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Book review: Growing old: a journey of self-discovery, Danielle Quinodoz, Routledge 2009

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how-to; it's more a 'how I did it and why' book, though obviously one can usefully adopt most of the techniques.

This is a visually attractive book and a pleasant size and shape to hold, but it didn't really hold my interest. It all felt like too much un-British navel-gazing, and the naked pain of the writers was hard to bear. One notable exception was Sandy Hutchinson Nunn's piece: 'Finding your racket voice' (chapter three: Writing the self). I know Sandy personally, and am therefore interested in what she has to say. I'm also deeply interested in TA (the perspective from which she writes this piece), so would have enjoyed this article anyway. Sandy writes well – as do all the contributors – and I know there are plenty of practitioners who would find this book useful and helpful. I regret that I didn't, and am quite willing to accept that this is about me and not the book.

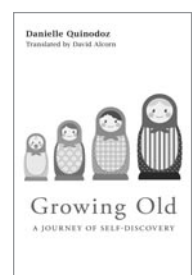
Margaret Akmakjian-Pitz, MA, MBACP (Accred), psychotherapist in private practice.

Growing old: a journey of self-discovery

Danielle Quinodoz

Routledge 2009

ISBN 978-0415545662 £14.99



Freud said that psychoanalysis should not be attempted with the over-50s. In specialising in a much older age group, and treating them with traditional psychoanalytical methods, Danielle Quinodoz has proved him wrong. This book is the story of her successes in working with this group, and what

she has learned over the years. Key concepts include the idea of helping elderly clients create a narrative of their life, so that there is a coherent whole, closing the circle of life; forgiving those who have caused hurt and making reparation with those who have been hurt; and, the concept that I most enjoyed, the idea that the Western perception of time (with the future ahead and the past behind) can be challenged. She offers the example of a South American tribe whose concept of time is that the future is behind (unseen) and the past in front (seen). The unseen future moves forward, becomes the present, and moves on to become the known past that is visible from the present moment.

The thrust of Quinodoz's work is about helping clients come to terms with their lives as they both age and, inevitably, begin to consider the end of life. Because time is limited, it needs to be experienced intensely. The best place to do this, in her mind, is in psychoanalysis. Death or infirmity may mean that a full analysis is cut short, but nevertheless she makes the point that there is time, and need, to make sense of life as it approaches an end.

This is described as 'growing old actively' (as opposed to growing old passively). As a psychoanalyst, Quinodoz is constantly making links between the client's internal and external worlds. She uses the metaphor of putting one's internal house in order. Once this is done, the rest of life, however long that may be, can be lived out productively. In some ways this could serve as a metaphor for any therapy, but Quinodoz is dismissive of psychotherapy, seeing it as a poorer cousin to psychoanalysis, and humanist or behavioural therapies do not warrant a mention.

This is an excellent book, well worth reading. It is filled with engaging

examples, both from the author's own caseload, and from both clinical and fictional literature. If I have a quibble, it would be that some of the analytical interpretations (such as the assumption that all small girls suffer from penis-envy) are a little much for me, but that does seem a small grumble in such a good book. There is very little written about old age, and this book, written with warmth and compassion, makes a welcome contribution to the subject. If you only have time to read one book this quarter, consider this one.

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