

Natascha Wodin

SHE CAME FROM MARIUPOL

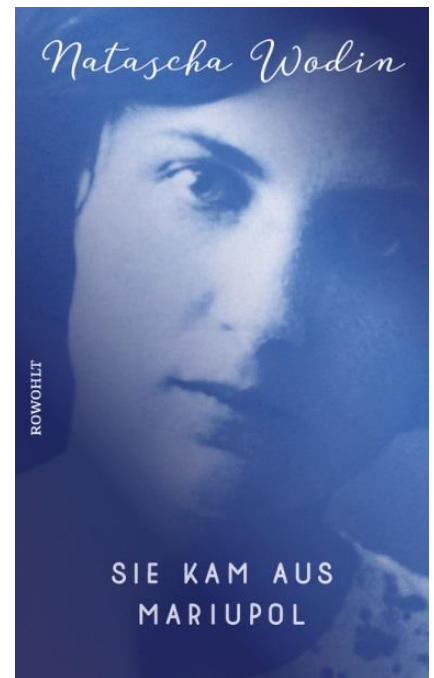
Rowohlt, fiction

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A forgotten voice rediscovered.

"If you'd seen what I've seen..." Natascha Wodin heard this sentence many times in her early childhood, yet her mother took her memories with her to the grave. Natascha was ten years old when she died; all the little girl knew was that they were detritus, human debris left over from the war. Why had they lived in a camp for 'Displaced Persons'? Where did her mother come from? What had she experienced? Decades later, the 'black box' of her own past began to open slightly, with Wodin gaining more and more insights as time progressed.

She Came From Mariupol is an exceptional book that details a forensic search for the truth. Here, Wodin investigates the past of her Ukrainian mother, who grew up in the harbour city of Mariupol and was forcibly removed in 1943 to Germany as an "Eastern worker" along with her husband. This work describes in absorbing and at times harrowing detail a topic seen by many as a footnote to history, a grim appendix to the Holocaust: the use of forced labour in the Third Reich. Her mother had already experienced the downfall of her aristocratic family during Stalin's regime of terror and was forced to board a German ship of unknown destination. Through this book, she steps forward from anonymity, given an identity by her own daughter. This compelling narrative enables Natascha Wodin to speak tenderly of her "poor little mother who went mad", and whose persona becomes tangible for the reader. The retelling of her story also allows Wodin to show us the true extent of her loss.



This is a darkly radiant account of one person's fate, developing momentous emotive power; its subject serves as a proxy for the fate of millions.

"This book promises to fill an enormous literary gap." *Wolfgang Schneider, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*

"Empathy can only be evoked for individual people. Novelists know this, and Natascha Wodin knows it. It is only through individual accounts, however fragmented they may be, that one can describe how historical events impact a person's biography and how radically current events shape people's lives." *Sigrid Löffler in praise of Natascha Wodin while awarding her the 2015 Alfred Döblin Prize*

> *She Came From Mariupol* is nothing short of a major literary event.



NATASCHA WODIN was born in the Bavarian town of Fürth in 1945 to parents who had been used as forced labour. She grew up in the so-called DP camps for displaced persons, and after the early death of her mother was raised in a Catholic home for girls. She then worked as a telephone operator and stenographer before training as an interpreter in the early 1970s. She began translating literary works from Russian into German and spent part of her working life in Moscow. Her writing career began in 1981, and she has since received many accolades for her work. She was married to the novelist Wolfgang Hilbig, experiences which she recounts in her major work, *Nachtgeschwister*. She lives in Berlin and Mecklenburg.