

The Quintessential Zerka

Writings by Zerka Toeman Moreno
on Psychodrama, Sociometry and
Group Psychotherapy



Edited by
Toni Horvatin
and
Edward Schreiber

The Quintessential Zerka

The Quintessential Zerka documents the origins and development of the theory and practice of psychodrama, sociometry and group psychotherapy through the work and innovation of its co-creator, Zerka Toeman Moreno.

This comprehensive handbook brings together history, philosophy, methodology and application. It shows the pioneering role that Zerka, along with her husband J.L. Moreno, played in the development not only of the methods of psychodrama and sociometry, but of the entire group psychotherapy movement worldwide. It demonstrates the extent to which Zerka's intuitive and intellectual grasp of the work, combined with her superb ability to organize and synthesize, continues to exert an influence on the field. Toni Horvatin and Edward Schreiber have selected articles that span a career of some sixty years, from Zerka's very first publication to recent, previously unpublished, work. Personal anecdotes and poetry from Zerka herself provide a valuable context for each individual article. The selection includes:

- Psychodrama, Its Relation to Stage, Radio and Motion Pictures.
- Psychodramatic Rules, Techniques and Adjunctive Methods.
- Beyond Aristotle, Breuer and Freud: Moreno's Contribution to the Concept of Catharsis.
- Psychodrama, Role Theory and the Concept of the Social Atom.

This book provides a rich source of insight and inspiration for all those interested in the history, development and practice of psychodrama, sociometry and group psychotherapy, whatever their level of experience. It will be of interest to anyone involved in the fields of psychology, counseling, sociology, social work, education, theater, or human relations.

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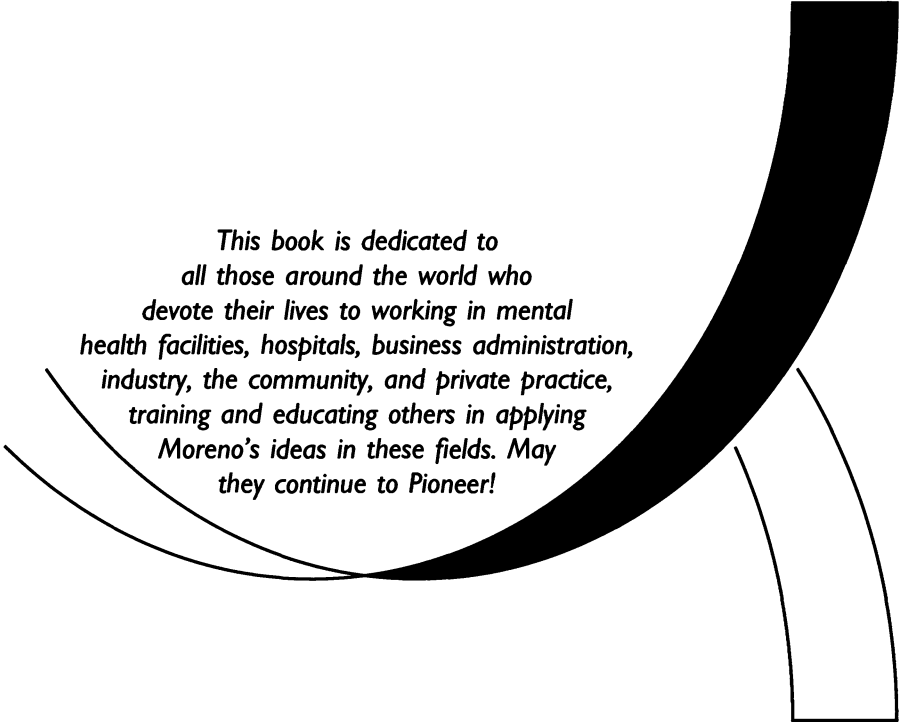
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*This book is dedicated to
all those around the world who
devote their lives to working in mental
health facilities, hospitals, business administration,
industry, the community, and private practice,
training and educating others in applying
Moreno's ideas in these fields. May
they continue to Pioneer!*

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Foreword

There are moments in every person's life that are profound. My first meeting with J.L. and Zerka Moreno was one of those profound moments. Each fall, the staff and interns of the Psychodrama Department at Saint Elizabeths Hospital, Washington, DC, made a pilgrimage to Beacon, New York, to study at the Moreno Institute. In October 1971 I was a first year intern and was inspired by J.L. Moreno's articles and books. He had become my hero. My expectations were that I would meet a charismatic genius, a compassionate healer, a soulful poet and a wise, humble and joyful man. I had little knowledge and few expectations of Zerka. When we first met what I found in him was the frail and elderly man he had become. Zerka, however, was a delightful surprise. She was vibrant and present with all the qualities I had hoped to find in Moreno. That winter and throughout the following years, I returned on my own to experience Zerka as a trainer, director and double. In my professional development at Saint Elizabeths Hospital from staff member to chief of the Psychodrama Department, to director of clinical therapies, Jim Enneis, also at Saint Elizabeths, was my intellectual father, and Zerka was my emotional mother.

Our travels to the Moreno Institute continued until it was sold in 1982. Over the years Zerka asked me, and I enthusiastically agreed, to collaborate on several projects. When she again became President of the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama (after Moreno's death), she asked me to serve as her Vice President. Our most important collaboration was serving as co-chairs of fundraising for the endowment of the J.L. Moreno Collection at the Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine of Boston and Harvard Universities.

Today the art, science and craft of the professional practice of psychodrama are flourishing worldwide. There are more certified psychodramatists and more published books than at any other time in history. Psychodrama in all its many forms is used not only in mental health and psychotherapy, but also in education, training, criminal justice, business, government, religion and the arts. My 34 years of experience at Saint Elizabeths, in private practice, and in leadership positions in the American Society of Group

Psychotherapy and Psychodrama and The American Board of Examiners in Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy have convinced me that without the steadfast support and constant vigilance of Zerka Moreno, psychodrama would be a lost art.

When Celine Zerka Toeman met J.L. Moreno in the summer of 1941 it was the beginning of the most successful partnership in the history of psychiatry. She was a 24-year-old recent *émigrée* from England who had traveled to Beacon Sanitarium in hopes of finding a treatment that would restore her sister, whom she had rescued from Nazi Europe, to sanity. By each one's account, theirs was a historic meeting. After a period of traveling to Beacon for weekend trainings, Zerka began working as Moreno's secretary, translating his German-English into fluent English. She brought order to the chaos of his writing by providing a discipline and organization that had been severely lacking. Her role evolved from secretary to editor and she began to challenge him to deepen and ground his visionary ideas in practical applications that could be communicated clearly to others. She began to attend clinical sessions and accompanied him during his trainings. She specialized in the double function, and became his preferred auxiliary ego in psychodrama demonstrations.

After their marriage, J.L. was still the clear leader in the field, and Zerka was always at his side. She soothed his ruffled feathers and provided the social grace that mended his tumultuous relationships with others. She cultivated and maintained her own independent friendships with many of the great leaders in the field of group psychotherapy. In 1941–42, she was one of the founders of the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama, the first organization in the United States devoted to the professional practice of group psychotherapy. Over time her knowledge, skills and abilities increased and she became more of an equal partner in their professional realms.

By the early 1950s, Zerka became J.L.'s full partner, and they collaborated as authors, teachers and clinicians. He chose her to become editor of the *Journal of Group Psychotherapy, Sociometry and Psychodrama*. She edited *Psychodrama Volume I*, and *Who Shall Survive?*, second edition. One has only to compare the original edition of *Who Shall Survive?* written by J.L. in 1934 with the second edition published in 1953 to become aware of her substantive contributions during these early years. She also co-authored the two subsequent volumes of *Psychodrama* and wrote her own articles, many of which are contained in this book, which further illuminated Moreno's ideas and incorporated her own enhancements to the theory and practice.

J.L. and Zerka were in the forefront of promoting the group psychotherapy movement worldwide. In 1951 they first organized an International Committee on Group Psychotherapy. Several subsequent international congresses resulted in the formation of the International Council on Group

Psychotherapy. In 1973 that became the International Association of Group Psychotherapy.

In the years preceding his death, as J.L.'s health gradually deteriorated, Zerka appeared to be his partner, but it was she who was the clinical director, director of training, chief executive officer and chief financial officer for the Moreno Institute and its many forms (sanitarium, training institute, and publishing house). Prior to Zerka's contributions, J.L. had taught students through a variety of "spontaneous" clinical sessions and armchair conversations on a wide range of topics. She developed a curriculum, student outcomes, and standards for certification.

After Moreno's death, Zerka emerged from his shadow to gain her own place in the pantheon of pioneers in psychodrama, sociometry and group psychotherapy. She continued to write, fleshing out his ideas and staking out new ideas of her own that complemented and augmented the body of work. She became the President of the American Society of Group Psychotherapy and Psychodrama once again, to help its transition during the post-Moreno years. Zerka was one of the founders of the American Board of Examiners in Psychodrama, Sociometry and Group Psychotherapy, which established nationwide standards for the certification of practitioners and trainers.

From the 1940s to the present, Zerka has traveled across North America and throughout the world teaching and training generations of students in psychodrama, sociometry and group psychotherapy. This 60-year span is a singular achievement in the field.

J.L. was visionary and cosmic while Zerka was attentive. His intellect was like quicksilver, bouncing from one intellectual endeavor to the next; hers was grounded, steadfast and rigorous. He provided the seminal intellect of the movement; she provided its heart and soul. There were also many similarities between them. They both had emigrated from Europe to America in search of freedom, opportunity and a better life. They both championed the isolated and rejected. His causes were prostitutes in Europe and prisoners and delinquents in the United States. Hers were gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons, and later those living with HIV and AIDS. In the early 1980s, during the height of the AIDS hysteria, I recall how she calmly took the hand of a person ravaged by AIDS, and informed the group that AIDS was a virus, and that you could not get a virus by holding someone's hand or touching them. She further challenged the group by stating that what this man needed, and what we all need, is love.

What was extraordinary about the partnership of Zerka and J.L. was not just what it produced professionally, but rather that their personal, intellectual and emotional relationship more than endured; it thrived. They wrote poetry, traveled, and enjoyed attending theater and movies. Each was a voracious reader and worker. Family was important to them. Regina, Moreno's daughter from his first marriage, came to live with them in 1950

at age 11. She grew up in Beacon and went on to raise her own family as well as to have a successful career as a teacher in early childhood education. In 1952 the Morenos' son Jonathan was born. Jonathan D. Moreno, PhD is now Kornfeld Professor of Biomedical Ethics and Director of the Center for Biomedical Ethics at the University of Virginia. Jonathan and his wife Lesley, an attorney in Washington, DC, are parents of Jarrett and Jillian, two grandchildren who are the light and joy of Zerka's life.

Over the years, Zerka has endured physical disability, pain, and life-threatening illnesses. From hearing loss in her right ear, to sarcoma that took her right arm and shoulder, to a recent hip replacement that required five surgeries and caused excruciating and prolonged pain, her courage and buoyancy have been an inspiration. At 88, Zerka's physical body may be challenged, but her intellect, heart and spirit remain alive and vital. She no longer travels around the world teaching and training; groups of students from Europe, Australia, South America and Asia now come to study with her.

Besides teaching and professional writing, Zerka spends time organizing and writing her memoirs. It is my hope that one day the autobiography of Zerka Moreno will be published and will serve as the companion to this volume. As J.L. Moreno said, "More important than evolution of the creation is the evolution of the creator." How a young woman fleeing from Nazi-threatened Europe with no formal training or education in psychiatry evolved to be one of the premier teachers and trainers in psychotherapy is a most fascinating story, and one that must be shared.

In the past we have spoken of the work of J.L. Moreno. In the present we speak of the work of Zerka Toeman Moreno. In the future, when we speak of the development of the fields of psychodrama, sociometry and group psychotherapy, as evidenced by the work you are about to read, we will undoubtedly speak of both Morenos.

Dale Richard Buchanan, PhD, TEP
Director Clinical Therapies (Retired)
Saint Elizabeths Hospital
Washington, DC

Preface

This book was born on the original psychodrama stage, some years after the stage was relocated from its home in Beacon, New York to Boughton Place, a community center in nearby Highland. Zerka was conducting monthly trainings there at the time. We would gather on the top level of the circular tiered stage for morning check-in and post-session processing. It was there that Toni heard her fellow students express the desire to read what Zerka had written about psychodrama.

At that time copies of the early journals in which Zerka had published were hard to come by. Toni envisioned a single source, which would combine Zerka's professional writings with brief, more personal commentary that would provide a context. Fellow student Ed heard about the project, and soon our collaboration began.

Life circumstances being what they were for both of us, time passed. Meanwhile, the sessions at Boughton Place became limited to summers, and ultimately Zerka moved to Charlottesville, Virginia. Finally our long warm-up turned into action and we had the good fortune to have our proposal for publication accepted by Routledge.

During the intensive process of reviewing all of Zerka's written work, we were impressed with its timeless significance. Her words are those of a pioneer; one who learned the method from the inside out.

The "quintessential" of the title of this book is meant to express the duality of the practical and ethereal that Zerka has brought to this work. The reader will encounter, for example, in the article entitled "The 'Double Situation' in Psychodrama," her clear and precise description of applying her entirely intuitive "feeling into" the protagonist. From Zerka's own exploration of this process came her teaching that role reversal is the *sine qua non* of psychodrama. Without her, it is doubtful that the role of auxiliary ego as a therapeutic tool would have been as thoroughly developed. For those of us who did not experience the early work at Beacon and who have not applied this method with psychotics, her description and clarification of the function of the auxiliary ego as it was originally developed provide special insight that can be applied to any auxiliary work.

It was during the time that we were studying with her that Zerka was more publicly claiming her rightful place as J.L. Moreno's equal partner in the development, growth and dissemination of psychodrama, sociometry and group psychotherapy in the world. Our intention is that this selection of Zerka's own work will further establish her singular contribution. Without Zerka's tireless efforts and superb organizational skills, as applied to her roles of explorer, birther, historian, reporter, presenter, researcher, colleague, spouse, and mother, among others, the philosophies and methods of J.L. Moreno could easily have remained excellent dreams and brilliant visions without realization. Moreno may have provided the vehicle, but Zerka drew all the road maps.

Zerka has called herself "a participant actor in one of the major revolutions in social science." In "The Seminal Mind of J.L. Moreno" (1967) she says, "Many of Moreno's ideas have reached such a level of universality that they are becoming widely accepted, as if they had always been." We encourage readers to think about a world without group psychotherapy or without the concept of human beings acting as therapeutic agents for each other by their presence in a group. Perhaps then we can come to some appreciation of the significance of the legacy that Zerka carries on to this day. We asked Zerka during the interviews for this book if sometimes, even given Moreno's powerful vision, she felt like she was "wandering in the wilderness" with people just not comprehending what they were trying to do. She replied, "Moreno's vision of what the world could be inspired us. I thought that *others* were wandering in the wilderness."

Work-was-life-was-family to Zerka. In working with her own son Jonathan and doubling him, she traveled as far back to the "First Universe" as any adult possibly could. As you will read in "Psychodrama in a Well-Baby Clinic" (Chapter 2), Zerka was the bridge for new mothers to join with the psyches of their babies. Her writings about raising children the psychodramatic way offer all parents a model from which to build a relationship with their children.

A few comments about the organization of the text: The articles span the period from Zerka's very first publication in 1944 to unpublished material from 2004 that she has chosen to debut here. The chapters group the articles chronologically within a framework of life events: in Chapter 1 (1944–1948) we explore the beginning writings of young Zerka Toeman, who is caught in the passion and excitement of the movement. Chapter 2 (1949–1965) begins with her marriage to J.L. and displays some of Zerka's efforts to document their pioneering work together. Chapter 3, "Transitions," reflects the era of Zerka's gradual assumption of responsibility for all aspects of the Moreno legacy. Chapters 4 and 5 are part of her own rich legacy.

Each chapter begins with one of Zerka's poems taken from her volume *Love Songs to Life* (1993). Each article is presented with its professional citation followed by a section called *Zerka's comments*; a brief observation

from Zerka about the context in which the article was written. These comments are the result of many interviews and conversations with Zerka. She reviewed and approved their final form.

Editing has included the following.

- Text has been adjusted to present a uniform citation style that references a comprehensive bibliography at the back of the book. Bibliographies that originally appeared at the end of some articles have been listed in a chapter note (chapter notes are located before the bibliography) and incorporated into the comprehensive bibliography.
- Minor adjustments in grammar or punctuation have been made where to do so would make meaning more clear.
- In the case of several articles, more extensive text revisions have occurred. These are indicated in the relevant chapter notes.

We have chosen to retain certain instances of language or custom in order to keep the text reflective of the era in which it was written. For instance, a number of articles contain the words “Negro” or “colored” where today we would use the terms “Black” or “African American.” Also, especially in the early articles, the male pronoun is used exclusively in instances referring to both genders. We recognize that the author’s original usage bore no disrespect.

In reviewing the articles with Zerka, we discovered that over the years examples or case studies that were particularly illustrative of a certain point would be repeated in subsequent articles. In compiling this selection, we have extended to Zerka the author’s prerogative to make revisions so as to present the most cohesive explanations and best examples of the concepts and methods she was trying to convey. Thus we have created with her a reworking of certain articles in order to achieve the fullest presentation of a case or point. These articles, then, would upon comparison deviate from their original sources. In yet other cases the reader may encounter a duplication of an idea across articles because it was a new presentation of a previous idea and simply bore repeating. By approaching the text in this way, in some cases we are providing a “second edition” of the original article.

We have often heard Zerka expand on a quote of Socrates: “The unexamined life is not worth living, and the un-lived life is not worth examining.” We hope that readers will appreciate the depth and breadth to which Zerka has examined and lived her life, as here reflected in her professional writing and personal comments. It is our pleasure and privilege to present this work.

Toni Horvatin
Highland, New York

Edward Schreiber
Northampton, Massachusetts

June, 2005

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We remember with gratitude all of the protagonists, auxiliaries, and group members from the beginning who helped Zerka and J.L. to define, refine and practice this method, and we think of those today and in the future who will join us on the psychodrama stage.

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Chapter 1

Beginnings

1944–1948

*O God, what strange powers
are here at work.
You bring together two people,
reared oceans apart
and make them meet
in a moment of their great need.
Both are strong,
both are weak,
supporting and clinging,
happy to find themselves back
in each other.*

From *Love Songs to Life*
Zerka T. Moreno

Role Analysis and Audience Structure

Toeman, Z. (1944) *Sociometry, A Journal of Inter-Personal Relations* VII, 2: 205–221

Zerka's comments

Wartime was my world at the time this article was written. Although we were pacifists, we knew the war had to be won "or else," and everything was geared toward the war effort. The hospital at Beacon was profoundly affected. The staff was swallowed up. Moreno's secretary, Joe, became a soldier. There was a shortage of nurses and aides, as they went off to the front or to work in factories. We did whatever we could to scrape by. I remember a young woman patient and I shoveling a path in the snow from the road to the house so that Sunday visitors could come up the hill.

These associations with the military, although unfortunate in the global sense, were important for us because psychodrama, sociometry and group psychotherapy became better known. They were using group psychotherapy with soldiers at the time at Saint Elizabeths because they couldn't treat thousands of soldiers individually.¹

The phenomenon of sheer numbers of military personnel who had mental health needs sent professionals searching for solutions. Still, recognition for group psychotherapy, and for Moreno as its pioneer, was slow. While there was no question as to who developed sociometry, it is quite astonishing today that few group psychotherapists agreed concerning group psychotherapy. One example of how prevalent this position was occurred in 1944 during the Second World War when, dining with a group of military men at the American Psychiatric Association convention in Philadelphia, one captain proclaimed: "I just received a directive from Washington that we must practice group psychotherapy with mentally ill soldiers. What the hell is group psychotherapy? I was never trained in that." Moreno and I looked at each other. He shrugged his shoulders as if to communicate, "It's hopeless to start teaching them here under these conditions. That's just the way it is." But it represented an oversight that in some ways has continued to the present day.

We wanted to help with the mental health of the military personnel. In 1948 we were invited by a professor at the University of Maryland to see "sociograms of life and death." He had been part of a group of psychologists sent to

the South Pacific to study morale on two military air carriers. They realized that all their psychological tests yielded only individual profiles. They had nothing that could tell them about groups and give them a definition of high morale. Evidently one of the participants (we never found out who) suggested looking at “Moreno’s sociometry.” I remember wrapping up eight copies of Who Shall Survive? and sending them to the War Department in Washington.

A major from the British War Office Selection Boards came incognito to the New York City Institute to study with Moreno, spending long hours in discussion. The major’s report was the basis for subsequent implementation of certain strategies adopted by the military in organizing their troops. J.D. Sutherland and G.A. Fitzpatrick described this work in their paper, “Some Approaches to Group Problems in the British Army” (Sutherland and Fitzpatrick 1945).

During the war we continued to have open sessions in New York City twice a week, and that is where this research was conducted. “Role Analysis and Audience Structure” was inspired by the case of a young woman client whose fiancé was pulled in two directions – between marriage and family and his military career. After the session, J.L. remarked that it was an interesting phenomenon and said to me, “Why don’t you do an article on it? Why don’t we do some research?” That was the first time he suggested that I write something on my own, although I wasn’t surprised that he did. After all, we were building a system. The more we explored and wrote, the better.

Moreno saw young people as who they could become. That is why he encouraged us to write up the experiments, the ideas – everything. There was so much to say, and he couldn’t possibly do it all, and moreover he believed in us. I credit Moreno with giving myself to me.

Introduction

The session material for this paper was gathered by the author during 1942, and was announced among the Sociometric Researches in Progress under the title “Composition of a Psychodramatic Audience,” *Sociometry*, volume 5, number 2, May 1942, p. xlvii. Director of the psychodramatic sessions was J.L. Moreno, MD. Role analysis of a psychodramatic production was undertaken as well as an analysis of the vote structure of three audiences.

The psychodramatic method has an important contribution to make in the education and training of military personnel. Thousands of men are returning from the fronts affected by mental disorders. These men were at the time of their induction apparently well adjusted and able to maintain themselves at a satisfactory level of performance in civilian life. But the rigidity of military service, apart from the scene of battle, calls for a profound readjustment for the individual. It throws him into unfamiliar situations, the cumulative effects of which frequently lead to a breakdown

of his morale. The thesis we wish to present is that psychodramatic procedure can educate him to a better adaptation to military life.

The psychodrama stage presents a unique opportunity for studying the human being in dimensions hitherto chained to verbal expression. The prime importance of the *motor sense* in military training makes psychodrama the treatment par excellence. It enables the director to move with the subject into as close a mirroring of his life situation – without actually infringing upon it – as objectification permits. There are no limits to the possibilities of expression upon the psychodrama stage. It is an exploring into new dimensions of realization, the realization of action, and into new dimensions of analysis, the analysis of action. Here the subject can project his conflicts without barriers. He may choose the auxiliary egos to represent absentee persons related to his problem. He may pick the situation, the time, the place, and the persons with whom to paint the picture of his life. The director is given a comprehensive statement of the syndrome of the subject while he presents his problems and initiates the auxiliary egos into their roles. Diagnosis and guidance can thus go hand in hand. By throwing the subject into action, warming him up to the maximum of spontaneity and analyzing the performance immediately after completion, the subject is given insight into his reactions. Once he has gained a certain amount of objective understanding, a program of re-training can be undertaken.

In action training the psychodrama offers many advantages compared with other methods of personality guidance. It is possible to stimulate the subject into action and to stop him, right there, to point out where his action is inadequate. It is possible to make him start again, to warm him up along a different track, to make him realize that his old warming up process would lead to the same conflicts that brought him to the psychodrama laboratory. He is given records of his past actions, and is able to analyze his present performance on the stage in the light of what he has learned. The subject is given fresh opportunities to warm up into a different spontaneous state that would permit him to live as a more fully integrated, better-adjusted person.

Spontaneity is frequently understood in folklore as anarchistic behavior, “doing whatever one pleases whenever and wherever one pleases,” or as impulsive, uncontrollable action leading to emotional and social instability. But according to Moreno spontaneity training opens the way for a flexible and systematic process of learning, providing a more reliable foundation for the absorbing of discipline than authoritarian methods. Anchoring discipline upon obedience does not give it as deep a root as can be provided by the spontaneous matrix of the individual, as the individual can be directed *sua sponte* (“from within the self”).

We see an interesting parallel in the conserve–spontaneity conflict in the drama. The dilemma of the actor of the conserved drama is that of the actor-creator. Torn between the conserved role – lines, emotions and

gestures long rehearsed – and the desire to create a *new* one, to live a new Hamlet experienced only in this moment, the conserved role becomes meaningless to him. The division within him is a torment. It makes his performance unconvincing. Our culture demands a specific rendering of Hamlet. Yet, does our actor really feel these words rehearsed so thoroughly that he no longer searches for their meaning? Is this then, the great Hamlet he has desired to enact? Or is not there, deep down in him a pain for that other Hamlet who had to die before he was born? This dichotomy may eventually interfere with our actor's performance, and often does, to a degree that makes performance in any conserved role impossible for him.

The spontaneity actor knows no such dilemma. His is the privilege of creating a Hamlet of the moment. True, spontaneity acting needs training; nurturing of the creative elements within the actor. It needs guidance in order that his Hamlet is not only spontaneous, but esthetically acceptable, blending harmoniously with the roles of other actors on the stage. But his training does not consist in learning lines and emotions set down for him. It is a training on the level of the actor's own creativity so that the spontaneity will be ready, stored away for an occasion when it will be called upon to carry him over danger zones. His is not the fear that tomorrow night at the same time these same emotions, the same words, have to be repeated, the same inflection of his voice used, in order to rouse his audience. His is a creation of and for the moment, valueless upon repetition, complete in itself – however imperfect it may be from the point of view of the conserved drama. His values have unified to the point where his creative ego is not at pains to prove itself at the price of the conserved self, *that self which is expected of him*.

Mock warfare as applied to our combatants is a true reproduction of the conserved form of the drama. The men follow a rigorously set pattern. Every step is designed so that not a single man is left without a definite set of instructions. Every moment is timed for the next step, which must be equally well prepared, and the next and the one after that, until the enemy is annihilated or surrenders. No amount of mock-warfare training, however carefully constructed its every detail might be, however frequently a soldier is subjected to it, can prepare him for the unknown, for that moment when he will be at a loss because of some unprepared-for surprise tactic on the part of the enemy, or because his equipment fails him. In the latter case his technical skill will help him, but the emergency may be outside the realm of technical knowledge. It is then that his spontaneity, his initiative, his ingenuity for making decisions on the spur of the moment has to come to the rescue.

There is a source of untrained spontaneity in every individual. Everyone is called upon, unknown times a day, to exert spontaneity in situations for which they know no suitable precedent. Obviously, many things depend upon split-second reaction of the soldier in battle. He has been carefully

“drilled.” He knows his weapons, what to expect from them and how to use them to his own and his fellow soldier’s advantage. But he will face situations that demand immediate action of a kind unrelated to his previous training. There is a great need for some training that bridges the gap in the personality adjustment of the *soldier-actor*. That bridge we believe is to be found in the application of psychodramatic methods.

Presentation of a typical problem

The case presented was chosen from among fifteen others dealing with problems of military trainees, because it revolves around one shared by many of them and is thus of great public interest. The problem defined is: Should a soldier marry while in the armed forces, or should he wait until the end of the war?

The subject, let’s call him Jack Roberts, was referred to us by a superior officer. He introduced himself when coming up on the stage. He was 25 years old, a second lieutenant, and came from a small town in Ohio. He was the youngest of three. His parents were alive and well-adjusted. He was college-educated and stated that he had been an average student. The interview with the director disclosed that it was his work situation that was first affected by this problem and that it came to the notice of one of his superiors. Thus, the first scene to be portrayed was the work situation. The subject was prepared by the director. Only crucial parts of the material are herewith presented. Many psychodramatic sessions have been combined into one. Lack of space prevents going into details that the case history revealed previous to the subject’s appearance in the theater.

Jack is backstage with the auxiliary ego who will represent his superior officer. Jack is warming up the auxiliary ego to his role.²

DIRECTOR: When Jack first started to talk about his problem he was bashful. He said he did not think he would do well on the stage. “I am not an actor.” The director explained to him that a psychodramatic subject does not have to be an actor. As long as he is honest and has a problem that is burning within him, he will be able to warm up to an adequate presentation of the conflict. Let us see how Jack’s problem came to the attention of an officer, and what his conflict consists of.

Jack returns to the stage with auxiliary ego.

DIRECTOR: Jack, describe the situation. Tell us where the scene took place.

JACK: It was a small room at the camp where I was having basic training; rather bare, simply furnished, posters on the wall.

DIRECTOR: What time of day?

JACK: Early evening.

DIRECTOR: Were you in the room first?

JACK: No, the officer was waiting for me.

DIRECTOR: Then go backstage and let the officer warm up to his role.

Jack goes backstage, auxiliary ego paces the floor, warming up to his role, then sits down. Jack enters, salutes. Officer motions to Jack, telling him to sit down.

Officer looks concerned, frowns.

OFFICER: I sent for you Roberts because as a candidate for O.C.S. we have been carefully watching you. Your record has been good up to the past few weeks. Lately you seem less alert. We need men of action for officers. How do you account for the change in you? You seem to be preoccupied with thoughts that have no bearing on your job.

JACK: I did not realize it was so obvious, sir.

Jack fidgets on his chair.

OFFICER: Are you in trouble of some kind? Is there something wrong at home?

JACK: No sir, not exactly at home.

OFFICER: Whatever it is, we don't want it to interfere with your chance for officer's training. I just wanted to warn you. It's not our job to pry into your private life. But we all make sacrifices these days; you realize that.

JACK: I do, sir.

OFFICER: Think you can work it out so that it won't spoil your chances in the army?

JACK: I think so, sir.

OFFICER: Hm, well see you don't slip up again. We'd like to see you get in and make the grade. We need good men. That's all.

JACK: Thank you sir.

Jack salutes and leaves stage. Auxiliary ego leaves after him. Director motions Jack to come back for an interview with him.

DIRECTOR: That scene took place while you were a private. The officer and probably others saw that something was on your mind that interfered with your army duties. But you are a second lieutenant now. That must have been quite a while ago, since you made the grade at O.C.S. meanwhile.

JACK: Yes, it was.

DIRECTOR: What was troubling you that made you less alert?

Jack looks down.

JACK: Whether I should get married or not. It had come up while I was in camp and I was not able to decide, so I pushed it into the background for a while. But now I have to face it.

DIRECTOR: One of the things we do not do here is give you advice. We merely give you a chance to objectify your conflicts on the stage with the aid of auxiliary egos who will try to represent absentee persons. You yourself have to find a solution, either here or later. Your problem, though it is a private one, contains many general elements. It is therefore of interest how the problem came about and how you solve it. Where is your young lady now?

JACK: Back home with her folks.

DIRECTOR: Inform the auxiliary ego who will portray her role how your girlfriend acts, and what happened when you saw her last. It does not have to be exactly as it happened. Just try and show us the essence of the situation, and perhaps of many other situations you may have been in with her.

An auxiliary ego is selected to represent Diane, Jack's girlfriend. Jack informs her of Diane's behavior. After two minutes they start the scene. Jack describes the situation.

JACK: Diane came down to the training school to discuss the possibilities of our marriage. The discussion took place after supper, while we were taking a walk.

Jack and Diane walk around center level of stage, while enacting this scene.

DIANE: I'm sorry if I upset you by coming here. I only wanted to get things straightened out.

JACK: You know I love you, else I would not have asked you to marry me last summer. I know you would have if I'd put some more pressure on you, but your family did not approve and so I hesitated to force you. I was a private and they felt that the future was too uncertain.

DIANE: It was not easy for me, being between two alternatives. I did not know what to do. But after you left I felt as if I'd let you down. It was not right to have let you go.

JACK: I've written you how I feel now. If I get my commission there's a reasonable job waiting for me. I owe as much to my job as I owe you. If we were to be sent overseas I'd be divided between worrying over your welfare and that of my men.

DIANE: But you said I could help if you were sent overseas, you'd have someone to hold on to, to come back for. Does not that still hold good, even if you are an officer? Besides you don't need to worry about me. I can take care of myself. I'll get a new job and live at home if you should be sent away.

Jack takes Diane's hand and stops walking. Diane halts and looks at Jack.

JACK: It's funny, but being an officer does make a difference. Strange how last summer I tried to convince you that we ought to get married. Now you're trying to convince me. We just don't seem to feel the same way at the same time.

DIANE: That's why I came down, so we could get together on it.

JACK: I don't think I'm ready for it now.

Jack starts walking again and Diane walks along with him. Both look unhappy, Jack especially strained.

JACK: Why don't we wait until I'm through with O.C.S. Let me concentrate on that first. Then we'll make a final decision.

Diane looks depressed.

DIANE: You mean, not mention it any more until you make up your mind?

JACK: I know it's hard, but it's the only way I can see my way clear right now.

DIANE: I guess that's the only thing to do then.

Jack is a little more relaxed when Diane says this.

JACK: Maybe we should have got married last summer after all. I just did not want you to do anything without your family's approval.

Jack and Diane leave stage. Jack comes back to interview with the director.

DIRECTOR: Jack, how often did you postpone marriage?

JACK: Oh, it went backwards and forwards a few times.

DIRECTOR: It seems that every time you wanted to marry she did not want to and when she wanted to you could not make up your mind.

JACK: That's right.

DIRECTOR: Your timing did not click. We often see that. And so you sent Diane home without a decision. She was willing to accept your suggestion to wait until you had finished school.

JACK: That's right. But now I'm through with school and I'm due for a furlough shortly. I've got to come to a decision one way or another.

DIRECTOR: Now that you've got your commission, do you feel that your responsibility towards the army weighs against marriage as heavily as before?

JACK: I feel it's just as important as the responsibility towards a wife and eventually a family.

DIRECTOR: Do you think you would have married Diane if the war had not come along?

JACK: If I felt the way I do now about her, probably.

DIRECTOR: Have you ever wanted to marry anyone before?

JACK: Yes, twice. But nothing came of it. Since then Diane has been number one.

DIRECTOR: How does Diane's family feel about you now that you are a lieutenant?

JACK: Well, judging from Diane's letters they seem to have given in somewhat. I suppose that is because she is more anxious to marry me.

DIRECTOR: Why do you think they were against it?

JACK: They were afraid of the uncertainty of the future and thought Diane was too young to tie herself down at a time like this, mostly because she was so hesitant.

DIRECTOR: Do you think Diane would have committed to marry you in the summer if her family had supported your proposal?

JACK: I believe so. She is very attached to her folks and she is quite young.

DIRECTOR: How do you feel about her folks? Do you think they should have not interfered?

JACK: Oh, I don't blame them. In their place I might have done the same thing. But at the same time, I feel that my hesitance now is due to her indecision, which was caused by their pressure.

DIRECTOR: Suppose you had an opportunity to see into the future, say five years from now. The war is over. What would you like to do and where would you want to be? Don't be hesitant, pick yourself the life you dream of.

JACK: I'd like to live on the West Coast.

DIRECTOR: Married or single?

JACK: Well, by that time I'd probably be married.

DIRECTOR: To Diane?

JACK: That depends on whether she'd wait for me.

DIRECTOR: Cautious young man, aren't you? Suppose she waits?

JACK: Rather Diane than anyone I know.

Jack moves about the stage with easy motion, uses his arms to describe the scene.

JACK: We have two children, a boy and a girl. The boy's the eldest. We live in Los Angeles in a lovely rambling house in the suburbs, very cozy and comfortable. There are six rooms. The furniture is modern. It's a beautiful home and we're very proud of it. My flowers in the front yard are the envy of the neighborhood. Diane grows vegetables in the back, by the kitchen entrance. The children have space to themselves to play in.

DIRECTOR: What is your profession?

JACK: I earn the wherewithal as a junior executive in a transcontinental airline firm.

DIRECTOR: What time of day is it?

JACK: It's evening. The children are in bed.

DIRECTOR: Explain to the auxiliary ego how you visualize the future.

Jack and Diane leave the stage again so that Jack can prepare her for this scene.

DIRECTOR: We saw how Jack warmed up so easily to the idea of being married to Diane, and having two children with her. His image of the future is very clear. Jack showed no hesitation. He knew he wanted Diane, to live on the West Coast and be a junior executive. Some people have a strong image of their future. Others have no vision of the future. They are not able to see ahead. Apparently Jack's desire to be married to Diane has colored all his dramas even though he does not entirely admit it on the interview level. We shall see how he imagines his life with Diane will be.

Jack and Diane return. Jack arranges furniture on the stage.

JACK: This is the living room. Diane and I are having our after-dinner chat. The children are sleeping. Diane is doing some needlework and I'm smoking a pipe.

Jack tells Diane where to sit. He himself sits down with his feet upon another chair. He looks very comfortable. Diane pretends to be concentrating upon some needlework.

JACK: You look very nice tonight, dear.

DIANE: Thank you. You look a little tired. Had a busy day at the office?

Jack lights pipe and smokes.

JACK: Rather. We're opening many new airline connections. How were the children?

DIANE: Oh, they're all right. Junior needs some new clothes. He is outgrowing all his things. He's getting to be rather a wise guy. Maybe you should take him in hand. Mary is easy to manage. Nothing special happened today.

JACK: Yes, they are getting big. Makes one feel old. Had a letter from mother today.

DIANE: Is she feeling better?

JACK: Well, she never complains. You know how she is. But Kenneth added a few lines. He wrote that the doctor suggests a change of climate for her, like coming out here.

DIANE: Well, why does not she come? We'd love to have her.

Jack looks searchingly at Diane, then speaks haltingly.

JACK: How would you feel about mother living with us, for good? I have not wanted to ask you before. Old people can be difficult and it would mean an additional burden for you. But she has not been well and needs someone to look after her. I hesitated to bring it up because it means that the children have to move into one room so that mother could have one for herself.

DIANE: But of course she can. We'll make her as comfortable as possible. She's very welcome. You should have not worried about that. We'll simply make room for her. When can she come?

Jack looks relieved, relaxes deeper into his chair.

JACK: It's swell of you to take it like that. I did not know how you'd feel about it and I'd be so relieved to know she's well taken care of.

DIANE: You have been worrying about that, I know.

JACK: It will mean your being tied down to the house more than before.

DIANE: With children one is tied down to the house anyway. You did not say when she'll come.

JACK: If Kenneth can bring her, as soon as I've written for her to come; perhaps sometime next week. If he can't get away I'll have to go and bring her. She's too old to come by herself and too ailing.

DIANE: Any time she comes, she's welcome.

JACK: Mrs. Roberts, I think you're a very nice girl.

Jack smiles and goes over to Diane, patting her on the back.

DIANE: Thank you, Mr. Roberts; you're rather nice yourself.

Jack and Diane leave the stage. Jack comes back for interview with the director.

DIRECTOR: How did the auxiliary ego act as Diane?

JACK: She did a fine job. Before, in the first scene with her I felt at times as if Diane and I were really back there thrashing it out.

DIRECTOR: Does Miss B. look like Diane?

JACK: No, she does not.

DIRECTOR: As long as the auxiliary ego is able to reproduce the atmosphere of the absentee person, the stimulus is sufficient for the subject to warm up to his role. Did you present her with the problem to be portrayed in this last scene before you came out with it on the stage?

JACK: No. I just thought that would be a good thing to bring up. Dad has not been too well. Maybe I worried about what was to become of Mum if she was left alone. I felt it best not to inform Miss B., to see how she'd react.

DIRECTOR: A sort of proxy test of Diane?

JACK: You could call it that.

DIRECTOR: She certainly came through.

JACK: She did indeed.

DIRECTOR: Is that the way you expect Diane to act in such a situation?

JACK: Pretty much like that. I guess I'm prejudiced in her favor.

DIRECTOR: When do you expect to see Diane?

JACK: In a few weeks.

DIRECTOR: We'd appreciate it very much if you would let us know how things work out with Diane. Will you do that?

JACK: I certainly shall. I want to say that I appreciate this opportunity to work things out.

DIRECTOR: Do you feel any easier about it now?

JACK: Not yet, but at least I've had a chance to feel what it might be like to be married.

DIRECTOR: Do you think you're still too close to it to say whether your working it out here has clarified things for you?

JACK: Yes, I think so.

DIRECTOR: We appreciate your honesty, and think you did a fine job here on the stage. In essence, Jack, there is no reason why an officer should not be a good family man as well as a good officer. The two are not incompatible. In the situation of the husband you would be the supporter. Later you would be the father. On the other hand, you will be the leader and authority to your men in the army; a sort of military father. It is possible to gain from one kind of role some experience for the other.

JACK: You mean that by being an officer I may learn about being a husband, and vice versa? But would not the authority I express in one role conflict with the other to some extent?

DIRECTOR: Not if you don't mix up your roles. Roles are, after all, only suitable within the proper frame.

JACK: That's true.

DIRECTOR: The issue in this case is a clear-cut one: Should Jack get married now or should he wait until he comes back from the army and can devote himself to family life? No one can tell him what to do. He must make his own decisions, but he will find that having had a chance to

place himself and his conflicts in an objective setting will enable him to come to a solution more rapidly and concretely than would otherwise be possible

The final outcome of this session was that Jack wired his girlfriend to be ready for his homecoming and to prepare for the wedding in a few weeks. He has reported to us from time to time. It is noteworthy that he has risen in rank since his marriage, is well adjusted in his married life and has apparently gained self-confidence for his military responsibilities.

Analysis³

Methods of role analysis

We consider: (a) how the expectancy of acting in a role in the future affects a subject and each member of the audience; (b) role deficiency of a subject; (c) adequacy and superiority in a role on the stage and in actuality; and (d) whether a role is dominant or secondary to the subject and each member of the audience, on the stage and in actuality.

Expectancy of acting in a certain role may produce a fear of entering situations in which that role comes to expression. In another case, the expectancy of a role may have the opposite effect. Getting a chance at expressing this role may increase courage, self-confidence and satisfaction in the role. In one soldier, marriage expectancy or fulfillment may produce increased role superiority as a fighting man; in another it may reduce his efficiency as a soldier. The role of the soldier may be dominant to a subject at this time. Two years hence the role of the husband may become dominant. In some cases, role deficiency as a husband may influence a man to such a degree that, if this deficiency is not recognized, marriage may become a factor which in turn may reduce his credibility as a fighter. In such a case, if his role deficiency as a husband is recognized before marriage, a decision not to marry or to postpone marriage may increase his value as a soldier. We have found that role-training helps to reduce role deficiencies. In times of war, role-training in military camps and schools might of necessity have to be limited to the soldier role, although it should be realized that the various representative roles in which a subject has to perform are dynamically interrelated and interdependent.

Scoring role dominance, role adequacy and role deficiency of single subjects and audiences⁴

Four methods of scoring have been used by the author as the basis for analysis of role and audience reactions. One method was to have the audience score silently while the proceedings on the stage were in progress.