

## Book Review

by Jeanette Rehnstrom

### Machine

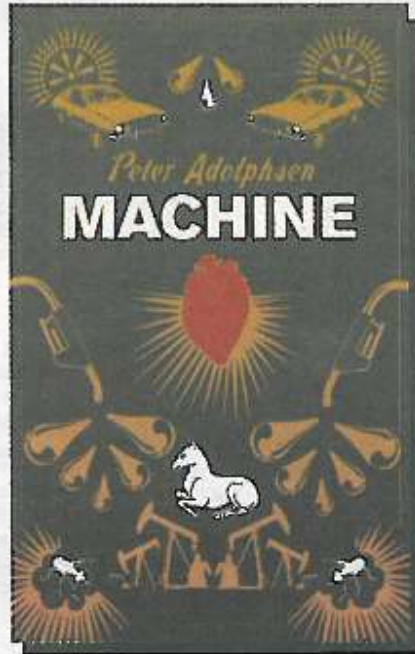
By Peter Adolphsen  
(Harvill Secker)

LOOKING AT this slim volume of a mere 88 pages, you might wonder what any self-respecting author could fit into such a confined text.

But with Danish writer Peter Adolphsen, the answer is almost everything.

His book begins in June 1975, with a single drop of petrol combusting in the engine of a car in central Texas. It turns out that the drop of fuel was once the heart of Eohippus, the dawn horse, which lived 55 million years ago. The story traces it through the eons.

Adolphsen has the skill to look through both ends of the telescope at the same time. He is both incredibly detailed and broad when dealing with the gargantuan issues of life, death and functions of the universe. Adolphsen suggests that we are, have and always will be interconnected by the elements that make up our uni-



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verse.

“Death exists, but only in a practical, macroscopic sense,” he writes. “Biologically one cannot distinguish between life and death; the transition is a continuum.” In other words, when we die our bodies – our ‘machines’ – break down into their constituent parts to become a part of other ‘machines’ in nature.

But do not mistake such weighty philosophising for a dull and dark read. There is tangible joy in Adolphsen’s pleasure in knowing things intimately and passing this on to his readers. In this respect he could be best compared to the controversial French author Michel Houellebecq, though Adolphsen is much less sentimental in his approach.

All in all, *Machine* makes for an interesting, thought-provoking read.



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