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It is 1740 and Louise Fletcher, a young dairy maid on an Essex farm, has been warned of the lure of the sea for as long as she can remember--after all, it stole away her father and brother. But when she is offered work in the bustling naval port of Harwich, as a lady's maid to a wealthy captain's daughter, she leaps at the chance to see more of the world. There she meets Rebecca, her haughty young mistress, who is unlike anyone Louise has encountered before: as unexpected as she is fascinating.

Intertwined with her story is fifteen-year-old Luke's: He is drinking in a Harwich tavern when it is raided by Her Majesty's Navy. Unable to escape, Luke is beaten and press ganged and sent to sea on board the warship Essex. He must learn fast and choose his friends well if he is to survive the brutal hardships of a sailor's life and its many dangers, both up high in the rigging and in the dark below decks.

Louise navigates her new life among the streets and crooked alleys of Harwich, where groaning houses riddled with smugglers' tunnels are flooded by the spring tides, and love burns brightly in the shadows. Luke, aching for the girl he left behind and determined to one day find his way back to her, embarks on a long and perilous journey across the ocean.

The worlds they find are more dangerous and more exciting than they could ever have imagined, and when they collide the consequences are astonishing and irrevocable.

A breathtakingly accomplished love story and a gripping search for identity and survival, *She Rises* is a bold, brilliant, and utterly original novel.

She Rises Details

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Author : Kate Worsley

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From Reader Review She Rises for online ebook

For Books' Sake says

"She Rises is a briny, sea-shanty take on Tipping The Velvet, complete with twisting plot, characters who rise and fall in station with the turn of every page, an evocative period setting, and – oh yes – cross-dressing young women and lesbian love affairs. Yet Worsley lacks anything like the storytelling flair and panache of her mentor, and here, sadly, the similarities end." Excerpt from full review at For Books' Sake.)

Arawelo says

Beautiful writing and really engrossing, quite brutal too, naval life was tough.

The twist at the end was amazing even if it does meander at times

CaseyTheCanadianLesbrarian says

I'm not sure how to begin this review. I have two options: 1) I can tell you I loved this book and urge you to get your hands on it right away; 2) I can warn you that it's very difficult for me to discuss this book in any depth without revealing GIANT SPOILERS. You are, therefore, warned. If you haven't read this book, you probably shouldn't read this review beyond the first paragraph. This is coming from someone who usually is pretty blasé about the whole spoilers thing. Let me just say this: if you like historical queer fiction, if a tantalizing mixture of inter-class lesbian romance and mid-1700s navy action sounds exciting to you, if you are desperately waiting for Sarah Waters's next book, if you love authentic, rough language that disorients and dazzles you, then please pick up She Rises by Kate Worsley.

First of all, have you had a look at that gorgeous cover? This beautifully written and suspenseful novel completely lives up to the stunning artwork. The novel has a peculiar structure which alternates between the perspective of fifteen-year-old Luke, who has been press-ganged and forced to work on a navy ship, and Louise, also a teenager and a former dairy maid, who has recently arrived in the seaside town of Harwich to become a lady's maid. This structure moves you along pretty quickly, because you're always wanting to read on and find out what happened to Luke after reading about Louise and vice versa.

See the rest of my review at the lesbrary: <http://lesbrary.com/2013/11/01/casey-...>

Bandit says

Because one of my favorite author Sarah Waters takes entirely too long between books, I've been looking for something in similar vein. I came across this book on a list of Lambda nominees and it sounded really great. And it actually really was. Absolutely spellbinding, took a short while to get into, but then I couldn't put it down, ended up reading it all about five and a half hours. The dual story lines was what initially threw me, being fairly indifferent to maritime tales, but the narrative is so cleverly split and so well executed plus the sea here is impossible to ignore, it's very much a character in itself, practically a love interest. Although the historical and gay aspects intertwined inevitably invite the comparison, this isn't Sarah Waters. This is Kate

Worsley, a major talent if this confident and exciting debut novel is any indicator. I have to say I didn't love the ending, understood it, appreciated it, but didn't like it. Loved the book, though. Gorgeous writing, very striking book inside and out. Highly recommended.

Bethany says

[Also... after the last 50 pages or so I really don't think I can put this on my lesbian shelf? It definitely belongs on my general queer shelf, but considering that Lou s

Dana says

Oh god, what a disappointment?? This book was slow from the start, but I was interested in where it was going and was willing to give it the benefit of the doubt. And I even loved it in the middle of the book! The writing was good, the concept of the story was completely sucking me in, and at that point I felt like the execution of the idea was stellar! Despite the insta-love factor of Lou and Becca's relationship, I enjoyed their interactions and shipped them a bit. I LOVED the stuff about Lou/Luke figuring out gender identity stuff and the drag-like feel to the early scenes vs how it develops into something more as the story goes on. Which is why what came next was such a disappointment.

cw for rape and racism

I guess the first thing I didn't love was the rape that happens, like, multiple times. Rape/sexual assault is a subject that I don't like to read about, but I HAVE read a couple books where it was a theme. This book handled this part of the story... alright. Luke getting raped is a traumatic thing for him and the story does not shy away from that. It doesn't try to sugarcoat it. But something about this plot thread made me a little uncomfortable to read, though I can't really place my finger on why (beyond obvious reasons).

If that was my only issue, I might have given the book 4 stars. But ugh, the racism. The book had absolutely no brown or black characters for the first half of the story (that I can remember), as if people of color didn't exist in 1740 Britain. But THEN, Luke lands in a French colony off the coast of Africa (I think? The discussion of locations was a bit confusing to me). And the author proceeds to describe basically every black character that Luke sees with the n word. And they're only placed in the story in relation to white people and in terms of their subjugation. Like, NO THANKS I'M OUT. Sorry, but we live in times where you put racist shit in your story for 'historical accuracy' there needs to be conversations where it's taken apart. There are approximately ten million racist books written about or in the past, do we really want to add to those? And in *She Rises* there was no discussion of the abhorrent racism, the black characters were given no role in the story, and (surprising no one) this vitriolic racism could have been completely removed from the book and it would not have affected the plot at all. And it was written by a white author. Gross gross gross and bad.

And lastly, I kinda hated the ending. Lmao. I'm glad they got back together, but I have no clue what was happening with Luke and the sea etc. Don't get me wrong, I LOVE open-ended endings. But this legit felt like it stopped mid-chapter. Does he go back to the sea? Does he stay? Does he find satisfaction with life on land?? Do he and Rebecca actually ever talk about this shit?? On that note, why did he keep being like "Later, I would be sorry I didn't talk to Rebecca about this" or whatever, when we literally don't get to see 'later'???? AHGH. Frustrating!!

Three other things: I loved the cover (the best part of the book). The slang used on the ship was downright confusing. And how the hell did Luke hide his period lol.

Fariha says

I picked this up thinking that it was your ordinary pirate boy / land girl romance where they both end up traversing the seas. And the blurb introduces the two main characters, Luke, who is press ganged into Navy service, and Louise, who has gone to work as a lady's maid in a busy seaport, and follows with the fact that this book is full of adventure and love so what was I supposed to think?! So you go into this book all - "yeah this is the typical nautical trash that I can't get enough of" but ITS NOT TYPICAL AND ITS NOT WHAT YOU ARE EXPECTING AT ALL.

The narrative alternates with each chapter, with Louise's chapters written in second person as she addresses someone: "you were there" , "how could I tell you" etc. Luke's chapters are narrated in third person but present tense which I really hate in a book, so like "he stirs" , "he wipes his sweat" etc. So it's already really kind of disjointed and for me personally, I hate second person narrative so it was a real downer for me. Add to this the fact that Luke's chapters were so boring I skipped them all - legit skipped them ALL except the last one, the fact that the two different narratives take ten billion years to seem to have any relation to each other, and the slowest pacing I have ever come across, and you get this book.

The characters are all really bad too, Becca is horrible - like actually a terrible person she's so mean how do people like her? Louise is annoying and quite obsessive which was even more annoying, and I don't know anything about Luke because I skipped all his chapters except the first one where he's awake and confused. So he's my favourite out of them all I guess.

A lot of people say that this book resonates with a real love for the sea, which you can kinda grasp from the way that the town that Louise lives in gets really high tides that come into the streets and effectively controls people's lives. (Did I say "kinda grasp"? I meant *just about see*). Also I read somewhere that the alternating chapters mimics the rhythmic lapping of sea waves or s/t. I mean *what?! Call me cheap or unappreciative of intelligent allegories and metaphoric structures but when I pick up a book about the sea I'm looking for a specific kind of book. And maybe that's just me being super specific, but I need more interaction with the bloody sea*, and narrated in a way that doesn't put me to sleep (she tears her hair from the annoyance of PRESENT TENSE FREAKING THIRD PERSON WHO DOES THAT). And maybe some pirates, some internal ship politics as well as relations to other ships, and just some overall nautical marauding.

So why give it 3 stars Fariha? I'm glad you asked. This book has a hell of a twist I mean holy *shit I didn't see that coming*.

Or maybe I was so unprepared because I skipped all of Luke's chapters, which was essentially half the book.

Jane says

I was captivated first by a wonderful cover, then by an intriguing epigraph, and then by two stories, at first seeming simple, that twisted and turned together in ways that were wonderfully unexpected.

First there was Luke. He was just fifteen when he found himself in the wrong place at wrong time, and was press-ganged into the His Majesty's Navy. There was no way out, and he found himself sailing away on a warship. He had to learn fast, what was required of him, who he could trust. He was at the beginning of an extraordinary adventure, but he could only think of the girl he had left behind.

And then there was Louise, a young dairymaid who was presented a wonderful chance to better herself. She became a lady's maid in the household of a sea captain, and she began to search for her brother who had last been seen in the same harbour town. But she was somewhat distracted from that search by the young lady she served, who behaved in ways that were quite unexpected. As did Louise...

It's difficult to say more than that about the story without giving far too much away

She Rises is a story of love, adventure, identity and secrets.

And all of this in a world that lives and breathes. The houses and the streets of a harbour town. The taverns and the docks. The ships that set sail into the wider world.

I liked Luke from the start. It took me a little longer to become involved with Louise. It didn't help that she was addressing one person – 'you' – but soon I realised who 'you' was and I understood.

That story was effectively told, the prose style distinctive and suiting it perfectly. Like the sea, it had quiet times, but there other time when waves rose and fell, and those moments quite took my breath away.

The way in which Luke's and Louise's narratives came together was unexpectedly wonderful and, though the change of gear was a little clunky, but it raised the story to greater heights.

I saw influences, some fine authors and some wonderful books, but She Rises has a spirit, a character, a reason for being that is entirely its own.

There were more than enough good things for me to forgive its few failings, keep turning the pages, and feel sorry that now the story is over.

Chaitra says

The cover is beautiful. That's about what is good about the book, to be honest. It's plodding, it plays coy. The alternating storylines of a brother and a sister is decipherable about a quarter of the way in if you're paying attention. For some foolish reason, I was. I did not like the writing, I did not like one single character. I cannot for the life of me understand Becca's charms, she starts out cruel. Once the cruelty is taken out, she might as well be an ornamental plant for all the personality she has. Worsley tells me Becca + Lou = true love, but to me it seems like slavish devotion. And that's the more interesting storyline. I couldn't bring myself to care about Luke and his whimpering, unhappy journey aboard a ship. I blame the writing for that - it's high drama, but I felt like I was being told over and over again that it is high drama. Not exactly my thing.

Edit. I wrote the review several days after I finished the book, and the details are already rather vague in my head. Hmm.

Jenny Q says

Enter to win a copy through July 9th @Let Them Read Books

I have mixed feelings on this book. On the one hand, it's an imaginative historical novel full of conflict and danger, with fantastic descriptions of life on an eighteenth-century naval ship, and of life in an eighteenth-century shipping town. On the other hand, I didn't really care for the story. *She Rises* turned out to be completely different than what I was expecting, and while sometimes that can be a very good thing, in this case, for me, it was not.

In alternating chapters we follow Louise, a poor dairymaid, as she is given a new position as a maid and companion to a wealthy captain's daughter, and Luke, a fifteen-year-old boy who has been forcibly pressed into the navy and struggles to adapt to the tough and dangerous life of a sailor. Louise's chapters are written almost as letters to her mistress, Rebecca, and it is easy to see early on that she has developed a fascination for her, undeserved though it may be. Luke's chapters are written in a more immediate style, and the realistic depiction of the brutal life of a sailor can be tough to read at times, but I appreciated the honest and eye-opening account.

It's very hard to pinpoint in this review what I didn't like about the story without giving anything away, because *She Rises* does have a few monumental surprises in store for the reader. I can't say that I ever really formed an attachment to Louise, or any of the other characters. At first I was drawn to her and rooting for her success in life, but as the story went on I found myself disliking her single-mindedness and the clinging nature of her personality. Luke is made of somewhat stronger stuff and I was sympathetic to his plight onboard the ship, and I became more interested as the connection between Luke and Louise became clear and I knew who he really was, especially as the alternate storylines finally merged and plunged on toward a conclusion--but that conclusion left much to be desired. It's the type of ending that frustrates me, that leaves me feeling a bit cheated, that has me scratching my head and saying, That's how it ends? That's what I just slogged through 420 pages for?

However, in spite of the fact that the story itself was not my cup of tea, I cannot fault the writing. It's evocative, lyrical, and profound in places, and as I stated before, the description is just fantastic. So that bumps my rating up a notch and allows me to recommend *She Rises* to anyone in the mood for literary historical fiction that doesn't mind some unusual twists and turns.

Niki says

Some aspects of this book were excellent and worth more than three stars. The evocation of Harwich as a bustling, briny port is gloriously vivid and I found the sections of Luke's story describing his time at sea very powerful, BUT the "Twist" in the tale is so obvious, signposted so heavily, that I found myself willing the author to do something more subtle. The "Twist" doesn't so much sail over the horizon like one of Luke's ships in full sail, it lumbers over the horizon like a vast, rusting hulk of a tanker, overshadowing everything around it and my irritation with its obviousness spoilt the last three-quarters of the book for me. I should add that I'm usually the last one to spot impending plot developments!

Kylie Sparks says

Finally, an author to follow in Sarah Waters footsteps, putting the lesbians back into history! I thought this was a fantastic story, I'm surprised to see how many readers didn't like it. There's no accounting for taste, I guess. It's set in Georgian England, in a sea town in Essex. It alternates between the stories of a young maid to a sea captain's daughter, and a young man who is press-ganged and sent to sea. It's a love story and an adventure story and I found it pretty mesmerizing. It's not perfect--there is a section or two that is less than convincing. But for sheer overall enjoyment, this one is 5 stars. Lesbian book groups, you should definitely check this one out.

queerjadis says

some good wlw content but the genders ,, god the genders.

i really can't tell if this is supposed to be a book about a trans man or a butch lesbian so i've just chosen to treat it as he's a trans man. while you can absolutely have he/him butch lesbians, i think luke's experiences echoes closer to that of a trans man than a butch lesbians. this may be because of the time period and how he's not able to choose to be butch, but it just means that i think he reads as more trans than butch. idk i'd be interested to see how other people read his character, but with the way that he refers to himself internally, the constant setting barriers in how he refers to himself, the final telling becca to call him luke, that's just what seems to fit better. also my use of pronouns in this are a riot, im trying to accurately portray the stages of luke's character development so i'm sorry if they're like wrong or not respectful, hmu and i'll change it.

okay so like the authors clearly trying to do smth with how gender is performed, how it's a costume, but instead the character ends up falling into the usual trap of his transness becoming a character or costume that he pulls on and off at will, like the costume is essential to the realising of transness, and this is something seen over and over again in media - the cis obsession with the pulling on of the 'opposite' genders clothes, of the slow montages of trans people trying on clothes and 'finding themselves' (their transness) within them, which just ,, isn't ,, how that works particularly ,, i get for media it's easy to focus on this idea of a singular moment but like the whole thing is a real big journey and i just don't understand how lou is written as hating everything about men and not being particularly uncomfortable in presenting as a woman and then she tries on the sailors garb and suddenly Understands Himself like ,, no ??? thanks ???

the main good thing this book did was that air of fear that cishet men bring with them, that lou can see very clearly in the early aspects of the book - like the fear she feels at their behaviour, of the threat of them that is present within their drunkenness especially but also just in the very way they look at women. the way that even their gaze says that women owe them something. the men take and take from women in this book and it's very accurate.

did not enjoy how it was then later written off as part of the heterosexual mating dance ,however, as totally normal and healthy, and that luke then coopts this behaviour as his own even tho when he's presenting as a woman he's clearly terrified by it so like ,, why ,, would he then do that ?? like yeah there's power in the arrogance, in flirting, but real trans men would never purposefully try to make women uncomfortable in the guise of attraction - this is not how trans people act, it's not how butch lesbians act, and it's not how trans stories should be written.

the author plays at investigating gender without successfully managing to say anything intelligent - she turns Luke into everything that he himself hates in cis men and then calls that liberation. and yeah that can be a

result of trauma, but the fact that he perpetuates the same gendered binary without query is just unrealistic and made me mad

tying into this, why does luke also become violent and emotionally abusive, why are emotional distance and violence always treated as if they come naturally hand in hand with masculinity. what could have been a really interesting look into how Luke's strength differs from that of the cishet mans, how its softer and comes from a vulnerable place, the strength that comes with trauma and with the outside look into the gender binary that being trans give you, instead becomes about him adopting those terrible traits that are the worst without him even giving a thought into why he's replicating them. like actual trans men exist and its nothing like that? the author could have used this as a very interesting opportunity to investigate why cis men are so Like That and into what socialises them that way, and how luke becomes different - how trans manhood is different to cis manhood but nope, didn't bother with any of that, lukes just a sad asshole now.

Luke becomes the assimilated queer who allows himself to benefit from his perceived privilege and it just Isn't Realistic. like all us queers are out here with our trauma and we don't do awful shit like treat our wives like shit and then maybe up and leave maybe not in the most disappointing ending of a book maybe ever. idk i mean hopeful endings are my fave kind and maybe thats the problem bc this shows that happy ending as completely broken down, but like in 2013 was this the kind of rep we rly needed? Extremely No.

also like no offence but are we supposed to think its cool that albert is having relations with a whole ton of women who don't know he's trans like those women rly should know whats happening there thats rape?

did like luke loving his new strength and reveling in the strength in his shoulders, that felt very On Brand and accurate to just the whole experience tho

noah fence but the twist was like rly obvious tho, maybe it's just bc i think genders fake and the book relies on you assuming that bc lou is a 'girl' and luke is a 'boy' then they must be entirely people to properly pull off the conceit which then obviously doesn't work on me but yeah it was p cheap ://

Melinda says

This is a hard review for me to write as I am truly conflicted about this book. Worsley has a beautiful writing style and is especially skilled at bringing 18th century England--and the sea--to life. I also found the idea behind this book to be original and fascinating.

But...

All in all, this book just didn't work for me. As much as I liked the idea of the book, I don't think that idea came to fruition effectively. Writing parallel stories, as Worsley has done here with Louise and Luke, is not always successful and, in this case, I found it horribly distracting. The two tales do come together eventually, but it doesn't make up for the majority of the book where the stories seem to operate on their own.

Worsley did a fine job creating the main characters of Louise and Luke, but I can't say much about any of the other characters in the book. Most problematic was Rebecca. She was an incredibly unlikable character and Worsley never really made the case for the attraction between Rebecca and Louise plausible--which is at the center of this novel.

This is Worsley's debut novel and, fair or not, I am chalking this up to inexperience. Worsley's writing is certainly top notch--and I'd be willing to read any future books of hers--but she needs to improve her structuring and finessing the structure of her stories.

Jane says

No, she sinks like a body wrapped in an anchor chain thrown overboard. Could not finish this excruciatingly show, needlessly complicated story of lesbian love and cross-dressing sailors.

Confession: I bought this by mistake, thinking it was by the talented and delightful Lucy Worsley. No such luck - this must be by her dim cousin from Essex.
