Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

Old Age is a Terminal Illness: How I Learned to Age Gracefully and Conquer My Fear of Dying

Alma H. Bond
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Four Stars (out of Five)

For over thirty-five years Alma Bond thrived in her successful practice as a psychoanalyst in New York. When a speeding yellow cab hit her one afternoon in Central Park tossing her in the air like a rag doll and sending her into a coma where she hovered near death Bond's life changed in an instant. Although she eventually recovered she took possession of her new life with fervor and energy which she shares in this splendid little memoir.

In addition to her own experience of near death Bond also lost five of her closest friends over the past decade. The death of her friend of twenty years Kendall Kane from suicide just over two years ago sent Bond tailspinning into a deep depression from which this book helped her to recover.

Brilliantly weaving her own death journals into the stories of her close friends Bond searches not only for the reasons that we fear death and dying but also how to overcome those fears. Those fears become even more persistent rough age and the breakdown of our bodies. Bond a psychologist and author of eight books including *Camille Claudel A Novel* draws on Freud to remind us that the "fear of knowledge is the cause of much illness."

Although her advice verges sometimes on the simplistic—"Each day is a gift"—Bond's heroic and thoughtful reflections draw the reader into her story and the stories of her relationships. Here is a woman who embraces life celebrates its beauty loves her family and friends and ages with grace in the face of death. As she describes the experience of her friend Jill's presence after Jill's death Bond's love and loss are deeply engaging. "When I felt Jill's gentle fingers on my head after she died I learned that the healing power of a loving touch endures long after the toucher has departed."

Bond concludes by observing that the Death Instinct often takes over our minds and

hearts when we give up the will to live. We can stave off death simply by recognizing our deepest inner needs and trying to meet them. “If live is lived according to one’s inner needs and not merely the edicts of society the Life Instinct is strong enough to win out over the magnetic pull of the grave.”

Bond’s lyrical prose and her luminous insights into the push and pull of life and death love and loss gently urges readers to face their own deaths and those of their loved ones in ways that celebrate life.