by Anne Rabe
Klett-Cotta
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Fiction

🏆 Finalist German Book Prize 2023

🏆 Top 20 SPIEGEL bestseller list

🏆 Shortlist »ASPEKTE« Debut Prize 2023

🏆 More than 50,000 copies sold to date in Germany alone

The English language translation rights to the book have sold.

This page will be updated

The Possibility of Happiness

Die Möglichkeit von Glück

review

Anne Rabe's impressive debut novel is a SPIEGEL bestseller, was shortlisted for both the 2023 German Book Prize and the Aspekte Debut Prize, and continues to receive widespread critical acclaim.

'The Possibility of Happiness' follows a woman, Stine, who was born at the same time and place as the author: in Wismar, a small town on the Baltic coast in East Germany, in 1986. Too young consciously to remember much about the time before German reunification, Stine's questions about that time are consistently met with silence. Stine's past, including her family's involvement with and reluctance to let go of the East German regime, are explored over the course of around fifty achronological fragments, in what forms an extended meditation on generational trauma.

The first-person narrative has two main strands – firstly, Stine as a daughter, choosing to sever ties with her abusive mother, and to raise her own daughter, Klara, away from the family home; and secondly, Stine's life as a writer, investigating the true story of her grandfather Paul's career under National Socialism and then the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED). These plotlines are interspersed with poetry and journalistic reflections on wide-ranging aspects of East German society, from the aftermath of 1989 to the present day.

Rabe writes from a fresh and original perspective, creating well-developed, believable characters, and never shying away from moral

once an English language translation is published.

complexity. The novel's fragmentary structure is used very effectively, resulting in a mounting sense of tension throughout the narrative. In one profoundly shocking episode, the protagonist and her brother are made to take an excruciatingly hot bath by their abusive mother. The nature of the maternal abuse has for the most part only been hinted at until this point in the novel, so this sequence comes as a violent and deeply distressing revelation – one that haunts the reader long after they have finished reading the book.

Rabe's award-winning talents as a playwright, scriptwriter and essayist are brought to bear in this extraordinary work of literature. 'The Possibility of Happiness' is a unique literary achievement, combining different forms of writing to form a nuanced and unsettling work that is as erudite as it is compelling.

Rights sold: Turkey, Livera

Find out more here:
https://www.klett-cotta.de/produkt/anne-rabe-die-moeglichkeit-von-glueck-9783608984637-t-5465

press quotes

The book of the hour: Anne Rabe intertwines the personal with the broader context, connecting her own family history through a sociogram of the post-reunification years in East Germany. This novel delves into the infiltration of violence into every aspect of society during the tumultuous 20th century, showing that even at the zenith of society's historical potential, the shackles of violence could not be cast aside.

Ronald Düker, DIE ZEIT, 19.10.2023

It's astonishing what this montage of research, literary quotes, dreams, and memories, and the interplay of internal and external dialogue, brings into focus. Anne Rabe's research transcends mere erudition; the emerging picture fractures into ever more minute pieces, and within this fragmentation lies its profound

veracity.' 'The Dark Heart of the GDR

Stefan Kister, Stuttgarter Zeitung, 24.10.2023

The Possibility of Happiness' intertwines memoir, family research, and essay. Anne Rabe skillfully interweaves the personal aspects of family with social analysis. A powerful and moving work that transforms the fragmentation of a traumatized self into a literary form.

WDR 5, 13.10.2023

Anne Rabe has written an intriguing novel about experiences of violence in the GDR and how they are passed down through generations. (…) It explores the overt and covert brutalities within families and the state, questioning their continued existence…

Welt am Sonntag

'The Possibility of Happiness' explains why East Germany's history of violence since reunification has differed from West Germany's. (…) Anne Rabe postulates a range of causes, which she vividly illustrates through Stine's family history, something a sociological study could not achieve…

Andreas Platthaus, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, FAZ

Rabe's debut is powerful. Many of the experiences described are ones she herself had to endure as a teenager. And so, while it says 'novel' on the cover, 'The Possibility of Happiness' is primarily an analysis of familial structures, as they sometimes were in the GDR, and a critique of the system.

Simone Schmollack, taz

Anne Rabe allows us to experience the pain of coming to terms with the past (and) offers an answer to the question of how to break the cycle of violence: by having the courage to ask questions.

RBB Kultur, German radio station

about the author

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Anne Rabe was born in 1986. She is a multiple award-winning playwright, scriptwriter and essayist and served as a scriptwriter on the Grimme-award-winning series Warten auf'n Bus. Through her work as an essayist and speaker over the years, she has also played a major role in East Germany's collective attempt to come to terms with its past. She lives in Berlin. 'The Possibility of Happiness' is her first novel.

Find out more: https://www.anne-rabe.de/

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