

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Psychodrama, Surplus Reality, and the Art of Healing*, by Zerka T. Moreno, Leif Dag Blomkvist, and Thomas Rutzel. New York: Routledge. 2000.

My serious reading of the literature of psychodrama started in 1981 in Marrakech. It was there, under the Moroccan sun and under the influence of the atmosphere and the local culture, that I first read J. L. Moreno's *Psychodrama, Volume 1*. It was a heady experience. I decided that the book contained something very important and was very different from the literature I had read in my then recently completed psychiatric and psychoanalytic therapy training. At times, however, it was very difficult for me to grasp Moreno's ideas, although I did think he was trying to say something of great interest and importance. Indeed, I decided to train as a psychodramatist.

In the years that followed, I lost some of my links with the core importance of Moreno's creative philosophy. During the 1980s, I began to write about psychodrama. I now see that I was, albeit for the best of reasons, becoming part of a process that risked losing psychodrama's major contribution to the world and its therapeutic needs. Moreover, I believe that other authors followed the same trend, moving psychodrama toward a superficially more logical, cognitive, systemic, and prosaic school of psychotherapy, perhaps one that might be seen as more acceptable to other schools of psychotherapy.

This new and rather magical book, *Psychodrama, Surplus Reality, and the Art of Healing*, has haunted me for many months, initially because I served as the publisher's reviewer and more recently because I was asked to review it for this journal. By a strange quirk of fate, I write this review once more under the Moroccan sun.

In her epilogue to the book, Zerka Moreno calls the work "a blueprint which we owe to Moreno." The book consists of a series of conversations between Zerka Moreno and Leif Dag Blomkvist; their conversations roam over Moreno's central ideas in chapters with such titles as "Time and Death," "Ecstasy and Role Reversal," and "The Surreal Experience." Blomkvist has added commentaries to the dialogues, and Moreno contributes additional chapters on the early history of psychodrama, its clinical application, the use of humor and magic objects, and an epilogue.

The authors are able to bring to life the essentials of Moreno's philosophy and therapeutic creation, psychodrama, in a compact and accessible manner that loses nothing of the original magic of J. L.'s creativity. Unlike the three volumes of *Psychodrama*, this book has an index. I should add that the book

also acts as a clear and definitive statement about Zerka Moreno's significant contribution to psychodrama over the last five decades.

That said, the book is not without faults. For example, I believe that in the chapter on sociometry, the authors show a limited understanding of the complex process that occurs in analytic group therapy. Furthermore, I consider that same chapter to be a somewhat confused discussion of the subject. On page 94, Zerka Moreno defines sociometry as the "measurement of human relations," a definition that applies to the use of sociometric techniques to explore and measure the relationships in a pre-existing group at the New York State Training School for Girls at Hudson. On page 109, she states that a family is not a sociometric group because the children in a family do not choose (using sociometric choices) to become members of the group.

I am optimistic that psychodramatists at all levels of the craft will find much to debate and argue about in the contents of this rich and challenging book. It put me in touch again with some of the original reasons for my being so moved by psychodrama. I recommend that psychodramatists read the book and form their own opinions.

PAUL HOLMES  
Brighton, East Sussex  
United Kingdom

*Theatre for Community, Conflict and Dialogue—The Hope Is Vital Training Manual*, by Michael Rohd. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1998.

At a clinic in Washington, DC, in 1992, theater teacher Michael Rohd led a series of drama workshops with teenagers from a private high school and homeless people with HIV. Together, they explored how to use theater to delve into the impact of HIV and AIDS on all of their lives. Something new and exciting began to take shape: theater based on dialogue and action, theater without answers or resolution, theater committed to the depth and breadth of engagement that becomes possible only when the body and the imagination are involved.

In *Theatre for Community, Conflict and Dialogue*, Rohd reports the subsequent development of that work into a practice that has proved itself with youth groups around the country, in which not only issues related to HIV and AIDS but also concerns about violence, substance abuse, and teen pregnancy are addressed. Rohd's purpose with his compact book is to empower the reader to adopt the precepts and techniques that he developed for the Hope Is Vital project. Subtitled *The Hope Is Vital Training Manual*, the book contains a succinct presentation of Rohd's method, which is broken down into clearly described activities designed to meet specific goals at each stage of the process.