

Project seeking publisher

Mothersland

by Shahzoda Nazarova Samarqandi

translated by Shelley Fairweather-Vega

This haunting novel by the world's leading Tajik-language novelist is a time-twisting reverie on the bond between mothers and daughters. Growing up in late-Soviet-era Uzbekistan, Mahtab feels more at home in the cotton fields – and in the past, as depicted in her mother's diary – than at school, where the books in the library are rewritten with every new political trend. When a Russian film crew comes to town to make a movie about cotton, starring Mahtab in the role of her hero-worker mother, Mahtab suffers an accident that scrambles her memory. As she struggles to recover, she must untangle her mother's story from her own, and navigate the hazy contours of memory, love, storytelling, and country to finally find herself.

That fall, when the Soviet Union fell apart, my heroism came to an end as well. I don't remember exactly whether my youth ended, and then the USSR, or if it was the other way around. But I do know that those two things are connected. Now I'm left here between two truths: the truth of the land, and the truth of the sea.

Originally written in Tajik, a Persian language, the novel was translated into a lyrical Russian by the poet Youltan Sadykova. A previous English translation was self-published in England. This new translation from the Russian adheres closer to the original style. All rights belong to the author.



About the Author

Shahzoda Nazarova comes from the minority Tajik-speaking community in Soviet Uzbekistan. The feminist focus of her writing and her job with the BBC obliged her to flee her native land for the Netherlands, where she still lives and writes. Nazarova has published three collections of poetry and several acclaimed novels. Her writing has earned her criticism in been banned in Uzbekistan for its feminist focus and frank discussions of sexuality and politically charged topics.

This translation is nearly complete and samples are available.