

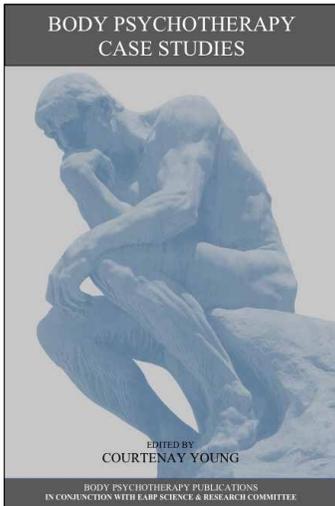
BOOK REVIEWS

Body Psychotherapy Case Studies

Edited by Courtenay Young

Body Psychotherapy Publications, 2018

Review by Virginia Zaharieva



For Two Stradivari and an Orchestra

Thirty years ago, having just crawled through the recently fallen Berlin wall, I was digging through the library of a mountain cabin at the foot of the Mont Blanc when I found a book with the strange title, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, written by the famous neurologist Oliver Sacks whose case histories describe the unimaginable world of his patients.

These accounts led me into an odd state – on one hand, I felt awkwardly curious while reading these stories of human pain, while on the other hand, taking into account my familial predisposition to insanity, I felt relieved that these stories did not concern me. But, I also felt slightly guilty for the mix of the two sensations. While I was reading the book, I was drawn to the role of the therapist, his (or her) power, patience, and humble service in relieving these people's suffering.

30 years later, I am myself a therapist with 23 years of experience in the Bulgarian body psychotherapy tradition. Today, I read Courtenay Young's *Body Psychotherapy Case Studies* with much less voyeurism and less guilt. The 15 essays selected here make me feel intrigued, understood, supported, and accompanied in the loneliness of my therapeutic studio. I feel grateful for the documented experiences shared in this excellently organized volume.

Body Psychotherapy Case Studies is a book that can be useful to:

- Clients, who might recognize themselves in some of the cases.
- Students, who wish to bring structure to their own work, learn how to present case studies from their practice, participate in scientific research, have a glimpse at the work of their mature colleagues, and learn from their experience.
- All practicing colleagues in the EABP and USABP family, for whom the case study method of describing one's work is still a relatively novel but quite necessary tradition in the direction of creating context, collective knowledge, and exchange. The cases enrich us with the experiences, observations, feelings, sensations, and reflections of colleagues from all body psychotherapeutic approaches.

Courtenay Young has documented the development of body psychotherapy case studies through the past ten years. He begins the book with a short story of the origin and transformation of the body psychotherapeutic method and its more known branches, and introduces the requirements for writing a body psychotherapy case study.

It should be noted that the book ends with a consent form template, which should be signed by the client whose case would be described, as well as by the therapist who would be describing the case, in compliance with the ethical and professional norms regarding this type of text. Each case is followed by an extensive bibliography. The language is comprehensible, clear, and easy to understand – a crucial quality for a book of scientific research.

The book presents a variety of cases. I was truly fascinated by Herbert Grassmann's work with a sexually assaulted client, *Sexual violence & its consequences* and also with the cases of eating disorders and drug addictions. The case written by Jacqueline A. Carlton, *Medical trauma: Interpersonal neurobiology and the autonomic nervous system* is very representative. I was quite impressed by Courtenay Young's approach in his study, *The angry cyclist – Doing effective psychotherapy without touch*, as well as by Stanley Keleman's *About developing a somatic soul*. I would also like to mention Laura Hope Steckler's *A woman of many colors* for the way she works with a woman suffering from a dissociative identity disorder – an approach that could be applied not only to cases of pathology, but also to issues related to identity crisis.

Body Psychotherapy Case Studies documents deep human experiences. It gives examples of the wide range of approaches that can be utilized in body psychotherapy. The composed professional frame keeps readers at a suitable distance, able to take in the sacred mystery of the body psychotherapist's job who slowly and patiently (I did not encounter the word *love* anywhere in the book – only compassion and positive countertransference) disassembles frozen trauma so that clients can recreate themselves through accepting and transforming their suffering into a resource for a happier life.

This book poses specific questions such as the possibility of interdisciplinary cooperation with other colleagues (Bernard Schläge). It juxtaposes the rush for interpretation against trusting clients' abilities to understand their own process. It touches on the transformation of the client, and the therapeutic relationship after therapy ends. It speaks about life counselling in difficult times, and the possibility of combining different kinds of therapeutic work, such as couple therapy and individual therapy.

Yalom (2002) wrote: “*The most elegant and complex instrument of all – the Stradivarius of psychotherapy practice – the therapist’s own self.*” I am convinced that in our work, and within the frame of the therapeutic agreement, there are *two* Stradivari – one is the body of the therapist, and the other is the body of the client. Out of the awareness, somatic resonance, and attunement between therapist and client, the beautiful sound of life emerges. We should not forget that there is also an orchestra – the *other* as family and society. And it all happens in the omnipresence of the Universe as conductor. Because, when we do not take into account the vertical dimension of the transcendental, our work as psychotherapists becomes flat.

In the end, I would like to ask Courtenay Young for several more copies of the book which I would purposefully forget in mountaintop cabins where other lost people might find them.



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