



by Leta Semadeni
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Fiction

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Tamangur *Tamangur*

review

Set in an Alpine village, *Tamangur* depicts the grief experienced by a young child and her grandmother following the deaths of the child's brother and grandfather. With its creative imagery and spare prose, Leta Semadeni's novel explores the intersection between the childlike and the surreal.

A young child lives with her grandmother in a small Alpine village. Both characters remain unnamed as we experience their lives through short, sparsely told yet striking episodes. The child's grandfather has gone away to the hunters' paradise of Tamangur. As the book continues we meet the village's other inhabitants through the child's eyes. There is the wildly entertaining Elsa and her ne'er-do-well boyfriend, Elvis Presley; the village tailor, who steals other people's memories and repeats them as her own; and the beloved grandfather, whom the grandmother and child are both mourning.

The scenes in the present are interspersed with flashbacks as well as the child's dreams, in which she is often faced with the horrifying moment of losing her little brother to the river, which carries him away towards the Black Sea. The vignettes provide a sense both of village life and the reality behind the disturbing images: the grandmother's grief, and her anger that her beloved husband should leave her, even in death; and the young girl's guilt that she was responsible for her brother's death when he drowned in the river. The novel portrays the competing emotions of grief and guilt within the family,

counterbalancing them with the warmth of the love between grandmother and grandchild.

At the end of the book the grandmother is lying in a hospital bed and her granddaughter is now a young woman. The grandmother declares that her 'soul is still young,' and shortly thereafter goes to Tamangur, by which we understand that she dies. The final scene lays bare the metaphor of the novel's title, while emphasising the importance of imagination for the child in dealing with her grief.

Tamangur is a hugely rewarding novel, remarkable for its evocative setting, crisp prose, and whimsical, unsettling imagery, perfectly poised between the comic and the tragic.

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Find out more: <https://rotpunktverlag.ch/buecher/tamangur>

press quotes

Elemental, powerful, serious, honest. And above all, deeply poetic. [...] A phenomenal book.

Alexander Kluy, Buchkultur

Tamangur – an amazing book about life and love.

Monique Schwitter, Bayerischer Rundfunk

Semadeni's beautiful, glancing prose is reminiscent of Christine Schutt, and her portrayal of family grief is both humorous and haunting.

Vijay Khurana, NBG Reader

about the author



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Leta Semadeni was born in Scuol (Switzerland) in 1944 and studied languages at the University of Zurich. She taught at various schools in Zurich and the Engadin valley, and worked in Latin America, Paris, Zug, Berlin and New York. In 2005 she went freelance, and now lives and works in Lavin. She primarily writes poetry in Romansh or German, which she translates into the other language herself. She has received numerous awards, including the Graubünden Canton Literary Prize and the Swiss Schiller Foundation Prize in 2011. Her first novel, *Tamangur*, won a Swiss Literature Prize in 2016. This was followed in 2017 by the Graubünden Cultural Award for her life's work and in 2023 by Switzerland's most prestigious literary award, the Grand Prix for Literature.

Previous works: *Monolog per Anastasia / Monolog für Anastasia. Poesias / Gedichte, Nimrod* (2001); *Poesias da chadafö / Küchenedichte. Poesias / Gedichte, Uniun dals Grischs* (2006); *In mia vita da vuolp / In meinem Leben als Fuchs. Poesias / Gedichte, Chasa Editura Rumantscha* (2010).