



by Paula Fürstenberg  
Kiepenheuer & Witsch  
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Fiction

## Everyday Life, Suspended

### *Weltalltage*

#### review

'Everyday Life, Suspended' is a friendly, funny, and seductive work of fiction about a friendship between two young Germans with a morbid interest in disease and the body. Paula Fürstenberg's latest novel is essayistic in nature, combining what seem to be autobiographical passages with lists of ideas and speculations on the body as a site of resistance, and how this relates to the history of Germany and the world at large.

The narrator and her friend Max have both grown up in the former GDR and suffer from health issues – the narrator has dizzy spells and still has after-effects from glandular fever. She recalls (or tells herself) stories of their friendship: how she broke a girl's tooth for laughing at Max, for example. Max is affected by the suicide of his uncle, a sculptor, and while he appears to become a moderately successful architect, he is haunted by thoughts of death and plunges into depression. The narrator draws up lists, sometimes numerical, sometimes alphabetical, in which she analyses the effects of bodily functions on the mind and on writing – quoting Susan Sontag, Annie Ernaux, Thomas Mann, Anne Boyer, Virginia Woolf, and others.

The book's structure is unique, involving lists based on reverse alphabets, numerical lists, and lists of authors and perpetrators, with autobiographical sections that slip in and out of these. The writing is compelling. In key passages, quotations tease out mind/body paradoxes, such as a section in which the narrator lists the names

(and lives) of women who have freed themselves in some way by attacking men, or – in one instance – pelting tomatoes at a political meeting. Many of these quotations lead us back to the ideas of the Socialist Patient Collective in the 1970s, which used illness as a site of resistance: ‘My body has become a terrain in which western surgeons engage in a dialogue with Siberian bears. Or rather try to establish a dialogue.’

In the end, the narrator seems to liberate herself from her bodily fetters by taking up cycling and dance with a new friend, Fredi, despite feeling she has betrayed her close friend Max. Max is hospitalised and comes up with illness theories of his own. The book concludes with a series of statements on behalf of the body.

An unexpected journey into a world of ideas, ‘Everyday Life, Suspended’ is a novel told by a generation whose voice is seldom heard with quite such articulacy, a provocative book that confidently rethinks the relationship between mind and body, fiction and theory, and delves constantly into new ideas.

Find out more here:

<https://www.kiwi-verlag.de/verlag/rights/book/paula-fuerstenberg-welt-alltage-9783462003369>

## press quotes

*"Everyday Life, Suspended" is more than a heartwarming celebration of friendship. It deals with the realization that it is not so easy to define the terms healthy and sick.'* stern

*'Paula Fürstenberg has achieved what the narrator herself identifies as her intention: To write a novel about the effects of history and society on the body – without engaging in exhibitionist navel-gazing or the sensationalist licking of other people's wounds.'*

WDR

*'[A] story about sick bodies [that] delivers many things: a linguistic recalibration, a search for political causes and last but not least, a call to arms.'*

WDR3

## about the author

Paula Fürstenberg was born in 1987 and lives in Berlin. Her debut novel, Familie der geflügelten Tiger ('The Family of Winged Tigers') was published in 2016 and translated into French. She has been awarded numerous fellowships for her work. 'Everyday Life, Suspended' is her second novel.

Previous works: Familie der geflügelten Tiger, Kiepenheuer & Witsch (2018).

## rights information

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