

BOOK REVIEWS

These are strange times. For the first time in my life, we were all in it together. Me and my street, my city, this country, the world and, yes, my clients and I. Through the screen of the online session I found a new meaning in being-with the client and also myself, struggling to accept our suffering, our newly-found fear of others, our sense of drowning and feeling besieged, this global disturbance.

Locked in the quiet bubbles of our homes, there was nowhere to go and less space to hide from ourselves. The landscape of my life reversed as the outside became reduced, slow and pale, despite the media that was so hard to ignore, while the inside turned more turbulent, vibrant and wild even. I lost sense of time as days blended into one another but eventually a sense of peace and calm learned to coexist with my fear of the chaos out there. In time, I found grounding in the routine of a smaller life and the world of books.

Each of the examined books here has something useful to contribute to these extreme times. What better time to read philosophy and reconsider existentialism? Jonathan Webber's *Rethinking Existentialism*, a challenging and stimulating read, takes a clear approach to the philosophies of Sartre, Beauvoir and Fanon. In *Living Well and Dying Well*, Helen Kewell writes about her work counselling the old (aged 72-95) using a series of case studies. We generally do not talk about the old in Western societies nor, I suspect, do many of us work with this age group and yet, this diverse collection of people (their only common denominator is age) has featured prominently in the news in recent months as they were the hardest hit by the COVID-19 virus. The tales in this book may surprise you and to me they raised the question why we are not challenging our prejudices as a society? Why are we ignoring this group and should we therapists not consider reaching out to work with more of them? Another book for these times is Karen Weixel-Dixon's *Interpersonal Conflict*, a topical book given that so many of us have had to navigate stressful moments with loved ones and others during lockdown. Last, *Living Your Own Life*, edited by Silvia Laengle and Christopher Wurm, stirred the reviewer to a moment of Proust-like reminiscing. He explains how this practical book, which he considers unlike any standard therapy books, opened the horizon of his work with, amongst others a clear emphasis on working with clients ethically.

Living Your Own Life had lingered on the booklist for quite a while before this reviewer picked it up. Perhaps you need to take a chance with some of the forgotten titles and find your own little gem hiding on the booklist?

Ondine Smulders