

The Mirror



New Life

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Moreno Psychodrama Society eJournal

THE MIRROR

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Psychodrama

Sociometry

Sociodrama

Role Training

Role Theory

Group Work

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About this Journal

This eJournal is published by the Moreno Psychodrama Society (MPS). MPS is a body of people working together to bring psychodrama into many areas of our world, to enliven our lives and relationships. It is also the umbrella organisation for the Psychodrama Institute of Melbourne (PIM), the Psychodrama Institute of Aotearoa (PiA), and Psychodrama in India institute (Pil), accredited training institutes with the Australian and Aotearoa Board of Psychodrama (AABP) that stand for, and promote the development of mutual relationships and a vibrant community of likeminded folk.

The idea of the eJournal is to bring to life the experiences and ideas of its members, colleagues and friends that is relevant to the theory, application and research of Psychodrama, including sociometry, sociodrama, role training, group work, group psychotherapy and role theory. We want the journal to be of personal value to our members. The aim therefore is to reflect the emergent in our field of psychodrama and to provide a unique forum for our trainees and practitioners to express themselves. We value new writers, fresh ideas, short essays, poems and papers.

As in psychodrama, a mirror brings to light 'what is' before us; a mirror reveals, providing us with a perspective of ourselves previously unseen. To our readers, we invite you to look closely at what you read, and note what arises in you. If anyone wants to share their experiences, or what they identify with, we will gladly forward your responses to the writers, or if you want to engage in a written dialogue on a topic, we welcome this as well. Surplus reality serves as doorway into another reality.

'The Mirror' is a metaphor for seeing, and a portal to new worlds and perspectives.

Sue Daniel

Content Editor

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Letter from the Guest Editor



ONE MORNING, a few months ago, I was making myself some buttered toast and vegemite, and suddenly I felt happy. The room looked brighter and the objects on the kitchen bench clearer. I had the distinct feeling of being uplifted. On reflection, I realised I had come out of something, I wasn't even aware of. Then I began thinking about Covid, and the two previous years including the intense lockdown in Melbourne. My thoughts turned to the fact

that by living 'in and through' this period of quarantine, I had adapted to the situation, and narrowed my focus to surviving, creating anew in order to keep working, indeed as had everybody else. Now, I was out, psychologically. My Covid coat, my protective skin had dropped away. There was no imminent danger. Over the toast, my spirit had lifted and I sensed a feeling of expansion in my body.

Since then, I have been processing some of the things that have happened to us all. There is a grief, of things lost, people too, surroundings different; a cultural change. Life is not the same, it is remarkably different. There is no going back to 'normal', for we are all irretrievably changed. Dare I say we are more real. Certainly, we have developed new roles, old ones may have dropped away, or, reappeared. The political environment transformed. We had a change of government in Australia. Women rose up, Independents flourished, the two-party system was severely shaken. There is a revolution. People have had enough, they are voting, protesting, giving voice to what they see and feel and know, is wrong. There is new life.

Zoom has opened up a whole new way of living and connecting. The world has become smaller, more intimate. The articles and notes from members in this 19th eJournal reflect a plethora of experiences and an indomitable spirit of spontaneity and creativity despite the current war, economic conditions and coronavirus.

Sue Daniel

My Journey with Grief and Cats

Carol Gill



My journey with Grief and Cats

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Dylan Thomas

Preface

This paper is about changes in my life because I lost people and cats that I love. It is both a celebration of my closest relationships and a reflection on how losing them has affected me. Cats have been my comforters through major life changes, but they have also become those who I have loved and lost. I have taken on many roles through my life journey and so have the people in my life.

Introduction

This paper is about significant roles and role relationships I have encountered in my experiences of grief and love. Specifically, it looks at coping roles that have helped me deal with loss and change and psychodrama that has helped me reflect on social and psychodramatic roles in my social atom. I show how I have taken on complementary roles with people in my social atom and how their changing roles have influenced my own. Grief takes its toll, but it also means that I have loved and connected and that this journey has helped me learn and grow. To express my experience more richly I include poetry that has touched me in my life journey and photos of my life companions and teachers.

CATS HAVE ALWAYS comforted me. A significant early memory is moving into a new house when I was 8 years old. It was a time of significant change and I recall comforting our family cat so she could settle in better. I think I was comforting myself and role reversing with our cat. I was a reassuring friend to my cat and, through role reversal, a comforter to myself, developing my progressive role of 'tender carer'. Many of my psychodramas have been resolved by me cuddling a cat concretised in the form of a leopard patterned furry cushion.

Lucky



A more recent memory is giving permission for my youngest daughter's cat 'Lucky' to be put down. He was 19 years old and suffering badly. I don't often cry but I did on this occasion. We were 'merciful lovers' of our 19-year-old boy, and grievers of our beloved pet. Our cat Lucky had been a companion to us

all...my eldest daughter had been ill for most of her teenage years and he had been her constant companion and a source of comfort for us all.

What a responsibility it is to end a life but when I waited for my 86-year-old mother to die of cancer I welcomed her death. I cried for the next 2 years and still do. Her suffering and my own at watching her was unbearable. We had reversed social roles in the months before her death. I the mother and she a dependent, but she had earned that right. I became an attentive carer. She became a trusting, ill child. It was a struggle to embrace this role reversal.

Mother O' Mine

If I were hanged on the highest hill,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!
I know whose love would follow me still,
Mother o' mine, O mother o' mine!

Rudyard Kipling

My mother took on the role of 'withdrawn from the world hider' and 'lonely contemplator' in the weeks before her death. I took on the role of 'deeply suffering griever', 'terrified care giver', and 'long suffering carer'. I was terrified of my caring role which involved administering complex medications and caring duties. I was also terrified of death and the day I would have to let my mother go for the rest of my life. However, my needs could not be prioritised.

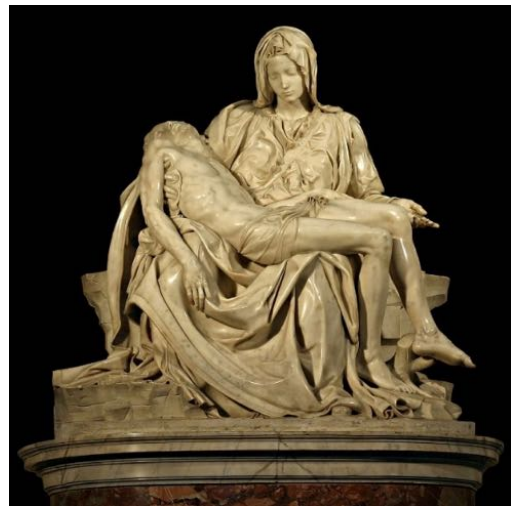
My mother wanted to be a 'self-focussed griever' and 'relisher of her long life' and there was no room for my 'devastated griever' role. It is impossible to replace a mother. I took on a number of coping and retrogressive roles and maybe progressive ones. For instance, I often mentioned returning to work in Australia



– it helped me to cope with an intolerable present moment...camping on my mother's couch for weeks with a total focus on my withdrawn and needy mother. I had no private space to lick my wounds. She frequently dismissed me with a hand wave – I was a personal assistant and my own needs were totally overridden by the needs of others. I was told to take a day off by my anxious relatives as my wellbeing deteriorated but I couldn't settle to do this – my mother was dying and going on a day trip seemed impossible.

Within days of me leaving to return to Australia, my mother's health deteriorated, and I chose to return to the UK. I am not sure whether I was a 'responsible escapee' but I know that this was a coping role. Perhaps I was a 'lover of self in the face of Inexorable distress' or 'connector with myself', and 'connector with my social atom overseas'.

Mother of Christ



Life is full of changes and I often act them out on the psychodramatic stage. A magical place where I can act out the past and present and multiple futures and gain new interpretations or ways of seeing. I remember in one drama I was the mother of Christ who was taken down from the cross. I could not replicate the peaceful face of the statue...I wanted to tear my clothes and scream at the loss. I'm still angry at Madonna for being so calm and at her creator for giving her a calm face when she should "rage, rage against the dying of the light" (Dylan Thomas, 1947).

This was not my experience of grief with any I have lost. However, my mother did not seem to rage – she went to bed and wouldn't get up again for 6 weeks. We thought she was near death and she went to a hospice to die but they resurrected her. She came kicking and screaming back into life, awoken from her reverie as a 'reluctant liver of life'. She died a month later.

Remembering Father

As I hold up a mirror now to these experiences I realise I hate loss. My father was lost to me when I was 9 years old. I loved him and the loss was significant. He had cancer and died a year later. At 9 years old I was a 'lost, sad child' and a 'silent grieving child'. He was a 'committed father'.



He lives on through me and in my children. Katherine, my eldest daughter, has red hair. He had red hair so my father is in my daughter as well. I was angry that he died so young and I lost him as a child. He missed most of my life's milestones. My mother said he died with an angry look on his face. He was just 43 years old. I hid my anger for many years...you could say and do anything to me and I would smile or even laugh. I was a 'compliant actor' hiding a 'raging volcano'. I don't want that role any more.

Babushka Katryna

Babushka Katryna is 3 years old. She was a breeding cat for the rare and expensive Siberian breed but did not have a good temperament. Apparently, she hasn't been

abused. The breeder said she was born this way...when she was a kitten she was normal but changed when she was moved into a cattery after breeding. She flew down from Brisbane in a cage next to a Greyhound puppy. She is my Covid cat and took up residence in my study. We were reclusive together during quarantine.



She was a 'resistant recluse'. After a month of her hiding in my study I thought of giving her back. I was feeding and caring for her, but she still wouldn't stop hiding.

We spent 12-16 hours a day together for nearly 2 months.

Slowly she started to come out of hiding as a 'reluctant socialiser'. She started to play most nights on her own and with me.

I wave a feather wand around and she chases it. She curls up on a \$10 stand I bought from Pets Circle. She has started to approach me with a 'sniff and run' tactic. I can now approach her and stroke her. When she is under my desk I brush her and she becomes a 'furry, purry, roly' pussycat.

However, if I try to pick her up she spits at me. I'm glad she does because she would have

"This too shall pass"

been too scared to do that before. She has strengthened the role of 'confident playmate' with me but she hides when anyone comes to the house...she hears them well before I do...long before they ever reach the front door. She is a 'self-protecting vigilant hider' and we became 'warm companions'.

I think Katryna is a mirror for me. I am scared, and I have been hurt and I'm scared of being hurt again. I have compassion for Katryna...she is just scared, and I think she's been lonely and abandoned for a long time. The breeder wrote her off as having a temperament that makes her not valuable and when she was no longer suitable for breeding she was given to me because she couldn't be sold. She has value as she is, not just for what she can do for others. I also almost wrote her off but with care and love she is coming around and she is finding happiness. Sometimes she sits near me just to be near me. We are 'silent companions', separate but together.

Others have wanted her to move quickly...they try to force her to be picked up. They are 'critical expectors' of certain behaviours and 'non-understanding handlers', but I don't want to cuddle an animal that doesn't want to be cuddled by me. I want her to move towards me of her own free will. I want to be trust – worthy. I am setting the scene for Kat. I am trying to make her feel safe and I am playing the role of

'trusted, patient, companion'. Sometimes she is very responsive and others less so. I am walking with her at her pace and accepting her as she is as a 'patient carer'.

Conclusion

I understand that change is hard for everyone including cats. Everyone needs their own time to adjust and heal. They need to be comforted on their life journey. This paper has shared my journey with grief and pussy cats. At my age grief is a part of my journey and cats have been too. There is no way to avoid grief and change, knowing there are endings is important to living life well. Life is a moving feast and I have a new role of 'accepting liver of life'. Life is indeed a 'wild and precious' journey. I know that both good and bad stuff will pass and that grief is a consequence that starts sharp and softens with time and pussy cats.

Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?

Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?

Mary Oliver

All Hands on Deck!

Sue Daniel



ROBERTO CAME ONTO the stage and said, "I heard this morning that Russia is planning to invade... (he named his country) after the Ukraine. This is the last time you will see me, so this is goodbye." He quickly returned to his seat. There was dead silence in the room.

Given the nature of my colleague's announcement, my warm up died. Nothing I had prepared could follow now. His warm up was such that I couldn't imagine what I would do next. There was an online audience of 330 people who knew absolutely nothing, as we in Vienna, also knew nothing about what had brought this about.

I found myself slowly walking to the front of the stage, and looking directly into the lens of the camera, I spoke firstly to the onscreen audience. I said, "This is very shocking, my heart is beating very fast and I am feeling a lot. I can't proceed with what I was going to do, and, I'm going to ask our friend to come back up on the stage." I then moved across in front of the audience, in situ, and invited Roberto to come back onto the stage. "Come on," I said to him, "Come up here with me". He left his chair immediately and joined me. We stood together side by side and I held his hand. I looked into the audience of 20 and asked

them, "How close do you feel to Roberto right now? Come up on the stage and place yourselves how close you feel in relation to him." They *all* got up and came on stage, and the chief of the technicians joined them. Roberto's oldest friend was standing next to him and I noticed he was very moved. I asked him to express himself to Roberto (now, our protagonist). He did, crying all the time. I asked him to breathe and take his time, there was no hurry. The others were also crying. I asked each of them, one by one to share with him. At times, I turned my head to the camera and made comments, either mirroring what someone had said, or making a comment here and there – such as, please note your breathing, please breathe in, and out - so that the online participants would maintain their connection with us.

During this time more of the story emerged, the declaration of Putin's plan, that had been posted online, had since been taken down, but as several people said later, it had its desired effect - to frighten and to threaten. Our protagonist relaxed little by little, moved by the people around him, responding to the love and care that they all expressed to him.

What you have just read was what happened in the beginning of my keynote sociodrama session entitled, **ALL HANDS ON DECK!** for the European Association for Psychotherapy (EAP), 30th Anniversary (Hybrid) Congress, on Sunday, 13 March 2022, in Vienna, Austria. The theme was '*The Hope of Psychotherapy for our Endangered World*'.


Who was to know how true this would turn out to be! But then tele is an amazing thing...

To set the scene: It was day two of the 2-day conference. Over 350 people were in attendance. Twenty people were in the audience, and a bank of technicians including camera crew and sound engineers were behind and left of them. Six sound proofed booths, with two French, Ukraine and German translators in each, were at the side. Three hundred and thirty people were online, including many of the keynote speakers. Whilst the participants onscreen could hear and see me, I was unable to hear them. They were, however, able to send texts via the chat. My colleague, ready to receive their scrolling texts on her laptop, sat comfortably in a gilt armchair on the left of the stage.

I had been invited to Vienna to conduct – in person, an action oriented sociodrama, it was to be the only action session in the conference. However, because of the above I had to throw my original plan away. The audience member, Roberto (not his real name) had asked the conference hostess could he make a short announcement before this session. She told me this was going to happen just as I was organising myself onstage, double checking the sound from my roving mike with the technicians. What was I to say? It's a conference, and all sorts of things happen in conferences. I stood to the side with my colleague in the armchair. Shortly after, the hostess arrived and announced that Roberto

had a brief announcement to make and then I would conduct my session...

The psychodramatic event I first described in this paper took place in the real world, in a conference, unplanned, and became the start of my session. And as I said to all the participants at the end of the session, "Psychodramatists work in the 'here and now.'"



Psychodramatists
work in the 'here
and now'

During Roberto's drama, one of his auxiliaries became greatly affected by the theme of the war, so I assisted her to be in touch with her deep-seated feelings - about being Viennese, and being conceived during the 2nd world war, when Vienna was being bombed. Again, we worked with the group members around her, each taking roles that were healing for her, and the sharing continued and deepened for all on the stage. I made sure that I kept my contact with the online conference participants from time to time, while directing onstage: "Look around you, note where you are now, feel where your bottom is on your chair, feel your feet on the ground, and choose something that represents how you are feeling right now. It might be a particular object, or you might be attracted by a certain colour or texture of something." Many online participants were texting their responses. The chat had become viral. A technician later told me he had never seen so many comments on a chat.

The drama over, the group took their seats. But I still had a job to do. The next step in the morning's proceedings was for the online participants to be organised into 27 groups of twelve. They had the task of discussing the conference theme, "*The hope of psychotherapy for our endangered world*", and to share their personal responses to the drama with each other. My task was to lead this event and create sociodramatic sculptures from their responses on the chat. My colleague was to read these out, reflecting the general sense from the online participants. Those in our physical audience were to meet together and share. The groups had half an hour to do this. I asked that each group choose a scribe, and for this person to be the writer for the chat.

Back on stage, we proceeded as planned, and as the themes and ideas were read out, members of the physical audience came up on stage, becoming auxiliary ego's for the online audience. And so, we created a sculpture with the words from the chat. At times the sculpture changed form, people shifted their roles, tried out new roles and role reversed with each other. The content primarily came from the online audience. Responses centred on what they thought necessary for a connected world:

KINDNESS...

CLEAR SEEING

LISTENING...

LOVE

RESPECT...

CARE

OPEN HEARTED INTERESTED HUMANS.


In the end we had a guardian angel with big wings, standing on a chair, protecting the mortals in the sculpture.

Discussion

Current events, namely Covid and the war in the Ukraine, rudely serve to remind us that we are all in the same boat and that we all share space on the same planet. Hence the title of my conference session. Humans, especially when in the same situation, need one another to survive, and to thrive. From the year 'dot' the connections we make with one another are what has enabled this. The anthropologist,

Margaret Mead said that "The first sign of civilisation in an ancient culture was a femur (a thighbone) that had been broken and healed. If an animal broke its femur, it wasn't able to survive due to predators and an inability to move." Mead stated, "The

broken leg that has healed, is evidence that someone has taken the time to stay with the one who fell, has bound it up and carried the person to safety and has tended them through recovery. Helping someone else through difficulty is where civilisation starts." (Mind Journal, Ira Byock).



The sculpture
is created
With the words
from the chat

Sociodrama and Axiodrama

The session in Vienna was a psychosociodrama. Sociodrama is the drama of the *socius*, the society, the people. Whilst 'the psychodrama' focuses on the individual person in relation to their inner and outer world, 'the sociodrama' is about groups and the relationship between groups, our social roles and the relationship between these. Axiodrama, a form of sociodrama, focusses on the study, exploration and application of standards and characteristics; including our respective values, morals, ethics, ideals, principles and beliefs. These can often be held tenaciously, or may be used as guidelines to for living. We therefore are prone to hold these things in high esteem and respect people who have similar standards to us. These values and views are often founded through a socialisation process whereby our family, including our ancestors, loved ones, friends and groups (our cultures) are the primary influencers. These values can and do change over time due to life experiences and events. These include education, reading and music. They also include heartbreak, wars, unfair deaths, disappointments, and falling in love. We can also alter our views through training in a field of work, friendships and group influences and the wider social network. We are constantly growing and changing. There are many agents and channels of influence, including situations that occur in everyday life that touch us deeply, and serve in us making

new choices or coming to new realisations. There is an old saying, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks." However, old dogs become wise, and humans, aren't dogs.

In the congress in Vienna, that March day, we worked in both the physical and virtual space of the congress, and found an adequate response to an unexpected challenge.

The dinosaurs were not aware of the imminent dangers of distinction, but we are. I don't think we, the people, in our respective places of living, want to make war with each other, or want to see the demise of the world. It is a handful of people who want and decide on this.

The hope for the world is in each one's hands, beyond countries. We are all humans in need of connection, friendship and love. It is only *in the moment* that we can do, or be, in a way that brings about this, not tomorrow, not yesterday but now. What we are not going to do, is be silent. We are going to speak up, be heard, be seen, and reach out.

Let this be the revolution.

Concluding Remarks:

In 1969, Jacob Levi Moreno, wrote the *Magic Charter of Psychodrama*. I share it with you today as a beacon of light for us to reflect upon:

THE MAGIC CHARTER OF

PSYCHODRAMA

A Simple Way of Restoring Harmony and Peace in a World of Unrest and Tension

Psychodrama is a way to change the world in the HERE AND NOW using the fundamental rules of imagination without falling into the abyss of illusion, hallucination or delusion.

The main barriers and challenges in the search for understanding, truth, and joy in our world are:

1. Sex
2. Race
3. Age and Ageing
4. Disease
5. Death
6. Fear and Frustration
7. Language
8. Animals
9. Objects, such as food, money, means of transportation, and computers
10. Human limitations and lack of unity with the cosmos

The human brain is the vehicle of imagination. Psychodrama, in training the imagination, overcomes the differences, which hinder communication between the sexes, between the races, the generations, the sick and the healthy, between people and animals, between people and objects, between the living and the dead. The simple methods of psychodrama give us courage, return to us our lost unity with the universe, and re-establish the continuity of life.

The basic concepts of psychodrama are:

1. The warm-up, preparing for an act
2. Spontaneity and creativity
3. The encounter
4. Simulation
5. Concretization and acting out
6. The mirror
7. The double
8. Sensitivity training
9. Role playing and role reversal
10. Surplus reality

By means of these methods a man can play the part of a woman and a woman can play the part of a man; a black man can be a white man and a white man can be a black man; an old person can take the part of a child and a child the part of an old person; a man can be an animal; an object can be a man.

By means of these methods a healthy person may live more effectively, a sick person may learn to bear his misery, and the dead may continue to play a part in our lives. Fear is dispelled and human limitations are stretched. The astronaut becomes a psychonaut exploring the spaces of the mind.

This is the way psychodrama proceeds. Resolve not to render lip service to it but to live by it.

Copyright Dr. J. L. Moreno, 1969



Preface

*Demonic voices residing within me - mimic the criticisms and abuse of the past,
My body stubbornly reacts to the stored memories with rigidity; freezing in the moment...
I wonder what would unleash the hidden me, freeing my soul from this knotted web??
I suckled on the nurturance that came my way from my healer, my body resorting to calmness...
And yet, I knew I had to find my answers, as, the love and care did not come from within...*

DURING THE PAST decade, I had realized that in order to grow further, I needed to heal my past traumatic experiences as completely as possible. Since I began my psychotherapy training 12 years ago, I went through many processes, therapy sessions, introspection, working on my trauma, and had come a long way. My body though, still had stored memories that needed to be worked upon. Each attempt at it in the past used to take me into a retrogressive role of 'frozen in fear', and I would then become an 'utterly helpless and disempowered child'. No matter how much my therapist tried, all I sought in those moments was a hiding place, an experience, that would take me away from the demonic voices, pain, hurt and fear. In those times, my body would feel like a live wire, not only damaging myself further, but also having the potential to hurt my therapist. Receiving nurturance from my therapist proved to be the only calming source that would eventually bring me back to functionality. Effectively, my healing source would be external. As much as I craved healing, the fixed retrogressive role would not allow any movement. This stuckness infuriated me, increasing my guilt, shame, and

self-badgering. It made me want to run miles away from facing myself, others and the world at large.

In my work as a therapist, I witnessed many of my clients struggling with the same issue, and my resolve of finding an alternate way got stronger. A few years back, I learnt the concept and approach of *Inner Bonding*, which focuses on healing the child within (The authentic self which went in to hiding in childhood in order to protect itself from pain), and becoming an integrated self. I instantly warmed up to it. I started applying this concept to myself first and later extended it to my clients. The experience of this approach helped us to transform from self-badgering to becoming compassionate towards ourselves. It assisted us to take ownership of our 'here and now' reality as healthy adults, and brought remarkable changes in the way we related with ourselves. We began by becoming aware of our hidden selves, then accepting different aspects within us and finally integrating them. Not only was there a change in the pace of our respective processes, the quality of the interaction between these different aspects of ourselves changed markedly.

However, work with our bodies still remained a challenge. Every attempt to work on healing mine or my client's body would bring the therapy process down to a snail's pace. A nagging question occupied the background space in my mind – "If the body requires healing from a traumatic event, yet any approach toward the event takes the person into a fixed retrogressive role (one which does not keep the functional adult-self-available), how or in what way could healing be possible?"

This was the time when I was introduced to psychodrama. I believe this to be my cosmic blessing. My experience in a one-on-one session with Sue Daniel as my director and M as my auxiliary, sowed the seeds for a breakthrough. My body, though engulfed physically in my fixed retrogressive role, for the first time, allowed partial functionality in me. The experience of my body responding in this new way revived my hope of finding ways to heal traumas stored in the body. I joined the training program of Pil (Psychodrama in India) and also attended as many psychodrama workshops as possible, conducted by Sue in India.

In the meantime, I kept reading as much as I could about Inner bonding and Psychodrama. I came across an article about miniature structure– *Integrating Morenian Role Theory and Cognitive Behaviour Therapy with Babushka Dolls: An example of Healthy Role Development in Individual Counseling* by

Jo-Anne Colwell, unpublished paper, Psychodrama Institute of Melbourne, 2010. Something touched my cords deeply!!! Slowly, my creative mind started expanding on the question of "What next??" My search was for guidance, and understanding.

Simultaneously, I shared my thoughts with a few of my clients about how I wished to explore and experiment with the miniature structure. I am and will forever be grateful to all of them for their enthusiasm and willingness to go ahead and work with me. We started the sessions with less intense work to get a better understanding of it. What manifested from this journey with my clients has been magnificent! This paper here is my attempt to share my journey so far, with miniature structures with all my readers. I hope it helps to enrich you personally and gives you something that you could use in your work.

Thanking you, Sarita Shah

Acknowledgements

Through all my struggles, it was my faith in my therapist, M, and the healing process that kept me going forward in my journey. Words will never justify my endless gratitude towards her for having faith in me, forever standing by me, encouraging me, nurturing me, healing me and never giving up on me. Every learning, every experience would keep alive in me the desire to find a way whenever I experienced lows. There are people who come as blessings in

our lives, I believe it is God's way to help us keep the faith and the life in us alive. I also feel deep gratitude and thankfulness to Sue who, during one of my supervisions with her in Ahmedabad, suggested that I write a paper on 'Miniature Structures'. She also told me that there was very little literature on the use of the miniature structure. I am forever indebted to her for being so generous and kind with her guidance and encouragement. The reason why I attempted this paper is due to her suggestion. My experiences of M and Sue as my supervisors, teachers, guides and mentors are most precious to me; I keep imbibing my learnings in my personal and work roles. My special thanks also goes to my colleague Radhika Ghanekar for designing the cover page. Once again, I thank all my clients who have participated in my work with miniature structures and given permission for me to use parts of my work with them in this paper.

Section Layout

I have divided this paper into three different sections. In the first section, I share about my connection to the miniatures, and how I developed new personal and professional roles through this structure. The second section is about the work I have done on myself as a protagonist using miniatures. The final section is about how I have used miniatures with my clients, my purpose behind choosing miniature forms in some of my work, and my experience and learning through it.

SECTION 1

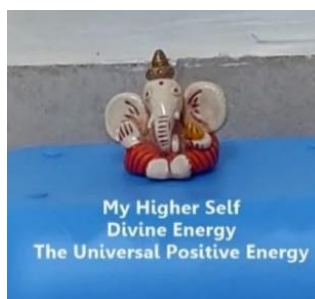
The new personal and professional roles that developed in me

Through my quest to know more about the miniature structure I developed the role of 'keen searcher of mini figurines'. I immediately bought two sets of babushka dolls online, and got into the role of 'enthusiastic collector of varied figurines'. I went onto buying human figures, sets of animals, birds, insects, pleasant and demonic looking face masks and super hero figures. My system was a radar, looking out for things that I could add to my collection - the 'spontaneous child' in me was alive and kicking! While driving, if I saw anything that was being sold on the sides of streets, I would stop to buy them!! My excitement was not only about adding them to my collection, it extended to building a relationship with them! I conversed with the figurines and allowed my mind to fantasise how clients would choose them to represent their internal worlds. By doing so, it brought out the roles of 'imaginary conversationalist' and 'impassioned fantasiser' in me! The figurines became a part of not only my professional but my personal world as well!!! For example, the smallest penguin became my inner child and Lord Ganesha, my higher energy - the divine energy – the Universal Positive Energy that has been my survival source. The big penguin was chosen as my mentor and my therapist and my healer and I found myself conversing with all of them, about my thoughts and

feelings! The demonic masks I collected became my source of releasing my negative energies. Two of the masks have lights around the eye holes, making them look really mean and angry. However scary they seem, they represent how I experience the demons inside me, and serve the purpose of making me face them! My imagination and creative juices kept flowing with the various sets, and numerous psychodramatic roles came alive in me, such as, the 'excited figure collector', the 'enthusiastic conversationalist' with the miniatures, the 'mono psychodramatist', the

'creative fantasiser', the 'curious contemplator', the 'avid photographer', the 'creative, spontaneous child' and the 'thoughtful arranger'. At present, I am mulling over designing a sociodrama session, using my collection of domestic and wild animals, birds and insects. In this, the participants would be asked to choose which they identify the most with, and then their drama would be about exploring the various influences on their social world at large. I can go on writing about my enthusiasm but instead I am sharing some pictures of my collection here.

My Mini Collection



As I was collecting these miniature forms, I started thinking about how I would use them. I took guidance from both the paper on Babushka dolls as well as readings on play therapy to create my own format of using the miniature structure with my clients. As my work unfolded, my initial role of 'working model-maker', through the potency of its impact, became more confirmed in me. Unexpectedly, the role both firmed and expanded through my *action*.

Selection of the miniatures

I started visualizing how the selection of specific figurines would have a specific significance in the drama. For example, the selection of each figurine representing an aspect, person or thing, would aid the warm up in my protagonist. It would provide a clearer understanding both to the protagonist and me about the protagonist's surplus reality regarding that event, the relationship and the significance it would hold in the present moment. All my thinking around the importance of the selection became more confirmed as I worked with clients, because each form represented the appearance, a characteristic demeanour and specific expressions of what the protagonist wanted to concretise. The size of the human figurines that were chosen for themselves and their auxiliaries, the colour of the clothes, the height difference and the distance at which they were placed gave form to their surplus reality on the stage.

Imagining working with the miniatures

I further imagined how the protagonist would set the scene using miniatures. I would display the entire range of super heroes, angel masks, angry masks, animal figures, human figures, cartoons characters in one corner of my therapy room. From these, the protagonist could choose figurines that were the closest to their reality. The scenes would be largely set on a small carpet. After this, the protagonist

would describe what they saw, and then start their drama after stating what they would like to do. Through visualising this, my role of 'miniature drama-producer' became clearer.

When I went ahead in action, my experience showed me that in miniature psychodrama, the protagonist largely sat in the Mirror position throughout the drama. That is, they were outside the drama, watching it. This Mirror place, selecting the forms, setting of stage and describing the lay out, facilitated the protagonist to experience empowerment vis a vis the event. It also helped me, in the role of director, understand the scenario very clearly.

Throughout the drama, the protagonist sat in the mirror position and held different figures as they took up specific roles in the enactment of their drama. By holding a particular mini form, the protagonist was able to start dialoguing with the respective aspects of themselves. They then sat back in the mirror position to look at what took place, identified what they were feeling about it, and able to decide whether they would want to do something about it. Being in the mirror position enabled them to unhook themselves from any retrogressive role, enabling them to be 'clear seers' and choose their next move, whether it was confronting, replacing or dialoguing with it, from an empowered place. This experience, especially when working with childhood abuse and trauma, *I observed*, not only enabled catharsis, and confrontation but also helped

each protagonist to feel an immense amount of safety. It changed the power equation vis a vis the abuser or the trauma. Both the miniatures and the mirror position, served to maintain the protagonist in a powerful and progressive role, where they felt in control. As director, I mostly took the role of a double.

SECTION 2

I present here some of my work with miniatures, beginning with my own psychodrama piece, followed by the work that I did with my clients in Section 3. In all the cases, I was able to put my working model into action and we all experienced the potency of the miniature scenes. I have also attached the feedback of the clients in the appendix.

My use of miniature forms as a protagonist

I shall begin sharing my work by presenting my own piece with miniatures. I am mostly a background person, preferring to be in a shadow than have any sort of spot light on me or become visible to others. Some of it may be inborn, some of it due to my past experiences of criticism, and the shaming that came my way. When Sue suggested writing a paper, one aspect of me part was ignited with enthusiasm, given my passion towards my miniature structure. But the aspect that fears visibility and is petrified of criticism, made the task humongous. I started mulling over, penning parts and pieces here and there, but just like other times, the thought of becoming

visible to others, sapped me of all energy. The struggle was on.

It so happened that at this time, we were practising psychodrama in our Pil training group. One of my colleagues was warmed up to direct me, with my miniatures. I instantly knew I would like to do this. When I concretised my inner world, the arial view was 'as if' I was in a mirror position. I found myself in the role of 'clear seer'. I quickly saw that my protective self (wounded self) was exhausted dealing with the voices that I have internalised (my critics). Though an aspect of me felt very safe now with Sue and M, my protective self was still threatened by being visible to others. Through the role reversal with my inner child, (my 'creative self'), I realised that she was wishing that I work on my paper and present it to the others. I could experience the swings in me; zooming in from the mirror place, I could see how I would slip into a retrogressive role (freezing in my body) while being in the role of the 'wounded self'. The wounded self would experience the demonic voices hovering over the inner child whom she was protecting. I remember my director being in the role of a double, and my fellow trainees taking up roles of 'warm companions', all encouraging me and asking me to keep breathing. My 'wounded self' put a condition to my 'adult, functional self'. "Only if you get rid of these voices, will I allow you to present your work to others". My 'adult self' empathised with the 'wounded self'. This awareness brought out a new role in me;

the 'believer in the higher self'. I ended my drama by dialoguing with 'Lord Ganesha/The divine Energy/ The Universal Positive Energy' to guide me further.

My internal battle is still on but since this drama, my role of 'frozen with fear of criticism' moved from 'fixed' to 'diminishing' in the retrogressive role category. The entire drama helped me to enact the role of initiator, by taking the first step and sharing this fear with M. She encouraged me to start sharing some aspects of what I have penned with her and experience the safety in my relationship with her. This would help me progress further. I, meanwhile, negotiated with the 'wounded self', and started writing this paper, not with the perspective of presenting it to people at large, but to experience what I can bring out. My 'creative inner-child', feeling extremely excited with this freedom, kept playing around with the photos, editing them, arranging them and enjoying the look of them. My 'wounded self' kept an eye on how much am I sharing, and with whom. Me, as of now, am just focused on compiling things. Work in progress...

SECTION 3

My experience of using miniature forms with my clients

When do I use miniature forms with clients? As mentioned previously, one of the most prominent reasons for choosing miniature work is when I believe clients have a desire to

heal their childhood trauma, or, when they have gotten into retrogressive or stuck roles in their previous work; not being able to stay connected with their 'adult, functional-self'. I also use it with clients who 'move against' or 'away' from their own emotions as a way of coping. Drama with miniatures helps them to 'move towards' difficult feelings in a manner that doesn't overwhelm them. The psychodramatic miniature structure enables the client to have an aerial and empowered view of their surplus reality, retain the functional adult through being in the mirror position, with the result that they develop an objective understanding of their traumatic experience. This objective view unhooks them from the retrogressive role, enabling them to be spontaneous and creative in making choices of how, and what would help them heal. It further helps them to confront and express themselves fully. In the case of abuse, the power equation between them and the abuser is altered. They are able to maintain and expand their empowered progressive roles throughout their drama.

Client 1: Work on freeing and healing the child from molestation trauma through a present time event

This client had been a victim of molestation in her childhood. We had been working on her core shame and low esteem, both of which had been hugely influenced by those experiences, apart from other reasons. One day, she requested an emergency session, as

she had witnessed one of her uncles masturbating in her living room the previous night. This had triggered her. Upon sharing this with one of her close friends, her friend suggested that she confront him with his inappropriate behaviour. She was deeply shaken up by the experience and wanted to process the whole event to understand the happenings in her internal world.

I suggested that we could either work with the miniature forms to concretize the whole event or ask if any of my colleagues were free to be auxiliaries for her psychodrama. She preferred using the miniatures as she didn't want others there. I felt some fear in her. Though she had confronted her uncle, she seemed to be disconnected from the reality of having stood up for herself. Previous sessions with her had brought to the adult self. I sensed that the miniature forms would help her feel safe to concretise the previous night's event and may help the inner child to experience her adult self as her 'protector and confronter of the abuser'.

She had previously shown a desire to heal herself of her childhood molestation trauma and free herself from a victim place. Therefore, I saw today's session as an opportunity to do so. I believed that using miniature forms would enhance the process by preventing her from slipping into the old fixed retrogressive role while being in the role of 'the child' at the time she experienced the trauma of molestation. This had happened in past sessions when she had attempted to heal herself from the trauma.

She could concretise the previous evening's event on the stage, and have an arial view of her internal world (inner child roles) by staying in the mirror role. This, I thought, may help her to make her choices for further action.

My internal process as a director before the drama

A part of me knew that this was going to be my first miniature drama as a director, connected with confronting a molestation abuser. Though this client had actually confronted him in reality, I was not sure what the drama would unfold about her childhood abuse, if at all. I was nervous, as the event was very fresh in her, and I was unsure of what may be the emotional charge vis-a-vis the event. It was going to test my belief about miniatures and I was quite positive, in spite of being nervous, that it would work, and I was gearing up to action time. To deal with my nervousness, I recollected the words Sue often says, "Messy is beautiful", and also I got in touch with how my intuitive self (my tele) has helped to be with my clients. While driving to Maanas (where I have my rooms), I was listing the steps in my mind of what I can do to provide my client safety. What techniques would prevent her from going into a fixed retrogressive role, in order to keep her in a progressive, functional and empowered adult role.

The stage setting with miniature forms and some scenes

We began the drama by her setting up the stage, putting her bedroom, where she did her work the previous night, and the living room where she confronted her uncle. She concretised her cousin who was there in her bedroom, placed herself and her 'inner child', and chose a phone to represent the chat she had with her friend that encouraged her to confront her uncle. Before the drama began, I asked her if she would like to create a safe space, or bring someone here. She chose Captain America (a super hero) as her double.

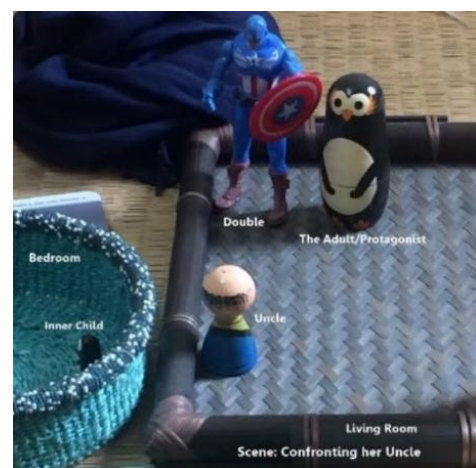


The miniature drama

From the mirror position, after enacting the scene, she experienced the disgust she had felt when she had witnessed her uncle masturbating in her living room. She realised how this had taken her into a role of 'frozen while she spoke with the friend, who had the mirror role thus helped her to experience that she can fill her life with positivity from now on.

encouraged her to confront him. Before she proceeded to confront her uncle in the drama, she decided to converse with her 'inner child', to make her feel safe. She asked her to stay in the bedroom, helping her understand that she (as an Adult) will confront him, take a stand for them both and take care of her. This was one of the most profound progressive experiences for me with this client till now. In her earlier work, when she faced her inner child, her adult-self had become a 'fearful freezer'.

The protagonist then concretised her inner world to work with her frown fearful self. While she had previously felt helpless and disempowered, being in the mirror position enabled the 'adult self' to take on the role of 'compassionate empathiser' towards her child-self. She was able to converse with her and help her to experience her presence as an adult protector. This enabled an integration of her roles. The drama concluded when she brought her loved ones and well-wishers into her living room, after she confronted her uncle.



The drama ended with her in this progressive role. Her inner child and her adult self had developed a trust and compassion toward each other. She concluded the work by expressing a desire to work on her parents' absence in those times of childhood molestation. What occurred in the drama first was a catharsis of abreaction, where she expressed her anger, disappointment and hurt towards her uncle. As she continued the drama, dialoguing between her adult and inner child, she realized that she freezes when she is experiencing helplessness or fear, and is then not able to hold on to, her adult self. This profound moment of realization was a catharsis of integration for her.

Realizations shared with me post the session in her following session

Later, in our conversation, she shared how safe she felt in herself. This was a major progressive role development in this client. The drama helped her experience herself in the role of a healthy, protective and empowered adult while confronting her uncle. She said this was an experience of a great deal of relief and pride for her!

My Experience as a Director

Using the miniature and enacting the drama from the mirror place enabled this client to remain in her role of 'compassionate adult' and empathise with her inner child. It was one of those moments that made my belief stronger

about working with my miniature structure, especially when the client becomes stuck or frozen vis a vis trauma or abuse. However, I remained alert and vigilant of myself during her drama, not to make it my agenda to help her 'adult-self' to bond with her 'inner-child'; And to keep her goal in mind of wanting to process the previous day's event. I also maintained my role of 'cautious observer' throughout this drama, keeping a check for any signs of my protagonist going into a fixed retrogressive role, by encouraging and reminding her to breathe and share what was she experiencing during each role that she took. As her double, I encouraged her to act when she found it difficult to continue in the drama.

The drama went on for almost two hours and though I knew it was extending too long, I sensed some kind of closure and integration happening in the protagonist and so did not stop the drama where she completed her confrontation with her uncle. I periodically asked her if she would like to do anything further or was it a good place to stop, but no, she came up with something more to do. I was conflicted because I knew my protagonist was feeling exhausted and yet needed to continue. The drama was not finished. There needed to be a completion. At that time, I realized I needed to work on this to understand what would be the healthier thing to do. The protagonist was completely exhausted after the drama, but I experienced a great sense of relief in her and the integration between her

various roles. However I was also very relieved and happy that the drama ended with her being in a progressive role.

Client 2: Work on grieving her loss of her father, and trauma healing

The client expressed a desire to experience the loss of her father and grieve. She was 5-6 years old at the time of her father's death. Since then, she had assumed the role of a 'responsible caretaker' for her mother and her younger sister. She had neither grieved the loss of her father nor her childhood. She also wanted to free herself from the sense of over responsibility she felt towards both her mother and sister. She said that this role kept her in the role of a 'succumbing victim' to the physical abuse from her mother, and in a mothering role towards her younger sister. She wanted to develop a 'self-protector' role and move away from the role of 'over-responsible carer of others'. She also wanted to develop a new role of 'self prioritizer'. We had identified a need in her for developing the role of 'nurturing parent' for her 'hurt, pained child' and her 'inner-child', to protect her from the domestic violence that she was experiencing in her home.

Over the next few months our work focused on building a nurturing and healthy relation with three aspects of self; The 'adult, wounded-self' and 'inner-self'. The role of 'adult-self' is still in development.

The reason I chose to work with Miniature Forms

Through using the miniature structure in previous sessions, Client 2 had realised the method was very effective for her and she felt safe to be more authentic in her relationships. This was different to her experience in a group setting. When people had taken up auxiliary roles she had become acutely aware of their presence, and this had inhibited her in fully taking up her roles.

I believed that by working with miniatures she would be able to 1) Remain in an empowered role especially in the recreation of the scene of her father's death; 2) Increase her spontaneity and creativity through being in a mirror position; 3) Assist her to strengthen her 'adult-self'; and 4) Achieve an integration of different aspects of herself.

In addition, we also identified that she had bottled up anger towards her mother, her family, and towards society for denying her the opportunity to acknowledge her emotions at the time of her father's death. I believed this drama could bring about a catharsis of her feelings. I was anxious but I also very warmed up to directing this drama, as I knew my client was extremely warmed up to it.

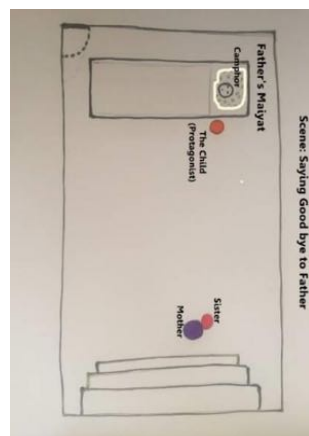
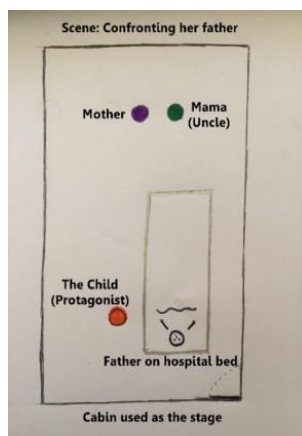
Drama

Before she set the stage, I asked her to create a safe space and explained to her that this drama can be stopped at any given time if she

so chooses. The whole of the cabin (counselling room) was chosen as a stage and the safe space she chose was outside the cabin. The stage was initially set with the hospital scene where her father was admitted. The 5–6-year-old child was brought there and was in the hospital parking lot, sitting under a tree in the early hours of winter morning, along with her younger sister by her side and one of her uncles who had brought them there. I then

asked her to take the role of that child, interviewed her for role, and then asked her to return to the mirror role. Then, I asked the protagonist what she saw was happening to the child and what she would like to do about it. This is how the entire drama was enacted, by zooming in on the child, then taking the protagonist into the mirror role to choose what she would like to do to heal her ‘child’.

Diagrams of the stage at different points of the drama



The drama enabled the client to have a bird's eye view of herself (as a child) during her traumatic experience and helped her to maintain the role of 'nurturing adult' towards herself. The drama unfolded into eight different scenes, each of them bringing significant changes that helped the child release her bottled up emotions. Each role interview with her child enhanced the visibility of 'the child' to the protagonist, thus helping her to express her various feelings which were denied to her at the time. For example, in the beginning of her drama when she set up the hospital scene

depicting the time of her father's demise, she remembered that they were not told the truth. She firmly refused to bring one of her uncles onto the stage, saying "I don't like him and I don't want him here". This change made 'the child' experience safety, respect, acceptance and empowerment. I believe this gave her the strength to go further in the drama. In the role interview, the child shared that she was not allowed to meet her father when he was in the hospital, and at that, began to cry. A little later I asked her "So would you like to go visit him now?" She was surprised "Can I?" I said, "Of

course, this is your drama, you can do whatever you wish.” She then visited her father, complaining to him that he never came to visit them and that she misses him. In another scene, when her mother was in Parada, (a ritual where the widow is kept behind a curtain (parade) and is not allowed to come out in the open), the ladies gathered around sympathising with her (in the role of the mother) for not having a son, and, losing her husband at this young age. The child became hurt and angry by this. Returning to the mirror position, with the protagonist encouraging her to do what she wanted, the little child finally ended up shouting at them, and threw them all out. One more scene at her father’s ‘Maiyyat’- was when they were about to take him away. She had not been allowed to meet him or say good bye. She did so in the drama, finally being able to cry for her loss. *Even as I am writing this, I can feel goose bumps!!* I was amazed at the kind of resolve and perseverance she had to want to face the most traumatic times of her childhood!

I believe being able to meet her father in the hospital, confront the relatives and then say good bye to her father was possible for her because of the miniature structure, which finally helped her complete this past experience.

My Experience as a Director

This has been singularly the most challenging piece for me so far as a director, therapist and double. In some ways, it is also the piece that has touched me the most! I feel inspired by my client’s courage and strength!

I share the uniqueness of this drama here - there were no role reversals throughout this drama! This was because what the protagonist had asked for was to grieve for her loss and heal her traumas. I believed at the time that role reversing with any of the aspects would have taken the focus away from the child, and would have prevented the child from experiencing her emotions, as the focus on others would have brought her to her conscious self and perhaps reexperience the power others had over her at the time of his death. That would have stopped her from experiencing the power within to change the traumatic experience and release her emotions to heal herself. Though role reversal is one of the most significant aspects of psychodrama, I found this drama to be an exception, keeping in mind the goal. The amazing realisation is that this came to my awareness only when Sue asked me in the supervision why was there no role reversal. I believe I was intuitive in my flow of being with the protagonist (I trusted my tele with her). I wonder if role reversal would have enhanced her catharsis or would it have curbed it.

The other significance of this drama was that the eight different detailed scenes were set up in the drama on the same stage, being able to accommodate all of them there and the protagonist could actually have an overview of all of them at once; that as a director made me experience and learn the influence one can have from the collective experience of a chain of events. I believe this was possible because the protagonist kept returning to the mirror role which helped her to stay in her functional adult role, preventing her from getting stuck in any old retrogressive roles. I kept checking how the protagonist was feeling and experiencing throughout the drama, and I periodically kept reminding her to breathe. In the beginning of the drama, she opted to go in the safe space outside the cabin. Alerted, I felt conflicted about continuing the drama or not. But the tele between us was strong once she reconnected with her progressive role of 'persistent adult'.

Before she set up the next scene on the stage, I asked her if she would like to do something more, or stop there, but she insisted on keeping going. Though she was exhausted, the tele between us assisted her to go on till she could come to a closure. Finally, we both knew that she had found an adequate closure when she reached a very deep catharsis. I experienced the surfacing of her deep pain, and then finally her relief through the full grieving of her loss. This deep catharsis of abreaction happened when she was able to express her anger at her family for not allowing

her to meet her father in hospital. This time (in surplus reality), when she went to meet her father in the hospital room she was able to cry and complain to him for never coming to meet her. The anger and the aggression she experienced when she threw her relatives out of the parade scene, shouting at them that they (she and her mother) did not want their sympathy, allowed her a greater relief. She collapsed while crying, saying good bye to her father at his 'Maiyyat', before they took him for his burial.

I took supervision from Sue for this piece of work. I am forever and extremely grateful for her guidance, as it taught me some fundamentals of psychodrama in the use of the miniatures.

Conclusion

From the above cases and many others, I have come to believe that the application of psychodrama using a Miniature Structure is a potent method for healing past traumatic issues and childhood traumas. In situations where there may be a possibility of a client regressing to a frozen state due to other people's presence as auxiliaries in the psychodrama, the miniature structure is a very suitable alternate. It is helpful for those who wish to do one-on-one work. The method can also be handy where there are space restrictions for a spatial spread of stage, or issues with physical disability, illnesses or where there is difficulty in movement.

However, along with the benefits, this method also has limitations and should be judiciously used. This method limits the work with the protagonist taking up roles of the different entities and dialoguing with them. It prevents the actual experience of people taking up auxiliary roles. Sometimes hearing the other helps the protagonist to empathise with them and understand their reality. While the miniatures may prove to be beneficial for space restrictions, it also prevents one from having body movements, sometimes essential for the protagonist. Having an aerial view may help, but it is also necessary at times for the person's whole body to become a part of the drama. My experience with miniatures has encouraged me to learn further. My belief in the process is getting stronger each time and I am also valuing the judicious use of them.

I would like to end this paper here by dedicating it to my clients, mentioned here and to all the others for having faith in the process and specially for putting their trust in me. I am forever grateful to them, and to my supervisors and mentors, M and Sue for being so patient with me and generous in their help and guidance. This would not have been possible without their warm and loving encouragement.

APPENDIX

Clients' feedback on our work with the Miniature Structure

Client 1: "I don't think I would have had the courage to take this up in a larger group, with an audience, and choose auxiliaries. Here I could choose from props; the miniature forms. It was relatively easier to go through the entire series of events when there were miniatures involved because being in mirror position and replaying the event was not threatening, and I could remain in an empowered state while I enacted the scene of confrontation. I did not have to go through the ordeal again. Due to the element of size the power dynamics changed. The abuser didn't seem like this huge, powerful, overbearing entity. I could throw him out of the drama. For that matter, the entire event looked very different from this perspective. Everything was so tiny that it didn't feel like something huge and difficult had happened to me. I could look at it as something from which I can move on from. (Not a life altering reality, but something I can deal with). I felt empowered and things did not overwhelm me. Here I'm talking about the encounter from the previous night's session."

"Sexual abuse is a very traumatic and painful subject for me to explore by itself, but because I was in a mirror position; an adult stance, I looked at the entire encounter from a place of empowerment. (Here I'm talking about the childhood sexual abuse history). I felt safer to

explore more deeply the themes of sexuality, sexual abuse, taking a stand and safety, after my drama. This shows how impactful the work was for me. I can't put a finger on exactly what worked. Either of these or both... but the fact that there were miniatures involved and/or I was in the mirror position, reduced the intensity of the pain drastically. When I say drastically I mean I could experience the pain and suffering with an appropriate level of intensity, without getting overpowered by the pain and grief, and be compassionate toward myself. Being in the mirror position, I could narrate, experience, and look at things from an objective point of view. I could actively engage in providing safety to my inner child. I felt much more confident in myself and have slowly started putting trust on the 'adult' in me. I could add elements that would've otherwise made me feel very helpless or powerless, for example, my uncle (the abuser). I still can't believe that I did a piece where the abuser was on stage and I didn't die!"

Client 2: "In this particular session I found the miniature structure most effective. I was very spontaneous, aware and ready to put all my guards down. I sensed that I was spontaneous because I saw dolls and props. For my little one it was a play where I can create my world and dialogue by taking up different roles like mother, father, sister, teacher, friends and myself, so for her it was the same. So, like this, connections built with miniature psychodrama. I was amazed to see how creating a scene

warmed me to the actual experience of that time. The difference I experienced between miniature work verses 'the group psychodrama' was that I could get in touch with the wholistic experience of that time. In the group psychodrama, choosing a person as an auxiliary meant I would have to experience a human person as my auxiliary. I am unable to do this because my focus would remain only in the relation with that person or aspect."

"While setting the stage at the hospital, I could focus just on that time; I could experience the cold weather, and the smell of a particular tree. For the first time I found myself allowing my most painful emotions to be expressed without putting extra connotations, being selective, or being judgmental. I was ready to accept my painful reality and allow myself to grieve. I was amazed after the drama how I could remember all of these things, like the hospital, home, curtains, tube light, telephone booth, and camphor. In conscious awareness I have a sense that I have taken the many responsibilities of others and the house to fill the void in the family. Post the drama I realised my desperation, even at that young age, to hand hold my younger sister, and how that prevented me from allowing myself to experience *my* loss, pain and grief. In this drama I also expressed my anger about society and rules – as a child I perceived this custom of parade, as society punishing my mother, because a child understands being confined to a room as a punishment – "*Kamre*

mein bandh hona ek punishment hai!! So, in this session the child (me) experienced the power to throw all the people out and create the space to grieve. This had not been allowed in the real world. The miniature structure provided me with the kind of safety that I had not wanted to experience with other people being my auxiliaries, especially for this drama. If there would have been people around, I would not have been able to put out layers. Also, in this particular event, there were

multiple traumas that I experienced which I found that I could deal with, along with my grieving. This would not have been possible for me if there were 'real' people as my auxiliaries. Having a bird's eye view helped me to experience everything that I was going through, to face each of the traumas and resolve them. I found that I was more spontaneous with the miniature forms and props than with human auxiliaries at this time."



Jaya Narayan

Today, I received an unexpected gift, a beautiful book of poetry written by Phil Smalley and illustrated by Vanessa Hutchinson. Welcoming an impromptu present via post warmed me to reflect on the past two years. I like to begin by acknowledging the postal service as my lifeline to the external world and my family overseas. Two years ago, when I attended the opening night at PIM, I had no idea that I wouldn't see any of my Psychodrama colleagues and friends in flesh and blood for a long time to come. If I had any inkling of the future, I might have hugged them one more time or hung around longer. What I have missed most in these strange times is the loss of human connection in flesh and blood. I have longed for the spacious quality of face-to-face interaction, which the online world could not fulfil. The positive side of the virtual has been the opportunity to shine my adaptive roles, especially the enthusiastic learner role which was showered with worldwide exposure. Meanwhile, I enjoyed getting to know my Psychodrama colleagues more in-depth on zoom from their homes and natural surroundings. Their screens prompted me to look in and find threads of connection through colours, objects, plants, artefacts and pets in

their environment. This intentional process of perceiving helped me to become a caring viewer and a technology admirer. I felt periodically challenged by moments of lukewarm spontaneity and low energy. My known ways of warming up include a physical change of scene, dressing up, commuting, and meeting others that became unavailable to me; Instead, literally finding my feet or scribbling became helpful. These two years have allowed many amongst us to complete unfinished projects - write, learn, bake, sew, date, have babies, dance or try a new hobby. The book I referred to earlier by Phil is a lovely example of the creative possibilities in uncertain times. It has been the deliberate practice of reflective writing and reading that has kept me afloat through these times. I am not sure if I can do the physical distancing and lockdown phenomenon all over again, but these two years have taught me a lot about enjoying my own company.

Phil Smalley

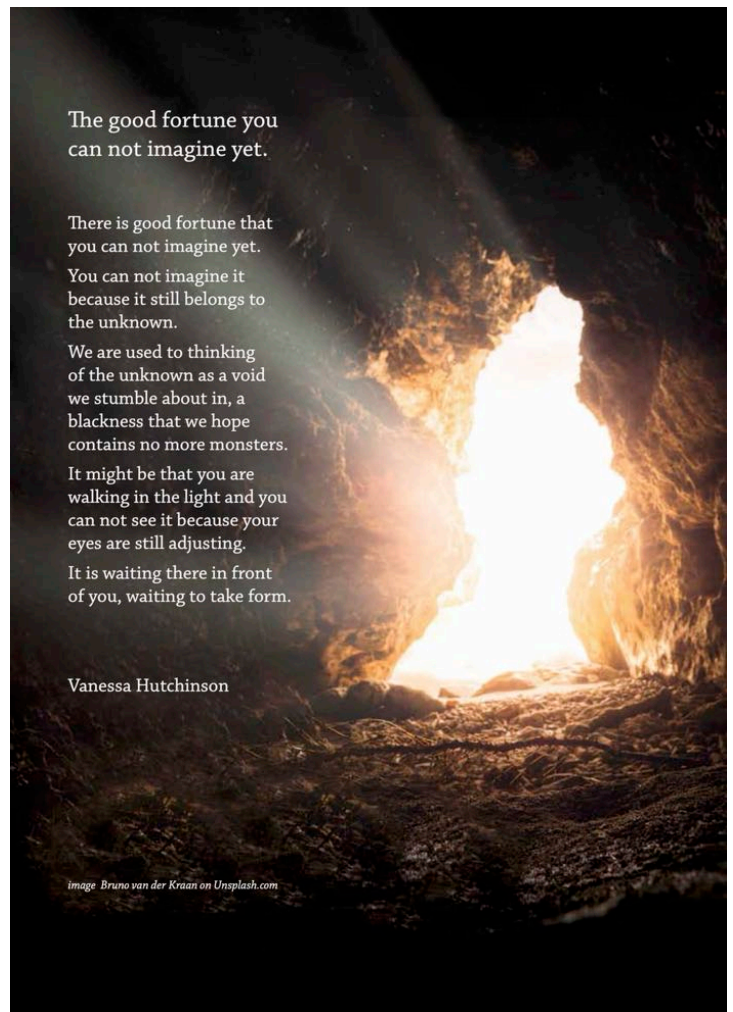
I have enjoyed ToS as it provides an opportunity to connect with the Psychodrama community, even though we have not been able to do so in person, but ***I do miss the hugs!***

Vanessa Hutchinson

I have enjoyed ToS and other workshops being online. It's different to the in-person workshops and while I miss those ones very much, other things are possible in the online space. I love seeing faces from all around the world on a regular basis at ToS. I feel that this makes the ToS even richer. I am always enriched by this experience. The sharing from people of other cultures can really surprise me and opens windows into other world views. While participating in others' dramas I feel close to people even though we are not in the same room or country. There's something delightful too about hearing the sounds in the rooms of our distant participants, the whirr of the fan in the hot country when I am experiencing cold weather, the sounds from outside; birds, children laughing, a car going past. I feel connected to the world.

Yogita Thompson

I've enjoyed ToS on Zoom. I've initially had resistance to Zoom but it has allowed me to further develop relationships which I otherwise would not have. ToS on Zoom during the shutdown gave me something to look forward to and was uplifting. Psychodrama / TOS allows me the opportunity to explore issues in a creative way. So often people bring forward something that is similar to what I've experienced and I don't feel so alone with things. Lovely way to stay connected with people.



The good fortune you
can not imagine yet.

There is good fortune that
you can not imagine yet.
You can not imagine it
because it still belongs to
the unknown.

We are used to thinking
of the unknown as a void
we stumble about in, a
blackness that we hope
contains no more monsters.

It might be that you are
walking in the light and you
can not see it because your
eyes are still adjusting.

It is waiting there in front
of you, waiting to take form.

Vanessa Hutchinson

image: Bruno van der Kraan on Unsplash.com

Linda Harrington

I found the Zoom ToS meetings that I was able to attend a great opportunity to connect with others through some very difficult times. I loved meeting new friends, and hearing about their lives, joys and challenges, as well as to connect with old friends. More than that, I was left feeling warm and hopeful for the future after each session, both fortified and nurtured. Thank you so very much for all your efforts in offering us this opportunity.

Working online - when the video drops out – Lethe Gaskin

Working online ... I thought I would hate it, but I love it. The technology is a whole kettle of fish, of course, to be dealt with one way or another. The sound, the picture, the dropping out, gawd. I think my complete psycho worry-wart role has diminished, now I just tear my hair out a little.

Today I met a man, in his 60s, for a second counselling session, his video wasn't working, again, so we talked by phone, which means we still haven't seen each other. This time the sound was clear, thank God! (Last time it was almost impossible for 20 minutes.) We have trouble with each other's accents, neither of us are Australian born. But we seem to like each other, and persevere. After a while, he asks me my name, because his memory is not great, after having Covid to near-death, and I tell him. I also tell him I am from New Zealand. "Oh" he says, "New Zealand and Australia are the same". "NO THEY ARE NOT" I said, and we both burst out laughing. His laughter is a miracle sound to me, because he has been extremely downcast, since being so ill. I don't know why, but our laughter goes on, and on, until he is coughing and spluttering, because his lungs can barely cope! "Oh this is so happy; I have not laughed since the machines". He means the weeks in ICU on ventilators that still terrify his dreams, he has not felt any light or laughter until this moment. People around him have been avoiding him and he has felt afraid and lonely. So many

appointments, doctors, psychologists, social workers, and here we are on one little telehealth call, and he tells me that today "the sun has come out", and that he thinks laughter will make him well. Amazing. We talk about allowing the laughter in his heart and in his eyes, until his lungs get a tiny bit stronger! The sun gently beamed out through the cracks in my phone as well.

Hans van Wilgenburg

"Online during Covid is a life saver and as a lifesaver I know you have to learn new skills when the going gets tuff. Being a life-or-death situation, I had to be deal with the technology of Zoom and the fear of stuffing it up, which I did at times. Being confronted with self on the screen, what a mirror, have never seen myself sooooo much. I changed the angle of the camera, changed the back ground even. At times walked around the house and land using the built-in camera to show where I lived. During TOS sessions learnt to look at the camera, closely watched the facial expressions of participants, listened to their tone of voice and sensing a tele across many oceans. Amazing that we could connect. Yet I missed the experience the feeling when being in the presence of others, the touch, the smells. Zooming was great during the lockdowns to enable us to continue to work in new ways. Covid is still here although restrictions have been removed.....I see reluctance to meet and mix at work and socially. So, although I am not zooming so

much as before, being on line is still a norm that may not go away as it is a Life Saver.”

Psychodrama zoom sessions in the time of COVID-19 - Gavin O'Loughlin

I had quite few group experiences on Zoom during the time of COVID-19 and its variants including leading some groups. The great advantage of having Zoom has been being enabled to continue with psychodrama in some form. I do not want to imagine what it would have been like through this time without something like Zoom. All my accumulated skills would probably have seriously deteriorated. Another great advantage has been the possibility to have sessions where people can Zoom in from other countries; they bravely dealt with the time differences. It has felt quite expansive to me to have those international sessions.

A question comes to mind when I consider what the experience has been. What has been the effect on my tele with people? I have intended to function mostly as I would in person as this is where my interpersonal roles originate after all. Various points of interference with my tele with people come to mind such as being distracted by my own image, wondering how my hair-do was going, did I look like I had a lot of baggy, saggy flesh in my face? etc. Other interferences were the difficulty in group singing on Zoom where the algorithm attempts to give precedence to one person speaking or singing, making the chorus not possible; a sad loss. There was the tele

interference of losing internet connectivity at times, especially my own Wi-Fi cutting out on a few occasions. Then there is the absence of the possibility to engage in a chat with someone before or after the session over a cup of tea or coffee and some nibbles. In the unstructured, in-person situation various conversations are possible at once, by various persons. The option of break-out ‘rooms’ during a session was a strength in being on Zoom that is partially comparable, I must acknowledge.

Our sociometry did build in our Zoom sessions I believe, based on the tele we achieved with each other including by the authentic explorations we undertook. We made use of small props on a table top in one person's room for our concretisations sometimes. We had auxiliaries playing roles and engaging in dialogues with role reversals occurring. We used a scarf on the shoulder or some held prop to distinguish which character in the drama we were playing in each exchange. It has tended to be tricky sometimes to keep track of who's who in the zoo of a Zoom drama. Just as for in-person dramas there is a discipline of keeping one's focus as director or auxiliary or audience member.

As mentioned we made use more recently of the break-out rooms in Zoom for smaller sub-groups of two to four when we were building the sociometry in a group, very similarly as we would in an in-person group. The wild card in Zoom was that the algorithm could be given the allocation of persons to groups rather than

it being by the people choosing. There's probably a lot that can be said about the losses and gains of this. One point is that the act of choosing partners may contribute to the sociometry. Another is that it was a delightful surprise to see who showed up in my subgroup, like being marooned on a desert island off a sinking ship with survivors washing up holding onto barrels. Sue Daniel generally took the producer role in the ToS sessions, working the magic in Zoom.

A final observation is that pets sometimes made cameo appearances as peoples' Zoom rooms were usually in the domestic space. I recall trying to get the attention of a cat in Japan by calling its name over Zoom. It didn't work. That'll be one for the Zoom people to work on.

"See you in a little box sometime!"

Yoko Furukawa

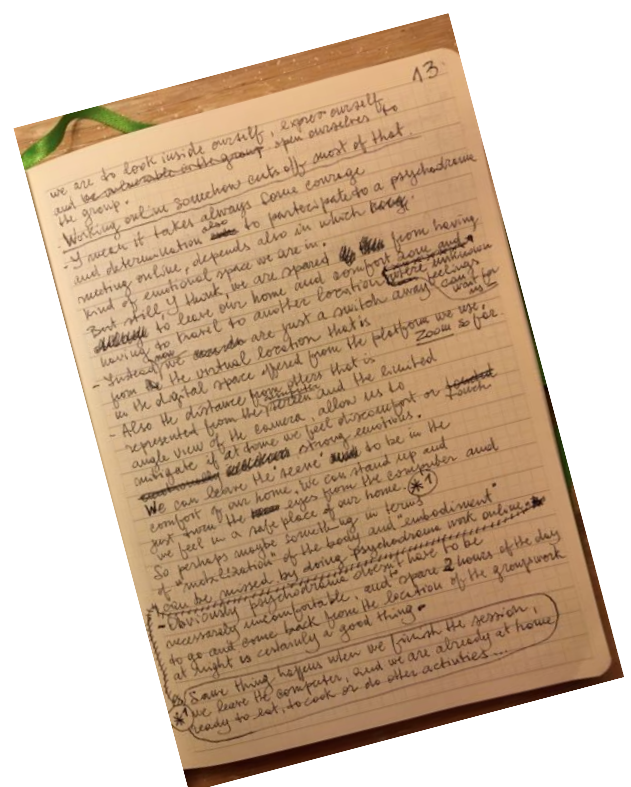
As you know I have a big barrier - language. In weekly group sessions or in two-day workshops, I can meet the same members many times, and thus my ear somehow gets used to their English. In contrast, ToS ends before my ear gets used to their English.

Nevertheless, I am grateful for my fortune to encounter many participants from around the world while I am in Japan.

Dafina Bytyqi

Zoom! A magic window through which I can see so many and be seen, anytime, anywhere. An inside out window for all the people of the world, happy and sad.

From Bruno's diary



Contributors



Carol Gill has participated in Psychodrama training groups for a number of years. Over this time, she has derived great personal and professional benefit. In particular, she uses Psychodramatic vignettes in her teaching to facilitate student learning. Carol's life journey has been greatly enhanced by regular group meetings that increase her self-awareness and develop her psychological and social roles.

Sue Daniel is the director of the Psychodrama Institute of Melbourne, and an international Trainer, Educator and Practitioner of Psychodrama. She has a psychology and psychotherapy practice in Melbourne. Her work is in the fields of education, addiction, industry and mental health. Sue teaches psychodrama in many countries. She is the founder of MPS and the Australian and Aotearoa Board of Psychodrama. Throughout Covid she has enjoyed online Yoga, baking, music and connecting with people onscreen.



Sarita Shah is a founding member and Centre Head of Maanas The Inside Story, Ahmedabad. Rooted in the philosophies of person-centered therapy and codependency model, she has been involved in training counselors and therapists in these modalities. With psychotherapy as a medium and nurturance as her core, she is passionate about working with healing childhood traumas. Sarita is a trainee at Pil (Psychodrama in India), and in 2021 received her certification as an Associate Psychodrama-Director from the Australian and Aotearoa Board of Psychodrama.

Submission Guidelines

We welcome submissions to this journal.

Should you wish to offer an article for consideration, please send it to:

Ted Bugarski, the Co-ordinating Editor email: MorenoSociety@netspace.net.au

- Please email your submissions as a Microsoft Word “doc” file attachment.
- Any diagrams to be included in the submission need to be in JPEG format.
- The document to be formatted to A4 page size
- Helvetica 12-point font
- 1.5 spaced, unjustified
- Include a 1.5” W x 2” H colour jpeg head and shoulder photograph of the author – approximately 1MB File size
- Include a biography of the author, up to 50 words.

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