



by Maike Wetzel
Schöffling & Co.
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Fiction

Floating Bridges *Schwebende Brücken*

review

Floating Bridges is a work of auto-fiction, recounting the sudden death of Maike Wetzel's husband in a boating accident. The narrative is raw and authentic, as the author navigates the depths of love, grief, and motherhood, while offering an intimate, intense portrait of her marriage.

The novel begins with the narrator seated on a picnic blanket beside a lake with her two children aged one-and-a-half and seven. It is a vibrant summer day, and her husband, accompanied by his brother, sets off on a trip across the lake on his small sailing boat. Wetzel's husband was given the boat by his family and friends as a fiftieth birthday present. On the fateful day in June 2018, he encounters strong winds that lead the vessel to capsize. It is the couple's seven-year-old son who raises the alarm. Despite his attempts to swim back to shore, the husband tragically drowns. His brother is rescued.

Written in concise chapters, the narrative focus alternates between the harrowing incident on the lake and its aftermath, while also exploring earlier years when the couple meet and start a family. The reader learns about the sequence of events during the accident via excerpts from newspaper reports.

Floating Bridges depicts the narrator's journey in coping with her husband's death. There are many poignant moments, such as the funeral, the process of clearing out his belongings, visiting the bank to

make changes to their joint account, group therapy sessions, and interactions with Kindergarten teachers and other parents during children's birthday parties. Throughout these experiences, the narrator's emotions oscillate between private grief and her composed public façade.

Wetzel writes in a sensitive and nuanced manner that enables her to skilfully paint vivid pictures and craft immersive atmospheres. As an author, she delves deep into the thoughts and emotions of her characters, authentically conveying their inner thoughts, which allows the reader to empathise with the protagonists.

The novel carries a profound emotional weight, evoking a sense of deep sadness while gracefully avoiding any trace of self-pity or despair. As the narrative unfolds, a comforting resolution emerges, offering solace to both the author and the reader. Wetzel's linguistic precision is striking, as is her raw honesty. The content is relevant and written in the tradition of Joan Didion, Joyce Carol Oates, and Ocean Vuong.

Find out more:

<https://www.schoeffling.de/foreignrights/maike-wetzel/floating-bridges>

press quotes

A profoundly moving book. The word 'autofiction' does not at all do the work justice. What we are reading is the spiritual and literary examination of a terrible misfortune. As if out of the blue, a catastrophe shatters a life—and then, broken, it is pieced back together again and goes on. I am tremendously impressed with how Maike Wetzel tells this story.

Daniel Kehlmann

Maike Wetzel paints an unsparingly honest and affecting portrait of grief without a hint of self-pity.

Alexandra Roesch

about the author



Maïke Wetzel was born in 1974 and works as a writer and screenwriter in Berlin. She studied at the Munich Film School and in the UK. Her debut novel, *Elly*, won the Robert Gernhardt Prize and the Martha Saalfeld Prize. Her short stories have been translated into numerous languages and received multiple awards.

Previous works: *Elly*, Schöffling & Co. (2018) ; *Entfernte Geliebte*, Schöffling & Co. (2019).

Previous translations: *Elly*, Scribe (2020).

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