

Alain Claude Sulzer

Writer - Fiction

Alain Claude Sulzer was born in Basel in 1953. Alongside his translations from French into German, he has published eight books since 1983 (novels and stories). He won the highly acclaimed Prix Medicis Etranger and the Prix des Auditeurs de la Radio Suisse Romande for [A PERFECT WAITER](#), which is translated into ten languages.



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Publications

Non-Fiction

Publication Details	Notes
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**DIE JUGEND
IST EIN
FREMDES
LAND**

2015

Galiani

"The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there." J.P. Hartley
DIE JUGEND IST EIN FREMDES LAND is Sulzer's most intimate book. And yet, Switzerland of the 1950s and 60s emerges in these generous recollections in three dimensions and technicolour. An all-round success. Neue Zuercher Zeitung.
DIE JUGEND IST EIN FREMDES LAND follows memory traces, pictures of family life in Switzerland in the 1960s, a suburban small-town Switzerland that feels indeed like a foreign country. Sulzer's descriptions are often ironic and with an advanced sense of the absurd, but also open, serious and moving. Often these memories are triggered by random everyday objects – a sofa, a television set, a memorable wallpaper. Sulzer thinks back on his first experiments on the typewriter and with alcohol, he recounts an attempted flight to Paris, an unexpected backstage encounter in the theatre, and other attempts to escape the stifling surroundings of his early years. But it's also very much a book about the process of memory, the very act of transforming the lived past into stories.
Following Sulzer on his memory trail, one ends up without fail in the terrain of one's own biography. Moving, highly entertaining and deeply sad – a mosaic of the past in which nostalgia and quiet dread lie close to each other.

Fiction

Publication Details	Notes
DOPPELEBEN 2022 Galiani	<p>DOPPELEBEN (DOUBLE LIVES) by Alain Claude Sulzer is an ambitious and original novel examining the fascinating lives of the Goncourt brothers with Alain's distinctive psychological insight and beautiful pared down prose.</p> <p>The Goncourt Journal, written by the now famous brothers Edmond and Jules de Goncourt, was an acid testimony of the French literary scene in the second half of the nineteenth century.</p> <p>With a compassionate sensitivity, Sulzer captures the slow decline of Jules, who contracted syphilis at the age of 20 in a brothel, and died of it aged 39. Aphasic and struggling in vain against his progressive memory loss, he tries to hide his distress from his brother so as not to alarm him, while Edmond downplays the situation. Edmond finally decides to continue the Journal they started together to keep their collaboration alive, as if by doing so he could prevent Jules from dying altogether.</p> <p>This fraternal love contrasts with the unconstrained love of Rose, their nanny and housekeeper, whose double life the brothers only discover with amazement after she dies. She had led a dual existence for years: devoted housekeeper by day, nymphomaniac by night. In love with a man whom she supports by stealing from the brothers, she turns to drink and eventually prostitution. After her death, the brothers are stunned to discover that they had shared the intimacies of their lives with someone they barely knew.</p>

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UNHALTBARE ZUSTAENDE (INTOLERABLE CONDITIONS) 2019 Galiani	SHORTLISTED FOR THE SCHWEIZER BUCHPREIS 2019 The year is 1969. Stettler, a man in late middle age, works as the creative director/window decorator of the biggest department store in the Swiss town he calls home. His work is his whole world and his pride - he has been in his position for thirty years. In his free time, he listens to classical music and thinks about how to decorate the Christmas display window. All is well until one day a new man is hired by the department store, a younger man, who is given the coveted Christmas window job, and generally threatens Stettler's position and Weltanschauung. Stettler's one distraction and consolation in this period of uncertainty is his growing passion for the pianist Lotte Zerbst whom he hears frequently on the radio. He knows little about her, but decides to write her a fan letter. She replies, and a tender restrained correspondence ensues. Lotte, the reader discovers, is just as alone as Stettler, and her professional persona hides a sad and traumatic past. Things come to a head when Lotte comes to Stettler's town to play a live concert - a unique opportunity for the two to meet in person - but Stettler, increasingly overcome by loneliness and unsettled by the societal changes all around him, has made plans of his own - something shocking and irreversible. An act of protest, liberation and self-realisation that nobody would have thought him capable of.
POSTSKRIPTUM 2015 Galiani	Only someone who loses everything becomes internally free. Lionel Kupfer, an avid film star of the early 1930s, must realize during a stay in Switzerland that he is unwanted as a Jew in Germany. The contract for his next film will be dissolved. Eduard, his lover, whose dangerous proximity to the new rulers is becoming more and more obvious, brings the bad news to him. Lionel Kupfer is forced to emigrate. Within a period of fifty years, we meet people of different origins, whose paths intersect, only to be torn apart again. But although they lose sight of each other, they do not forget each other.
AUS DEN FUGEN 2012 Galiani	A solo recital at the Berliner Philharmonie. Olsberg, a world-famous pianist, gets up in the middle of a piano sonata, leaves the concert hall without a word, never to return. This single act results in dramatic changes in the lives of various people present at this event - a Berlin socialite's soiree in honour of Olsberg is cancelled, a betrayed wife returns home from the concert too early to preserve her ignorance, a godmother learns more about her god-daughter than she had bargained for, a member of the catering staff decides that the general chaos might offer the perfect opportunity to upgrade his life, a businessman discovers that the call girl meant to accompany him to the Philharmonie is actually somebody from his past...'Aus den Fugen' shows us how the impulsive actions of a single person can reverberate and cause life-altering consequences for those who least suspect it.

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ZUR FALSCHEN ZEIT 2010 Galiani/Kiepenheuer	It is 1971. A seventeen year old boy is prompted by a picture of his father wearing an expensive Omega watch to wonder about the secrets his father kept before he committed suicide days after the boy's birth. Confronted with a wall of silence, the narrator decides to take matters into his own hands and to unearth his father's past, together with the missing watch.
PRIVATSTUNDEN 2009 Epoca	'In Alain Claude Sulzer's novels, the love can not be lived. In Private takes a passion to silence. ' Schweizer Illustrierte
A PERFECT WAITER 2008 Bloomsbury	The outwardly composed Swiss waiter Erneste is inwardly consumed by a deep, passionate love for the man he met thirty years ago. Sulzer's first novel to be translated into English moves between two time periods to tell the story of the doomed gay love affair.
ANNAS MASKE 2001 EPOCH	'[a] novel based on a careful investigation of historical facts, which are referenced to the tension-free tone of a report, but also fictional charge. The result is a faction novelistic prose narrative of considerable sophistication. ' Sandra Kluwe, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung