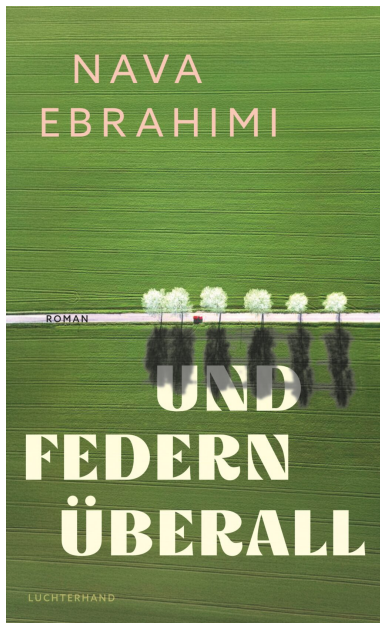




by Nava Ebrahimi
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Fiction

🏆 Nominated for the
German Book Prize 2025

Feathers Everywhere

Und Federn überall

review

This novel by Iranian-born Nava Ebrahimi takes place over one day at a poultry slaughterhouse that represents the economics of a rural German town. The author's setting is more than a mere backdrop for the six intersecting stories of the very different characters who work there: it's also a commentary on the modern world of work.

Sonia is a single mother who does shifts on the processing line and longs for a position in the factory administration. Anna's career as an engineer depends on optimising the efficiency of the line. Managing director Merkhausen is obsessed with Poland because of his grandmother's heritage – a passion matched only by his zealous efficiency. In unusual emails to the factory workers, he prays for economic prosperity and tells the slaughterhouse manager not to lose sight of the figures or the staff. This absurd image sets the novel's tone early on and demonstrates that religion is being used in the factory to sanitise the exploitation of the factory workers.

Justyna is a young Polish worker at the plant who starts chatting online with Merkhausen: this eventually leads to his emotional unravelling. Nassim is a nearly-blind Afghan poet and refugee who gains local fame after an accident with a cyclist destroys his white stick. As a result, Merkhausen pledges him €1,000, but mainly as a PR ploy. Nassim is unsure he wants the publicity, but in the end concedes, as it is good for him to have the support of an executive for his asylum application. The last of the six characters is Roshi, a

translator who has come to the town to translate one of Nassim's poems.

Ebrahimi deftly deals with themes of economic disparity and the dehumanisation of modern work, as well as exploring the universal subjects of belonging and displacement. Although the characters' hopes and frustrations are very different, they run along similar lines: the difficulty of making ends meet and the pressures of exploitative working environments. In dry, unsentimental language, and employing corporate language and bureaucracy to comic effect, Ebrahimi gives each figure a spotlight by naming a chapter after them, then bringing their struggles to life in vivid, first-person narratives. The result is a polyphonic, multi-faceted portrait of life in a rural German town that could just as well be set in modern Britain or America.

Find out more:

<https://foreignrights.penguinrandomhouse.de/feathers-everywhere/978-3-630-87745-7>

about the author



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Nava Ebrahimi was born in Tehran in 1978 and is one of Austrian literature's most exciting new voices. She won the Ingeborg Bachmann Prize in 2021, and her novel *Sechzehn Wörter* (Sixteen words) won the Austrian Book Prize and the Morgenstern Prize. After studying Journalism and Economics in Cologne, she worked as an editor at Financial Times Deutschland and at the Cologne-based Stadtrevue. She has been shortlisted for the Open Mike debut prize, and has attended the Bavarian Academy of Writing. Alongside her novels, she also writes a column for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

Previous work: *Sechzehn Wörter*, btb (2017); *Das Paradies meines Nachbarn*, btb (2020)

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