



The Man with a Shattered World: The History of a Brain Wound

Alexander R. Luria , Lynn Solotaroff (Translator) , Oliver Sacks (Foreword by)

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Russian psychologist A. R. Luria presents a compelling portrait of a man's heroic struggle to regain his mental faculties. A soldier named Zasetzky, wounded in the head at the battle of Smolensk in 1943, suddenly found himself in a frightening world: he could recall his childhood but not his recent past; half his field of vision had been destroyed; he had great difficulty speaking, reading, and writing.

Much of the book consists of excerpts from Zasetzky's own diaries. Laboriously, he records his memories in order to reestablish his past and to affirm his existence as an intelligent being. Luria's comments and interpolations provide a valuable distillation of the theory and techniques that guided all of his research. His "digressions" are excellent brief introductions to the topic of brain structure and its relation to higher mental functions.

The Man with a Shattered World: The History of a Brain Wound Details

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From Reader Review The Man with a Shattered World: The History of a Brain Wound for online ebook

Eve says

2.5/5

Gerardo says

No por algo el prologo de Sacks.

Genial libro con detalles desgarradores sobre lo que le sucedió al soldado.

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[illegible][illegible]

Carmela Napoletano says

Mi è piaciuto molto, tanto che avendolo preso in prestito in biblioteca, ho poi deciso di comprarne una copia da tenere. Il resoconto della propria malattia, di tutte le difficoltà quotidiane (davvero inimmaginabili per chi legge) scritto di prima mano dal protagonista, risulta emotivamente molto coinvolgente, anche se un po' ripetitivo. Ma non poteva essere diversamente date le condizioni di Lev Zaseckij (il protagonista). Gli interventi di Lurija offrono spiegazioni chiare e aiutano nella comprensione della difficile condizione in cui si trova il protagonista. Le ho trovate ugualmente belle perché testimoniano l'empatia e l'impegno del medico nel seguire il proprio paziente in una lotta davvero titanica. Una lotta continua, che alla fine diventa essa stessa l'essenza della vita del protagonista.

Sirarpi says

Zazetsky coped with this fragmentation by writing a journal of his thoughts and memories as they occurred, day after day, for 20 years. He then arranged and ordered these entries, in an attempt to reconstruct his lost "self." From over 3000 pages of this journal material, the neurologist A. R. Luria has constructed this extended case history from which emerges a remarkable portrait of Zazetsky as a determined and courageous human being. Zazetsky's first-person account is interspersed with comments and descriptions by Luria himself, explaining the relevant structure and function of the brain.

Samer Bou Karroum says

Its a light book that can be read for entertainment. Its an eye-opener since you'll enter the world of an injured person (injury in his head) and see what he sees and understand life from his own perspective.

There was a lot of repetition, which helped me understand what he is passing through, but still, it was a bit boring.

I recommend it for light reading.

What's missing in this book is perhaps what can we conclude from his account and how might this story affect neurology and psychology.

Abeer Hoque says

Zasetsky is a bright young student who goes to war (WWII) and exits with a bullet to his brain, and devastating amnesia. Over the course of the next 25 years, he struggles to come to terms with, to explain, to regain his life, his past, his future, his identity, his purpose.

He writes and rewrites over 3000 pages of a journal even though the effort is beyond superhuman: he sometimes takes days to remember a single word or its meaning; a day of writing might yield a single paragraph; he cannot read or understand conversations; his right visual field is destroyed; and he is beset with an ever degrading memory, headaches, weakness, fatigue, depression, fear.

"I can't see the first letter of a word clearly. It doesn't come through clearly but looks as if it's been plucked, gnawed around the edges, and what's left are scattered points, quills or threads that flicker like a swarm."

Dr. A. R. Luria is a Russian neuropsychologist (and Oliver Sacks' mentor) who follows Zazetsky for 25 years. Combining his patient's journal and his own immense knowledge and compassion, he has compiled this little 130 page book which is heartbreaking, and yet not for a moment self pitying. His so called "digressions" are marvelous, insights into brain science and psychology, explained in elegant and clear language.

My only criticism is that the book could have done with some editing. The journal entries have a lot of

That said, I recommend it to anyone interested in neuropsychology, the brain's workings, and memory.

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Grace Best-Page says

Very, very interesting. The workings of the human brain are utterly fascinating, and the working of the patient's spirit is equally awe-inspiring. Unfortunately, my library didn't have the version with Oliver Sack's introduction, as I'm sure that would have been interesting, too.

Ahmad T Rai says

Pros :

A terrifying surrealistic journey into what it means to suddenly lose what makes you "You" - an interactive human being.

When you suddenly wake up and you lost all your knowledge , memories , words or even the ability to communicate.

The writing is so vivid that it makes you almost feel what he's living through. I say "almost" because it is impossible to imagine losing what you take for granted " your memories, your senses , the order of the world, left from right, and even your own organs"

This book leaves you with a newly found appreciation for everything that constitute who you are. Words that come to mind to describe this person " tenacity , frustration, fragile , vertiginous , blocks , locks, confusion , regression , courage , agony , despair , hope""

Cons : this book definitely could've been written and edited in a much better way. There is a lot of repetition and no care for the chronology of the events at all.

Liam says

Review in Retrospect

Luria makes better, but fewer, readable patient case studies than Oliver Sacks. Luria was the first 'neuropsychologist' and he seems to be figuring out the condition rather than poetically redescribing it as has every other modern clinician-patient story. It's sad really, there is more care and less ego here but it receives less attention. I think this was the most interesting case study I have ever read (even more so than people that believe they are vampires), this man had pure word blindness so he could write but not read and not remember very well either so he had to write everything and get people to tell him what he wrote so he would by chance ask it to be read and then realise he had once wrote it for him to remember in the future. Just trying to imagine that makes my head spin, and Luria does a good job of getting you there.

Tim Weakley says

I can see why Sacks was such a fan of Luria, and his case histories. The idea of "romantic science" comes through clearly in this study of a man with a traumatic brain injury. Shot in the head during the battle of Smolensk the subject was never able to regain normal brain function. He spent the rest of his life allowing himself to be used as an experimental subject discovering the functions of the brain, and attempting to relearn basic skills. Fascinating perspective.

amapola says

Una lotta che non ha portato alla vittoria e una vittoria che non ha messo fine alla lotta

Nel 1943 sul Fronte Occidentale russo, Lev A. Zaseckij viene ferito da un proiettile tedesco che gli penetra profondamente nel cervello. Ha 24 anni e da quel momento la sua vita va letteralmente in frantumi. Scrive Oliver Sacks nella Prefazione:

Soffre di un intollerabile caos visivo che muta continuamente, gli oggetti nel suo campo visivo (in ciò che resta del suo campo visivo) sono instabili (...) Gli è impossibile vedere, e persino immaginare, il lato destro del corpo: il senso di "lato destro" è scomparso sia relativamente al mondo esterno che a se stesso. E' continuamente incerto, in modo quasi non immaginabile, circa il suo corpo: qualche volta pensa che alcune parti del corpo siano cambiate, (...) Altre volte pensa che la gamba destra sia chissà dove sopra la spalla, forse sopra la testa. Dimentica pure come funzionino le parti del suo corpo: così quando ha bisogno di defecare, non ricorda bene di avere un ano.

Ma soprattutto, e infinitamente più serie di tutte queste, sono le devastazioni della memoria, del linguaggio e del pensiero: "La memoria è vuota, non riesco a ricordare nemmeno una parola ... Tutto ciò che è rimasto nella memoria è polverizzato, spezzettato in singole parti isolate, senza alcun ordine".

Campo visivo ridotto, perdita del senso del proprio corpo, memoria svuotata del significato delle parole... questo libro è il racconto di 25 anni di lavoro per recuperare quel mondo che la pallottola tedesca aveva mandato in frantumi; è una selezione che Lurija ha fatto delle tremila pagine di diario di Zaseckij (il vero protagonista è lui), raccordandole con alcune argomentazioni. Un esemplare rapporto tra medico e paziente. Il diario, ripetitivo fino all'ossessività, rende benissimo l'idea dello sforzo, della tenacia, dell'indomabilità di un uomo che non si arrende mai, sostenuto, confortato, aiutato dal medico che lo segue. Impossibile non commuoversi e, al contempo, non restare profondamente ammirati da questa vicenda e dai suoi protagonisti. E' proprio vero che non c'è niente come il dolore e le avversità che rivelino la stoffa di cui siamo fatti.

Cinque stelle non al caso clinico (non ho competenze in merito), ma ai due protagonisti.

Il proiettile è rimasto sempre conficcato al suo posto: troppo rischiosa per il paziente la sua asportazione.

<http://youtu.be/Bln4y1BhKJc>
