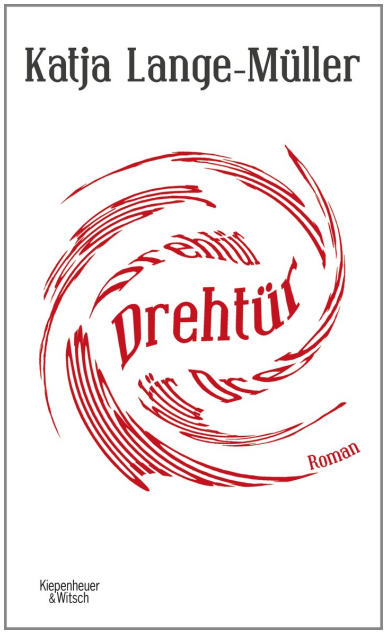


by
Kiepenheuer & Witsch
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Revolving Door

Drehtür

review

Katja Lange-Müller's new novel is a structurally fascinating portrait of a woman contemplating the purpose of life.

Asta Arnold has arrived back in her native land, but she has never felt quite as out of place as she does at this moment. She has spent over two decades working as a nurse in far-flung places across the globe, only to be somewhat unceremoniously pushed into quasi-retirement. After all these years, Asta has nothing and no one to come home to. Troubled by the future, haunted by the past, she finds herself smoking cigarette after cigarette outside the arrivals area of Munich airport.

As so often in Lange-Müller's work, the narrator in *Revolving Door* shares some elements of her own biography, especially her youth spent in the GDR. *Revolving Door* is a novel of beginnings and endings that takes place entirely within a few feet of the doors that usher travellers in and out of the airport. As Asta observes other passengers she dwells on her memories. These take us around the world, from Nicaragua to India to Mongolia, and Asta has to confront her own burning insecurities. Was her life's work useful after all? Can she be a fully formed person without her profession? With each cigarette, Lange-Müller's cranky, authentic protagonist digs deeper into past episodes of her life – and circles around the question of how we can help, and what risks helping entails.

Lange-Müller creates a masterfully complex construct of layers from the very beginning. Asta's airport limbo sets the stage for a stream of

consciousness fuelled by anxiety and nicotine. This only intensifies as Lange-Müller stacks several subplots together like a Russian nesting doll: a passer-by reminds Asta of a former colleague, which in turn reminds her of the story this colleague once told her about a trip to the Frankfurt Book Fair. This multiplicity of narrative strands results in compelling, fully-formed short stories nestled within several other stories in a structure reminiscent of Manuel Puig's *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. This latest novel confirms the author's place amongst the best authors writing in German today.

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