



by Klaus Merz
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Fiction

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The Argentinian

Der Argentinier

review

Somerset Maugham once asked whether it was possible for an author to write about goodness, sheer goodness. Klaus Merz has made a brave shot at doing so in this absorbing and thought-provoking novella, which looks back on the life of one very good man, the narrator's grandfather Johann, who went in his youth to South America to experience life on the pampas and thereafter returned to his village in Switzerland to marry the girl he loved and spend the rest of his life contentedly teaching generations of village schoolchildren.

The grandfather's life in Argentina is romantically described and concludes, through a letter found after his death, with an account of his brief but passionate romance with a girl called Mercedes, who teaches him to dance the tango and helps him to grow up, but by whom he has a daughter he is destined never to see. Equally well evoked is the nightmare of the Europe he left in search of a better life. And backing all this are the stories his pupils told about him in the years after illness had caused his return, including his legend as a virtuoso tango dancer.

A beguiling, appealing tale on all counts.

press quotes

'Klaus Merz creates a many-layered tapestry ... full of poetry.' – Christine Lötscher, *Buchjournal*

'The poetic prose of Klaus Merz has always surprised us, but the greatest surprise of all is that it never fails to do so.' – Wilhelm Hindemith, *SWR*

about the author

Klaus Merz, both storyteller and poet, was born in Aarau, Switzerland, in 1945 and now lives in the Swiss town of Unterkulm. Among the awards he has won are the Solothurn Literature Prize in 1996, the Hermann Hesse Literature Prize in 1997 and the Prix Littéraire Lipp in 1999.

Previous works include:

Am Fuß des Kamels (1994); *Kurze Durchsage* (1995); *Jakob schläft* (1997, a novel now in its fifth edition, and published in four other languages); *Kommen Sie mit mir ans Meer, Fräulein?* (1998); *Priskas Miniaturen* (2005); *Der gestillte Blick* (2007) – all with Haymon.

Jakob schläft has been published in French, Italian, Polish and Russian editions.

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Haymon Verlag

Tel: +43 512 576300

Email: anita.winkler@haymonverlag.at

Contact: Anita Winkler

www.haymonverlag.at

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