



by Martina Clavadetscher
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Fiction

The Horror of Others

Die Schrecken der Anderen

review

At the beginning of this multi-layered novel, a body is found in a remote, frozen Swiss lake. The gruesome discovery piques the interest of a local archivist called Schibig, commissioned by local police investigators, and elderly Rosa, whose interests remain opaque at first. Their amateur sleuthing is juxtaposed with that of property developer Kern, who has grown rich on the proceeds of his grandfather's collaboration with the Nazis, and whose tyrannical, bedridden mother remains devoted to the cause. She is keen for her son to become chair of the local branch of a neo-Nazi secret society and to produce an heir, but he fails on both counts. His wife Hanna, meanwhile, is bored and frustrated and has resorted to using dating apps to try and get pregnant. Kern follows Hanna to a certain McGuffin's house: although we do not find out what happens there, McGuffin turns out to be the name of the dead man in the ice. Meanwhile, Schibig and Rosa trail some local youths, who seem to be responsible for a spate of racist attacks. As the threads of the two separate strands become ever more intertwined, Rosa gatecrashes a meeting held by the neo-Nazi society, posing as a sponsor. The storylines culminate at a spring fair to unveil a memorial to the Swiss Holocaust victims, at which a bomb explodes, presumably having been planted by the secret society. In the end, justice triumphs, with Kern and Hanna meeting their end in a hot-air balloon accident and Kern's tyrannical mother dying, foiling her attempt to donate her extensive wealth to the secret society. Rosa has the last word,

implying that her mission is far from ended.

While the narrative works on the level of a detective thriller, with complex arcs, cliffhanger chapter endings, and a final dramatic conclusion, it also addresses uncomfortable truths about Switzerland's supposed neutrality during WWII and the dangers of history repeating itself. Award-winning Martina Clavadetscher (Swiss Book Prize 2021) deftly manages the story's inherent symbolism – such as the body rising to the surface of the ice like the buried past. By providing insights into her characters' behaviour, she resists any black-and-white morality. Thanks to her literary inventiveness, we are at once in the thick of the human world and above it, looking down with a bird's eye view at the endless cycle of human folly.

Find out more:

<https://www.chbeck.de/clavadetscher-schrecken/product/38775167>

press quotes

Sophisticated, unsettling, fascinating

GONG, Buchtipp

'The Horrors of Others' deals with big questions: For how long does long-forgotten history spill over into the present?

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung Bücherpodcast, Fridtjof Küchemann

Clavadetscher skilfully blends a variety of literary forms, plays with sound and rhythm, and captivates readers with her precise yet highly poetic language.

Luzia Stettler, SRF

about the author

Martina Clavadetscher is a writer and playwright. After studying

German literature, linguistics and philosophy, she worked for various German-language theatres. Her previous novel was awarded the 2021 Swiss Book Prize.

Previous work: 'Die Erfindung des Ungehorsams' (2021) won the Swiss Book Prize in 2021.

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