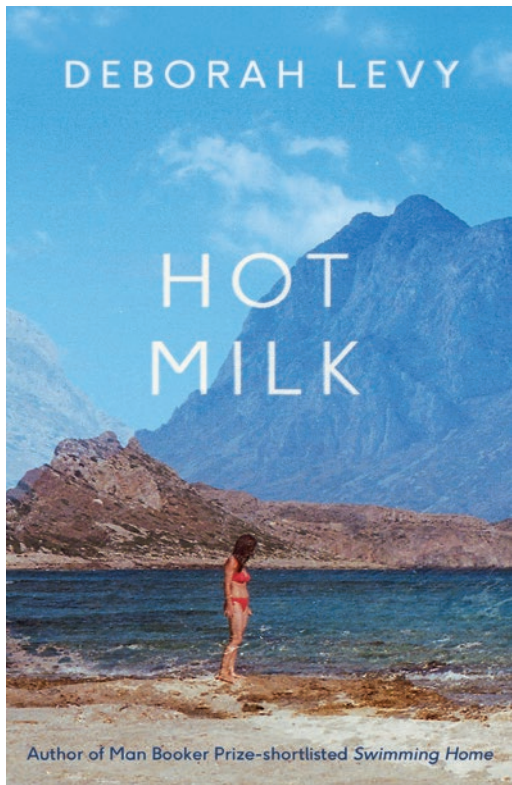


Reader's Guide



Other books by Deborah Levy
Beautiful Mutants (1989)
Unloved (1994)
Swimming Home (2011)

Hot Milk Deborah Levy

Hamish Hamilton

www.themanbookerprize.com

#FinestFiction



About the author

Deborah Levy is a British playwright, novelist and poet. She is the author of five previous novels, *Beautiful Mutants* (1986); *Swallowing Geography* (1993); *The Unloved* (1994); *Billy & Girl* (1996) and *Swimming Home* (2011), which was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize 2012 as well as the Jewish Quarterly Wingate Prize. Deborah is also the author of a collection of short stories, *Black Vodka* (2013), which was shortlisted for the BBC International Short Story Award and the Frank O'Connor International Short Story Award. She has written over 20 plays, including *Ophelia and the Great Idea*, as well as commissions for the Royal Shakespeare Company and for Radio Four.

About the book

Two strangers arrive in a small Spanish fishing village. The older woman is suffering from mysterious paralysis, driven to seek a cure beyond the bounds of conventional medicine. Her daughter Sofia has spent years playing the reluctant detective in this mystery, struggling to understand her mother's illness.

Surrounded by the oppressive desert heat, searching for a cure to a defiant and quite possibly imagined disease, Sofia is forced to confront her difficult relationship with her mother. Examining female rage and sexuality, Deborah Levy explores the strange and monstrous nature of motherhood, testing the bonds of parent and child to breaking point.

Discussion points

Early in the novel, Sofia says, 'I am bittersweet'. Do you think she presents herself honestly to the reader, or sees herself accurately? How might the other characters describe her?

Hot Milk is littered with misunderstandings and mistaken identities, and there are many instances where a conscious or unconscious deception can be more significant than the truth. Discuss.

One reviewer describes Deborah Levy as 'prodding at the intersections between gender, identity, language and desire'. How are these concepts explored through the character of Ingrid?

Sofia knows that the sea is filled with stinging jellyfish. Why does she keep going in the water?

Hot Milk has been described as a coming-of-age novel, a category that arguably applies not just to Sofia but several of the characters in the book – but do any of them truly change?

Themed reading

Sharon Olds *Satan Says*
Helene Cixous *The Laugh of the Medusa*
Ali Smith *The Accidental*
Miranda July *The First Bad Man*
Elena Ferrante *My Brilliant Friend*
Virginia Woolf *Orlando*

Useful links

<http://www.deborah-levy.com/>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/mar/27/hot-milk-deborah-levy-review>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/hot-milk-by-deborah-levy-book-review-a-beguiling-tale-of-myths-and-identity-a6923406.html>

<http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/books/2016/03/too-close-comfort-deborah-levy-s-hot-milk-very-nearly-greater-sum-its-parts>