



by Urs Widmer
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Fiction
prohelvetia

Pro Helvetia supported the
English language translation
of this book.

Mr Adamson

Herr Adamson

review

‘When I first met Herr Adamson I was eight years old’: it is into that childhood world of imagination and excitement that the grand old man of Swiss letters, Urs Widmer, leads his willing and charmed reader. The pages thrum with warmth and gentle humour as we follow the young boy into the deserted garden of a nearby villa. It’s the perfect place to be a Red Indian Chief, and to play hide and seek with a new playmate who is sitting on a garden bench one summer’s day. The little boy is drawn instantly to this old man who doesn’t talk down to him and instead encourages his flights of fancy. The boy looks forward to the secret encounters and he grows fond of the old man: together they visit the house he had lived in before the bombs fell. It is only when the boy trips and is about to fall against Herr Adamson, only to fall right through him, that he realises: the old man is dead, a ghost figure, and his guide to the kingdom of the dead when his own hour has come. Everyone has a guide, a person who dies at the very instant he or she is born – though surely not always as unalarmingly and likably as Herr Adamson, our narrator muses, suddenly feeling his age and catching a glimpse of the familiar figure.

press quotes

Whimsical, wise, kind, amusing, Urs Widmer would enrich the shelves of Britain's own bookshops, too. 'One of the best representatives of Swiss literature.' – *Le Monde, Paris*

about the author

Urs Widmer was born in Basel in 1938 and studied German, Romance languages and literature, and history in Basel, Montpellier and Paris. After completing his doctorate in 1966 he worked for Walter Verlag and Suhrkamp, before co-founding 'Verlag der Autoren' in 1969, a publishing house which is owned by the authors themselves and focuses on texts related to the performing arts. Shortly afterwards, he wrote his first book, *Alois*. He now lives and works in Zurich as a writer.

Previous works include:

Der blaue Siphon (1992); *Im Kongo* (1996); *Der Geliebte der Mutter* (2000); *Das Buch des Vaters* (2004) – all Diogenes.

Translated editions of previous works have been published in, amongst others:

Albanian, Arabic, Bulgarian, Chinese, Danish, Estonian, French, Georgian, Hebrew, Italian, Catalan, Korean, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Dutch, Polish, Portuguese, Rumanian, Russian, Slovakian, Slovenian, Spanish, Czech, Turkish, and Hungarian. His work has been translated into 26 languages.

rights information

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Diogenes Verlag was founded in Zurich in 1952 by Daniel Keel and Rudolf C. Bettschart. One of the leading international publishing houses, it numbers among its authors Alfred Andersch, Friedrich

Dürrenmatt, Patricia Highsmith, Donna Leon, Bernhard Schlink and Patrick Süskind. Children's authors include Tatjana Hauptmann, Ute Krause, Karl Friedrich Wächter and Tomi Ungerer.