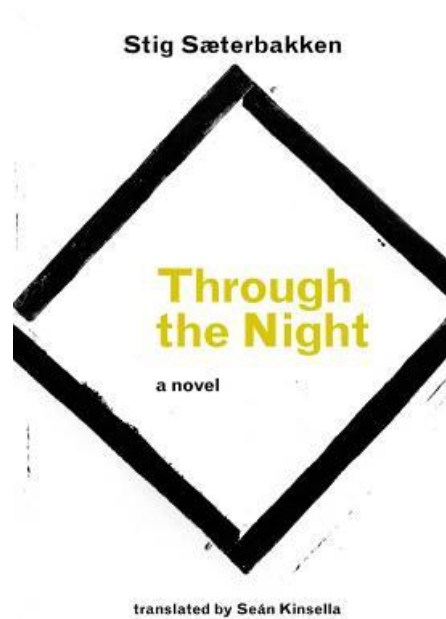




Through the Night

Stig Sæterbakken , Sean Kinsella (Translator)

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Dentist Karl Meyer's worst nightmare comes true when his son, Ole-Jakob, takes his own life. This tragedy is the springboard for a complex novel posing essential questions about human experience: What does sorrow do to a person? How can one live with the pain of unbearable loss? How far can a man be driven by the grief and despair surrounding the death of a child? A dark and harrowing story, drawing on elements from dreams, fairy tales, and horror stories, the better to explore the mysterious depths of sorrow and love, *Through the Night* is Stig Sæterbakken at his best."

Through the Night Details

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Author : Stig Sæterbakken , Sean Kinsella (Translator)

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From Reader Review Through the Night for online ebook

Álvaro says

Es un libro muy raro, muy personal, muy interior.

Un libro que va pasando de 4 estrellas a 2, luego a 3, a 4 otra vez, vuelve a 3....muy oscilante.

Para contar lo que pienso, necesito contar la estructura, no meto spoilers, pero algo cuento....

El libro empieza flojo, un monólogo interior en el que el protagonista nos relata su vida familiar, y, por ejemplo, dedica 10 páginas a describir con pelos y señales un cuento que cuenta a su hijo cada noche. A punto estuve de abandonar.

De repente, el libro despegas, el protagonista empieza a cuestionar, y cuestionarse, todo aquello que le (nos) hace feliz, el amor a su mujer, la estabilidad, tiene una aventura, duda, afronta el suicidio de su hijo (no revelo nada, lo dice en la solapa), se pregunta y nos pregunta, nos hace pensar.

Aquí el libro alcanza una altura considerable.

Ya llevamos la mitad (exacta) de la novela, y la cosa, después de todo, promete....

Justo en ese momento la novela vuelve a cambiar, y se convierte en un relato alucinado y onírico de cómo el protagonista deambula por ciudades de Europa en busca de una "casa mágica", al más puro estilo lobo estepario, en la que encontrará la respuesta al dolor que siente por su hijo perdido.

Esta parte el libro vuelve a pegar un bajón, ya que se narran largos paseos, y conversaciones de bar con personajes bohemios, que, al menos para mí, no tienen mucho sentido, y no aportan ni a la trama, ni empujan a la reflexión.

Tres cuartas partes del libro, y dudas de hacia donde va, miro la portada para asegurarme de que estoy leyendo el mismo libro que hace 50 páginas...

Y entonces el protagonista encuentra la casa, y pasa a ser un libro casi de terror, con muy buena creación de atmósferas (me llega a recordar a "la casa de hojas"), y un final esperado/inesperado, bastante redondo.

Y Fin.

Como veis, no se que pensar del libro, las partes buenas son muy, muy buenas, pero las más flojas parecen copias de estilos ajenos, y derivaciones innecesarias.

¿Lo recomendaría? Hasta la mitad del libro, sin dudas.

En su totalidad, uhmmmm.....¿cuánto tiempo tienes?

Sean says

More like a 4.5, as it's not without its flaws. In particular the plot twist here does not work nearly as well as the one found in Sæterbakken's previous novel *Self-Control*. Appearing as more of a useless appendage affixed to a healthy functioning organ, it can in fact be ignored to allow for a strengthening of the novel, whereas in *Self-Control* the twist generates a deeper reflection on and reconsideration of what came before. In some ways *Self-Control* feels like a less developed version of *Through the Night*, and through its cryptic omissions and ragged edges that earlier novel comes across as more raw in its power. In contrast this one felt more polished, and hence more approachable, and yet due to that approachability it is ultimately less

haunting in its overall effect. Still, it's a strong novel, and it's regrettable that Sæterbakken's suicide shut the door on what might have come next from such an insightful writer.

Tuck says

stig saeterbakker is the master of looking at the death, destruction, hopelessness, absurdity of being a human and making it funny, enthralling, and true. this is the 2nd book of his i've read, his Siamese puts us in the apartment of a dying and decaying old married couple whose only reason for living even one moment longer is to goad one another in sadistic and mean-spirited glee, that and they love each other, and now this one in the head of a father whose child committed harikari, whose wife loathes him for his philandering, he loathes himself for his wretchedness, and we love reading about it because saeterbakken is such a great writer. saeterbakken is dead now. fucking figures. 5 black stars for the new year.

natura says

Una lectura desgarradora, ya que la experiencia vital de la que parte lo es. Y todo el recorrido del protagonista no es si no un ahondar en esa sensación de pérdida y dolor insoportables e insuperables, haciendo preguntas y cuestionando temas que te remueven por dentro. Dura pero necesaria, te saca de tu "zona de confort" para que te des cuenta de que no lo tienes todo hecho ni predeterminado, que hay muchas cosas que replantearse, y que hay que hacerlo, por muy incómodo que resulte.

Guille says

“El dolor es un regalo. Las personas que no son infelices, no tienen nada que decir”

Desgraciadamente para él, afortunadamente para nosotros, Stig Sæterbakken tenía mucho que decir en esta su última novela antes de suicidarse.

A través de la noche es uno de esos libros con los que uno se lo pasa bien pasándolo mal, en los que uno se siente incómodamente culpable por sentirse atraído por el dolor ajeno, fascinado por su exhibición y, al tiempo, con el embarazo propio de alguien que es sorprendido observando un momento íntimo en el que no le corresponde estar presente. De ella se sale queriendo pasar más tiempo con aquellos a quienes queremos, vivir ese tiempo de una forma más intensa, pero también, al hacernos patente todo eso que damos por hecho y establecido, despertará o agudizará nuestro miedo a perderles. Es por eso que, aunque la novela tiene cierto tono juvenil, el fondo será más del gusto de lectores con algunas experiencias ya a sus espaldas.

El punto de partida de la narración es demoledor, un profesional acomodado, casado con una mujer bella e inteligente y con dos hijos adolescentes, abandona todo por una amante para casi inmediatamente darse cuenta de su error y volver a casa.

“Todo deseo de libertad se basa en una equivocación.”

Al poco tiempo, su hijo se suicida estrellando su coche contra un camión.

En un instante, el protagonista experimenta brutalmente como su presente estalla en mil pedazos, como se desbarata cualquier posibilidad de futuro y como su pasado se va convirtiendo en un artefacto explosivo que amenaza con arrasarlo todo. Así se siente el protagonista de esta triste y dura historia, presa de un dolor insoportable acrecentado por un devastador sentimiento de culpa por lo hecho y no hecho, por lo dicho y no dicho, por no haber sabido a tiempo.

Sæterbakken, con un lenguaje directo, transparente y efectivo consigue transmitirnos toda la desesperación del personaje sin caer en ningún tipo de pornografía sentimental. El autor nos sumerge en este horror en el que pueden pasar semanas hasta que uno pueda llorar por la muerte de su hijo; en el que uno puede sorprenderse riéndose a carcajadas por un chiste sin gracia; en el que uno puede odiar a su yo futuro que ve la televisión sin tener en mente a su hijo muerto; en el que uno se niega la posibilidad de otra vida en otra parte, con otras gentes; en el que uno puede odiar las palabras que tantos han pronunciado antes en ocasiones parecidas y que ya nada expresan; en el que uno puede escandalizarse al observar a personas paseando a su alrededor ajenas por completo a su tragedia personal; en el que uno se odia por no haber sabido cumplir con su más alto deber en la vida, proteger a su hijo; en el que uno puede llegar a creerse lo más inverosímil, cualquier cosa que le ofrezca una pizca de horizonte o la posibilidad del castigo redentor; un mundo inverosímil en el que uno hace justo lo único que no debe hacer, lo único que le dijeron que no debía hacer, dormirse.

Así, uno lee las últimas páginas emocionado y absolutamente convencido de que el autor tiene más razón que un santo cuando dice aquello de...

“Solo conoce su destino el que lo desconoce.”

Y ahí es cuando recibes el empujón que te sumerge en un mar de desconcierto sin poder precisar en qué dirección está la superficie y sin acertar a decidir si esta última vuelta de tuerca favorece en algo a la novela.

Tonymess says

Stig Saeterbakken took his own life in 2012 and this novel deals with suicide, through the eyes of Karl Meyer, a dentist, who is struggling to come to terms with his teenage son's suicide. The book opens with a powerful set of vignettes, with Karl attempting to deal with his grief, make sense of his wife's grief (who has just put an axe through the television) and wondering how he can reconnect with his daughter.

Our novel then tracks back, through a long series of short memories, recalling the events that Karl shared with his son Ole-Jacob, and all the actions that may have led to this tragic suicide.

For my full review go to <http://messybooker.blogspot.com.au/>

Bruno says

Maledetti norvegesi, vi amo.

Il lento disfacimento di un matrimonio, la morte di un figlio, i rimorsi, i rimpianti, un dolore tirranico e

schiacciante. Una misteriosa casa in Slovacchia dove le più segrete paure sembrano prendere vita. Un romanzo dalla scrittura penetrante denso di quesiti esistenziali. L'ultima parte mi ha davvero scosso profondamente.

Mi sono innamorato di Sæterbakken dopo aver letto questo suo meraviglioso saggio sulla concezione della vita e dell'arte e ho ritrovato in *Through the Night* tutto quello che mi aveva affascinato. Uno scrittore che aveva tanto da dire ma che purtroppo si è tolto la vita proprio qualche anno fa. Assolutamente da approfondire.

I stared out the window. There wasn't anything to see out there, it seemed as though someone had snuck in and stolen the landscape. Then I noticed a streak of dirt on the glass and I remembered something my mother used to say: "The windows of a house are the calling cards of the people who live inside." Reflected in the glass was Eva, a beautiful image of Eva, sitting on the sofa, with her hands in her lap, looking like something Edvard Munch could have painted.

And the old thought came to mind, the old dream, the impossible dream: drop everything, go away, become someone else, start afresh, put it all behind you, start over again, without encumbrance, without one single connection to what once was. Not disappear without a trace, but arrive without a trace. The thought was frightening, yes, but also, and more often, a kind of consolation: I had a vivid picture of how free and carefree my life in my new city would be, how assured and eloquent I would sound when expressing myself in my new language, how creative and innovative I'd be in my new occupation, how at ease I'd be when socializing with my new colleagues, how sensual my life with my new woman would be, how considerate we'd be to one another, how I'd strike just the right balance in being strict yet fair with my new children - encouraging, inspirational, yet commanding respect.

I know. Sooner or later. But for the time being I'm here, with everything that's mine, that's ours. Why should it end? There's so much still to come.

Zac Smith says

First 110 or so pages are absolutely devastating. A complete and utter revue of sadness, despair, failure, and loneliness. It reads like a real, authentic memoir of someone who has suffered insurmountable loss as well as suffered from their own insurmountable mistakes. It is beautifully written and direct, full of detail, intense similes, and realistic interactions.

The next section after this is alright, similarly sad, but more like a weird indie movie. Quirkier, more meandering.

Most of the last section is kind of like a whatever horror/thriller/adventure thing, I wasn't really into it. Seemed like it could have been trimmed up a bunch.

The very end was great. Brutal, sad, effective, prolonged, and with a little twist! Really liked it. Saved the book from the last section and a half.

Joshua Cross says

One of the most terrifying and perplexing novels I've read. Part domestic drama, part horror story, "Through the Night" is a meditation on grief that borrows heavily from the equally horrific worlds of fairy tale and nightmare. The ending left me with more questions than I began with, and haunted by images that will stick with me for years to come.

"Grief is a gift; people who aren't unhappy, they have no say."

"Everything is as it ought to be. Until it's no longer that way. The only person who knows their fate is the one who doesn't know it."

Jonathan says

Deserves to be read for the final third in particular, which had me more tense than any horror film...

Bárbara says

3,8.

Franco Santos says

Un libro sobre el solipsismo más que de otra cosa. Muy bueno aunque hace agua en la parte media. El final es inquietante.

Antonomasia says

A very curious mixture of mundane litfic (albeit well-expressed) and the dark and leftfield. Karl, a middle-aged Norwegian dentist, has an affair. A while later, his depressed teenage son dies in a car crash that may have been suicide.* Falling into his own spiral of despair, Karl ends up in Slovenia, at a house said to confront those who walk into it with their greatest fears.

Sæterbakken said that he didn't see himself as a Norwegian or Scandinavian writer - his influences were from elsewhere in Europe, or were American. I missed the sense of place, the peculiar details of another country and its culture - in this respect it was slightly blank, miscellaneously Western, and the use of American vocab in the translation added to the frustration. (Dalkey are not big enough to tweak translations for different markets.) I had wanted to read a translated novel, not an American one!

What was very special - I completely understand why so many people give this book 5 stars - was the intensity with which so many of Karl's thoughts are expressed. There were various metaphors which I've thought inwardly and never dared use aloud, and to see them articulated was cathartic. Sometimes I got the feeling that Sæterbakken was really writing about himself, rather than getting fully into character: there was

such absorption in thought of the sort that only a quiet or creative life allows, and not quite enough about how Karl's inner experience meshed with professional and family life.

During the earlier part of the book, dealing with the affair, I kept returning to the thought that this was a system problem, the convention that he had to be thrown out of the household for it in this violent schism, and that a slightly more relaxed attitude to long-term monogamy (whilst not having to sweep anyone's pain under the carpet) would have saved this family a world of trouble. This wasn't discussed in the book though, but a response to the extremity of pain everyone seemed to be in.

Something I've noticed a few times this year - and *Through The Night* was one of the first books like this - is that I'm not nearly as averse to horror in writing as I thought I was, with the proviso that human intention is what counts. I can tolerate much more when the cause is non-existent supernatural entities, or animals, but far less when the culprits are malevolent humans. (I am even haunted for days or weeks afterwards by some descriptions of meat.)

The house. There are a number of reviews saying how scary it was, yet aside from about one outright hallucinatory page, to me it simply felt like a brilliant evocation of viewing dank old probate-sale houses. Maybe I think more hauntologically than average (if so I didn't realise), seeing things vividly and imagining stuff in that sort of situation without finding it overwhelmingly bothersome. It was still a great piece of writing, just not exactly frightening.

If you start this and find it getting mundane (after a rollercoaster of a first chapter which goes from taking an axe to household appliances, to adorable original fairytales) it is certainly worth persevering with - it gets much better again later, and there is much better writing than you'll see in most recently-published novels.

* For some reason, many reviewers buy anguished Karl's interpretation that it definitely was suicide. (Influenced by the author's own, not long after this was published?) Reckless self-destructive behaviour, death by misadventure seems like an equally plausible interpretation of the facts. Also, an unknowable mystery: how did Sæterbakken relate having written this book about grief to his own decision to kill himself? Perhaps in the end he was unable to focus in that way. Or had it been an attempt to talk himself out of it?

Olle says

Ojämn och annorlunda läsning. Inledningsvis visste jag inte vad jag skulle tycka. Boken tog sedan fart efter cirka 100 sidor, för att sedan lämna läsaren med alltför många obesvarade frågor just när man trodde att allt skulle nå sin upplösning.

MJ Nicholls says

This novel swayed to my recent existential rhythms: nooked up in my bed listening to the theatrical tumult of Swans' *White Light From the Mouth of Infinity*, all dressed up in decorative gloom (or black PJs). This novel with its slow-burning terror, its epic heartbreak, its beyond-black humour, sways to that Swans sound. A first-person account of a collapsing marriage and the loss of a son does not sound like riveting material, but Stig (who died last year—extra gloom), makes it all seem fresh and opens new wounds to deliver a punishing

account of catastrophic grief and a fly-on-the-wall account of an extramarital affair, lacking any false glamour, all wrenching sadness. Alongside, a strange *House of Leaves*-style storyline lifts the novel into peculiar heights of brilliance (no spoilers, except the final few chapters are lethal and should be prescribed on the NHS). A dazzling Swans-song from Stig.
