

Good Reads comments:

A bittersweet debut novel about mother-daughter relationships and socialism. I really loved the opening chapter and nothing else really came up to par with it; it would be a brilliant short story on its own.

I admit I bought this book chiefly because it was partly set in Tamworth, the Midlands town where I attended the same secondary school as the author. It was a lovely trip down memory lane A humorous, quirky book showing how very different the political landscape was forty years ago.

A little like reading a prequel to Goodbye Lenin.....

I am a child of the 1990s - I grew up on PlayDays, the fall of the Conservative government and the rise of the Spice Girls. For me, Motherland is a piece of historical fiction, but I recognise that for many other readers, this novel has the potential to be more hard-hitting, particularly given its semi-autobiographical roots.

From fairly early in the novel, I was reminded of Meera Syal's Anita and Me. There are some fairly obvious parallels - both take place in the 1970s, both feature fish-out-of-water protagonists and in tone they both tend towards the tragi-comic. ..., in many respects, Motherland is a very British tale - indeed while the word of the title is used by Eleanor to refer to the GDR or occasionally Russia, the main theme of the novel is about Jess' relationship with her mother.

Whole review: <http://girlwithherheadinabook.co.uk/2015/09/review-motherland-jomcmillan.html>

I liked this one, despite a rather abrupt shift in tone in the final fifth or so. Ultimately a warm portrait of mother-daughter relations, juxtaposed against the East German-(the mid-sized Staffordshire town of) Tamworth relations.

Quite.

Tragi-comic really, given the narrative arc, but it never descends into farce, nor does it condescend to its characters and reader. I enjoyed it a lot, even though at times it delves into sometimes desperately embarrassing territory, and we are set from the very beginning for a rather sad end.

Motherland combines a teenager's cold-eyed view of adult absurdities and a wistfulness for lost certainties; a compelling blend. (Historical novels society)