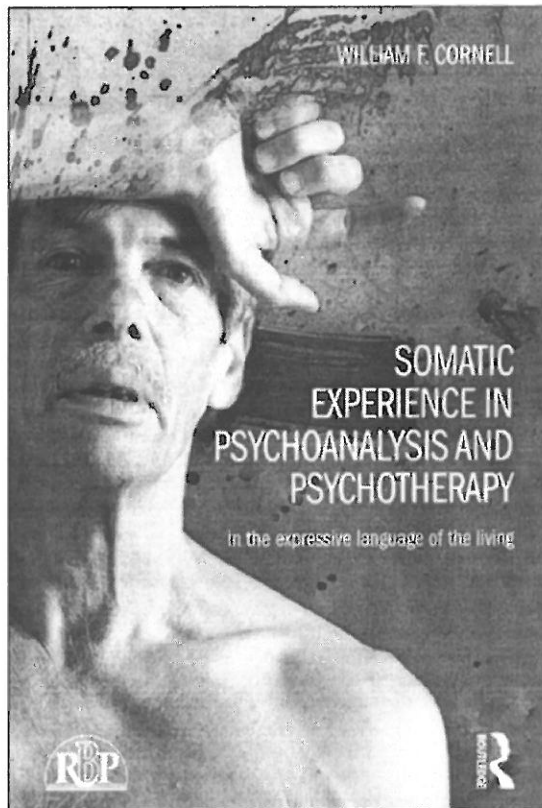


# the TRANSACTIONAL ANALYST

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'Working with the body' – Celia Simpson talks to Bill Cornell about his forthcoming book, see page 7

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# Focus overview

**DR CELIA SIMPSON** introduces this issue's special focus on working with the body.

**I**T GIVES ME great pleasure to introduce the special theme of this issue of *the Transactional Analyst*, that of 'our listening and speaking bodies'. We last had a body focus in the magazine in 2011, and our understanding continues to develop as the role and importance of the body is increasingly recognised in psychotherapy and counselling. The articles and reviews that follow take a specifically clinical focus, yet being in our bodies, listening to them and listening to the bodies of those we are working with, is a skill and an aim that improves all our interactions. So I hope that transactional analysts working in all fields find our coverage of this theme relevant.

Interest in the body, in our physical selves, in soma, in the connection between body and mind, has been developing rapidly. The therapeutic field is blossoming with expressions of this: dance and movement psychotherapy, therapy in nature, adventure therapy, energy psychology, to name some of these. Interest in our interiority has increased – therapists are attending to our somatic countertransference and using the information helpfully, we are acknowledging the energetic exchange that occurs in the therapeutic dialogue, and are accounting the role of the body-mind in metabolising a client's or supervisee's disturbances. Concurrently, there is increasing interest in the exploration of our inner landscapes through reflection, meditation and mindfulness. It seems that we are embracing – and integrating – our whole dynamic and vital selves more completely.

My personal journey back to the body has brought me to the delight of dancing – just for me. In that experience, I have realised the power of dance and movement to reorganise myself: to empty out, to express new shapes and feelings, to reintegrate myself anew. Here words take a back seat, and music and the sensory and kinaesthetic take the fore. After many years of mostly talking therapy (and academically-focused work), I have found that dance and meditation reach the parts that hitherto were only hinted at. I have just embarked on some training in developmental movement based on Judith Kestenberg's work, which I am already finding relevant to my own life and to that of my clients. So I have great personal and professional enthusiasm for the integration of body and psyche, an accounting of the impact of the sensory and non-verbal on our experience, our various understandings and our individual work.

The interview, articles and reviews on the theme represent some of the developments in the area of the

body-mind in transactional analysis. It is my hope that they bring together learnings that inspire, inform and encourage you to pay more attention to the somatic dimension in yourself and in and with your clients, supervisees and trainees.

First off, **Bill Cornell** shares his thoughts in an interview with me about his fascinating new book, *Somatic Experience in Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy*, published by Routledge this year. Bill's training has been in Radix bodywork as well as in TA and other therapeutic modalities, and he creatively weaves some of these threads to help us further understand the somatic experience of both the therapist and the client, and how we might work with it. He also opens up some fascinating themes of vitality, the erotic and sexuality.

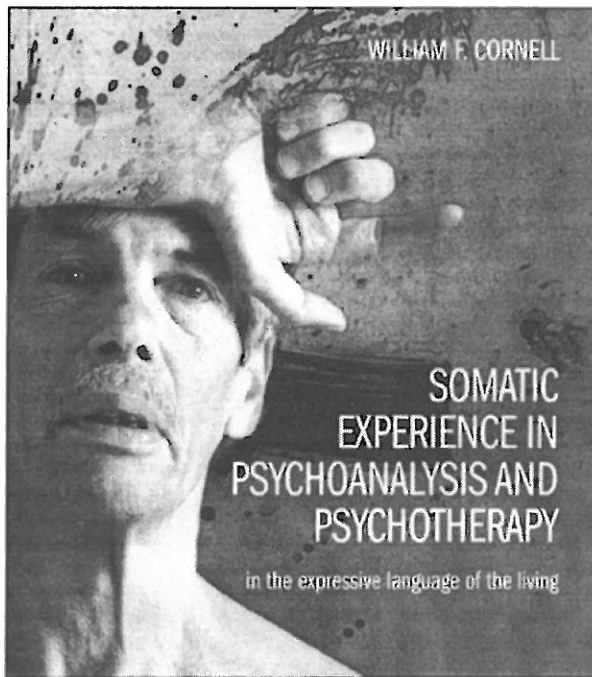
Then **Sue Hampton**, who also trained in body psychotherapy as well as in clinical TA, shares her experience and thinking about embodiment. For Sue, 'embodied awareness' is 'a profound and simple skill which we can practise to enhance our capacity to self regulate in order to support our autonomous state of being.'

The Northern College for Body Psychotherapy (NCBP) was set up in 2003 by Lis Heath, Steff Oates and John Heath (transactional analysts wanting to become more skilled in their use of somatic process in their talking therapy) and Jamie McDowell (an Alexander Technique teacher wanting to add a psychological model to his bodywork). This is the final year of the College, which has held hundreds of hours of workshops and organised conferences over nearly 13 years. From my personal experience of attending some of these events and of talking with other participants, the NCBP has been instrumental for many of us in developing our psychological and body awareness, and related skills, to bring them more fully into our work. In 'Psychophysical therapy', **Jamie McDowell** and **John Heath** reflect on the valuable experience of the College. They also share some of the fruits of it: 'psychophysical therapy' is their integrated way of working therapeutically together.

We also have two great body-focused reviews in the Reviews Section. **Steff Oates** highly recommends a new collection on the life and work of Sándor Ferenczi, a body-oriented psychoanalyst whose pioneering and often vulnerable spirit has left a profound legacy on our thinking. **Sue Hampton** reviews *Touching the Relational Edge: Body Psychotherapy* by Asaf Rolef Ben-Shahar. Sue focuses on some aspects of body awareness and relational skills that the embodied therapist can consciously use, whether or not he/she uses touch. For instance, using self-regulation to be with the client's bodily process.

We would be delighted to hear from practitioners working in this arena, in the form of letters or articles.

**Dr Celia Simpson, Assistant Editor**  
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## In conversation with... **Bill Cornell**

**DR CELIA SIMPSON** talks to Bill Cornell about his new book, *Somatic Experience in Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy in the expressive language of the living*, published by Routledge later this year.



**B**ILL CORNELL IS a creative practitioner, prolific writer, editor of the *Transactional Analysis Journal*, and winner of the 2010 Eric Berne Memorial Award for his work on the relational and somatic organisation of the Child ego state and on script and script protocol.

*CS: It's great to do this interview with you Bill. My sense is that your new book, *Somatic Experience in Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy in the expressive language of the living*, has been for you a satisfying experience of marrying together your commitment to the body and to psychotherapy. Do you want to say something about this marriage?*

*BC: It's funny that you have an association to marriage, because the first couple of years trying to write this book were more like enduring divorce proceedings. Altogether it took me five years to write the book. After the first couple of years, I nearly gave it up. The manuscript was simply not working, and I couldn't figure out what the problem was. I gave it to Mick, my partner, who is probably my best critic and who could read it more objectively. He immediately spotted the problem: that I was writing to two different audiences – the verbally*

*based, psychodynamic therapists and counsellors on the one hand and body-centered therapists and body workers on the other. I was writing in two different voices with two different goals, and they simply didn't work together. Mick argued that I needed to choose one audience and orient the book to them. I chose to focus on the psychodynamic practitioners and try to articulate how a more fully informed, body-centered perspective could enrich the more traditional, verbally-based approaches. I'm not sure I achieved marital status between the two, but I think I've managed a challenging dialogue. The manuscript went through two more severe edits before reaching this stage, tearing it apart and putting it back together again in a different shape – that is very much what it takes to make a real marriage!*

*CS: Yes! I agree that you've provided a challenging, and vital, dialogue to the talking and listening therapist. I'm curious about why you selected the material you did for this book.*

*BC: Once I found the focus, the book began to write itself. As the manuscript had been accepted for the Routledge *Relational Perspective* series, Lew Aron, one of the editors of the series, made it clear that he hoped the book would challenge rather than echo the current relational zeitgeist – an invitation I found hard to refuse. I felt a great urgency to resurrect Reich's clinical thinking in a substantial and lively way. I think I've*

## Focus on: Working with the body

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succeeded in this. I wanted to position sexuality at the heart of psychotherapy and human relations. These were central considerations in the ultimate focus of the book.

CS: *So what do you hope to achieve by the collection in terms of how people respond to it?*

BC: The book isn't a 'collection' as such. It is almost all new writing or radical revisions of a few earlier journal articles. I wanted to write in a fairly autobiographical voice, so as to illustrate how I struggled with many issues from my early training in Transactional Analysis and body psychotherapy. What I hoped to achieve in this way was to evoke the importance of our willingness to call our favorite theories and ways of working into question. I knew this book had the potential to disturb people, and I wanted it to be clear that I had been plenty disturbed along the way as I matured as a psychotherapist.

CS: *What are the top line messages in the book?*

BC: I intentionally avoided writing this book in a way to privilege any particular 'brand' of body therapy, psychoanalysis or Transactional Analysis. I wanted to demonstrate that a body-oriented perspective in counselling, psychotherapy, or psychoanalysis is highly compatible with more verbally-oriented methods, each can inform and deepen the other. The second 'top message' is that our bodies in their potential to be fully engaged in life with all of its twists and turns, provide an essential foundation to our well-being and maturational capacities.

CS: *I'd love to know what your favourite chapter in the book is, and why.*

BC: That's a tough question. Each chapter addresses a particular aspect of the therapeutic process, so it's a bit hard to choose a favourite. Even so, I'd say 'Traces of the Other: Encounters with character.' Character theory during my Reichian training was incredibly important to me. Redefining the meaning of character as a means of unconscious communication rather than primarily as systems of defense has been a crucial part of my development as a psychotherapist. I've written a lot

about script theory and protocol in TA. Character is closely linked to these central TA ideas, conveying the lasting impact of the nonverbal aspects of our formative relationships.

CS: *I found that chapter very interesting. Another chapter I particularly enjoyed was 'The Silent Call'.... Perhaps our readers would be interested in how you conceive of the erotic – is it always sexual? – and why you consider its inclusion to be so important?*

BC: The literal meaning of 'erotic' is 'coming to life,' so it is not only about sexuality. There was an element of the erotic in Winnicott's way of framing aggression as the capacity to come into life more fully, to make demands on the environment. But sexuality was virtually absent from his writing. For Reich, sexuality was at the heart of the work with the body in its defenses and potential vitality. Sexuality is an essential element of the erotic. Now, for the most part, in current models of somatic work, psychoanalysis, and Transactional Analysis, sexuality seems to have been moved to the periphery of attention, if attended to at all. I think our work as psychotherapists and counsellors becomes empty, hollowed out, when we don't attend to our client's sexual experience, anxieties, and desires. Attention to sexuality is present in all of my clinical work. I think that our sexual relations are a foundation for sustaining life through difficult times. These days therapy so often fosters cultural and social adaptation, normalcy. I'm not interested in that. That is not why I am a psychotherapist. When we keep sexuality within the therapeutic frame, we are engaged with the full person, including those aspects that do not necessarily suit normative social expectations.

CS: *My sense is that therapy is broadening out currently – touching our vitality in its various forms, such as movement, dance and working in natural contexts, as well as sexuality. Do you see transactional analysts paying more attention to the body, both theirs and their clients? And if so, how do you think this process might deepen?*

BC: Yes, definitely. In all of my traveling to teach and supervise in TA, I see persistent interests in learning how to attend to the body level of our work more

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systematically. There has been a very important move away from the traditional ways some of us in TA were trained that emphasised intense emotional discharge and/or regression. I teach people to work with somatic experience in the here-and-now. In training groups now there is the desire to see how bodily experience and non-verbal communications are part of the transference/countertransference dynamics and to help us see and experience the protocol level of psychological organisation. I think this awareness deepens by bringing more body-centered questions into our case consultations and by reading. There are several excellent, new books on working with body process in addition to mine.

CS: *Could you recommend a few of these to our readers?*

BC: *The Embodied Analyst: From Freud and Reich to Relationality* by Jon Sletvold, published by Routledge; *Verbal and Non-verbal Communication in Psychotherapy* by Gill Westland, published by Norton; *Handbook of Body Psychotherapy and Somatic Psychology*, edited by Guslt Marlock and Halko Weiss, published by North Atlantic, are books that I can happily recommend.

CS: *Thank you. I'm excited to read my copy of the Handbook that was my Christmas present to myself! So what are you working on at the moment Bill?*

BC: I'm taking a bit of a rest. I saw three books to publication this year. I need time for more reading and reflection. I don't have another book underway, although I am giving serious consideration to a book on perversion. I have an article soon to come out in *Psychoanalytic Perspectives* called 'The Body of the Analyst at Work' and a couple of articles in the *TAJ* pipeline. I'll be co-editing an issue of the *TAJ* with Mark Widdowson on 'The sense and nonsense of research in the human sciences' and another with Brad McLean of 'Gender, Sexuality, and Identity' – both very current and exciting topics. With that amount of editing on the horizon, there won't be much time for my own writing.

Thanks for each of these questions Celia. They have provided me with an opportunity to further reflect on

what the writing of Somatic Experience has meant to me.

CS: *Three published books in a year is very impressive! I'm sure our readers look forward to reading the work that comes forth after your reflection period. Thank you Bill for such an interesting interview.*

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