



by Maë Schwinghammer
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Fiction

Everything in between, beyond *Alles dazwischen, darüber hinaus*

review

Everything in between, beyond by Maë Schwinghammer is an innovative and engaging literary autobiography, exploring themes of gender, neurodivergence, family and class. Eschewing a continuous narrative, the short, episodic chapters, in first-person and present tense, are interspersed with diary entries, shopping lists and song lyrics.

The book opens with a short reflection on the narrator's difficulty with language. In the pages that follow, the young narrator starts at kindergarten, where neither the teachers nor the other children understood what they were saying. They attend speech therapy sessions accompanied by their mother, the one person who almost always understands. On a visit to family in Serbia, Schwinghammer is proud: they can say a few words in Serbian, and for the first time people are impressed with their use of language.

A few years after the birth of their sister, their parents separate. Adolescence sees Schwinghammer start grammar school, where their working-class background sets them apart and they are bullied. After they change schools, their mother's depression deepens: one day she doesn't come home for hours, and she subsequently begins therapy and starts taking anti-depressants.

With university comes Schwinghammer's gym lad phase: a regime of training, protein – and internalised homophobia. Throughout their time

studying journalism at university, Schwinghammer writes countless job applications for their dad, now unemployed following various health issues. After their girlfriend breaks up with them, they meet Jona, who introduces them to a new group of friends.

This marks a new phase in Schwinghammer's life as they begin to explore their gender and sexuality: they make out with a man for the first time, and try on a bra. They come across the word 'non-binary' and repeat it 'like a newly learnt magic spell.' Schwinghammer finds themselves on a journey of self-discovery and healing. They realise they are non-binary and begin to take hormones. They are diagnosed with autism. They open up to their parents about their experience of bullying at school.

At the end, Schwinghammer returns to the theme of language. The final page lists all the names they've been called in their life. The list and the novel end with the name they have chosen for themselves: Maë.

Schwinghammer manages to reflect on intersecting forms of oppression, while building an easy rapport with the reader through a conversational tone and flashes of ironic humour. This is an evocative and essential memoir, which will appeal to fans of Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts*.

Find out more:

<https://www.haymonverlag.at/produkt/alles-dazwischen-darueber-hinaus/>

about the author



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Maë Schwinghammer was born in 1993 and grew up in the Simmering district of Vienna, going on to study German Language. They also write poetry, plays and essays. They made their poetry debut in 2022 with 'covid metamorphosen', which deals with social and personal transformation in a global pandemic. 'Everything in between, beyond' is Maë's first novel.

Find out more:

<https://www.instagram.com/maeschwinghammer/>

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