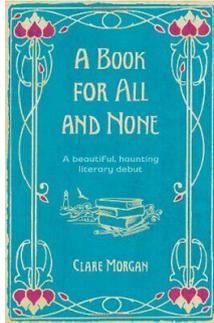


**JULY 2022**

## **A BOOK FOR ALL AND NONE – CLARE MORGAN**

The title is taken from Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical work "Also Sprach Zarathustra - A Book for All and None". Zarathustra was a Persian sage, "a dualist adhering to the heresy of the eternal struggle between good and evil as a type of war of equals but not believing in any human form of deity".



The book is based on Nietzsche's correspondence and Woolf's letters recounted by two university researchers. The final chapter "To the Lighthouse" refers to Virginia Woolf's eponymous novel.

Clare Morgan has cleverly woven together two storylines - lonely Raymond, living his life through his fantasy around Nietzsche, and Beatrice, married to tycoon Walter, doing the same thing through her obsession with Virginia Woolf. Raymond and Beatrice meet at Oxford and spend time together respecting each other's expertise and enthusiasm. Beatrice is also researching a possible connection between Nietzsche and Woolf which strengthens the relationship and creates opportunities for regular contact. Raymond and Beatrice become lovers and spend time together at Raymond's remote cottage in the Welsh countryside.

Walter, Beatrice's husband, spends his time in somewhat corrupt dealings in the Middle East and the descriptions of the violence suffered by his representative out there when things go wrong is very graphic. He also has a mistress, Julie whose character is interesting in that she makes a life and a business for herself despite the affair not working out.

Beatrice becomes pregnant and the scene is set for her and Raymond to live together and bring up the baby. However, the twist in the story is that, because of the July 7<sup>th</sup> bombing at Kings Cross, Beatrice misses her train to Wales. This changes everything as she and Walter then get together again and she decides to have an abortion. Raymond accepts her decision and decides to go to Germany to continue his research. The other twist of fiction based on historical events is that of Virginia Woolf's baby being Raymond's mother so Beatrice's child would be Woolf's grandchild.

Everyone agreed that this was a difficult book to read and prior knowledge of both Friedrich Nietzsche and Virginia Woolf and her Bloomsbury set would have been a big help!

Some quotes from the group:

"Beautiful, lyrical writing"

"a masterclass in creative writing"

"an unusually devised book, well written with powerful characterisation built around the possibilities of love and human relationships"

“I am not keen on having real people used in fiction and it also seemed wrong to use the tragedy of Kings Cross as part of a theme of a novel”

“Some, in fact most, of the descriptive passages were wonderful in their own literary right.”

“I love the Bloomsbury Group painters so it was interesting to see how the author made imaginative, interesting connections re: Woolf’ sister Vanessa Bell and her husband Clive’s family history of building a fortune in the coal mining industry”

“Although the book as a whole was hard work and felt a bit like a history lesson, I have to admit to meeting two of them first in a lesson on creative writing where they were used by the tutor to demonstrate the power of descriptive writing. On their own they are wonderful and enjoyable as examples of excellent literature”

“An extraordinary reading experience and could have been better if I knew more about Nietzsche and a deeper understanding of Virginia Woolf. For me it has been like reading some beautifully crafted intense short stories, original descriptions of time, place and emotions and some dire humour with Walter on his business encounters and air travel.”

Christine Wright