

BOOK REVIEWS

As I write this, I am aware of how much the outside world is pressing in, and yet how often, in these recent months, I have found myself turning inward, towards questions that feel at the same time very old and very pressing. What does it mean to be fully present in my own life? What passes between me and a client in the space of one hour, or between me and others in my lifetime? These are not abstract questions to me. They are the ones I sit with and keep coming back to.

It is perhaps not a coincidence that the four reviews in this section, covering five books, share a refusal to solve what cannot be solved. Each of them, in its own way, asks of us to stay present with the whole of a human life, including its limits (birth, death, grief, the body in motion) which resist our wish to understand them fully through reason.

The sections starts off with *Hour of the Heart*, in which one of existential therapy's most enduring voices, Irvin Yalom, reflects with great honesty on what can still pass between two people, even at the end of a long clinical life. From there we turn to Emily Woof's novel *Ecstatic*, a work shaped by the Five Rhythms, which raises questions about community, freedom and the dancing body as a source of meaning, of resistance and sometimes also of delusion. This is followed by Jenny Kleeman's *Sex Robots and Vegan Meat*, an exposé of misogyny and inequality dressed up as innovation that raises profound questions about what it means to be human. In the last review, we cover two short and beautiful fictional books that between them contain the whole arc of human life: Jon Fosse's *Morning and Evening* and Peter Handke's *A Sorrow Beyond Dreams*.

What links these books, for me, is not so much a shared theme of our human-ness but a shared kind of courage. They do not turn away. Each one asks the reader, and for this audience, the therapist-reader, to stay with what is uncomfortable and perhaps even unbearable at times, and to find therein the beginning of a real presence. None of these books will leave you quickly, and that is their point.

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