



by Jackie Thomae
Claassen
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Fiction

Happiness *Glück*

review

In her third novel, award-winning author Jackie Thomae explores the topic of unrealised motherhood, taking as her protagonists a group of thirty-something women who all variously struggle with not having children. Known for her socially aware novels, character-led plots and subtle use of humour, *Glück* is a worthy successor to the German Book Prize-nominated and recently translated *Brothers*.

As she approaches her forties, radio host Marie-Claire Sturm enjoys a successful and largely happy life in Berlin. Despite her good job, health and apartment, she is preoccupied with her unfulfilled wish to have children and regrets the two abortions she had when she was younger. Through work, Marie-Claire meets Anahita Martini, a rising politician in a similar situation; both women feel alone and pressured by social expectations.

Later, they almost meet again, when both sign up to attend a retreat in Greece for childless women. Maren, the organiser, has turned this difficult experience into a lucrative business model, extracting large sums of money from women looking to undergo a spiritual journey. Neither Marie-Claire nor Anahita is convinced – Anahita ends up not going – but Maren is surprised to learn that even the occasional man will buy in to what she is offering.

Marie-Claire and Anahita next encounter each other in the waiting room of their gynaecologist, Dr Nonnenmacher. Against the backdrop

of her perfect-seeming life (complete with husband and children), the doctor offers women an expensive pill that may prolong their fertility. The pill is marketed as creating more equality between men and women, allowing the latter to have careers but also eventually children.

Gradually, both Marie-Claire and Anahita move through their struggle – the former with a child, the latter without. The novel's epilogue is narrated by Marie-Claire's toddler, and is one of the many chapters offering a perspective from another woman, including Maren, the gynaecologist, Marie-Claire's sister, and a stay-at-home mum. The braiding of narratives provides a sense of collectivity and tells a powerful story about female fertility.

With well-developed characters and a nuanced structure, intriguing glances into the future and narrative quirks that subvert expectations, Jackie Thomae once again proves herself a consummate storyteller and observer of social issues.

Find out more:

<https://www.ullstein.de/werke/glueck/hardcover/9783546100465>

press quotes

'Soberingly honest and exceedingly sensitive.'

Die Zeit

'An immensely well-observed, profoundly funny and almost unbearably true novel.'

Harper's Bazaar

'Jackie Thomae's art consists in creating great art without it feeling like great art. An ambitious novel that wears its ambition lightly.'

Der Spiegel

about the author



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Jackie Thomae is a journalist and television author. Her debut novel 'Momente der Klarheit' was published in 2015. Her second novel, 'Brüder', was shortlisted for the 2019 German Book Prize and won the 2020 Düsseldorf Literature Prize. She lives in Berlin.

Previous works: Momente der Klarheit, Hanser Berlin (2025); Brüder, Hanser Berlin (2019).

Previous works translated into English: Brothers, DAS Edition (2024, translated by Ruth Ahmedzai Kemp).

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