

given the way in which therapy has become increasingly seduced by a more manualised and technical approach to engaging with clients/patients in our current world. Of course, much of this can be attributed to the influence of the medical model, as Groth so correctly states, but also to the way in which language itself can so fundamentally mis-characterise ourselves, others and the world.

Groth records and highlights Boss's travels and stays in India in the Fifties, which alone reflects quite a different picture of his thinking as a therapist to that presented in his earlier major publications under Heidegger's more direct influence. For example, Boss said that he had experienced three 'miracles' (*wundere*) (p101) whilst in conversations with different sages and gurus, which deeply affected his outlook on therapeutic practice.

Groth's comments and reflections on Boss clearly show how deeply influenced he is by the latter, offering some interesting and challenging perspectives of his own on being a therapist, or therapist. For me, these merit serious consideration, even if they might well seem a little questionable for the general therapeutic community. But here is what I really like about this book: that both Boss and Groth are onto something crucially important. It is their belief that, as Groth puts it, "[p]sychotherapy has possibilities that have not been realised" (p129). Both address this challenge by taking their own paths, emphasising that it is possibility rather than actuality (read: theory, abstraction, naturalistic explanation, technique) that opens this path.

As a companion piece to this review, in the next journal issue I will review Groth and Fazekas's *Dialogues on the Renaissance of Daseinsanalysis: What Does 'Existential' Really Mean?*

Mo Mandić

The Red of My Blood: A death and life story

Clover Stroud. 2022. London: Penguin Books.

I have read a lot of good books (and some less worthy too) but seldom does the universe place the one I need in my hands at the time I need it. I have had books speak to my experience before, Andre Carl van der Merwe's *Moffie* in particular. On that occasion, I had the uncanny experience of seeing much of my adolescence on the page and the tangible vision of the future I escaped, my avoided future, if you will. But I came to that book more than twenty years after the fact. So, I cannot express how excited I am to have recently come across this book. The right book at the right time.

As the subtitle says, this is a book about death and life and it is exactly the focus I needed. Despite the differences between myself and the author, like Stroud I have been recently bereaved, like her I was there at the passing, so we share a familiarity with death. But the dying has not been the problem...

well, that is not quite right, the dying has not been the only struggle. What has been far more difficult – and as I have looked around, seems to be rarely and poorly discussed – is the ‘how’ of life after loss. So many tell you that it gets better, but they do not say how. They tell you that you learn to live with it, but they don’t tell you how. I did not want to be told what to do or how to be, but the experience of living alongside death gets far less attention, and less attuned attention, than the facts of it.

This is the beauty of Stroud’s account, for me. Her story is like someone taking me by the hand and allowing me to witness her experience, how days and weeks were for her. There is no instruction, no assumption that following her lead would ‘help’, ‘heal’ or ‘resolve’ anything. No, it has just been magical to see the experience represented. Stroud’s generosity in letting us see inside her struggles and dilemmas was also, for me, a profound experience of the ungraspable put into words; not just the experience of loss (there are plenty of words for that), but the dilemmas of finding a way to live alongside death.

And this is what I needed. In the weeks and months after my bereavement, I felt increasingly separate from the world, not closer. The lead up to the funeral was, in retrospect, a period of great connection. It was after that milestone that the isolation ramped up. Despite the love and care of those around me, I felt cut off. From others and from the me I had been. Stroud shocked me with her grasp of this. She writes:

In order to survive that death of mine – and, better, to exist and even thrive with it – I had had to learn to live again in this new, changed, completely different world, without my sister in it, like a newborn baby must learn to live.

(p232-33)

Like a newborn baby! Having to start all over again, rediscover a sense of coordination, relational awkwardness and it felt, with a far more limited understanding and ability to word my world.

The friends that ‘gave me space’ often gave far too much space; the ‘we do not want to upset you’ approach has a horrible risk of making the already isolated feel alienated. The longer they left it, the more abandoned I felt.

Others knew better and let me talk and that was appreciated but was not without its risks either. “You can talk to me,” they would say. “Can I?” I would wonder. That is “Can I?” with an emphasis on the ‘I’. They were people I would be safe to talk to, disclose to, or break down with. But their claim assumed that this oddest of experiences could be worded, put into language. That I could process, reach out and communicate something clearly. The impossibility of that was not even considered. Talking for talking sake, without accurate meaning, may have kept me occupied but

increased the sense of isolation too.

"We are here for you," they would say too, meaning well. But in a profound sense they were not there. Their laughs and smiles and attempts to inject joy and pleasure into my life merely reinforced my sense of living in a parallel universe. They had joy, I didn't. My world had just been shaken upside down and they acted as if they did not notice it, as if everything was the same, except for the one missing piece.

Maybe our 'It's good to talk' generation overlooks the complexity of attending to, capturing and translating confusion, bereftness and emotionality into intelligible words. They assume that talking would lead to less distress, whereas Stroud captures my experience when she writes: "Crying was, in some ways, more contained than the stunned place of far distance that death pulled me into" (p149-50). The far distance of death was something I experienced, and I had to – must, rather, present tense – find a way back to a shared world if I can. And that is hard; it is like starting again.

This is not to criticise the attempts my friends and family made. Even if I felt people were out of reach there was comfort in their attempts to be available. My experience was just that living with death so close, meant attempts were possibly as good as it gets at that stage. Patience, faith and their love, their ability to wait for me was important too. But I could not see that or say that. And I still have no idea as to how long people may have to be patient.

Living alongside death seems to me as if there is a wall between you and the world, it is like being surrounded by an invisible membrane. You cannot feel it with your hands, nor can you see it, but the impact of it is there. Others laugh and you might muster a smile. They are excited by what is merely mundane to me now. No amount of intellectualisation changes that. Because living with death is not intellectual and it is not about time alone. I had to – must – find my new self. As Stroud puts it: "The person I had been to my sister had died with her" (p232).

That is it. I felt a part of me had died, and was dying. Who am I going to be? I wonder. Who am I now that I am not her son? (I am, but clearly with her gone, I am not). Who am I when she no longer picks up the phone? I still ring her number, I did it again yesterday knowing full well that I disconnected the account months ago. Who will I be if I dare to have joy again when the world is now so depleted, so grey and alien?

It is not just who will I be but who is it OK for me to be? Stroud describes the struggle she had thinking about "the violence of the fact my sister could be dead, and I could be OK" (p151). I get that too. If it were possible to 'move on', 'recover' or 'heal' (and at this point I am still not sure it is), how am I going to do this without doing violence to the meaning of someone so important? How can I possibly have fun with her life extinguished?

As you see, I had, and still have, a lot of questions. I am not suggesting

Stroud's book has answered them for me. I do not think this is a book to turn to for 'answers' in a simplistic kind of way. I think that her generosity in allowing us to walk part of her experience with her is a gift. I found the fact that someone struggled but is finding a way of attuning to her experience, finding words for it, and creating meanings out of the starkest, and darkest, of experiences reassuring. I am hopeful that I too can find a way to become someone who can live alongside death.

I am aware that this review is unusually personal for a professional journal. And, I am aware, even more so than usual, that I cannot say that this is the right book for you. But my sense is that as powerful as this book may be for those of us struggling to live with death, it is also a useful book for those who want to support us – whether personally or professionally. Because of that I am convinced it will be useful for members of the Society to read.

Stroud has offered something rare, something exquisite and something worthy of any attention readers may want to give it.

Martin Milton

A Matter of Death and Life: Love, loss and what matters in the end

Irvin D. Yalom & Marilyn Yalom. 2021. London: Piatkus.

I am unsure how to start this review as there is something too confronting if I simply write that this is by a couple who grapple with the impending death of one of them, the retirement of the other and the aftermath of it becoming a solo rather than joint project, much like their life. I am aware there is a broad range of literature on death and managing it as an experience, but it is not a topic I have ever really been drawn to and, in that sense, this feels like a novel undertaking. As I type this review, I can feel a disjoint between my upbeat activity and the real loss I know is to come.

The book is simply structured with a preface giving some background to the project, followed by thirty-five chapters. The first twenty-one chapters mark the time before Marilyn's death; there is an additional unnumbered chapter entitled 'We will remember' which includes tributes from their children that were spoken at her funeral. The passage of time is marked with each chapter having a month in the top right corner of the page; some months have multiple chapters.

The way in which Marilyn's actual death is dealt with is understated. The last chapter she authors ends with a statement that feels cruel and dissociated from the reality as she writes that:

Sandy sent material to Stanford University Press and within a