drowning implies. Instead he might be fighting for his life, battling against overwhelming odds or he might be quite conscious of his impending death and rather than exhaust himself fighting against such odds he has chosen to sustain himself by being calm and recalling memories that buoy him along and keep him afloat until the situation changes.

The person described as an innocent victim could in fact be a victim if they orient to the world in this way, but more often than not they would be taking some action that would protect themselves from harm so they might be described as a cowering self-protector or a fierce self-protector.

The vantage point from which roles are observed affects how they are described as does the interpretation of the observer. Imagine a powerful person asserting themselves. Being on the receiving end of the expression may feel like bullying but someone separate to the interaction may see insensitivity rather than bullying. In the eyes of New Zealand law however harassment is generally not concerned whether the action is intended or not (although it must be extreme, or repeated), if another person experiences it as harmful, it is regarded as harassment. In part, any harmful or predatory behaviour relies on the element of surprise. For example, a predator sees their prey or victim whereas the person about to become the victim may be completely unaware of their vulnerability. Being aware of various vantage points can be a significant source of information for both auxiliary work and a director's production in creating satisfying enactments.

As an observer you may have a reaction to a person and a particular attitude that is reflected in your choice of role name. Interpretations and moral judgments can put a spin on what is observed/experienced and then included in a role name. For example, again in a reflection of a protagonist's role in an enactment, one group member named the role as a "wise woman" noting various behaviours she had demonstrated. We verified the detailed description of all the things she had done during the enactment and that you could call all that behaviour wise, however, it was agreed that that was an interpretation. Someone else said the mother was an "old bag". This role name is loaded with judgment and feeling from the person toward the mother. Generating a role name requires the person naming the role to reverse roles and feel what it is like, what the thinking,

feeling and actions are first hand as opposed to a third party point of view where the expression could be objectified.

Perhaps both “wise woman” and “old bag” are more of a statement about the woman’s character. If this is the case, then what is being observed is more related to a cluster effect, i.e., a cluster of roles that a person enacts which create an overall impression of a person’s character or personality.

Roles are, in themselves, not inherently good or bad. Naturally there will be ways of being that personally we judge as good or bad and some that are socially unacceptable. Removing interpretation or judgment from our descriptions we can appreciate the protagonist’s subjective experience and self-perception. Being curious and naive will develop the capacity to look at a situation, event or behaviour as a phenomenon which simply exists. Taking a therapeutic perspective, roles can be viewed in terms of how they contribute to a person’s personality. This approach requires understanding of the clustering effect and the notion of gestalts.

Lynnette Clayton (1982) originated a model noting that role clusters can be recorded in three gestalts – neurotic or pathological, coping, and individuated gestalts. Each gestalt has a central identity called a central organising role that acts as an integrating force for the role cluster. The gestalts have been named and conceptualised in this way as they relate to a person fulfilling their unique life’s purpose. The pathological gestalt consists of the early identity of the child in the family system. In the coping gestalt, the identity is partially separated from parental figures and early life experiences. In the individuating gestalt, the flow of spontaneity and creativity is complete allowing a person to fulfil their unique life’s purpose. Lynnette Clayton’s model also identified the relevance of Karen Horney’s (1950) model identifying behavioural tendencies of moving against the other; away from the other; or toward the other as part of the coping gestalt. Max Clayton (1992) later developed this model reversing the order of the gestalts and changing the gestalt names to progressive, coping, and fragmenting. He also included the categories of moving against the other; away from the other; or toward the other in his schema.

In addition, Max Clayton described the roles themselves as being progressive, coping or fragmenting. This could in fact be correct if you relate to role as being a person’s whole way of being, but most examples I have seen suggest either a confused shorthand of the model or the introduction of a new classification system that determines progressive, coping and fragmenting as hierarchical categories of roles.

## **Approaches that lead us astray in naming a role**

After considerable thought and review of practice, I have reached a conclusion that there are a number of approaches that do not result in role names that provide sufficient meaning to assist a director, auxiliary, protagonist or audience member. These conclusions are presented below.

- A role name is not a diagnosis, but serves to inform us of the role relationship and the emotional life experienced by the person in the role. Neither of the earlier examples of wise woman nor old bag accomplish this.
- A role name is not a description of a relationship i.e., mother, father, daughter, brother as they are too generalised to be meaningful in a particular situation because they describe a person's filial connections or status rather than their functioning form.
- For the same reason, role names are not descriptions of gender identity i.e., man, woman, girl, boy, etc.
- A role name is not a person's name, for example, naming someone as Marco Polo. Marco Polo had many roles and to roll them all into a personal identity does not take adequate account of the dynamic interaction that will be occurring in a particular time and space.
- Roles names are not descriptions of intra-psychic experiences. For example, "part of her", "her inner child", "internal voice" are nonsensical in psychodrama given the definition of role.
- Role names are also not descriptions of the animal world, such as, "stunned mullet", "frightened rabbit", "rutting stag" as these don't convey the more advanced functioning and capability of human thought, intention or will.

Now comes a big however... However all of these things that I say role names are not can be springboards that may lead to role names. Having an image, whatever that is, even a sense of something or perhaps a sound or smell may stimulate the imagination and bring meaning. Giving voice to these images or ideas may bring rejection or resonance of the words and confirmation of the experience may occur. While a role name has not been produced something of the protagonist's role or functioning form has been touched on. Reporting these efforts at recognition when writing up a session have their place but they do not adequately name a role however they may give clues in the creation of a satisfying name.

Being with another person, relating to their world and their experience is a dynamic process. The process involves warming up and the bullet points listed above could be steps along the way in this warming up process. I am less concerned with getting a perfect role name and more

concerned that we don't distance ourselves from each other and our experience of each other.

There are a number of approaches that can lead us astray in naming roles. For example, I have noticed that distancing occurs when a director says, "Warm up to the role of..." as if the role is something external to the person. When a person warms up, they are themselves and the expression of this is the role. A more useful direction would be, "Warm up to yourself as a..." or, "Warm up as a..." both of which relate to the dynamic expression in context.

I have also noticed that distancing occurs when an enactment is described as an "as if" experience. Unfortunately the "as if" orientation separates psychodramatic experiences from "real life" and undermines the personal "truth" and "soul" realities experienced. Distancing perspectives and processes are unhelpful to the integrity of the drama of soul and truth.

An extension of the "as if" approach that perpetuates a misconception of role and warm-up is the notion of de-roling. De-roling is the term used to describe the process of auxiliaries removing themselves from the role they have been acting during an enactment and returning to themselves. At best it acknowledges the need to attend to warm up in the transition from the action to the integration phase. At worst it introduces contradictory concepts about role, i.e., that a role can be discarded or shed, that when in role an auxiliary is not expressing their real self, that whatever a person is experiencing as a result of an enactment is separate to the warm-up in the group, or that a person is caught up in a role and therefore unable to express themselves until they have regained their composure as themselves.

Some directors insist on auxiliaries de-roling at the end of an enactment "as if" the auxiliaries are separate to the enactment and their particular portrayal of the role. Being an auxiliary provides many opportunities to express what is emerging from the individual's own warm-up in role. Auxiliaries are free to express this provided it is pertinent to the protagonist and in line with the direction of the drama. If an auxiliary is unable to act or express fully during the enactment they have another opportunity in the integration phase when they can share from the role they played. Both of these approaches take account of warm-up and what further work might be required in the group.

## **It is essential to be in tune with a protagonist**

A role name is a description of a person's functioning in a particular situation. It is not possible to describe everything about this person without going into lengthy analysis or explanation. Therefore role

descriptions are usually approximations and will inevitably fall short of the real thing. However, naming roles in a way that accurately encapsulates a person's essential being in a particular situation can be electrifying and inspirational providing an acute experience of (self) realisation, learning, fulfilment, warm-up, satisfaction and vitality. Advantages are evident in production, increased spontaneity and creativity, catharsis and development.

A satisfying role name results from a dynamic synthesis of experience, observation and analysis that comes from practice and application and arises out of being in tune with a person.

At the beginning of a psychodrama, a director interviews the protagonist for role eliciting sufficient information to know their view of the world, i.e., the particular constructs they hold, beliefs they have, values they live by, their attitudes and their sociometry. The hidden thoughts, feelings, aspirations make apparent the person's map of the universe. For an auxiliary this is far more important to ascertain than finding out what activity the person is doing or trying to remember words they are saying as their view of the world affects everything about their expression. Once their view of the world has been identified, an auxiliary is free to enact the role spontaneously rather than simply mimic the protagonist.

I have been in some particularly thrilling dramas where the director and auxiliaries functioned well as a team, where each person was free, congruent and relevant in their contribution to the enactment. Their expressions heightened the overall satisfaction of the drama, maximising the therapeutic impact. These experiences are memorable examples of psychodrama as an effective group method. A feature that made those enactments so satisfying was that they were not role plays, simulations or "as if" experiences for any of the people involved.

There are many authors who describe a psychodrama as an "as if" enactment. This description tends to be made from an "objective" viewpoint that while the authors may not intend it, it distances the protagonist and their experience from the director, auxiliaries and audience. Psychodrama is the theatre of truth, requiring everyone involved to enter into the protagonist's subjective experience and enactment as real.

Some years ago my six year old grandson, Christopher, educated me on the importance of distinguishing between relating to a real compared to an "as if" experience. Christopher calls out to me as he is running frantically round in circles in front of me and making a furious buzzing noise. "Look at me Viv I'm a bee!" I reply admiringly, "Yes, look at you buzzing around just

like a bee.” To which he replies with disdainful emphasis, “No, not like a bee, I am a bee!” That’s me told!

Moreno (1975) describes a similar example of his son Jonathan coming to grips with the meaning of dog. Of course a boy can’t be a bee or a dog but their subjective experience is real as they take on the movements, sounds, behaviours and interact with the world in role. This is how a child learns and develops; their role repertoire expands, they discover what they are capable of as well as what is acceptable to others; they make meaning of their experience and of their world. In this same way, throughout our lives each of us has integrated experiences through role taking, role playing and role creating.

Psychodrama concretises a person’s inner experience, where their reality is made obvious to all. In this way, psychodrama is as Moreno (1946) says “the science of exploring the truth by dramatic methods”. Some would argue about the definition of truth expecting a particular display as if truth is an exact science. This view demonstrates paradoxically the truth of the statement in that any psychodrama is an enactment of the inner life and actual experience of the protagonist and therefore is the truth. Getting to know the protagonist’s truth requires everyone to enter their subjective reality.

Dorothy Heathcote influenced me many years ago when I was a drama student and new teacher. It was from her work that I learned an improvisational game called “The Yes Game” that requires participants to accept and say “yes” to everything that is presented and to build on it incorporating it into a dramatic enactment. Adopting a “yes” approach assists the development of the capacity to enter into a person’s subjective experience. Heathcote’s work is clearly informed by Moreno and is summarized in Heston’s (1993) PhD thesis - it is well worth a read.

An outcome of psychodrama is that a person may get to know their self by exploring their subjective reality and as they increase their self-awareness they are likely to increase their objectivity.

Grappling with the meaning of names and how to work with this is age old and is evident in a variety of settings including Shakespeare’s writing. His Juliet reflects some of the dilemmas of conceptualising role as a whole way of being that encompasses the psychodramatic, social and somatic and the meaning that is conveyed through a name.

*Tis but thy name that is my enemy;  
Thou art thyself though, not a Montague.  
What's a Montague? It is nor hand, nor foot,  
nor arm, nor face, nor any other part  
Belonging to a man. O! be some other name:  
What's in a name? That which we call a rose  
By any other name would smell as sweet;  
So Romeo would, were he not Romeo call'd  
Retain that dear perfection which he owed  
Without that title.*

Romeo and Juliet, Act 2, Scene 2

My experiences of playing in the sand, constructing and deconstructing, interacting with my friends and playmates, responding to the happy accidents that occur as a result of those interactions create a warm-up in me as I contemplate role dynamics. The playful excursions I have had into this subject have challenged me to question some of my practices and the ways I have conceptualised role. I have actively sought opportunities to practice being with others, role reversing with them, and developing my ability to relate to their essential being in order to name a role.

It is a challenge to describe this succinctly and accurately, doing justice to a person's essential expression while at the same time making the description meaningful. There are implications for us all in our various capacities as we apply role dynamics. I look forward to further playful excursions...

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# *Facing the Empty Page*

Elizabeth Nannestad

The empty page  
looks all innocence  
but has its own sense of humour.

You might decide  
to call yourself Mme X, be sighted in foreign cities without forwarding address.  
The empty page will be at home, waiting.

The empty page is  
the Inquisition: you could throw yourself upon it,  
say, *save me*.

The empty page has  
no heart  
no home  
no pity.

The empty page takes  
everything you can give it, still is only satisfied, if ever  
for a very short time.

It is a mistake to introduce the empty page  
to your prospective lover. It will spoil everything  
leaving you alone, just you and the empty page, forever.

Don't be a fool for it,  
the empty page.  
Take refuge in supermarkets

with two radios and a loudspeaker  
playing at once.  
The empty page can't stand children's cartoons on television

so turn up the volume.  
Give the controls to a person aged less than three  
who'll be a match for it,

the empty page. Yet  
neither will it be  
set aside indefinitely.

The empty page is closely related to the Great Australian Desert.  
Good men, good women, died trying to cross it.  
Some people find that encouraging.

The empty page  
haunts the O.K. Corral  
looking for someone, might as well be you, to gun down.

The empty page is  
some people's idea of desirable  
and not unwilling

to come round for a short time to your way of thinking.  
The empty page will  
settle in

take your name at the bank  
drink your whisky  
inhabit your house

while you'll feed on your own fingernails  
wear black  
suffer doubt.

The empty page will retain affection, so long as you don't  
shove it, whack it, thrash it, push it around  
or make crossings out.

The empty page, it's hell  
to live with.  
And to live without.

Nannestad, E. (1996). *If he's a good dog he'll swim*. Auckland, NZ: Auckland  
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# The Water of Life

Simon Gurnsey

Whether as a producer, auxiliary or protagonist I love surplus reality and the metaphorical elements in psychodramas. I have been a romping dog in a drama and any number of vines, rocks and broken axe handles. I feel enlivened and relish this in others. These elements may be, and often are, expanded into a whole story, one that has an integrity to the protagonist and the group. There is a co-creation at work as auxiliaries

experience the freedom of being something that isn't everyday, whether a personified rock or the warrior goddess Sekhmet.

A story has a narrative and logic that drives it forward carrying the drama. Sometimes these stories are ordinary 'small' stories, sometimes they are world-encompassing mythic tales; stories that mirror human nature, our collective histories and how things are the way they are. They go to the core of meaning and illuminate it.

I first came across the use of story as a means for both understanding complex systems and healing them when I read Bruno Bettelheim's (1976) *The Uses of Enchantment*. Bettelheim describes how the symbology and surplus reality in complex, well-constructed stories aids the development of both insight and perspective. He encouraged the use of story to attain a greater consciousness of our existence. He saw stories as a mechanism that assists us to develop more understanding and meaning. The book stimulated my thinking and provoked further study of the use that could be made of stories. Ironically, according to his biographer (Pollak, 1998) it seems Bettelheim himself invented large parts of his own history and plagiarised a great deal of *The Uses of Enchantment*. This doesn't diminish the impact of his writing on me.

I gained a deeper understanding of story when, as a playback theatre practitioner, I read Jo Salas's (1993) book *Improvising Real Life*. Our playback company spent many rehearsals developing our ability to work with metaphor to find the 'heart' of the teller's story.

*The intrinsic element of form in a story can transmute chaos and restore a sense of belonging to a world that is fundamentally purposeful after all. Even the most desperately painful of experiences are in some way redeemed when they are told as stories. (p. 1).*

As a means of intervening in a social system, stories are one of the 'oldest technologies', an immediately practical way of intervening to 'organise' and 'test' a system and 'stimulate the deep psyche' (Birch & Heckler, 1996).

When inspired by a mythic story or fairy tale, I become bolder and my creativity and spontaneity enlarges in response to the challenges and dilemmas faced by another person, myself, or a social system. This counters a reactive and often more restrictive tendency toward what I think of as being safe responses; ones that arise in me by way of a dependence on my more logical, rational thinking. Through the very nature of story, I find myself recognising patterns, generating solutions and entertaining a higher purpose.

At a psychodrama training workshop with Max Clayton and Chris Hosking at Te Moata, I was directed by a group member in a drama set in a surplus reality of the 'Promised Land'. The drama was steeped in my childhood reading of the stories of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. In the psychodrama, I was a Crusader imprisoned in a Saracen prison waiting for ransom from home. The internal logic of the story carried me through a number of scenes where I let go of and grieved for lost opportunities and let go of aspects of myself that were no longer serving me. I left my companion in the prison and he died there. The drama is, even now, easily brought to mind and, tears in my eyes, I am able to fully experience myself in that anguished prison and remember what I left behind in order to return home. The story is as *real* to me as any other truth from my life and as meaningful. It was my story, my fairy tale, created of a time, meaningful then and meaningful now.

I agree with Jones (2005) when he claims "Myths and archetypes, at the collective level, embody Moreno's sociodramatic roles. At the individual level they influence a person's psychodramatic roles" (p. 12). Stories are immediately useful to a producer of psychodrama. A love of story and an appreciation of symbol, image and metaphor are central to the work of any creative group leader and especially a psychodramatist. A story can encapsulate the whole in a way a summing up can never do. I recall during a processing session at the end of a peer practice group, the group was struggling for words and phrases to describe the central concern and the themes of the session. I suggested we use a story. I had seen Ann Hale do

this in a workshop, where with five minutes to go until the end she simply told us a metaphorical story that was the story of the group.

As I challenged my peers, I imagined myself as Puck, mischievous and playful yet authoritative, provocative and bold. I challenged the group to tell its own story and the group took up the challenge. One person started, 'Once upon a time...' immediately infusing the story with a mythic tone. Others followed, the story flowed, a sentence from one person, two sentences from another and in this way we told our story. Magical animals abounded. There was an evocative reference to 'Ostrich with his head in the sand'. The story finished and some members of the group then wanted to analyse the story when the story was enough, it stood for itself and we were the better for it as a group.

In speaking to the conscious and the unconscious, the rational and the emotive, a mythic story can likewise enable us to focus on the vision of an organisation. The internal logic and structure in a story may be used to expand thinking and facilitate creative problem solving. Through a process of pattern recognition we may assign meaning, look for commonalities and integrate experience into a coherent and collective whole.

Here is an example of the use I made of a mythic story in a community organisation I was involved with. For some time we had been dealing with a challenging staff issue. A staff member acted with cold hostility in ways that continually opposed the management team. Other staff members took sides at different times and our organisation became divided against itself. The issue had been difficult and this was being experienced at both operational and governance levels. A partial resolution of the issue came when the staff member resigned. In the wake of this my organisation found itself in a period of soul searching and meaning making. The governance board had become highly invested in the situation and its outcome and felt we had worked hard to resolve the situation. We also blamed ourselves for the dilemma and in our reflection we were critical of ourselves. We wondered if we could have dealt with the issue better or with greater alacrity.

Taking up my leadership creatively, I looked for a mythic story that might act as a mirror and assist my organisation to transform their adversity. While talking with a colleague I speculated what story might fit my organisation. We looked for a story that would enable everyone to better appreciate the social forces and unconscious influences impacting my organisation and its members and to put what had just happened into a wider context providing, hopefully, an opportunity to heal some of the pain people experienced. My motivation was to allow the fundamental creativity of the story to provide a framework for talking about the whole

organisation rather than specifically about the difficulty with the staff member.

The Brothers Grimm retelling of the German folktale *The Water of Life* stood out to me with its trials and close calls, traps and bindings, treachery from within, alliances formed and ultimately, redemption and celebration. *The Water of Life* tells of a king falling ill and his three sons, one at a time, setting out to find the 'water of life' as the cure. The story speaks to me of accepting the inevitable challenges of life and bringing to them the qualities of humbleness and dedication to the care of others. As I worked to connect strongly with the story, I understood more about my organisation and our response to the challenges. There is a link in the references to the version of the story I used. I invite you now to read and experience the story.

*Long before you or I were born, there reigned, in a country a great way off, a king who had three sons. This king once fell very ill—so ill that nobody thought he could live. His sons were very much grieved at their father's sickness; and as they were walking together very mournfully in the garden of the palace, a little old man met them and asked what was the matter. They told him that their father was very ill, and that they were afraid nothing could save him. 'I know what would,' said the little old man; 'it is the Water of Life. If he could have a draught of it he would be well again; but it is very hard to get.' Then the eldest son said, 'I will soon find it': and he went to the sick king, and begged that he might go in search of the Water of Life, as it was the only thing that could save him. 'No' said the king. 'I had rather die than place you in such great danger as you must meet with in your journey.' But he begged so hard that the king let him go; and the prince thought to himself, 'If I bring my father this water, he will make me sole heir to his kingdom.'*

*Then he set out: and when he had gone on his way some time he came to a deep valley, overhung with rocks and woods; and as he looked around, he saw standing above him on one of the rocks a little ugly dwarf, with a sugarloaf cap and a scarlet cloak; and the dwarf called to him and said, 'Prince, whither so fast?' 'What is that to thee, you ugly imp?' said the prince haughtily, and rode on.*

*But the dwarf was enraged at his behaviour, and laid a fairy spell of ill-luck upon him; so that as he rode on the mountain pass became narrower and narrower, and at last the way was so straitened that he could not go to step forward: and when he thought to have turned his horse round and go back the way he came, he heard a loud laugh ringing round him, and found that the path was closed behind him, so that he was shut in all round. He*

next tried to get off his horse and make his way on foot, but again the laugh rang in his ears, and he found himself unable to move a step, and thus he was forced to abide spellbound.

Meantime the old king was lingering on in daily hope of his son's return, till at last the second son said, 'Father, I will go in search of the Water of Life.' For he thought to himself, 'My brother is surely dead, and the kingdom will fall to me if I find the water.' The king was at first very unwilling to let him go, but at last yielded to his wish. So he set out and followed the same road which his brother had done, and met with the same elf, who stopped him at the same spot in the mountains, saying, as before, 'Prince, prince, whither so fast?' 'Mind your own affairs, busybody!' said the prince scornfully, and rode on.

But the dwarf put the same spell upon him as he put on his elder brother, and he, too, was at last obliged to take up his abode in the heart of the mountains. Thus it is with proud silly people, who think themselves above everyone else, and are too proud to ask or take advice.

When the second prince had thus been gone a long time, the youngest son said he would go and search for the Water of Life, and trusted he should soon be able to make his father well again. So he set out, and the dwarf met him too at the same spot in the valley, among the mountains, and said, 'Prince, whither so fast?' And the prince said, 'I am going in search of the Water of Life, because my father is ill, and like to die: can you help me? Pray be kind, and aid me if you can!' 'Do you know where it is to be found?' asked the dwarf. 'No.' said the prince, 'I do not. Pray tell me if you know.' 'Then as you have spoken to me kindly, and are wise enough to seek for advice, I will tell you how and where to go. The water you seek springs from a well in an enchanted castle; and, that you may be able to reach it in safety, I will give you an iron wand and two little loaves of bread; strike the iron door of the castle three times with the wand, and it will open: two hungry lions will be lying down inside gaping for their prey, but if you throw them the bread they will let you pass; then hasten on to the well, and take some of the Water of Life before the clock strikes twelve; for if you tarry longer the door will shut upon you for ever.'

Then the prince thanked his little friend with the scarlet cloak for his friendly aid, and took the wand and the bread, and went traveling on and on, over sea and over land, till he came to his journey's end, and found everything to be as the dwarf had told him. The door flew open at the third stroke of the wand, and when the lions were quieted he went on through the castle and came at length to a beautiful hall. Around it he saw several knights sitting in a trance; then he pulled off their rings and put them on his own fingers. In another room he saw on a table a sword and a loaf of

bread, which he also took. Further on he came to a room where a beautiful young lady sat upon a couch; and she welcomed him joyfully, and said, if he would set her free from the spell that bound her, the kingdom should be his, if he would come back in a year and marry her. Then she told him that the well that held the Water of Life was in the palace gardens; and bade him make haste, and draw what he wanted before the clock struck twelve.

He walked on; and as he walked through beautiful gardens he came to a delightful shady spot in which stood a couch; and he thought to himself, as he felt tired, that he would rest himself for a while, and gaze on the lovely scenes around him. So he laid himself down, and sleep fell upon him unawares, so that he did not wake up till the clock was striking a quarter to twelve. Then he sprang from the couch dreadfully frightened, ran to the well, filled a cup that was standing by him full of water, and hastened to get away in time. Just as he was going out of the iron door it struck twelve, and the door fell so quickly upon him that it snapped off a piece of his heel.

When he found himself safe, he was overjoyed to think that he had got the Water of Life; and as he was going on his way homewards, he passed by the little dwarf, who, when he saw the sword and the loaf, said, 'You have made a noble prize; with the sword you can at a blow slay whole armies, and the bread will never fail you.' Then the prince thought to himself, 'I cannot go home to my father without my brothers'; so he said, 'My dear friend, cannot you tell me where my two brothers are, who set out in search of the Water of Life before me, and never came back?' 'I have shut them up by a charm between two mountains,' said the dwarf, 'because they were proud and ill-behaved, and scorned to ask advice.' The prince begged so hard for his brothers, that the dwarf at last set them free, though unwillingly, saying, 'Beware of them, for they have bad hearts.' Their brother, however, was greatly rejoiced to see them, and told them all that had happened to him; how he had found the Water of Life, and had taken a cup full of it; and how he had set a beautiful princess free from a spell that bound her; and how she had engaged to wait a whole year, and then to marry him, and to give him the kingdom.

Then they all three rode on together, and on their way home came to a country that was laid waste by war and a dreadful famine, so that it was feared all must die for want. But the prince gave the king of the land the bread, and all his kingdom ate of it. And he lent the king the wonderful sword, and he slew the enemy's army with it; and thus the kingdom was once more in peace and plenty. In the same manner he befriended two other countries through which they passed on their way.

When they came to the sea, they got into a ship and during their voyage the two eldest said to themselves, 'Our brother has got the water which we

could not find, therefore our father will forsake us and give him the kingdom, which is our right'; so they were full of envy and revenge, and agreed together how they could ruin him. Then they waited till he was fast asleep, and poured the Water of Life out of the cup, and took it for themselves, giving him bitter sea-water instead.

When they came to their journey's end, the youngest son brought his cup to the sick king, that he might drink and be healed. Scarcely, however, had he tasted the bitter sea-water when he became worse even than he was before; and then both the elder sons came in, and blamed the youngest for what they had done; and said that he wanted to poison their father, but that they had found the Water of Life, and had brought it with them. He no sooner began to drink of what they brought him, than he felt his sickness leave him, and was as strong and well as in his younger days. Then they went to their brother, and laughed at him, and said, 'Well, brother, you found the Water of Life, did you? You have had the trouble and we shall have the reward. Pray, with all your cleverness, why did not you manage to keep your eyes open? Next year one of us will take away your beautiful princess, if you do not take care. You had better say nothing about this to our father, for he does not believe a word you say; and if you tell tales, you shall lose your life into the bargain: but be quiet, and we will let you off.'

The old king was still very angry with his youngest son, and thought that he really meant to have taken away his life; so he called his court together, and asked what should be done, and all agreed that he ought to be put to death. The prince knew nothing of what was going on, till one day, when the king's chief huntsmen went a-hunting with him, and they were alone in the wood together, the huntsman looked so sorrowful that the prince said, 'My friend, what is the matter with you?' 'I cannot and dare not tell you,' said he. But the prince begged very hard, and said, 'Only tell me what it is, and do not think I shall be angry, for I will forgive you.' 'Alas,' said the huntsman; 'the king has ordered me to shoot you.' The prince started at this, and said, 'Let me live, and I will change dresses with you; you shall take my royal coat to show to my father, and do you give me your shabby one.' 'With all my heart,' said the huntsman; 'I am sure I shall be glad to save you, for I could not have shot you.' Then he took the prince's coat, and gave him the shabby one, and went away through the wood.

Some time after, three grand embassies came to the old king's court, with rich gifts of gold and precious stones for his youngest son; now all these were sent from the three kings to whom he had lent his sword and loaf of bread, in order to rid them of their enemy and feed their people. This touched the old king's heart, and he thought his son might still be guiltless, and said to his court, 'O that my son were still alive! how it grieves me that

*I had him killed!’ ‘He is still alive,’ said the huntsman; ‘and I am glad that I had pity on him, but let him go in peace, and brought home his royal coat.’ At this the king was overwhelmed with joy, and made it known throughout all his kingdom, that if his son would come back to his court he would forgive him.*

*Meanwhile the princess was eagerly waiting till her deliverer should come back; and had a road made leading up to her palace all of shining gold; and told her courtiers that whoever came on horseback, and rode straight up to the gate upon it, was her true lover; and that they must let him in: but whoever rode on one side of it, they must be sure was not the right one; and that they must send him away at once.*

*The time soon came, when the eldest brother thought that he would make haste to go to the princess, and say that he was the one who had set her free, and that he should have her for his wife, and the kingdom with her. As he came before the palace and saw the golden road, he stopped to look at it, and he thought to himself, ‘It is a pity to ride upon this beautiful road’; so he turned aside and rode on the right-hand side of it. But when he came to the gate, the guards, who had seen the road he took, said to him, he could not be what he said he was, and must go about his business.*

*The second prince set out soon afterwards on the same errand; and when he came to the golden road, and his horse had set one foot upon it, he stopped to look at it, and thought it very beautiful, and said to himself, ‘What a pity it is that anything should tread here!’ Then he too turned aside and rode on the left side of it. But when he came to the gate the guards said he was not the true prince, and that he too must go away about his business; and away he went.*

*Now when the full year was come round, the third brother left the forest in which he had lain hid for fear of his father's anger, and set out in search of his betrothed bride. So he journeyed on, thinking of her all the way, and rode so quickly that he did not even see what the road was made of, but went with his horse straight over it; and as he came to the gate it flew open, and the princess welcomed him with joy, and said he was her deliverer, and should now be her husband and lord of the kingdom. When the first joy at their meeting was over, the princess told him she had heard of his father having forgiven him, and of his wish to have him home again: so, before his wedding with the princess, he went to visit his father, taking her with him. Then he told him everything; how his brothers had cheated and robbed him, and yet that he had borne all those wrongs for the love of his father. And the old king was very angry, and wanted to punish his wicked sons; but they made their escape, and got into a ship and sailed*

*away over the wide sea, and where they went to nobody knew and nobody cared.*

*And now the old king gathered together his court, and asked all his kingdom to come and celebrate the wedding of his son and the princess. And young and old, noble and squire, gentle and simple, came at once on the summons; and among the rest came the friendly dwarf, with the sugarloaf hat, and a new scarlet cloak.*

*And the wedding was held, and the merry bells run.*

*And all the good people they danced and they sung,*

*And feasted and frolick'd I can't tell how long.*

Take a moment to let the story sit with you and notice your responses.

I sent the story to the board and invited their responses about what the story might elucidate about our organisation. We considered the story and speculated that the king's illness might be considered the social ills our organisations' work is dedicated towards remedying. Another association was to see the illness as symbolic of the difficult employee seen as the cause of the ill health of our organisation. The cure of the king's sickness is the 'water of life'. The 'water of life' was imagined as amniotic fluid containing an embryonic baby; pointing to the possibility of redemption, renewal and rebirth, the reclaiming of the innocence lost through betrayal, the abuse of trust, pretence and deception. As the story pointed to the inevitability of some trial and conflict in any human endeavour, some easing of guilt about the lack of early intervention was experienced.

A board member reflected the story had helped her gain an understanding of what had occurred within our organisation and what was now required. Renewal is being seen as emerging from aspects of our organisation that have hitherto been ignored or overlooked. Our ability to look at ourselves and review how we made actively recovered informs us as we continue to develop our organisation as a place of healing for it's community. We are guided to be clear and resolute in our strategic vision and purpose in order to achieve our organisation's goals.

Our organisation's manager valued the opportunity the story provided to take a perspective that was not his own. He believed he could better role reverse with the departed staff member and felt more compassionate towards that person.

The part of the story that had the most impact on me was of the deeper loyalty the huntsman displays, as he pays heed to the underlying relationship between the prince and his father rather than the desire for

retribution of the king and his court. By freeing the younger son he acted with humility and kindness in service of a greater good.

I continue to find meaningful associations in the story *The Water of Life* as my organisation faces the challenges of post-earthquake Christchurch. As in this story, individual courage and stamina combined with ongoing collective effort is required in the long search for the water of life in the community I call home.

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*Simon Gurnsey's interest in story began with psychodrama and developed through his passion for Playback Theatre. In playback he learned to play and in psychodrama he learned to be fully involved with others, as a result his spontaneity developed.*

# A Discussion on Science and Research in Psychodrama

Philip D. Carter and Charmaine McVea



**Phil:** Hello Charmaine. I very much appreciate your paper (McVea, 2007) in the AANZPA journal. I am curious as to what impact it had. What was your motivation in presenting it and what has arisen out of it?

**Charmaine:** The study that I discussed in the 2007 journal investigated the short and longer term impact of a psychodrama enactment for the protagonist using Robert Elliott's (2002) single-case efficacy design.

My motivation for writing the article was to demonstrate that research can be done with integrity and can produce encouraging results that illuminate our practice and give us a vehicle to communicate the benefits of our method to others. By integrity, I mean that we can investigate psychodrama without compromising its form or philosophy. Elliott's approach is practice-based and, I believe, a good fit with psychodrama. I have a vision of creating a series of efficacy studies based on the work of AANZPA practitioners, which would combine to form a substantial research project. From my experience to date, I am confident that this research would demonstrate that psychodrama interventions can have positive therapeutic impacts that are maintained over time. Hopefully, it would also lead us into new discoveries about the therapeutically helpful aspects of psychodrama.

Since the 2007 article was published I have had conversations with many AANZPA members who have some interest in research.

**Phil:** Let's discuss outcome research first. Many studies have already been done and published. In Schramski and Feldman's (1984) review of outcome studies of action methods 39 out of the 200 studies applied directly to psychodrama and the rest to related action methods. Half the studies were experimental with differing subject groups in terms of age, ethnicity, and profession. Therapist experience differed as did the outcome measures used. Perhaps, the agencies that require some evidence of psychodramatic efficacy might be satisfied with that.

**Charmaine:** As you say, these studies generally support the efficacy of psychodrama or specific psychodrama techniques. In 2007, Michael Weiser reviewed psychodrama research published in English and German journals over the previous 50 years and found some encouraging results. As with the reviews you mention, much of the research he looked at was conducted in the 1980's and earlier. Agencies are generally not going to be interested in research that is 30 years old, and for good reasons. The trend in academic reviews is to look to research that has been carried out in the last 10 years, to see what is happening in current applications and in response to current social/psychological concerns. Early ground-breaking research is acknowledged, but there needs to be contemporary development of theoretical conceptualisation and practical applications. As Weiser points out, many early psychodrama studies do not meet contemporary standards of scientific rigour, which raises questions about how confidently we can interpret the findings. Probably more important, though, is that without current research, we send out a message that nothing worth investigating has emerged in psychodrama practice over the past 30 years.

**Phil:** A psychodrama practitioner called on to 'prove' psychodramatic practice might also point the way to the vast collection of written work collated in the psychodrama bibliography database ([www.pdbib.org](http://www.pdbib.org)) initiated by James Sacks and continued by Michael Wieser.

**Charmaine:** Much of the psychodrama literature is practice-based case reports, where practitioners write up work with their own clients that they have experienced as interesting or particularly effective. These reports are an invaluable source of clinical wisdom, and form an essential part of our professional literature. They do not, however test in a scientific sense if

psychodrama 'works', because they do not rigorously examine the assertions that the author is making. Practitioner reports generally do not acknowledge the impact of the practitioner's bias on how the material is being presented, they do not consider if the change is significant or lasting, what other factors might have influenced the outcome, or if the example being reported is typical or idiosyncratic. Well designed empirical research attempts to account for the impact of these various factors, and is therefore regarded more highly as giving a fuller account of the efficacy of a particular intervention.

**Phil:** Some practitioners are comfortable that positive therapeutic impacts occur and do not seek the extra work of arranging pre- and post-session measurements and follow up inquiries. The call to research on efficacy has been perceived as relating to external ideas of authority, as submitting to a safety orientation in our culture. A trainee clinical psychologist interested in psychodrama training was warned not to use any method unless there was empirical evidence for it. In another case, the agency had already pre-determined they wanted an approach which could be delivered with little training. Psychodramatists would be prudent not to get involved in such setups or get involved in making descriptions to suit others when they aren't really interested. Many have been okay with our size and see no need to have external approval or even credibility. Perhaps they have also had the good planning and fortune to be able to obtain work and earn a living while sustaining this independent view.

**Charmaine:** I know for myself that I have no interest in gathering information for the sake of justifying the work I do. What I am interested in is being able to investigate more fully what is happening for a protagonist or group during psychodrama that is therapeutically helpful. Then I want to be able to communicate my findings with the wider community, to contribute to building an understanding of the process of therapeutic change and what makes good therapeutic practice. I have a particular bias that psychodrama theory and practice has an enormous amount to contribute to the world, and that the world will be a better place if psychodramatists are making that contribution. Research is one area in which there is great scope for us to make a contribution.

If we are going to build a research culture within psychodrama, I would envisage it emerging out of a creative perspective, pursuing questions we are interested in (different people, different questions of course), open to discovering something new. We can also relate to the wider community by contributing to some of the topical conversations of our times; for

example, conversations about the types of processes that promote healthy functioning in individual, family, community and organizational life, and about the most effective use of public resources. Psychodramatists have a lot to contribute to these conversations, and empirical research is one vehicle through which we can make this contribution.

Of course many practitioners will never be oriented to research. Let's hope that they will continue to experiment with their application of the psychodramatic method, reflect on their experiences with their peers and clients and share their insights through writing. Research is a slow process and new developments are actually led by practitioners, not researchers. Nevertheless, there is a fine tuning and deepening of understanding that can happen when practitioners and researchers get together.

**Phil:** There are a number of interesting things here. An additional reason why existing outcome studies are weak is that there are differences in practice. What is called psychodrama is different between regions, practitioners, and over time. What is meant by producing the script of a protagonist differs. What is considered mirroring, doubling, and role reversal differs amongst practitioners. Perhaps, we have to develop operational definitions of our key methods and techniques before rigorous research can be claimed. Lynette Clayton's (1977) work in developing a rating scale for role warm-up is an example of a research approach to gaining precision.

**Charmaine:** In order to develop a scale that is measuring the construct that the researcher is interested in, it is usual to involve people who are familiar with the construct in working out what the key features of the scale might be. There are further steps that are taken subsequently – largely to do with testing the instrument out in different circumstances or with different groups of people - to strengthen the validity (i.e. that the instrument is measuring what it says it is measuring) and reliability (i.e. consistency) of the scale. It would be wonderful if there was more development of instruments that suit the research that psychodramatists want to do. For example, Lynette Clayton's role warm-up scale, and the role relationship instrument<sup>1</sup> developed by Peter Parkinson, could be investigated further, to establish their credentials as research instruments. There are undoubtedly many other examples of sociometric measures that could be applied to good effect. To develop robust instruments we have to become

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<sup>1</sup> This computer-based system is currently being upgraded for use on the internet. Contact Peter for further information: [peter@mentor.co.nz](mailto:peter@mentor.co.nz)

precise about what we are talking about when we use psychodramatic terms. Additionally, as Kipper and Hundal (2005) found when they constructed a measure of spontaneity, the results may challenge some of our preconceived ideas and require further development of underlying theory.

**Phil:** Some would consider the psychodrama method and process itself a 'robust research design' for the science of human relations. The laboratory in which all dynamics in human interaction and behaviour can be experimented within their ecological truth, the part examined in the context of the whole and the whole perceived from the perspectives of the parts. In this way, practitioners can be considered researchers. In this spirit, I examined the scientific validity of the role test (Carter, 2013). Part of a psychodramatic session was formulated as an experiment. The psychodramatist posed a hypothesis that certain



functioning that been achieved as a result of a therapeutic intervention. A psychodramatic role test was devised to test that hypothesis. This instance of a role test was then used to reflect on and examine the 'science' of the role test. The role test was found to be scientific in that: a hypothesis is submitted to its greatest challenge; ecological validity is approached by seeking to have all significant factors in their actual dynamics; all factors can be arranged in different configurations. Limitations from a scientific perspective were: replication is not possible, generalizability is limited, dependent and independent variables are ill-defined, and claims to causality are debatable. The article may offer ideas on how therapists could scrutinize the methods within their own practice as to scientific worthiness and not solely rely on external ideas of evidence and science.

**Charmaine:** Yes, as practitioners we are constantly experimenting and noticing the impact of our interventions on the protagonist and the group, and encouraging psychodrama participants to do the same. Practice-based research begins with this lived experience of the protagonist, group and director, and then opens that experience up to be examined from a range of different perspectives. The role test that you have written about could

be a good example of this. Role tests are a common feature of psychodramatic enactments – sometimes used intentionally and sometimes arising serendipitously. I would conceptualise the role test as a measure of in-session change – part of a research methodology but not the whole picture. To develop this further as an element of a robust research design, there are a number of areas we might consider. For example, how do we know that the protagonist has successfully met the role test? Can we identify the elements of a successful role test in such a way that adequately trained observers would agree with this assessment? How do we know that the person didn't already have this role well-established in their repertoire before the psychodrama enactment? – after all, they may have just needed time to warm-up to a familiar way of functioning. Intuitively, we may have the answers to these questions – a good research design will map out this territory so that observations of the protagonist's functioning in the role test sits within the context of their fuller experience. Of course another question that I think would be well worth investigating is, what is the relationship between a successful role-test (i.e. in-session change) and changes that occur after the protagonist leaves the group and goes back into their life (post-intervention change)?

**Phil:** As you outlined in your paper (McVea, 2004), *It's not enough just to say it works*, proving efficacy by itself is not satisfying. Positive effects have been shown for almost any intervention. Simply sitting with a person creates a positive effect. Other studies have identified factors in positive outcome in therapy and found the technique and therapeutic model to be a minor factor; for example, Assay & Lambert (1999) gave 15% to that, 40% for client variables, 14% to expectancy and placebo, and 30% to the therapeutic relationship. You encourage us to consider process-outcome studies, to use scientific-based research to build understanding and precision in our methods. You outline 5 approaches in the paper. In McVea (2007) you give an excellent example of one approach. It would be very useful and worthwhile if a group of us can take this type of approach up and build both our knowledge and our credibility. As part of this, I imagine work is being done on how to deliver and make assessable research instruments to practitioners in such a way that they could use them in their practice. I am interested to hear of any news in this front. I imagine that a simple pre- and post-session instrument such as the two you outline, plus an efficient follow up are possible. What are the opportunities and hindrances you have been experiencing in this area? What education is required? Training?

**Charmaine:** I think this is something we could do quite simply. Basically it would require a few practitioners who are running psychodrama groups and who are willing to be involved, and one or two researchers who manage the technical aspects of bringing the research together. These groups may overlap, but it is not essential for all practitioners to be researchers or vice-versa. One of the roles that the researchers would undertake would be to prepare an ethics application that would be submitted through a university ethics committee. A number of AANZPA members have links to universities, and could facilitate this aspect. Perhaps the greatest challenge that I have encountered, is the concern that gathering data will somehow interfere with the warm-up of the group. What I have found is that when group members understand the rationale for collecting information, they tend to be willing to participate and feel pleased to be contributing to the advancement of the work. Group members are often keen to participate in interviews before and after the psychodrama group, and gain a lot personally through the process of reflection.

**Phil:** Without a strong motivation, I don't see anyone organising a group of practitioners and researchers like this. Is there a simpler way practitioners could generate something that would have enough scientific worth? Could we offer a pre- and post-session questionnaire. There are very short measures that have been shown to correlate with longer methods and instruments. For example the Session Rating Scale of Duncan (2003) has a handful of questions that have been shown to show correlation with efficacy. Could it be done for a group over a number of sessions, no follow-up interview? Ethics and safety could be done effectively without necessarily involving a university ethics committee. Actually the common approach of these committees can be limited or even misdirected in that they tend to assume participants can be fully informed and give consent before the data collection. Aspects of this are described by David Larsen (2014) in his new psychodrama thesis "I Don't No: Consent in psychodramatic dyadic therapy when the protagonist's conserved coping role system is one of compliance."

Let's say simple instrument outcome research was done by half a dozen people. Would that be useful?

**Charmaine:** There are a number of budding researchers in AAANZPA who might take up this challenge. I know of at least one collaborative research project involving AANZPA members (a researcher and a practitioner) currently under way, so this type of project is definitely feasible. On the

other hand, yes, practitioners can collect their own outcome data as a standard part of their practice. There are a number of questionnaires that have been developed primarily for the purpose of measuring therapeutic change – for example Michael Lambert’s Outcome Questionnaire (OQ-45), Scott Miller’s Outcome and Session Rating Scales (ORS & SRS) and the University of New South Wales’ Depression-Anxiety-Stress-Scale (DASS). This type of data collection has become standard practice in many counselling agencies, influenced largely by the work of people like Michael Lambert and Scott Miller, who have shown that early feedback about client progress can lead to better therapeutic outcomes. Some agencies use this data to support the work that they do – but it is general support for work of the practitioners within that agency, not for a particular therapeutic approach. If AANZPA members gathered this information it might tell us that this group of practitioners, who are psychodrama trained, are getting positive outcomes with their clients. To be able to draw more compelling conclusions about the efficacy of psychodrama, other information needs to be considered.

The question of ethical clearance is probably worthy of another conversation at a later time. Briefly for now - ethical clearance ensures that the research meets community standards when working with people who may be vulnerable, and that we have established processes for handling sensitive information. This goes beyond our normal ethical practice, because the intention of research is to publish the results in a public forum, where the participants in the research usually have little say in where or how the information is used. It is now common practice for research journals to require prospective authors to have ethical clearance before they will publish empirical research. So, if we can set up ethical clearance at the outset, we ensure that we have thought through the implications of the research for the participants, and we have much more capacity to get our findings out into the world.

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# Portrait of a Woman Diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder, incorporating a Morenian Perspective

Kate Cooke

## **Abstract**

My desire to write this article was driven by two issues in my mind. Firstly, I had a desire to get to know more thoroughly Ailsa, the client featured in this article who is diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). I perceived that writing was one way I could achieve this. By “more thoroughly” I mean that I wanted to elucidate in a written form how her life events were connected to and influenced the growth of particular aspects of these disorders. Secondly, I wanted to integrate concepts from various psychological or psychiatric perspectives with my thinking as a psychodramatist.

I attempt to demonstrate how a sense of intrinsic badness can develop in a person who becomes personality disordered. This sense of intrinsic badness has been defined as the Alien Self which can be found in many people with severe BPD. Psychodrama’s developmental theory of roles is presented and extended, in conjunction with the concept of the Alien Self. I am keen for readers from the psychodrama community and others to reflect on the content of the article and to consider the relevance of the ideas presented for their own work. I would like this article to be a contribution to a dialogue in psychodrama thinking on various psychiatric mental states and their aetiology through the psychodrama lens.

## **Keywords**

alien self, attachment, Borderline Personality Disorder, psychiatry, social and cultural atom

## Introduction

This article is the result of my attempt to integrate psychodrama developmental and role theory with the attachment theory of Fairbairn (1952) and Winnicott (1967) and Mentalization-Based Therapy of Bateman and Fonagy (2004). It is also an attempt to test role theory's applicability to the specific psychiatric setting of Personality Disorder. It attempts to contrast normal development of the self in early childhood with what may occur developmentally in the context of trauma to the child.

I have developed my thinking about developmental theory over long experience of working in the psychiatric area and more specifically in the last decade with people diagnosed with severe Borderline Personality Disorder. I have listened to clients who were thinking about what led them to commit acts of self harm. I have observed their shame and confusion when they were unable to articulate these cognitive pathways or to know what exactly they were feeling at the time. It has confused me too. Surely motives and reasons for doing something of such significance as deliberately harming oneself would be apparent to the self-harming person? Is there a part of the traumatised psyche that sabotages the self?

Bateman and Fonagy (2004) have described an aspect of a traumatised psyche which is both "me and not me", incorporating the perpetrator's malicious intentions into herself, as the Alien Self. How does the Alien Self actually develop in a person? The concept of the Alien Self, plus the thinking of other theorists such as Fairbairn (1952) and Winnicott (1967) as outlined in the article, helped me understand the ownership of badness by the developing child. The badness comes into the psyche like Trojans in the horse brought into Troy never to leave, even through adulthood. This idea assisted me to keep holding an understanding and compassion for my severe borderline clients, and to observe that their behaviour results in confusion and frustration.

As I came to know my therapy client, Ailsa, and her history, I inquired into these questions, and reflected on the aetiology and mechanics of trauma and the development of the self, as is observed in severe Borderline Personality Disorder. I applied psychodrama role theory and found it a useful way of looking at the Alien Self.

Ailsa's story is narrated in the first person singular to emphasise her viewpoint, particularly her young age and her innocence. It is a true and unembellished story. However, Ailsa is an alias and any identifiable details have been changed.

## Ailsa

The first time I thought I was going to die was when I was three years old. The pain was so great, I blacked out. I came to, to find my father holding me, crying, and telling me he loved me, and he wouldn't do anything to hurt me. I started to cry too and he put his hand over my mouth, and told me not to tell Mummy as she would be very angry with me. Mummy was always away at the hospital looking after my sister Louise because she had epileptic fits a lot, so I couldn't tell her anyway. Daddy got better at it of course. And my body accommodated him, but each time I wondered whether this time I was going to die.

The next incident happened when I was five. I loved the water and was happy swimming in the pool at my cousin's place. A big boy jumped the fence and into the pool. He jumped on my head and held me down under the water for a long, long time. I was really scared, and found myself facing death again. A neighbour came to my rescue, and pushed him off me. Why me? Was there something bad about me that invited people to do bad things to me, and to make me feel so bad?

Three further years of Daddy's night visits stopped when he left my mother, my sister and me. I knew by then it was because I was so bad and disgusting that he left us. My mother got very, very sad, and that was my fault too, because I drove Daddy away with my badness.

When we were on our own, my mother would give me and my sister food and have nothing left over for herself. One day she fell on the ground and her eyes were closed and she couldn't hear me. I knew she was dead and I was more scared than I had ever been before because I would be completely alone if Mummy died. I ran across the road, even though Mummy had said never go to anyone's place on my own. I got the lady in the house to come over, and she woke Mummy up. I was so relieved I started crying. I knew it was my fault that she had died. She told me Mummy had fainted, and she was cross with Mummy for not asking her for help before. My mother would never ask for help. She felt it showed weakness. That's another place I learned it from. I never ask for help, no matter how bad I feel, because I am bad, and don't deserve help.

Then the worst did happen. My mother was so sad she became ill and had to go to hospital. Me and my sister, Louise, went to stay with my Nonna and Pop. Even though I loved being with my grandparents, I knew I was to blame for everything. I knew I had to make sure they were ok about me by not complaining, and not letting them know I was around, or that I was any trouble. I always checked with them that everything I did was ok. I

worried a lot that they might decide not to have me anymore and then I would be all on my own and I would want to die.

When Mummy came back from hospital, I didn't want to be away from her, in case she left again. I used to sit in school thinking she was leaving. I couldn't bear it and would leave school and come home to be with her. She got annoyed and sent me away to hospital for 4 years. They said I had character disorder, and some other things, and that I had to stay in hospital. I don't know why she sent me away. It must have been because I was evil and had a bad character.

## Typical and Atypical Development of Roles

Role theory has been enormously informative and useful in understanding Alisa, in forming an accurate picture of her personality development. What follows are some aspects of Ailsa's functioning from a Morenian perspective. I will first outline Moreno's (1946) ideas of role development which were predicated on typical or healthy development of the self. He states "roles do not emerge from the self, but the self emerges from roles." (p. ii)

Moreno (1946) also states that psychosomatic roles are at the centre of each person. As a newborn the world is postulated as being experienced entirely through the physical entity we call the body, or the soma. He develops his theory thus:

*...in the course of development, the psychodramatic roles begin to cluster and produce a sort of psychodramatic self and finally, the social roles begin to cluster and form a sort of social self. The physiological, psychodramatic and social selves are only "part" selves; the really integrated, entire self, of later years is still far from being born. (p. iii)*

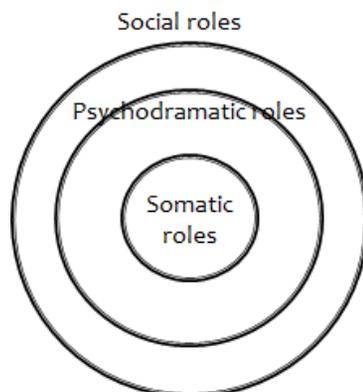
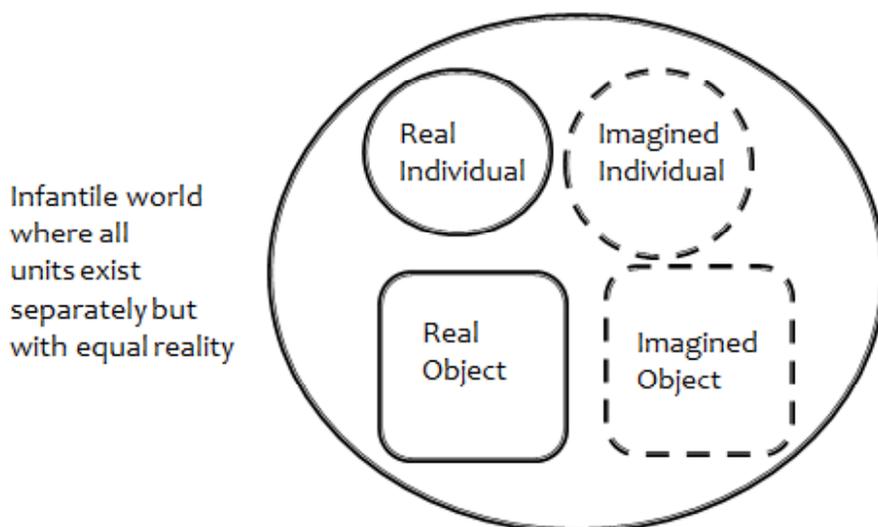


Figure 1: Moreno's Three Types of Roles

From an undifferentiated state in early babyhood (what Moreno calls the Matrix of Identity, 1946, p. iii.) where people and objects are not experienced as separate, they gradually become differentiated, as depicted below. At this stage, the child gives dolls and pets friendly roles or unfriendly roles, and equally the child can see his or her parents or siblings as friendly or unfriendly. They are both as real to the child at this stage as each other. The following diagram depicts the differentiating process as defined by JL Moreno and depicted by Evan Sherrard (1983) in his psychodrama thesis.

### Infantile World (non traumatic)

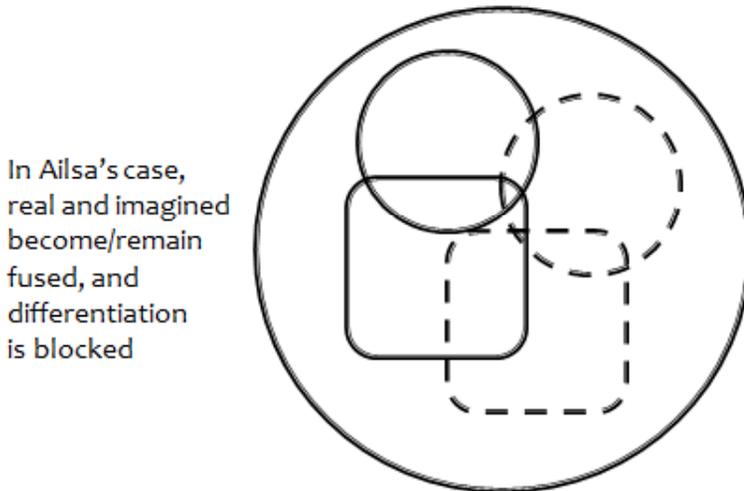


*Figure 2: Infantile World (non traumatic)*

At this stage, in atypical development, when Ailsa started to be abused at the age of 3, her psychosomatic roles of sleeper, eater, eliminator and pleasure/pain experiencer assist her to experience her somatic self, the beginnings of self. The intrusion of a pain-inflicting parent takes the young child to the edge of her capacity as a somatic being whose real and imagined objects are undifferentiated. Ailsa travels over the edge of her capacity to remain sensate, or sensorily aware at the somatic level. She learns to dissociate from the painful present. Perhaps this blocks further typical development of her psychodramatic and social roles, as Ailsa brackets off her somatic experience through dissociation. In addition, her mother is not available for comfort and Ailsa swims alone. In a state of

dissociation and without any adult guidance or support, Ailsa is in a desperate, frightened state where compliance, mute withdrawal and secret control of her distress seems vital to her very survival.

### Infantile world (traumatic)



*Figure 3: The Infantile World (Traumatic)*

The diagram above symbolises the real abuser and the imagined abusers as well as the real and imagined rejecters. Ailsa is unable to distinguish between what is real and what is imagined. Adults are imagined as not to be trusted, and unfamiliar places become distrusted as they are associated with the imagined untrustworthy adults. The abusing father ties Ailsa to a secret fantasy world, creating a fusion of soma, fantasy and reality, which goes against the organic differentiating process as defined by JL Moreno and depicted as The Infantile World, (non traumatic) in Figure 2. This fusion contrasts with the typical, non-traumatic world of a child, where the child gradually develops the ability to make a breach between the world of fantasy and the world of reality.

## Moreno's Matrix of Differentiated All-Identity

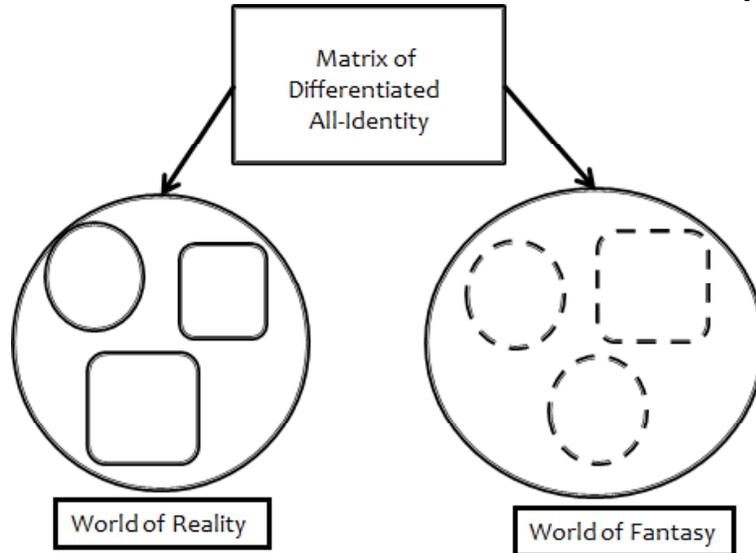


Figure 4: Moreno's Matrix of Differentiated All-Identity (adapted from Moreno, 1946, p.76)

However, in Ailsa's case, this breach did not occur totally. This is the work which is continuing in therapy.

### Ailsa's Matrix of Differentiated and Undifferentiated All-Identity

Survival necessitates the secrecy and splitting off of the developing sense of badness within Ailsa's psyche. She is without the use of a developed Pre-Frontal Cortex, i.e. a mind that is able to solve the problem she confronts, or the benefit of other minds which may contribute wisdom, compassion, and perspective about herself. In addition, and perhaps most importantly, she must continue to believe that her parents intend to love her and look after her. Speaking of W.R.D. Fairbairn's model of structural analysis of the obsessional character, but one, I think, which can be applied to the concept of the Alien Self, David Celani (2007) writes:

*Attachment to an object is essential in his model as without it the child is unable to manage his crushing terror of abandonment, which if not kept in abeyance would collapse his entire ego structure. (p.120)*

Psychological survival is as essential for growth as physiological survival and the two are intimately connected. Young Ailsa's terrifying experiences continue, and rather than see the perpetrators as bad, and thus threaten her primitive, unconscious need for dependency on parents or caretakers,

she incorporates the badness into herself and owns it. However, it is separated from other roles, and it eventually rigidifies into the recesses of her unconscious mind.

## **Ailsa's Social Atom**

Ailsa's social atom was influential in providing the context for the trauma of sexual abuse and neglect in attunement that she experienced in her early life. It is important to note that even many decades later, Ailsa still loves her mother and her father, or at the very least she still feels attached to them, particularly her mother. Despite the pain and suffering created by the paternal abuse, and despite feeling repeatedly abandoned by her mother, Ailsa yearned for love from them, and yet saw herself as "bad" and responsible for everything bad that happened to her. Fairbairn (1952) explains the complexity of children's dependency on parents. He examined neglected and abused children in Scottish orphanages who willingly condemned themselves as bad, but spoke of the virtue of their abusive parents. He states:

*It becomes obvious, therefore, that the child would rather be bad himself than have bad objects: and accordingly we have some justification for surmising that one of his motives in becoming bad is to make his objects "good." (p.65)*

This mechanism allows the child to keep hoping that his parents will one day love him.

Ailsa's secret-keeping, compliance, and isolation are indications that she is compartmentalizing her distress within her psyche. Celani (2007) elucidates:

*Splitting is transformed from a normal, albeit very early way of experiencing the world into a powerful defense mechanism when it operates past the developmental point when normal children are able to integrate the positive and negative aspects of their objects. Splitting allows the child to continue his attachment to the (mostly) rejecting object by repressing the memories of the hundreds of negative interactions, which if they were in full awareness, would destroy his essential bond to the object. This structural defense becomes increasingly pathological over time when developmental pressure toward integration of the good and bad parts of the same object has to be continuously thwarted, again, because conscious awareness of the sheer amount of parental rejection would be intolerable. (p.122)*

Ailsa's social atom below represents relationships with her significant others along with the positive or negative valencies. In addition, the range

of roles and counter roles can be observed to cluster in a particular pattern (Clayton, L. 1982, p.112)

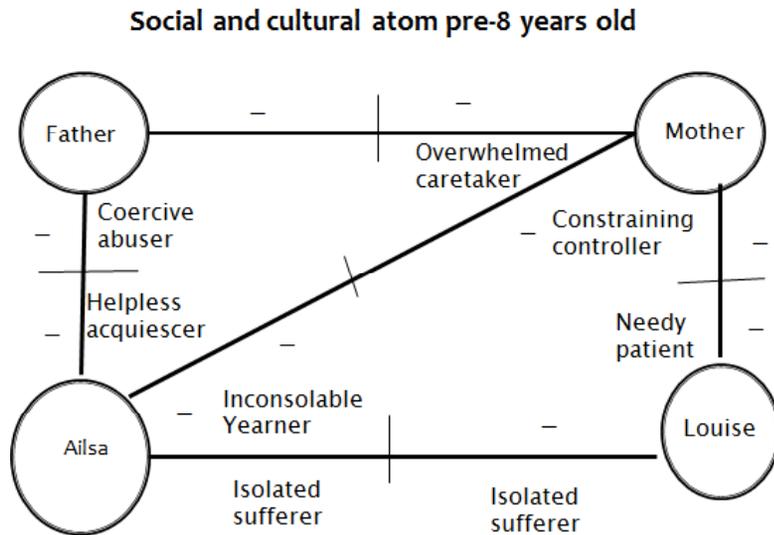


Figure 5: Ailsa's Social Atom pre-8 years old

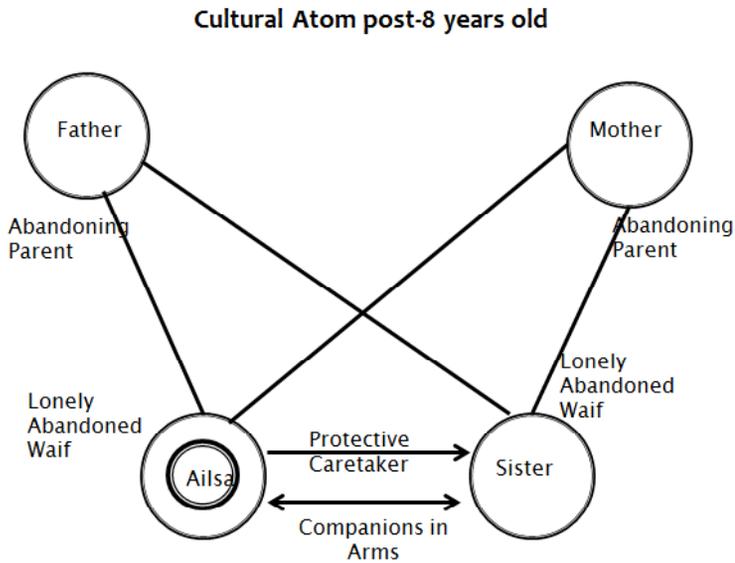
In typical non-traumatic development, a gradual differentiation between social roles and psychodramatic roles starts to develop. In Ailsa before the age of 8, when her father and mother were still living with her, psychodramatic roles as shown above were well developed.

At 8 years of age, Ailsa's father left the family and her mother became isolated and depressed and eventually went away for a long time, leaving the children to live with their grandparents. Ailsa developed a protective caretaker role with her sister, Louise, who was starting to be bullied.

The roles of protective caretaker and companion in arms are set apart from the Bad Being containing the personification of imagined things, both real and unreal. She continued to experience abandonment and helplessness, forming the belief that she was a "bad person" and this suffering was her punishment. It is as if she had found her Self in her Bad Being, in the absence of a consistently positive Self being mirrored to her from her social and cultural atom. Bateman and Fonagy (2004) state:

*In early childhood, the failure to find another being behaving contingently with one's internal states and available for (contingent)...intersubjective processes...can create a desperation for meaning as the self seeks to find itself in the other. This desperation*

leads to a distortion of the intersubjective process and leads the individual to take in non-contingent reflections from the object. (p.88)



*Figure 6: Ailsa's Social Atom post-8 years old*

Note: The double black circle symbolizes the Bad Being in Ailsa's psyche.

Inaccurate mirroring produces internalizations of representations of the parent's state, not a version of the child's own experience (Winnicott 1967). Here again, the child's primary experience is denied, and instead a second order, or representation, of the experience of the abusive or neglectful other forms in the child's mind that is held as the child's own. This creates what Bateman and Fonagy (2004) call an Alien Self. It is what has been depicted in the personal story above as the encapsulated psychodramatic role of Bad Being.

In her adult life Ailsa is disconnected from the Alien Self, or the Bad Being, until stress occurs for her and she becomes hyper-aroused. Ailsa's coping role is initially modelled for her by her mother, who is constrained and controlling, being a struggling single mother with one very sick child and another who is starting to show psychological disturbances. Ailsa responded compliantly with a view to being a "good girl" for her mother in order not to be abandoned by her. Ailsa incorporates her mother's role and is constrained and controlled herself as well as compliant in relation to non-arousing situations of everyday life.

This works sufficiently until an event in life occurs that triggers a sense of helplessness and hopelessness, as in her early life with her intrusive

abusing parent, or triggers a sense of abandonment leading to helplessness and hopelessness. The stimuli in adult life are legion for an individual who is already sensitive to deliberate and casual acts of vindictiveness, and who regularly attends Accident and Emergency Departments to have her self-harm wounds attended. The triggering role in the environment is often one of derogation and judgement. The self-harm is at once a punitive act towards one's loathsome self, and an act of defiance and anger, expressed through the self harm, the complete isolation and pain that is felt and unable to be verbalised. The diagram below depicts the cluster of roles that operate typically in Ailsa when she is hurt by painful comments, when she feels judged, feels she has hurt someone else, or feels trapped in a situation she cannot get out of.

### Bad Being in Action

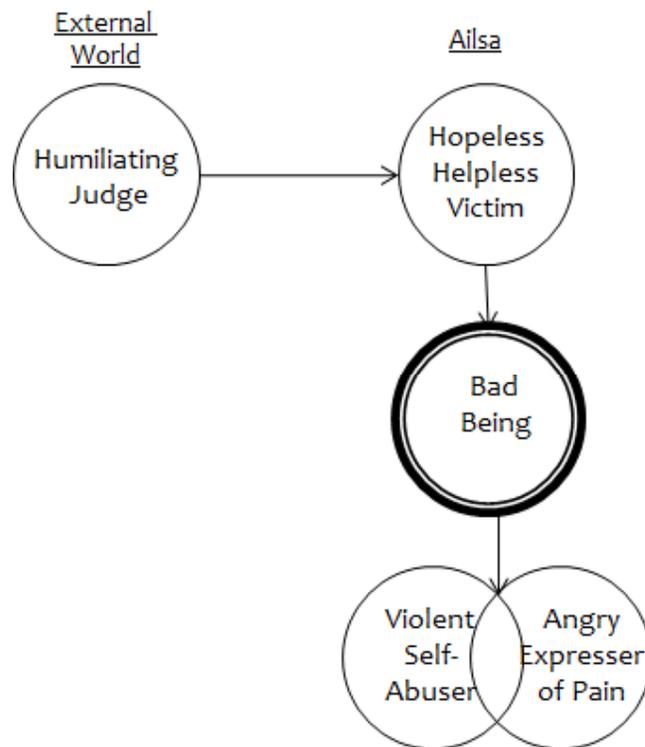


Figure 7: Bad Being in Action

## Treatment

The treatment process has been a long one and has involved continued suffering on Ailsa's part. I have provided an ear to hear and help to bear the pain. Starting to work from the point of view that it was up to me to show her that she could trust me, not the other way around, I started to enquire of her as gently as possible about my assumptions about her life, making them explicit and emphasising that they were possibly completely incorrect. Her responses were monosyllabic to begin with, but as time went on, she affirmed some things that I had raised, and then started to offer statements about herself. She started to bring situations in which she had felt humiliated, looked down upon, or objectified, and had self-harmed as a result. I validated her internal experience as best I could, doubling her. I started to wonder with her what the feeling was, and eventually time after time, anger, hopelessness and helplessness were identified and named.



There has been a gradual incorporation of a double into Ailsa's consciousness, as she has moved into secondary representational awareness. This means she has started to reflect on her experiences, in contrast to simply having an awareness of what was happening in the here and now, which is called a primary awareness, or what Moreno would call a somatic awareness. The somatic awareness involves the right brain where "attachment histories and traumatic deficits in regulating intensity of emotions are stored" (Shore, 2014, p.10) and where a wandering associative thought process takes place (Meares, 2005). The left brain, on the other hand, is the locus of the logical, analytical side of the brain, particularly in the Pre-Frontal Cortex (PFC) of the brain. The process of reflection that Ailsa is involved in, in therapy, involves pathways being formed from the right brain to the left brain, and from the emotional centre, called the limbic system, to the PFC, the seat of linguistic expression and executive functioning. These pathways have been absent hither to treatment, rendering her alexithymic, i.e., unable to put language to her internal experience. She has started to speak some of her pain. She has not stopped experiencing the Bad Being, nor has she stopped self-harming. The act of "letting you in" (which means letting me in to her very private self) has been terrifically risky for Ailsa.

*Mental states that are in essence private to the self may be shared between individuals...self awareness, empathy, identification with others, and more generally intersubjective processes, are largely dependent upon...right hemisphere resources, which are the first to develop. (Decety & Chaminade, cited in Shore, 2014, p.11)*

But slowly Ailsa's voice, and her self, uncontaminated by the Bad Being, has emerged in the therapy space, and in her relationships with others in the social environment. She has desires and wants and motivation. She wants a "normal life". She has even verbalised her desire for a relationship with a man. All these expressed desires and wants have a cost, as she butts up against the Bad Being, the Alien Self, creating a sense of her undeserving worthlessness and nothingness. The self-harm acts, often severe as a rule, have become dangerously risky. She is putting herself on the edge of death, which has always been the deal right from the beginning. She is giving herself the near death abuses she experienced from others as a little child, continuing on where others have left off, having internalised this way of treating herself. The strength it will take to ride through this is enormous and to some extent, lies in the realm of her Creative Genius. It remains to be seen whether Ailsa can find equivalent value in the power of reflecting and understanding herself and metabolising her experiences through verbalisation, and through catharses of integration and abreaction, to counter the Alien Self without continued self-punishing harm and constant risk of death by her own hand.

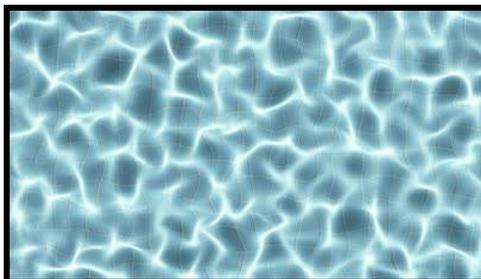
## **Concluding Thoughts**

My work with people diagnosed with severe BPD has been extremely stimulating to me. I became aware of how puzzled and ignorant I felt about the specifics of the suffering incurred in this condition. The Alien Self as a concept brought about more understanding which seemed to communicate itself in my work. Some people who work with Ailsa still think of her as "manipulative" and think she is "putting it on". As someone who has been through many roller coaster events with Ailsa, and who has had the privilege of being "let in" and trusted (to some extent) by her, I marvel at the discrepancies of human perception and human experience that can create such polarisation in the perception of another person. But I am the lucky one. I have the privilege of relating to someone in the most delicate and respectful way, and for that to perhaps make a difference. I trust I take this understanding to other people suffering from this disorder. I hope this article will stimulate other psychodrama practitioners to discuss, reflect on and to be compassionately creative in their work with people diagnosed with this disorder.

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# Social Atom Repair and Lifelong Learning



A Tribute to Dr Joan Chappell, TEP, QSO  
4.9.1921 - 8.8.2013

*by John Faisandier, TEP  
with assistance from Vivienne Thomson, TEP  
and warm appreciation to other contributors*

Joan Chappell was one of the great thinkers and quiet toilers in AANZPA. She died in 2013 at the age of 92 in Tauranga after a life of working as a psychiatrist, GP and psychodramatist. She grew up in England, moved to Christchurch in the early 1970s before retiring to a 'lifestyle village' in Tauranga in 1992.

She was not easily understood by many in AANZPA. Vivienne Thomson and I were her only two TEPITs (Trainer, Educator, Practitioner in Training) because somehow we were able to tune in to her way of working. At conferences and FTINZ meetings she would make herself available to us, sometimes at 7 in the morning for supervision. Despite, and perhaps because of, her quirky way of working we gained a tremendous amount from Joan.

This article is based on a conversation Vivienne and I have had and written snippets from others who knew Joan that illustrate her wisdom, quirkiness and character.

Joan was born in 1921 in England. This was post WW1 England. Joan was left for dead at birth. It was only by chance that a nurse paused to look in the bucket where her tiny body had been placed and realized that she was actually alive. This was a portent for the rest of her childhood. Her mother was emotionally unstable and was not capable of giving her even the most basic of nurture. Joan knew that at the age of four she had to parent her mother. This experience was the foundation of her interest in the Black Void and Parentified Child which she wrote extensively about, much of it unpublished. In the whole extended family there was no touching, no fun and no laughter as she grew up. Her life was dominated by rigid rules and no understanding of the needs of a child. Her bedtime every night in winter was 6pm. One Christmas day the turkey was not yet cooked by 6pm. She was required to go to bed rather than stay up late for the Christmas celebration. When she told this story at a trainer workshop we immediately created a fantastic Christmas scene for her. The whole group took on roles such as the fairy at the top of the tree and all sorts of other magical creatures. Joan joined in the fun – whoopee she'd say flinging her arms in the air. When it was over she returned to her analytical self and gave a brief report of her situation. Many found that frustrating and just wished she could keep playing the Christmas game. But that wasn't Joan!

She was highly intelligent and at the age of 17 went to university to study medicine. This for her was the only way she could escape the tomb that was her family home for those first significant years. It was the beginning of her life time work of social atom repair and dedication to helping others less fortunate. After graduation she worked in London and had considerable involvement in the Tavistock clinic for the treatment of

post-war trauma and alcohol addictions. It was there where she first encountered psychodrama.

Joan said she believed in the sanctity of marriage and was fortunate to have had two very happy marriages. Her first husband was Ted Chappell who was Italian by birth and a translator during World War II. He became an accountant at the British Medical Association after the war. Ted died of a heart attack in the early 1960s and Joan married Dr Norman Mathias. Norman was a GP in central London and was deputy Chair of the British Medical Association. It was with him that Joan got to have many adventures meeting famous people and travelling to numerous international conferences. They moved to New Zealand to be near his daughter who was ill however Norman died soon after they arrived in New Zealand. Joan decided to make Christchurch her home to be near her step-daughter and family, valuing them as the nearest to her as anyone could be as blood relatives.

First impressions of Joan for most people were not positive. For many the tight grey bun, stern face and her cryptic communications with very little chatter or small talk put them off. Many found her hard to follow. Mike Consedine told me once that he worked out why people couldn't follow Joan. "She jumps from step one to step four, where most people have to slowly reason their way through steps two and three, she just goes straight to step four because it is so obvious to her."

Her directing was like that too. She would produce the most unlikely interventions that resulted in significant movement for the protagonist who trusted them. She told me once that this was because she followed the warm-up of the protagonist very carefully. As a doctor she was so aware of what body movements and reactions the protagonist was making, things that most people did not even notice, let alone register as significant. This was a very strong teaching of Joan's. "This method is a body method," she would say. "You must always be aware of what the protagonist is doing. And if you don't know the significance of what the body is doing, then find out. Do a course on the body, learn some basic bioenergetics and any other science that will help you."

Joan herself was a lifetime learner. She engaged in the very early T-groups in the 1960s and said this helped her to understand herself and how groups can form healing communities. When she was a trainer in Christchurch she told me that she wanted to be a student in three different disciplines at the same time to maintain her awareness of what it is like to be a learner. She was learning the piano, horse riding, ballroom dancing, tennis and several other things at different times when she was my trainer. This was when she was in her sixties and seventies.

## Awareness of Sociometry and Influence

Joan moved to the lifestyle village (“not a retirement village!” she insisted) of Greenwood Park, Tauranga in 1992. She was 71 and one of the first residents in this new way of living. She loved it and got very involved in the community there, making sure she was on residents’ boards and committees. She advised Vivienne to make sure that she didn’t leave her move too late, because “the earlier you can get in to such a community the

sooner you can become ‘top dog’ and influence what goes on”



Joan with Dame Sylvia Cartwright, Governor General of New Zealand at Joan’s Investiture, Government House, 2006

She was acutely aware of social position. She would talk about the political machinations of the village and how she had to make sure she gave due deference to the appropriate people and let them know of

her expertise in subtle but clear ways. When she received her New Year’s Honour of QSM which was about a fourth level award, many in the village were surprised and somewhat envious as they only had first or second level awards. She was quietly satisfied that her considerable contributions to society had been appropriately recognized. Joan often coached me to make sure I related correctly to the authority structure of AANZPA, especially to Max Clayton and the Board of Examiners during my training. This, she said, was important for all AANZPA members to know so that the association functioned well.

She had immense respect for authority figures in the churches. While claiming she in no way believed in religion and the afterlife she claimed to be in good standing with both the Catholic and the Anglican Bishops of Christchurch, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church and the chief Rabbi. When I left the priesthood she would constantly ask me about my ‘relationship with Rome’ and whether I had communicated appropriately with the authorities there. I tried to reassure her that it didn’t matter to me anymore, but she wouldn’t let that lie for at least 15 years after I had left.

Keeping a strong positive relationship with those in authority was important because of the degree of influence that it gave her. She was passionate about creating a better world, especially in the health sector but also in the wider social welfare community. A story told at her funeral by a family member was that there was a minor politician who was married to one of the step-cousins. When they got together at Christmas time, Joan would bail this man up and ask what he was doing about this policy or that. It became quite a talking point in the family that she was holding him personally responsible for not changing things for the better. She expected this of anyone who was involved in public office.

Her own contribution was to join many associations and organizations that helped those in need. When I listened to the citation read out at her investiture for the QSM, I felt humbled to be a friend of this remarkable woman. She continued her work of improving society in her later life by making considerable donations, usually anonymously to the Greenwood Park village and through agencies such as the Salvation Army and other community groups in Tauranga.

She held Max Clayton in very high regard and was always very respectful of him. While at times she would appear to be deferential to him, at other times she would challenge him with great courage, tact and love. This is illustrated in this story from AANZPA member Dr. Peter Parkinson.



At times, during the years when I was running my General Practice in Thames, I was gifted by the presence of Joan who would come and stay with me for weeks at a time. She would come and work side by side with me as a fellow GP. This lifted the pressure of client load from my shoulders, and gave us time slots during the day for snippets of psychodrama, development and training. One day she asked me to set out my social atom aged seven. This I did and she noted that I had only my pets in my inner circle, especially cats and dogs. All humans I allocated to positions outside of my treasured canine and feline friends. Included in the inner circle were 22 golden retriever puppies. These were from three litters that had all arrived at the same time.

About six months after this event I was attending a training workshop run jointly by Max and Joan and I was protagonist in a session that was

being directed by Max. This session ground to a halt with Max saying to me: “How can I direct you if you don’t trust me?”

At that moment Joan stood up and said “Max I’m taking over!”

Like a lamb, (would you ever believe it!) Max sat down and Joan came and stood beside me and said: “Peter. Choose 22 puppies.”

It was beyond consideration that human beings should represent my puppies. I remained intransigent. Joan then said to the group: “We need 22 puppies!”

Whereupon the bulk of the group went down on all fours, trotting across the floor towards me. They panted all over me, licked me, and even went through the motions of urinating on me.

It took that moment to dissolve the defences that I had developed to deal with an inappropriate bunch of authority figures who thought that they could alter my dyslexia by getting angry with me, caning me, and excluding me from friends and times of play and enjoyment.



## **Further Stories**

A number of people were invited to share stories of Joan.

### ***Peter Parkinson***

For me it was special to have someone medically qualified beside me who could talk in physiologic terms as well as psychodramatic. We worked together on her “Black Void” hypothesis. While directing she would come and stand beside me and say: “Did you see her (the protagonist) go into adrenal collapse (Black Void) just then. See the colour has totally drained from her face!” It was very clear once she had pointed this out, but I had no skill or knowledge what to do at his moment. I shared this with her.

“First you must nurture to get the adrenal cortex up and running.” (The adrenal cortex secretes the steroids and imparts a sense of wellbeing)

Joan immediately put an arm around the protagonist until she handed the role of nurturer over to an auxiliary. She then indicated for me to continue directing, while she doubled. As the scene of the confrontation that previously dropped her into “the back void” proceeded, the colour returned to the protagonists face and the spontaneity to respond appropriately and effectively ensued.

### ***Bona Anna***

Joan was indeed a significant person and positive influence in Christchurch training and in the wider association.

One of Joan's favourite sayings was "throw the switch", which I understood as her version of develop a progressive role, or in Moreno language develop a new response to an old situation.

I remember her dog, whose barking responses paralleled the emotional tone of group processes and psychodramas during training group at her Port Hills home in Christchurch.

Joan was always supportive and always available. It was never too early in the morning to phone her. Indeed, her favourite time to be contacted was before work. I had a picture of her up bright and early every morning, keen to get stuck into the duties of the day.

### ***Paul Baakman***

I will relate three anecdotes I remember:

One day, I was driving back from a Dunedin psychodrama event, with Joan as my passenger. She was not shy in giving me driving instructions. I steered the conversation to a personal level and mentioned that I had been divorced. Joan said that, in working with divorced people she would often put forward the idea that following a trauma or 'major life event' "you either grow better or bitter". I have often remembered this little slogan and will sometimes quote it to a client.

Another time I saw Joan for supervision, prior to a presentation I was planning. I wanted to tell my story but she interrupted me by asking: "what do you want from this session". Despite my attempts to tell 'my story', she was like a little terrier, insisting on a 'contract' for the session. At the time I felt somewhat puzzled and irritated. Later reflections led me to value her intervention in the sense that she made me focus instead of drift. I learned about 'contracting' for a session and that there are times when this needs to be 'tight'.

Within psychodrama culture, Joan made a stirring plea for the 'director' to be called 'producer'. Her thinking was that only those with severe problems needed 'directing'. With most other people, the health would appear by producing rather than directing the drama. This contribution by Joan reflected her deep respect for people's self-healing abilities and her unwillingness to infantilize a trainee or client.

### ***Vivienne Thomson***

Joan expected a great deal from advanced trainees in particular. When producing a drama she instructed the whole group to be patients in a mental hospital. People were slow to respond and she cried out "Be spontaneous – you are all advanced trainees!"

There were many quirky things Joan did. When she was packing up her house at the Village to move to hospital care she said to me one day

“would you like a piano?” I only had my small car and a long trip back to Auckland so I said a book would be more suitable. Joan said, “this is one of the most formative books I have ever read”. It was *Jokes* by Sigmund Freud! She told me the book had taught her how to have a sense of humour after growing up in a humourless family. There were lots of underlining and side notes in the margins. Many of the jokes were rather dubious Jewish jokes but the book reflected Joan’s determination to make herself more human.

### ***John Faisandier***

The first time I met her she interviewed me about joining a skills and theory group for people working in community agencies in Christchurch. When I said that I wanted a support group to help me in my work as a parish priest she immediately said “Support is a no-no word here!” Thus began my 25 years of learning from Joan.

She could also be a caring and sensitive therapist. When I was in the process of leaving the Catholic priesthood I would often go for my weekly supervision session with her and should I indicate that I wanted to do personal work that day, she completely changed her posture and attitude to become the therapist rather than the supervisor. Otherwise I was there as an advanced trainee and needed to take control of the session.

### **Joan’s psychodramatic family**

Joan spent the last two or so years of her life confined to bed and not much able to do anything. This was very frustrating for her. She didn’t hide the fact that she was frustrated and sick of living this way. When asked once how she was going, her response was “Well I’m not making any plans”. She was not sentimental or gushy in the least but she was determined to create a life for herself that was full, purposeful and connected with many people. She often used to say to us at trainer meetings and other psychodrama gatherings that “You are my family”. We felt proud to be special for her and part of her conscious social atom repair work. It was amusing to hear at her funeral so many representatives of other organisations stand up and say that she told them “You are my family!” Joan made sure she had many families to make up for not having a good enough one at the beginning.

From beginning life with an emotionally inadequate family Joan made sure that she did not end her life that way. Her funeral was a tribute to her, with many telling stories of her wisdom, generosity and her love for them and the underdog.

Her teaching will live on in our association through those of us who have been touched by her and her deep desire for social change, for the significant contribution to our training she has made as both trainer and as a member of the Board of Examiners, and also in our work of producing dramas that heal.

Thank you Joan.

*John Faisandier is a Wellington-based TEP who did the majority of his training in Christchurch. He chose Joan as his primary trainer for certification as a psychodramatist and as a TEP. John spends his time training corporate groups in NZ, the Pacific and Asia on how to manage emotions in the workplace. He quotes Joan Chappell-Matthias's wise sayings frequently in his workshops. John is a serial entrepreneur and is currently setting up a workplace skills training academy in Bangladesh. This provides him with many spontaneity tests each day. Email John: john@tuf.co.nz*



*Vivienne Thomson is a TEP and Director of Training at the Auckland Training Centre for Psychodrama. Joan Chappell-Mathias was Vivienne's Primary Trainer both for becoming a sociodramatist and a TEP. Beyond that*



*Vivienne and Joan shared the experience of having been members of the Board of Examiners, their love of music and dance, gardening and being with family.*

Lynette Clayton, Joan, Vivienne, and Dale Herron

# Book Reviews

## *Impromptu Man: J L Moreno and the origins of Psychodrama, Encounter Culture, and the Social Network*

by Jonathon D. Moreno  
2014. Bellevue Literary Press.

Reviewed by Peter Howie

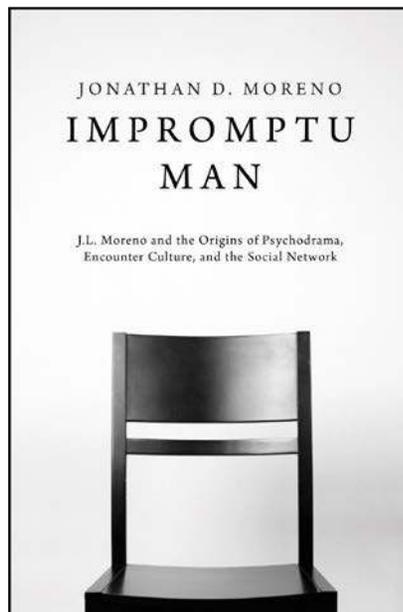
Ever since I began reading this book I wanted to write a review saying:

**“Get it, read it, love it!”**

Succinct certainly has its place and that may be enough for some.

For others, here is an extended version of ‘get it, read it, and love it’...

This book is biography, but biography of the ideas and dreams as well as the man Jacob Levy Moreno, who is referred to affectionately throughout the book as JL. The book is written by JL’s youngest child Jonathan. Jonathan D. Moreno was around JL as a child during the 1950s and 1960s, at conferences and presentations, and hung out as a child with many historical figures, for instance Margaret Mead, who was a friend of JL. Since that time Jonathan (I lovingly use his Christian name as I have been journeying with him for many days now) has had a distinguished academic career and is currently, at the University



Pennsylvania, where he is a Penn Integrates Knowledge university professor, and also Professor of Medical Ethics and Health Policy, of History and Sociology of Science, and of Philosophy. Think that's impressive? Amongst his earlier books is *The Body Politic: The Battle Over Science in America*, named a Best Book of 2011 by Kirkus Reviews. Among his other books are *Mind Wars: Brain Research and the Military in the 21st Century*,

and *Undue Risk: Secret State Experiments on Humans*. You can find out more about him in [www.medicalethics.med.upenn.edu/people/faculty](http://www.medicalethics.med.upenn.edu/people/faculty) or through google. He has a Wiki page, and, lets face it, in true Moreno style he has to be more interesting than his creation! Try this interview with him about the book: [www.soundcloud.com/why-public-media/jonathan-morenos-impromptu-man](http://www.soundcloud.com/why-public-media/jonathan-morenos-impromptu-man). Having just started out on an academic-like path, I am in awe of what he has created and produced in his highly productive and still creative life.

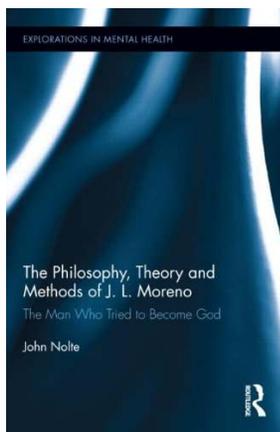
The book follows JL and his creations from his earliest days and adds in a variety of other biographical information that wasn't in Rene Marineau's valuable biography. It is written in an easy style that keeps me wanting more. Indeed when I came near to the end I was sincerely hoping I was only halfway through. I found myself greatly enjoying not only the historical presentations of JL, psychodrama, the theories, the people, the situations, the times, the milieux, the spin-offs, the rip-offs, the fights, the challenges, the delights, the failures, the successes, but I found great joy in the analysis provided by Jonathon, given greater weight by his physical proximity to much of what he wrote.

I found Jonathon's writing about the times and JL both loving and critical. There is something else about Jonathon saying JL "retained the personal style of a mystic and an impresario, characteristics that were to prove both provocative and troublesome in the years ahead" (Location 205 Kindle version) and, about comparing JL with Kurt Lewin as a spokespersons for the new science of group dynamics they were forging, makes this comment that JL "... was handicapped by his eccentric and bombastic manner ..." (Location 2872 Kindle version). This is done in such a manner that I found it entirely acceptable, even loving. Many authors have written similar things and maybe, perhaps, to distance themselves from such an eccentric, or perhaps from his followers and protégés. In this work it reads as a thoroughly acceptable reflection on a man who struggled with his own ebullience and resisted modifying himself sufficiently to make it in the mainstream.

This book exposes psychodrama's influence on a generation of group developers and therapists – the encounter movement, humanistic psychology, and many others, along with a variety of other social movements taking place at the time, right up to Social Network Analysis. It is a meaty book and I can find places already where I will be able to quote it in my next piece of writing. I recommend it as a central text.

# *The Philosophy, Theory and Methods of J. L. Moreno: The Man Who Would Be God*

by John Nolte  
2014. Routledge.



Reviewed by Peter Howie

Nolte uses his personal lived experience of Moreno, and his extensive experience as a psychodramatist and trainer, as the grounding for this writing. He is not writing as an outside observer but as one embedded in Morenian philosophy, practice and theory. He begins with a strong introduction of himself as he entered into the world of Moreno and learned and grappled with the man and his teachings and how they were applied. That in itself makes the book valuable.

There is a real sense that Nolte has enormous regard and respect for Moreno, while not glossing over the great man's many problematic idiosyncrasies. I enjoyed greatly Nolte's appropriate use of quotations from primary sources, his building on the work of earlier biographers.

It was a pleasing experience to read a complete explication of Moreno's wares from someone who enjoys them so much. He was able to criticise the ideas appropriately and present his own struggles with them.

The only clear addition of new material is the chapter where Nolte describes David Bohm's concept of implicate order as a favoured means for understanding the 'physics of spontaneity-creativity' and making sense of Moreno defining spontaneity as "unconservable energy". Not having the same problem as Nolte with Moreno calling spontaneity an "unconservable energy", I found this chapter unnecessary. Nolte admits that he may have tried to do too much in adding such a large piece of theory into the book. However, he keeps these ideas well contained and they do not affect the writing about Moreno in any substantial manner.

In summary, let me suggest that psychodrama trainers read this book with an eye on their trainees and those in training consider this book to improve their grasp of Moreno's philosophy, theory and methods. Practitioners will simply find it a valuable and enjoyable reminder of the breadth of their craft. While it is an expensive book it does give the 'good oil' and a firm basis for intellectually and philosophically grasping the prodigious and creative genius of J.L. Moreno.

## *J.L. Moreno Memorial Photo Album*

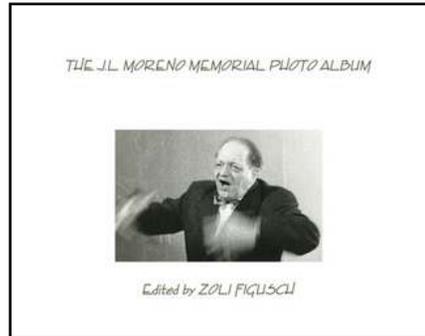
Edited by Zoli Figlisch

2014. Published by Zoli Figlisch.

Reviewed by

Paul Baakman

The J.L. Moreno Memorial Photo Album was presented at the 2014 London International Psychodrama Conference which coincided with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first International Congress of Psychodrama held in Paris in 1964. A series of black and white photographs follows a loose chronological order,



spanning a period from 1893 to the 1970s. The subject of the photographs are Moreno himself, his family members, colleagues and trainees.

This 'story in pictures' reflects Moreno's intensity and charisma and is a delight to take in and give a sense of Moreno's personal social atom.

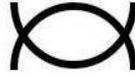
I find myself studying the pictures for clues; who are these characters? What is the nature of their relationship? What is this captured moment about? Only after this 'sleuthing' I take in the liberal sprinkling of anecdotes, personal experiences and stories which give a further background and interpretation to the visual feast that is this book.

The quality of the old photographs is overall surprisingly good. There are some stunning pictures of a vibrant Zerka. Toward the end the book we see Moreno as an old man, frail, yet alive with a warm and open gaze.

I am disappointed with the poor glue-binding which made the pages fall apart pretty quickly. The pages are not numbered.

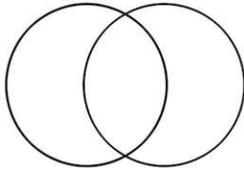
The pictures, as well as the accompanying stories and reflections, provide snapshots; frozen moments in time. There is no narrative that knits it all together into a coherent whole. I don't mind this as the writer makes it clear from the start that he does not aim for a comprehensive biography. This book forms an excellent companion to some of the biographies written about Moreno. Overall, I feel privileged and delighted with such an intimate look into some of Moreno's life.

# Qualities of the AANZPA Symbol

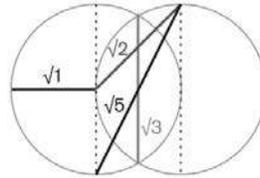


Philip D. Carter

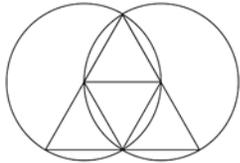
Let the circle be one to show all things complete. Describe another circle with the same radius. Let them intersect such that the centre of each lies on the circumference of the other. This is the vesica piscis. Something so simple,



yet the structure has so much of what comes after (the larger numbers) inherent in its structure. The



Vesica Piscis is a foundation of sacred geometry (Lawlor, 1982). It has astonishing properties. Certain ratios that cannot be precise in number, are precise in form. The proportions replicate



and multiply and can be seen in the forms and structures of life.



Two sets of ripples on a pond interpenetrate, each taking the other into itself.

In the Maori world, there is the concept of Pae, the relational space in which the new thing emerges.

The AANZPA symbol can be seen as many things: the Pae space; the interpenetration of ripples; the vesica piscis; the Mandorla (the integration of opposites described in the AANZPA Journal, 1993, p. 13); the interlocking of an embrace; the relational field...

Lawlor, R. (1982). *Sacred geometry: Philosophy of practice*. London: Thomas & Hudson.

# AANZPA Conference 2015

Moreno: a man of his time;  
a man for our times



## The conference

We warmly invite you to attend the AANZPA Conference 2015 in Otautahi Christchurch, Aotearoa New Zealand.

Ann Hale will give an keynote address during the conference. There will be opportunities to reconnect with old companions and make links with new ones. We will be stimulated by the legacy of Moreno and the developments and changes since his times.

## Dates

The conference begins  
5:00pm, Wednesday 21st and concludes  
3:00pm, Sunday 25th January, 2015

## Pre-conference

20th and 21st January, 2015

- › Hul at Rehua Marae
- › Peter Howie: Developing a Psychodramatic Practice

## Post-conference

26th and 27th January, 2015

- › Ann Hale: Encountering All of Humanity
- › Rob Brodie: The Moment of Encounter

## Contact

eMail: [conference@aanzpa.org](mailto:conference@aanzpa.org)

Phone:

Website: <http://confer15.aanzpa.org>