Existential Thought and Therapeutic Practice: An introduction to existential psychotherapy

Hans W. Cohn
Sage, 1997, £11.99 pb, 135pp.

Believing as I do that the existential approach has a tremendous amount to offer humanistic practitioners, I was delighted to have a chance to review this book. I must say, however, that I think its title is somewhat misleading. It is not so much an introduction to existential thought and practice as a comparison of the existential-phenomenological framework with psychoanalysis.

This is no bad thing, and it could certainly serve to help a few Freudians into the modern age. However, I was expecting something else and consequently experienced some disappointment. This was deepened when I read that Cohn, while honouring the American group of existentialist therapists, nevertheless decided reluctantly to omit reference to them. I think this is a real pity, from our perspective, because, as he says, 'Though [the Americans] are in varying degrees influenced by European developments, they seem to be very deeply rooted in their own philosophical tradition in which humanistic and pragmatic elements play a decisive part.' I think his analysis is correct, and it is this tradition which makes them so valuable to humanistic practitioners seeking a rigorous and reality-based approach to their work.

All that aside, I very much like what Cohn has done. Here's how he summarises a key difference between the existential and psychoanalytic approaches: 'We can say, I think, that psychoanalysis is less

concerned with individual existence than with common trends, what we might call 'essences'. On this concern psychoanalysis bases its claim to be a science.' While earlier he has written: 'existential psychotherapy is concerned with existence rather than essence, with this man or woman rather than with "man" in the generic sense. It does not ask "What is man?"but rather "How is this man or woman?"' As I see it, this means that the existential approach seeks to understand rather than to explain.

The chapter on 'The Therapeutic Relationship' is very illuminating. It examines transference and countertransference as viewed through the psychoanalytic filter and then compares this to the existential view, which, I suggest, is similar to that held by many humanistic practitioners: 'Phenomenologically, there is no distinction between a real and a transference relationship. The therapeutic relationship is always real but — as all reality (*sic*) — in need of elucidation.' It is this emphasis on elucidation or clarification of the client's story that makes the existential approach both client-centred and extremely rigorous. It is the *client*'s meaning that is sought, not an opportunity to put forward the meaning of Freud, Jung, Klein or some other psychoanalytic interpreter.

Cohn identifies other important factors that stress the unique quality of every therapeutic encounter. For example: 'The client you meet as the therapist is the client who meets you. There is no client *as such*. If two therapists meet the same client, it is not the same client.' And similarly: 'There is no "history" to be taken because there is no history *as such*. A client's history is disclosed in the process of interaction between therapist and client.' These statements lead logically to: 'This means there cannot be an "assessment", as this would imply an objective situation independent of time, place and the contribution of the assessing therapist.' This resounds with the clear ring of truth in a world aware of quantum theory.

In his chapter on groups Cohn states that there is no detailed existential-phenomenological approach to group therapy, but proposes a model of his own, after a review of Bion's and Foulkes' approaches. The latter is taken as an example of an approach that mixes phenomenological and psychoanalytic notions. I hankered after a reference to Yalom, perhaps, but I suppose the USA-exclusionary clause was operating here. This is a thought-provoking but not very convincing part of the book.

The chapter on anxiety and guilt gives the existential view competently, but that on the unconscious (existentialism doesn't permit such a thing) seemed more like academic point-scoring than creating meaningful distinctions. To simplify, Freud offers us the conscious and unconscious, while the existentialists provide a reflective conscious and a pre-reflective conscious. Different names, similar function, it seemed to me. In Cohn's words: 'Reflecting on the unreflected takes the place of making the unconscious conscious.' Interestingly, Cohn addresses both dreams and symptoms in a single chapter, viewing them both as phenomena, contents of our experience. This works only

partially well, because a disproportionate amount of space is given to dreams, symptoms receiving only two paragraphs. However, Cohn does compare Freud's compromise formation (the symptom) to the manifest dream, and makes the point that an existential approach deals with both similarly. That is, it tries to understand the phenomenon in its own right, rather than interpret it in the light of theory.

I was sorry to see a whole chapter given to sexuality, because this is not something that existentialists have typically made a big noise about. Sex, after all, is only one aspect of existence and not the most important at that. (Most of us can give up sex more easily than we can give up eating, breathing, walking, talking etc.) I felt that to devote so much space to it was to give supporting weight to the psychoanalysts' quaintly Victorian prioritisation of what makes us tick. I like to think the chapter was included simply to provide the opportunity to refute some of Freud's views on perversion.

All in all Cohn has given us a good read. The book is comprehensive, honouring to the reader and thought-provoking, though perhaps too short. It concludes with a brief overview of views on 'authenticity', an important concept in existential and humanistic thinking. The final sentence again recommends it to humanistic practitioners: 'But in the end it is the client who determines the aim of psychotherapy.'

Christopher Coulson

This slim volume purports to give the true line on the position of existential analysis within psychotherapy. It quotes liberally from Heidegger, from Binswanger and from Boss. It has no truck with Rollo May, with Jim Bugental, with R.D. Laing, with Irvin Yalom. In fact, of these four eminent representatives of people who have written on existential psychotherapy, only Laing even appears in the index. When we look at his entry, we find that it criticises him for being essentialist rather than existentialist.

One of the things I did like very much about this book was its treatment of assessment — the assignment of a patient or client to diagnostic categories. Cohn says there are four things to remember about this: '(1) The client you meet as the therapist is the client who meets you. There is no client *as such*. If two therapists meet the same client, it is not the same client. (2) What the client tells you as the therapist, she or he tells only you. She or he may tell another therapist something quite different. (3) There is no "history" to be taken because there is no history *as such*. A client's history is disclosed in the process of interaction between therapist and client. (4) This means that there cannot be an "assessment"as this would imply an objective situation independent of time, place and the contribution of the assessing therapist.' I wish this could be written up in letters of fire in all the premises where 'assessment' is carried out.

Unfortunately all Cohn's heroes throw around labels like 'schizophrenia' and 'manic-depressive psychosis' with great freedom. I do not quite see how this fits

with the rather fine statement made in the paragraph just quoted.

I also don't quite understand Cohn's liking for the work of S.H. Foulkes in group work. It was interesting, though, to read that Foulkes was much influenced by Kurt Goldstein, because I know that Goldstein was also a big influence on Fritz Perls, Carl Rogers, Rollo May, Abraham Maslow, Jim Bugental and Alvin Mahrer.

Together with some of the others from the Regents College school, Cohn has a rather strange definition of authenticity. Instead of understanding it, as a humanistic psychotherapist would, as a direct (and possibly ecstatic) experience of the real self, he sees it as merely 'an openness to existence, an acceptance of what is given as well as our freedom to respond to it'. This robs it of the feeling of liberation, of opening up, which in my experience always goes with authentic experiencing. There is no blood and guts in Cohn's description. He does not see how authenticity relates to the genuineness which Carl Rogers talks about, and so misses the humanistic connection which I think is so important. He does not see — and I think this is tragic — the point which Bugental made so strongly, that 'the truest existentialism is humanistic and the soundest humanism is existential. The two are not the same, but their overlap is rich in potential for greater understanding of human experience and for greater effectiveness in the effort to enrich that experience.' This is not a bad book, but I think it would be rather unhelpful to anyone from the humanistic orientation.

John Rowan

Supervision: Psychoanalytic and Jungian perspectives

Petruska Clarkson (ed.)
Whurr, 1998, £17.50 pb,

This collection of papers appears to be one group's effort to create a core text for the burgeoning supervisor-training industry. The group is the British Association of Psychoanalytic and Psychodynamic Supervision, to which all nine contributors and the editor belong. The papers themselves are a curious mixture, chosen I suspect more for their availability than according to any particular editorial theme. They include topics as diverse as 'Supervision in bereavement counselling', 'The ethical dimensions of supervision' and 'Supervised supervision: the *archetopoi of supervision*'.

The collection as a whole supports a view of supervision that is essentially non-humanistic. For example, a hierarchical view of supervisor/supervisee and therapist/client is posited throughout, so that parent/child and teacher/student analogies occur in many papers. There are frequent references to errors, mistakes, 'shoulds' and other signs of that black-and-white world where mother knows best. A notable exception is the paper on 'Developing insight through supervision' by SAP-Jungian Hugh Gee. Gee's open and

considered approach to the task of supervision (and by implication to psychotherapy as a whole) demonstrates a personal warmth and breadth of human understanding that stands out in relation to the others. To quote just a couple of sentences: 'I am unhappy about using the word 'mistake' in the context of therapy or supervision', and 'I have found the most appropriate task for the supervisor is to focus on the supervisee/patient relationship'. Exactly.

The editor and other contributors are all thoughtful people, so there are many passages of truth and clarity. Their impact, however, is blurred by the apparent need insistently to make the case that supervision training is necessary and that supervision of supervisors is necessary. The book fails to make either case, and its many unsupported assertions led me on several occasions to join the apocryphal man from Missouri in declaring 'Saying it's so don't make it so!'

To conclude, if you believe that some external third party knows best, that your clients are your children, that your supervisor is your admired parent and that your supervisor's primary responsibility is the welfare of your clients, then this book could have value for you. Otherwise, invest your time and money elsewhere.

Christopher Coulson

The Lone Twin: Understanding Twin Bereavement and Loss

Joan Woodward
Free Association Books, 1998, £15.95

This is a report of Joan Woodward's bereaved twin study in which she personally visited 219 lone twins. The book is largely made up of case histories, with the bereaved twins telling about their experiences in their own words and in their own names — very few are anonymous. This makes it particularly moving. We learn how very severe the loss of a twin is. Woodward points out that, surprisingly, it is most severe when the loss occurred before the surviving twin was six months old.

In Chapter 1 Woodward introduces her study and relates it to John Bowlby's work on attachment and the particular variations that occur when there are twins. As she points out, 'Twins' sense of self is built on the concept of being a pair'. Eight themes emerged from the study. These are: the effect of parental attitude, guilt, the negative aspects of being a twin, closeness, polarisation, the worst aspects of loss, the effect of the loss on relation to others, and ameliorating factors.

Where Woodward describes her sample she does not specifically draw attention to the loss of a twin *in utero*. She does, however, include relevant material together with case histories which make a useful addition to the information available. There is ever more interest concerning this period. She also says that some very inter-

esting accounts 'came from those twins who were told in late childhood or early adult life that they had been born a twin. Without exception they said that they had known about it at some level of consciousness and, when told, felt 'everything fitted into place.' This observation could make a contribution to the False Memory Syndrome debate.

Chapter 2 deals with twin loss at the time of birth. The themes dealt with are those of being suddenly and unexpectedly told that 'you were born a twin', early loss producing painful long-term distress affecting some lone twins for life, and searching for the lost twin and striving to make connections.

Chapter 3 deals with twin loss in childhood. Its themes are the grieving process and being blocked, replaying the experience of loss in later life, connecting with the twin in spirit, the loss of a twin after a very lengthy period of illness, and being over-protected. Chapter 4 deals with twin loss in adult life. It describes what happens when the twin's sense of self has largely been held within the twinship; moving on; appreciating having shared some adult life with a twin; playing a part in increasing the surviving twin's sense of self; the death of a twin leading to the prolonging of the surviving twin's life; and loss in exceptionally traumatic circumstances.

In Chapter 5 Woodward tells how the Lone Twin Network came into being, starting under the auspices of the Multiple Births Foundation, until it had so many members that it became a separate organisation. Lone Twins are helped through being able to share the everlasting sadness created by becoming an 'un-twin'. They regain a sense of belonging. They are in a group able to understand their suffering — something that most of their family, friends and therapists have not been able to do. Meetings between lone twins and parents who have recently lost a twin baby are also organised.

Chapter 6 deals with attachment theory and therapeutic interventions. The differences between Bowlby's position and Freud's are presented and Bowlby's Attachment Therapy is described. In Chapter 7, 'The Contributions ofAlice Miller and Jean Baker Miller', Woodward emphasises Alice Miller's insistence on the child's need for respect. She points out the contrast between how much effect Miller's work has had on individuals, and how little on organisations and society. She argues that Baker Miller's Relational Therapy would be particularly relevant to bereaved twins.

Chapter 8 describes lone twins' experiences of therapy; all the case histories are women's, as men apparently find it harder to seek therapy. In Woodward's final chapter she raises the problem of the 'selective foeticide' which is often the result of *in vitro* fertilisation.

Through her study Woodward discovered the lack of therapists with either deep awareness, or real knowledge of the nature and significance of twin loss. This book is required reading for all therapists. Without the basic information it provides, we are unable to work with bereaved twins.

Joy Manné

Counselling: The BAC Reader

Steve Palmer et al (eds),
Sage, 1998, £18.95, 656pp

This book is aimed at students, experienced counsellors and trainers, and at first glance there seems to be nothing new for long-standing members of the British Association for Counselling. However, the way it is set out with four main themes (counselling approaches, contexts, practice and issues) does make 15 years' worth of articles easier to peruse. The 'hot topics' are all there, including the ongoing debate concerning accreditation, trauma therapy and gender issues. Old favourites such as John Rowan, Windy Dryden and Petruska Clarkson have their say, and what they have to say is as relevant as when they were first in print. Some contributors have updated the original papers with additional material (for example, Peter Dale on adults abused as children). And every chapter has a Discussion Issues box to provoke further dialogue for professional development groups and trainees.

The editors have commissioned some chapters specifically for this book, and it would have been useful if they had stated in the Introduction which were new. A fifth section looks to the future development of counselling and the signs are realistically optimistic. This is a timely publication that fulfils one of the editors' suggestions — a celebration of BAC's first fifteen years.

Jen Popkin

The Rules: Time-tested secrets for capturing the heart of Mr Right

Ellen Fein and Sherrie Schneider
Thorsons, 1995, £6.99, 174pp.

The Rules 2: More rules to live and love by

Ellen Fein and Sherrie Schneider
Thorsons, 1997, £6.99, 208pp.

The Rules were apparently devised by a Michigan grandmother *circa* 1917 when she was a young girl. She used to make her beaus wait nervously in the parlour until she was ready to see them. *The Rules* have been updated by Ellen Fein and Sherrie Schneider for the benefit of 1990s women, who in their opinion are playing the mating game very poorly indeed. They maintain that courtship is a subtle dance with steps to be followed in the correct order. If one mixes up the steps

or misses some steps out altogether the courtship dance loses its symmetry and there are serious consequences: men fail to commit, and women suffer.

Rules 1 advises on how to capture Mr Right and there are 35 rules to follow. These include: don't talk to a man first; don't call him and rarely return his calls; always end a date first; and *never* accept a Saturday date after a Wednesday! There are hints on what to do if you have children and how to get him to commit.

Rules 2 covers tricky situations like dating a work colleague; there is an excellent chapter for mature women which wisely acknowledges that priorities do change as we age; there is also a chapter on same-sex relationships which somewhat redresses the stridently heterosexual tone of the first book. Finally there is a chapter for women already in a relationship who want to improve it.(Be warned! This chapter makes for particularly scary reading!)

Fein and Schneider defend themselves against claims that they are reactionary and are encouraging women to take a retrograde step in their relationships with men. They assert that they are writing about men and women as they *are*, not as they would like to be. They believe that the man must be allowed to pursue the woman, for only then will he appreciate her. The woman's job is to be worth pursuing. This all sounds terribly 1950s, and visions of Doris Day playing hard-to-get tended to rise up from my unconscious. However, the message must strike a chord with many women out there, because both books are now best-sellers.

I expected to loathe them both, but was suprised to find how much I enjoyed them. They are easy to read and quite funny. I would recommend them (with reservations, see below). Paradoxically, I think they actually support balance and reciprocity in relationships — I would even go so far as to say that they encourage self-actualisation (not that the authors ever use that term). Women are encouraged to fulfil themselves, not to wait for a partner who will meet all of their needs. They are encouraged to educate themselves, look after and value themselves and take every opportunity to have fun, in the belief that fulfilled women are far more attractive and are also less likely to give themselves away lightly. There are many tips for helping women maintain a good sense of self-worth.

A common mistake made by those of us with low self-esteem is to put up with almost any behaviour from someone who seems to show an interest. This usually ends up with both partners recreating painful and abusive situations from the past. *The Rules* offer practical and simple guidelines to support women to hold on to a strong sense of self-worth at a time when they may feel very vulnerable. These guidelines also serve to protect women from dangerous or exploitative situations.

My criticism of the books is that they are not very helpful about negotiating those more intimate relationships that have developed over time. In particular Fein and Schneider assert that men are not able to tolerate a woman's emotional dependence. So, a *Rules* woman must always present herself as a 'creature unlike all others'; she should not allow her man to

become over-familiar or bored, or pester him with the problems of childcare and housekeeping when he is 'trying to watch the ballgame' (*sic!*).

I would agree that it is usually wise to choose your moment well when raising contentious issues, but I think it is insulting to imply that a man does not want to become more deeply involved in the emotional life of his wife and children. (Read Ken Wilber's moving account of his wife's terminal illness and their last years together in *Grace and Grit* — a description of a man and woman struggling to maintain intimacy in the face of fear, pain and boredom.) This argument, although so engagingly put forward by Fein and Schneider, encourages women to try to live out the 'anima projection' of superwoman/mother/lover, all-nurturing, ever-patient, always well groomed. Just how realistic is it for *any* woman to maintain the persona of a 'creature unlike any other'? Let alone a woman with children? At times a mother may feel more like the 'creature from the black lagoon', and it is at these very moments that she needs the support and understanding of her man.

I think these books are a lighthearted guide to the difficult process of finding and courting someone special, but that they are shallow with regard to the real challenge of forming intimate relationships. A committed relationship is always tested by time. Over time most illusions fade and most projections need to be re-owned in order for us to create really nourishing and authentic marriages. We age, we change, some of us may become seriously ill and all of us will die. No matter how many rules we follow to capture Mr Right, life has a tendency not to play by the rules.

Jessica Woolliscroft

Critical Psychology: An introduction

Dennis Fox and Isaac Prilleltensky (eds)
Sage, 1997, £15.95 pb, 362pp.

I first came across Isaac Prilleltensky in a special issue of *The Humanistic Psychologist* devoted to 'social action as compassionate heartwork'. His paper dealt with the human, moral and political values involved in forms of psychology which can be emancipatory. His sentence stuck in my mind: 'Psychology needs an emancipatory orientation as much as society needs an emancipatory psychology.' It struck me as an excellent essay, and very much in line with the best elements within humanistic psychology. Now here is the book which he mentioned in that paper as being in press.

It is a book by 25 authors, divided into four sections. Part 1 explores the values, history, methods, ethics and practice of psychology. Part 2 places core subdisciplines of psychology under critical scrutiny, ranging from intelligence research through developmental and social psychology to cross-cultural, lesbian and gay and political psychology. Part 3 sets out

major theoretical frameworks that underpin critical psychology, including feminist theory, discourse analysis and postmodernism. Part 4 concludes the book with reflections both on debates arising in preceding chapters and issues for the future of critical psychology.

Each chapter has an introductory note by the editors, which makes for a unified appearance. These notes also have the benefit of helping the student to read the book with greater insight. This would in fact make an excellent text for use in any advanced course in psychology. Its aim is 'to expose the unholy alliance between psychology and social norms that benefit the powerful and harm the powerless, and to offer emancipatory alternatives'. Several chapters are by British authors, such as Celia Kitzinger, Sue Wilkinson, Erica Burman, David Nightingale and Ian Parker, which is unusual in books edited by Americans. Prilleltensky himself teaches in Canada, which perhaps helps to explain it.

I particularly liked the chapters by Louise Kidder and Michelle Fine on research, and by Laura Brown on ethics. These should be read by anyone involved in a psychological research project. There is a superb chapter by Prilleltensky and Geofrey Nelson on community psychology, which is a great concern of the humanistic approach, as witness Chapter 11 of *Ordinary Ecstasy*.

One of the strengths of this book is the way in which it is prepared to be self-critical as well as critical of others. There is even a chapter at the end by Julian Rappaport and Eric Stewart entitled 'A critical look at critical psychology: elaborating the questions', which looks at the whole book in a critical light, pointing out many ways in which the present authors themselves also sometimes make assumptions and take things for granted in ways which support the status quo even while seeming to oppose it.

Anyone who is interested in psychology and where it is going, and where it might go in the future, has to read this book. It is mostly very well written and jargon-busting, and I certainly found it both stimulating and satisfying.

John Rowan

Narrative and Psychotherapy

John McLeod
Sage, 1997, £12.99 pb, 180pp.

This was obviously a difficult book to write, and I did not find it an easy book to read. This is because it is a pioneering effort. It is attempting to open up a new territory and set up some markers within it. Better charts may no doubt appear in the future, but this is the best we have for now.

A few months ago I reviewed the excellent book on narrative therapy by Friedman and Combs. And at first I thought this present volume would be just about that sort of thing. But it is much

broader than that. As the author says in his preface: 'What it (the present book) is saying is this: all therapies are narrative therapies.' So the book starts off with a wide-ranging examination of narrative approaches to culture, research, training and organisations. It tells us about the Emmanuel movement of the early years of the century; it tells us how even the most scientific psychotherapy acts in such as way as to re-moralise the person in terms acceptable to the dominant culture. Psychotherapy at present deals almost entirely in meta-narratives: 'Each therapist has a story to tell about how life should be lived, and cannot help but convey this story to clients.' But the postmodern sensibility questions all this, and does not see any one narrative as privileged above all the others.

The second chapter expands the whole notion of narrative. The picture is gradually built up of psychotherapy as the river into which pour a number of streams, all having to do with the social construction of narrative. One of the most important notions to emerge from this examination is 'the moral landscape of narrative'.

We then come to a much shorter chapter on psychodynamic approaches to narrative. The work of Roy Shafer is particularly mentioned. This is followed by an equally short chapter on constructivist narrative therapies. It includes details of a striking piece of research carried out by James Pennebaker and his colleagues, where writing was used rather than conversation — resulting in fewer visits to a health centre.

Only now, in Chapter 5, do we come on to what I had expected in the first place — narrative therapy from a social constructionist perspective. The following paragraph, quoted in full, gives the gist of this story: 'It would be quite wrong to characterise social constructionist therapy as a coherent school or approach. There are two reasons for this. First, social constructionism can be viewed as part of a postmodern social and cultural movement that is attempting to move beyond modernism. At the time of writing it is possible to identify only some of the general outline of what might replace modern Western industrial-capitalist culture and thinking. It is a time of transition. No one really knows where all this is heading. The constructionist approach to therapy is not yet fully formed. The second reason for not expecting a unified school of constructionist narrrative therapy ever to emerge is that the idea of discrete schools or theories of therapy is itself a modernist notion. The pluralism and reflexivity of postmodern thought run counter to the formation of "grand theory". Instead, those influenced by postmodern ideas seek to develop "local" knowledges, in which theory and practice are closely integrated. Polkinghorne suggests that what psychotherapists and counsellors do (and have always done) in their actual practice represents a "forceful illustration of the implementation of a postmodern science" (1992: 147), even if the complexity and subtlety of this practice is not (yet) adequately reflected in psychological theory and research on therapy.'

The work of Michael White and David Epston is explained, and McLeod says that

the concept of the individual self is supplanted by that of the person. A person is an active agent and a relational being. And he quotes the philosopher John Macmurray as saying: 'Persons are constructed by their mutual relations to one another.' If this relating takes the form of a conversation, this means that areas of experience are being given a voice. 'The experience of telling, of giving *voice* to areas of experience that have been silenced, seems to me to be at the heart of any kind of therapy.'

This idea of experience having been silenced leads to a discussion of shame. It was curious to me that McLeod's treatment of shame held no place for John Bradshaw, who has written so well about it, nor even for Kaufman, who was the first to bring its importance to the surface in recent times.

Now comes quite a difficult chapter on the process of therapy seen from a narrative standpoint. 'Unfortunately, little has been written on the application of these perspectives to the understanding of story-telling performances in therapy. This chapter therefore represents an initial, somewhat tentative exploration of this area, drawing mainly on existing concepts of therapy process.' The author has to be congratulated on his persistence in trying to work with these sometimes recalcitrant notions. One interesting remark about the humanistic approach is made in this chapter: 'Other therapists draw the client's attention to the way he or she constructs his or her story, and through this either

invite the client to consider other ways of telling, or may even supply a model or example of how else the story might be told. This approach has traditionally been associated with the humanistic, experiential therapies.' Towards the end of this chapter the author tries to pull the threads together by saying: 'Perhaps the crucial aspect in any of the deconstructive manoeuvres described above — the thing that in the end makes them therapeutic, is that they open up the *possibility* that there could be another story that could be told in relation to a set of problems. People seek out the services of therapists because they are *stuck*, because they keep feeling the same awful feelings, thinking the same terrible thoughts, behaving in the same self-destructive ways . . . [Anything the therapist says, even if it is wrong] can be seen as constituting an opening up of the *possibility* of an alternative version to the story.'

Chapter 7 gives us a nice idea — a case history conducted through discussion of a novel: *Therapy*, by David Lodge. It works rather well. The final chapter contains one of my favourite quotations, taken from the work of Haim Omer, who says: '. . . the first lesson in psychotherapeutic style [is] similar to a first lesson in good writing: keep it short, simple and concrete; avoid jargon and euphemisms; make it personal; use the active voice.'

This is a very good book, representing a really enormous heave forward in our discussions of psychotherapy. It may not be all that easy to read, it may not be all that neat and tidy, but it is crucially important to the big questions. At one point McLeod makes the point that the enormous compendium on research in psychotherapy edited by Bergin and Garfield (4th edition 1994) contains in its index not one reference to narrative or storytelling. I can't believe that the same will be said of the 5th edition, now that this book has appeared.

John Rowan