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From the beginning this novel's tension weaves warp and woof between hilarity and hell. Two women friends travel through France, encountering backroad-European misogynist crudities and the awkward experiences of being female, over thirty, with your teeth almost literally at your closest friend's throat, and "fancying men, but not liking them very much." Throughout Rona's random acts of innocent irritation and Cassie's caustic reactions, the funny and fumbled art of their compassion supersedes self-slaughter, stretches itself thin, but refuses to puncture, throughout years of pals together both on holiday and in troubled spirit.

Foreign Parts Details

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Author : Janice Galloway

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Geraud says

not the best J. Galloway.

the story of two friends going on a trip and going on each other's nerves.

bittersweet. nothing earthshattering which is a shame because Janice Galloway can be a great writer (see "the trick is to keep breathing" , " where you find it")

Susanne Mclean says

Easy, undemanding read made more interesting if you start thinking about relationships, dependence and responsibility.

Virginia says

I didn't hate it, but boy oh boy I so wanted it to be better. And it could have been if we'd better understood the foundation of the relationship that made these two (apparently) inseparable. The journey itself was so blah that didn't add to plot at all, merely the device by which these two were confined to close quarters.

The choppiness doesn't help - Cassie's flashbacks into her fairly ordinary relationships didn't do much for me. We've all been there but this didn't make me identify with her, it was more of a 'so what?' response.

I did read all the way to the end, maybe I was waiting for Rona to kill Cassie in her sleep. Any response wouldn't have been good. I didn't understand her at all.

If we loved everything we read, then we'd never be able to single out anything as great and who wants that? So thank you Ms Galloway for providing the counterpoint.

Daisy says

I can count the number of books I can't finish on the fingers of one hand. Unfortunately, this is one of them. Worse - this was during a weekened break when I had nothing else to read.

But I absolutely hated it. It should have been right up my street. Cassie and Rona, friends (sort of), set out to travel across the French countryside.

By page 10 I couldn't keep track of the characters (and there are only 2!) and by page 20 I'd almost lost the will to live, let alone continue reading the book.

I hate writing negative reviews but I think that this novel has a very specialist audience (a white feminist poet in her late twenties) and I can't recommend it.

Rebecca says

Another snooze fest. It may seem like I am flying though books, but I am reading one at work and a different one at home and I just happen to finish at the same time. I was actually reading this one at home and got board and read Ice Tea and Elvis before just sucking it up and finishing this one. Foreign Parts is about two 30-something girls traveling across France. (Not Paris, which would have livened the story up a slight bit.) It is inter-spliced with stories about their past and traveling with boys, but they are not interesting at all. I sort of got the message that they became like lesbians with each other by the end, but I was too board to even care. It was no Brokeback Mountain which was a great little story. The movie did it proud.

grade: N/A

Mara Eastern says

Falls short of *The Trick Is to Keep Breathing*, but contains impressive passages of hilarious hysterics and chilling metaphysics.

Margo says

The highlight is on P9

Jon says

I did come to this after reading a lot of second-rate modernist duds, but even so I think it's pretty good. Surprising amount of tension, compassion, irritation, anger and fear generated from such a simple premise. Yes it's intermittently humorous too, but always subject to tight wariness.

Psirene says

I realize that this is a cutting edge hip Ireland writer but It was a painful read. I could not make it through the first couple of chapters. I may be getting too old for cutting edge.

Edmund Bloxam says

This book is a morass of misery.

The other character at one point says "Why can't you just relax and try to enjoy something for once?" I screamed, "Yes, that is this whole book."

Do you want to hear somebody constantly complain for five hours about every little thing, about every little situation; who purposefully forces herself to do things she hates (for one thing go on holiday at all). The barrage of 'sarcasm' has no offset, so even the minutiae, the bland moments (which is everything) are laced with bile, so they are not really humorous; they are simply miserable. The tone and style demands that you share this misery too.

At one point, she says 'ah, a cup of tea, the one thing in my life I truly enjoy'. I was, like, 'oh, I get it', then she complained about the tea (the cup, the milk, the....arrgh)! I've never read anything so unpleasant, so filled with hatred. And since there is no let-up, I am forced to believe that the main character is pathologically and extremely depressed.

Even the 'payoff' at the end (literally in the last ten pages) is ruined, because the other character falls asleep. Which is typical of the book, really. Also, it was poorly delivered, as literally moments before she realises she's in love with Rona, she fantasises about the physicality of a penis, thus undermining the feminism that is supposed to be the point of the book. Hints of that emerge occasionally, but it's such a swamp of wretched woriment, I didn't care.

Tuck says

a technical showcase, moving from 1st to 3rd person in smooth, effortless weaving (like romanian teen gymnasts, seemingly effortless, really superhuman strength and control) chronicles of the road trip of two old friends, from scotland to france, 2 weeks of pensions w/kitchen, or if that doesn;t work out, just sleeping in the car. through the innocuous recording, sort of like mark twain's travel journals, of their travels, and the re-telling and the simultaneous telling of the re-telling by the omniscient narrator, the reader feels like she is along for the trip, and you know how "trips" with "friends" can be, i mean i want to get all sexy with my bunk mate, in between times when i want to throttle them and never see them again,ever. "what are you thinking"? bad question. "want to go to the horse museum"? i dunno? what do you wanna do?" bad answer. but hell, like i said, it's like being in the car with them. i think back fondly to galloway's autobios while reading this fiction which seems very autobiographical. it is amazing galloway is not like mitch albom or james patterson or some other super popular author, because she is so talented and such fun to be around. that's what it feels like to read janice galloway, like being with her. This is Not About Me

Karen says

Really didn't enjoy this writing style. It didn't flow as a story and tried, unsuccessfully to include too many characters that didn't add anything.

MJ Nicholls says

First, that pathetic excuse for a cover. With this cover, the publishers are saying: “Look! This isn’t a fragmented experimental narrative at all! It’s a light and airy road trip about two crazy ladies discovering their place in the world! It’s not difficult or challenging at all! Beach read! Beach read!” Nice try, Vintage. But Galloway’s second novel is an ambitious narrative flitting between first, second and third POVs, set in holidays past and present. Within these separate narratives, her language closely mimics the internal monologue of her characters Cassie and Nora as they embark upon a desperate voyage into middle age, along the lost highways of their sexuality and female identity, creating a breathtaking and claustrophobic portrait of two complex, literate women struggling (perhaps) with latent homosexuality. Galloway is arguably the strongest female voice in modern Scottish fiction (except Ali Smith) and this novel showcases the breadth of her technical expertise and defiantly original take on the female experience. As far as covers go, the Dalkey Archive edition cover is, naturally, the truest (if not the prettiest).

Secondly, to the six people who “reviewed” this novel unfavourably, no. Sorry, but no. You are not getting away with your lazy, half-cocked dismissals. *Rebecca*: Galloway is not chicklit. In chicklit books overbearing women with unlikely positions in advertising dream of being fucked senseless by Rochester’s with their own TV companies. This is a passionate, witty and moving account of two people who, yes, “became like lesbians with each other by the end” (or, rather, Cassie’s sexuality comes to the fore throughout the trip, leaving her friendship with Nora suspended on a dark note). Comparing the novel to *Brokeback Mountain* is like comparing a delicious lemon parfait to a mouldy slice of rat-nibbled brie left round the bins. Take a cold shower.

Virginia Proud. To quote: “the journey itself was so blah that it didn’t add to the plot at all.” The journey *is* the plot—the rhythms of their trip (the practicalities, observations and snippets of small talk) creates the emptiness, frustration and camaraderie that drives this novel. The fragmentation was, to an extent, reminiscent of Michel Butor’s dizzying road trip *Mobile*, spliced with Ann Quin’s descent *Tripticks*, refracted through readable, cosier lens of modern lit-fic. If you were “waiting for Rona to kill Cassie in her sleep,” why didn’t you write that ending? Perhaps send to Mrs Galloway, c/o the Proud lady?

Caitlin King. So wrong I barely know where to begin. Try telling a roomful of hardcore feminists all they need in their lives is to be pumped with some penis (or vaginas) to solve their problems and you’ll be a popular dish in the room, best served cold. Next: not all armpits are stinky, not since the invention of showers and deodorants. Clearly, you’re missing out on a whole world of armpit-centred sensuality. Sweat has been a sensual trigger since people started humping in caves. It’s only our modern preoccupation with grooming that has repulsed people against the body’s natural, beautiful odours. Everyone out there, please lick your lover’s armpit tomorrow. You’re in for a treat.

Daisy, you said: “I couldn’t keep track of the characters (and there are only 2!)” Well done! Have faith in yourself, you did it, there are TWO characters in this book! Tomorrow, we learn the letter K! As for this book’s audience being “a white feminist poet in her late twenties,” I am a white non-feminist non-poet in his mid-twenties and I thought this book was swell. You must work in book marketing departments. Geraud: it’s “getting” on each other’s nerves, not “going.” More detail in your review, please. Psirene: “cutting edge hip Ireland writer.” A little tip for you. *Never* ever confuse Ireland with Scotland. You will be hastily sacrificed at the altar of Seamus McMullan O’Flaherty.

How's that for GR bullying? Do I get a gold star?

Aonghas Van Sant says

Janice Galloway gets it. She just really gets it.
