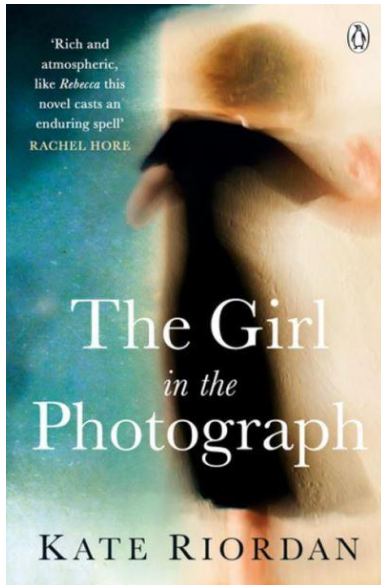


Compilation Review of The Girl in the Photograph by Kate Riordan



This book is a tale of two women in two different eras both suffering from the conventions of their time. Alice is unmarried, pregnant and sent away to hide her pregnancy with the acceptance that when the child is born it will be given up for adoption. Elizabeth, from the earlier era, is married but unhappily so, suffering post-natal depression and at odds with an unsympathetic husband. Their lives are entwined as are the chapters of the book. Alice gets absorbed by the history of the house and Elizabeth and all is revealed as she pursues the research into history.

This book had a mixed reception from our group...

"I liked the book better than I thought I would, because it wasn't really a ghost story, which I wouldn't have enjoyed".

"I have enjoyed reading this novel. I was apprehensive of the ghost aspect alluded to but the narrative was atmospheric and slightly disturbing rather than frightening or menacing."

"The start of the book has a desperately unconvincing affair, passionless and not believable"

"I found this a well-written and interesting story".

"I wasn't at all sure I was going to get through the novel at the beginning...."

"I had mixed feelings about this book but have to admit that despite having reservations I kept coming back because I needed to know what happened to Elizabeth."

"Difficult disjointed plotting, more like a mix of themed short stories."

"I did not like the story of Alice....."

".....but found Alice's story unsatisfying and predictable....."

Most liked the description of the setting

".....it is a mysterious place filled with untold secrets..."

"The Cotswolds setting, the villages, people and countryside were well described and a perfect backdrop for the novel."

"Good landscape descriptions."

"The descriptive narrative was very good."

"I found the writing style beautifully descriptive of place....."

"..... I also enjoyed the strong sense of place....."

...but mixed reception for the characters

"The characters were well written and all important to the unfolding story except perhaps for Henry"

"I liked the way the other characters were in both tales. Edith, Ruck, Morton and Tom's parents and how they showed different sides of Elizabeth's character. Isabel playing and talking with her toys was very realistic."

“.....but rather dense and humourless when it came to her characters. Mrs Jelphs being the one exception. “

“Characters not believable or interesting.”

“I found it difficult to have any sympathies with either woman, although I can sympathise with their situations, they themselves appear quite weak....”

Post-natal depression, attitudes to illegitimacy, the subjugation of women in both time zones were the underlying themes.

“We get a clear insight into the times when women were always judged by others and wives were mere possessions of their husbands. Also, post-natal depression after the birth of a baby was not understood or catered for.”

“The attitude towards women in those 2 different times was portrayed well. It generated sympathy towards Alice and Elizabeth. Both women were trapped because of the conventions of the time.”

“.....an insight into how post-natal depression was once dealt with and also of the disgrace and humiliation of becoming pregnant outside of wedlock.”

“.....with the very different accounts of Elizabeth and Alices’ mostly sad unhappy confinements. Impatience by husbands towards their post-natal depression must have been quite common in the 19th century.....”

“The author is projecting her own contemporary understanding into different eras.”

In the discussion most people felt that this book was trying to be a like the writings of Daphne Du Maurier, the Brontes or Jane Austen and almost everyone agreed that, as such, it was unfortunately unsuccessful, although some people would be interested to read another of her books.