



All the Lives We Ever Lived: Seeking Solace in Virginia Woolf

Katharine Smyth

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A wise, lyrical memoir about the power of literature to help us read our own lives--and see clearly the people we love most.

Katharine Smyth was a student at Oxford when she first read Virginia Woolf's modernist masterpiece *To the Lighthouse* in the comfort of an English sitting room, and in the companionable silence she shared with her father. After his death--a calamity that claimed her favorite person--she returned to that beloved novel as a way of wrestling with his memory and understanding her own grief.

Smyth's story moves between the New England of her childhood and Woolf's Cornish shores and Bloomsbury squares, exploring universal questions about family, loss, and homecoming. Through her inventive, highly personal reading of *To the Lighthouse*, and her artful adaptation of its groundbreaking structure, Smyth guides us toward a new vision of Woolf's most demanding and rewarding novel--and crafts an elegant reminder of literature's ability to clarify and console.

Braiding memoir, literary criticism, and biography, *All the Lives We Ever Lived* is a wholly original debut: a love letter from a daughter to her father, and from a reader to her most cherished author.

All the Lives We Ever Lived: Seeking Solace in Virginia Woolf Details

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From Reader Review All the Lives We Ever Lived: Seeking Solace in Virginia Woolf for online ebook

Kim says

An exceptional read.

Donna Hines says

A powerful, emotional, moving memoir by Katharine Smyth.

All The Lives We Ever Lived takes place in an English Class where Katharine Smyth first came across To the Lighthouse by Virginia Woolfs.

After her father's death she returned to seek solice and comfort in that novel.

Readers are taken on a memorable journey between her childhood memories and Virginia Woolfs Bloomsbury Squares.

Comfort reading at its finest in seeking answers and solutions to family loss, heartache, and homecoming. Beautiful!

Thank you to Katharine, the publisher, NetGalley, and Aldiko for this ARC in exchange for this honest review.

Zina says

"Perhaps there is one book for every life."

Perhaps this will be the most important book I could have read this year. I learned of my mother's terminal cancer in August of last year and it's been muddled thoughts that swim in frazzle ever since. However, I feel as if I'm just a little bit more prepared for what's to come thanks to Smyth's honesty about her grief and its many facets in comparison to Woolf's. This book is not a stark ray of sunshine and thank goodness for that!

saranimals says

How does one even go about rating and reviewing the memoirs of another? Something I had never previously had occasion to ask myself. What I will say is that I appreciate the author making To the Lighthouse and Virginia Woolf accessible.

I had tried to read Lighthouse previously, because it is such a classic, and I would have felt remiss if I did not, but the writing style of Woolf, with the endless commas, sentences which stretch on forever, I think called stream-of-consciousness, sentences which take up an entire paragraph, indeed even half a page, such as this one, were simply too exhausting and convoluted for this poor reader to follow, and, as such, could not fully appreciate Lighthouse until Smyth came along.

I've always admired authors like Smyth who can write about such intensely personal subjects. The description of All the Lives We Ever Lived is accurate, so if you think it's a book you'd like, you will.

Kerry (lines i underline) says

All the Lives We Ever Lived is an evocative portrait of the deep bond between the author and her dynamic, difficult father. It is an exploration of her overwhelming grief at his death. In her struggle to communicate the complexity of that experience, Smyth turns to Virginia Woolf, to the book that has long been her lodestar at life's most difficult moments: *To the Lighthouse*.

Smyth draws comparisons between her relationships and those of the characters in Woolf's masterwork. She admires how Woolf grapples with the deepest, most fundamental human questions about childhood memories, love, family life, and loss. Like Woolf, Smyth struggles to reach a sense of clarity in her experience of love and loss. She finds that capturing these essential aspects of humanity in words to be an elusive task.

The author herself has a beautiful way with language. This book made me want to read more of her work. I underlined many passages in this memoir and Smyth's love of Woolf's text certainly made me want to revisit it soon. I do think that I would have appreciated Smyth's dive into sections of *To the Lighthouse* much more if I had a fresher awareness of Woolf's novel. There were passages that didn't resonate as much for me because of this, and I do think readers do need to have read *To the Lighthouse* to appreciate this book.

All the Lives We Ever Lived did make me think about which book, if any book, would be that one for me, the one that I might come back to again and again for wisdom and guidance. You can have a lifelong relationship with a book, as Smyth proves here. The idea that there could be one book that would light the way for you through life is an irresistible thought for any reader. What would yours be?

Lynne Brookfield says

ALL THE LIVES WE EVER LIVED by Oxford University graduate Katharine Smyth is a beautiful and illuminating book on grief. Katharine uses Virginia Woolf's *TO THE LIGHTHOUSE* as a beacon to help understand the death of her father. This book is a keeper, to be read over and over.

Dan White says

Gorgeous writing. Deeply moving.

Jackie says

I won this book as a giveaway. It's an alright read. It's a memoir where the author compares her life to Virginia Woolf life as well as her *Lighthouse* novel. The author clearly shows comparisons and the book is a nice and easy read. I can see someone loving this book while others may not. Depends on what you like to read

Elizabeth says

I had high expectations for this book and that's probably what made me so disappointed. Where I waited for an intelligent memoir on the works of Virginia Woolf and reflections for comfort in reading her, I found a family story where a young woman completely subjugated by her father tells the story of her transition to adulthood.

His father, seriously ill, has been fighting alcohol addiction for years, even though his life depends on his sobriety. Smyth tells how Virginia Woolf's prose "helped her" by making connections between the lives of To the Lighthouse characters, her own, and the writer's. The only problem is that the links are often not searched and falls flat.

She writes very well and has a perfect way of structuring the story, but for my part, I have not found the depth expected.

Karen says

<https://wordpress.com/post/booksnooks...>

Beautiful. This book is a breathtaking tribute to life, love, and literature. Since the age of twenty, Katharine Smyth has been enamored with the book To the Lighthouse by Virginia Woolf. In All the Lives We Ever Lived, she blurs the line between memoir and books about books as she tells how the book impacted her life. She writes of her relationship with her father, growing up, loss, and turbulence as To the Lighthouse weaves its way around her stories. There is also the backdrop of a glamorous childhood complete with lake house.

If you want a truly full reading experience, check out Katharine's Instagram where you can view pictures of Virginia Woolf sites as well as photographs of Katharine and her dad.

I expect sales of Woolf's novel will soar upon the publication of this book on January 29th. I myself have not read it and now not only long to read it, but am also dreaming of summer, on the beach, near a lighthouse.

Jamie says

beautiful.

miss.mesmerized mesmerized says

The death of her father has left Katharine pondering about her life and the people playing major roles in it. Amongst them is not only her family but also Virginia Woolf whose works deeply impressed her when she was a student at Oxford. The parallels between "To the Lighthouse" and her own life are stunning, especially when it comes to the impact that places have on the people. It is her family's summer house in Rhode Island

that first and foremost underlines this impression. Re-reading Virginia Woolf gives her the opportunity to understand her grief as well as her family relationships and to finally cope with her father's passing.

Katharine Smyth makes it easy for the reader to follow her thoughts. Even though it is some years since I last read "To the Lighthouse", I could effortlessly find my way back into the novel and see the thread that Smyth also saw. I found it an interesting approach for a memoir or biography and I liked it a lot.

There are two major aspects that I'd like to mention. First of all, Katharine Smyth cleverly shows how literature can help to overcome hard situations and to find solace in reading. It has been a concept since the ancient times, the classic Greek drama with its purgatory function and the possibility of a katharsis which helps you to sort out your feelings and opens the way to go on in life. Second, I also appreciated the author's frankness. It is certainly not easy to write about the own father's addiction and his slow deterioration, yet, the process of writing might have helped her, too, and embellishing things would have been counterproductive here.

An interesting memoir which was also beautifully written that made me think about which novel I would pick as a parallel to my own life.

Beverly says

This wasn't the one normal books I read but it was pretty good. I read it in one setting I recommend that anyone should check it out get out of your comfort zone, Some of the book made me think of my own father so I related well to this. Was well written
