



by Anne Rabe
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Non-Fiction

The M Word: Against the Contempt of Morality

Das M-Wort. Gegen die Verachtung der Moral

review

In this riveting snapshot of the political shift to the right in Germany, presented in the engaging voice of an activist writer, Anne Rabe intersperses an analysis of current-day morality with diary excerpts ranging from early January to mid-April 2025, and considers the challenges presented by recent cultural changes as well as individually actionable solutions.

Spanning seven chapters, 'The M-Word' addresses the heightened importance of moral thought and action in the wake of the January 2025 elections, in which far-right extremists won a significant portion of parliamentary seats for the first time since the founding of the Federal Republic of Germany. The epigraph, from a lesser-known work by Adorno, sets the stage, and Rabe begins by asking whether we can afford to live in a world where morality – or, perhaps, more accurately, moral thought – is not a key part of public discourse. In one example of several fascinating histories, Rabe highlights Swedish children's author Astrid Lindgren's fortitude in speaking out about violence against children in a way that changed the laws in Germany and beyond.

In further chapters, Rabe's analysis crosses topics, drawing unexpected connections. Some of the themes she covers include:

religion and faith; democracy and autocracy; economic inequality; (im)migration and climate policy; rising right-wing radicalisation; how history lives on in individuals and families after regimes fall; the challenge of maintaining friendships across political and moral differences; how violence against women leads to contagious fear across a society; and the impact of shame, repression, disengagement, pop culture on our ability to coexist respectfully. She deploys powerful events, ranging from the recent Gisèle Pelicot case in France to the internationally renowned film *Der Untergang* to one of her children casually asking, over breakfast, whether boys can grow up to become Chancellor of Germany. In doing so, she helps us both understand and question the nature of our membership of society, and how we can change it. Rabe's interpolation of diary excerpts in portions of her essay is gut-wrenching amid war and so much else, but also delightfully effective at keeping us turning the pages.

This book is an approachable and rigorous documentation of current and past events, written in lucid prose. Rabe succeeds in weaving both German and international phenomena together in a way that has wide appeal.

Find out more:

<https://www.klett-cotta.de/produkt/anne-rabe-das-m-wort-9783608966930-t-9132>

about the author



Anne Rabe
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Anne Rabe, born in 1986, is an award-winning playwright, screenwriter, and essayist. She was part of the acclaimed TV series 'Warten auf'n Bus' and is known for her essays and lectures about confronting East Germany's past. She lives in Berlin. Her debut novel, 'The Possibility of Happiness', became a bestseller and was shortlisted for the German Book Prize.

Previous work: *Die Möglichkeit von Glück*, Klett-Cotta (2023)

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