



On the Roundabout: A Cyclical Journey through Repetition and Return with Older Adults living with Dementia.

Adam Atlasi, Jane Jackson & Judy Elias

This collaboratively led, experiential workshop will draw from our many years of experience working with older adults with dementia, through the London-based dramatherapy charity, Roundabout. We will journey together through repetition and return as core dramatic devices for stimulating memory, establishing connections and building familiarity.

Adam recalls being greeted by a client with dementia from a weekly group session, in a charity shop outside of our familiar context, "I know you, don't I?" A moment of recognition and return.

We will share how our dramatherapy practice supports our clients to return to their long-term memories, encouraging narrative continuity between lived experience and the here and now. For the client, it can feel like a homecoming. An encounter with memories that are still part of them and not lost. These encounters, witnessed and heard by an other, are key to recognizing and maintaining the parts of the self that remain intact for those living with dementia (Norberg, A. 2019).

The Roundabout image provides a symbol of the cycle of our client's experiences and identities, stepping in and out of moments of clarity. There's an alchemical element to life's indirect route through internal and external struggle, to the paradoxical sense of a destination. In our work, our clients search for golden moments through the return to any stops on the roundabout of life that call out to be re-visited. A process of individuation. And for those living with dementia, the degenerative syndrome highlights the inevitable prospect of no return. Yet, the weary traveller can be sustained through re-engaging with the long road of past adventures and discoveries, just as in Constantine P. Cavafy's encounter with states of being in *Ithaka*.



References

Norberg, A., (2019) **Sense of Self Among Persons with Advanced Dementia**. Ed. Wisniewski, T., *Alzheimer's Disease*. Codon Publications. Brisbane.

Biography

Adam Atlasi is a HCPC registered Dramatherapist, Clinical Supervisor and Deputy CEO at Roundabout Dramatherapy. He is the current Co-Chair of the Creative Arts Supervision Forum and works in the NHS with adolescents experiencing mental health crisis, supporting them to avoid hospital admission. Adam graduated with an MA in Drama and Movement Therapy from The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in 2019 and has a specialist interest in working with older adults, including those living with dementia.

Jane Jackson is a dramatherapist and clinical supervisor. She has experience with a range of client groups, whilst specialising in work with older people including those with dementia, adults with all levels of learning disability and adults with autism, in a variety of settings. Jane has been published several times in these areas both solely and with co-writers. A freelance practitioner, she has worked with Roundabout since 2002 and was for many years within the NHS.

Judy Elias qualified as a dramatherapist in 2001 and has worked in a variety of settings over the past 24 years, primarily as a freelance practitioner with Roundabout. She combines this with other work including a busy supervision practice. Early in her career, she developed a particular passion for working with older adults in residential care and this has led to numerous projects in care homes across London, including work with Holocaust survivors. Judy has presented on this specialist area at conferences and has shared her experience with dramatherapy students as a visiting tutor at Anglia Ruskin University.



Recent Publications

Atlasi, A., Blades, K., Wardell, N., (2021) **Sesame Folklore**. *Dramatherapy: The Nature of Interruption*. Routledge.

Jackson, J., (2019) **Notes of Recognition and Connection: Music within Dramatherapy when working with adults who have challenges in their verbal capacity or are non-verbal**. *Collaborations within and between Dramatherapy and Music Therapy: Experiences, Challenges and Opportunities in Clinical and Training Contexts*. Jessica Kingsley.

Elias, J., Cedar, L., Crockford, S., Jackson, J. (2015) **Roundabout and the Big Lottery: a four-year dramatherapy project for older adults**. *Dramatherapy Journal*. Vol 37(1).