



by Kathrin Röggla

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Fiction

🏆 Longlisted for the
German Book Prize 2023

Ongoing Trial

Laufendes Verfahren

review

Winner of the prestigious Heinrich Böll Prize and longlisted for the German Book Prize, *Laufendes Verfahren* is a significant new novel from Austrian author Kathrin Röggla. Acclaimed for her unflinching interrogations of socio-political themes, she here uses a distinctive narrative perspective to examine democracy and justice in the context of the NSU trial, an event that has gone largely unexplored in contemporary literature.

Running from May 2013 to July 2018, the National Socialist Underground trial was one of the longest and most expensive court cases in German history. Not only did it result in the imprisonment of Beate Zschäpe and four helpers for the racially motivated murders of ten people, it also highlighted institutionalised racism in the German police force, which had ruled out Neo-Nazis as suspects in the investigation and instead focused on those with Turkish backgrounds. Many of the victims' families and members of the public were critical of the trial for not going far enough, a line that Röggla deftly explores in this intelligent literary novel.

Steering clear of melodrama but written instead in cool, sharp prose, *Laufendes Verfahren* focuses entirely on the court proceedings as seen by a first-person-plural narrator. This unusual perspective assumes some prior knowledge on the reader's part, but allows us to become one with the "we" watching the trial from the public gallery. We thus sit alongside a vivid cast of characters, including a political

blogger, an anti-fascist grandmother, a woman from the Turkish embassy, the courtroom “grandpa” and more. Short, vignette-like sections lay out the different phases of the trial, from witness statements to concluding remarks, in a condensed narrative that takes on a more lyrical, philosophical tone as proceedings draw to a close.

As the title suggests, Rögglä is concerned not just with the trial itself but its impact on Germany at the time of its conclusion and beyond. Refusing to sensationalise the NSU, she concentrates on the trial’s ramifications and the meaning of “we” – what ingrained racism does to a society, and how that same society can function as an overseer of justice and democracy. Raising critical questions about political and personal responsibility, the role of our courts and the very real spectre of Neo-Nazism, *Laufendes Verfahren* is a challenging, considered novel in which every word counts.

Find out more:

<https://www.fischerverlage.de/verlag/rights/book/kathrin-roeggla-laufendes-verfahren-9783103971552>

press quotes

A moral picture of society and justice [...] Kathrin Rögglä has put the rule of law and its limitations not in a nutshell, but in a novel.

Andreas Platthaus, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

about the author

Kathrin Rögglä was born in Salzburg in 1971 and now lives in Berlin. She writes prose and drama and develops radio plays. Her books have won her numerous awards, including the Italo Svevo Prize, the Anton Wildgans Prize and the Arthur Schnitzler Prize. *Wir schlafen nicht* (We Never Sleep, translated by Rebecca Thomas) was awarded the Southwest Broadcasters Best Seller List Prize and the Bruno Kreisky Prize for political literature. She has published a number of works with Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag: *Niemand lacht rückwärts* [No-one laughs backwards], *Abrauschen* [Rushing off], *Irres Wetter* [Mad weather], *really ground zero*, *wir schlafen nicht* [We Never

Sleep] (2006) and the prose collection die alarmbereiten [On the alert] (2012), which won the Franz Hessel Prize. A collection of essays and plays entitled besser wäre: keine [It would be better if no-one came] was published in spring 2013.

Previous works: Niemand lacht rückwärts, Residenz-Verlag (1995); Abrauschen, Residenz-Verlag (1997); Irres Wetter, Residenz-Verlag (2000); really ground zero. 11. september und folgendes, S. Fischer (2001); fake reports, S. Fischer (2002); wir schlafen nicht, S. Fischer (2004); die alarmbereiten, S. Fischer (2010); Nachtsendung: Unheimliche Geschichten, S. Fischer (2016); Der Elefant im Raum, Akademie der Künste (2019).

Previous translations: We Never Sleep, Ariadne Press (2009).

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