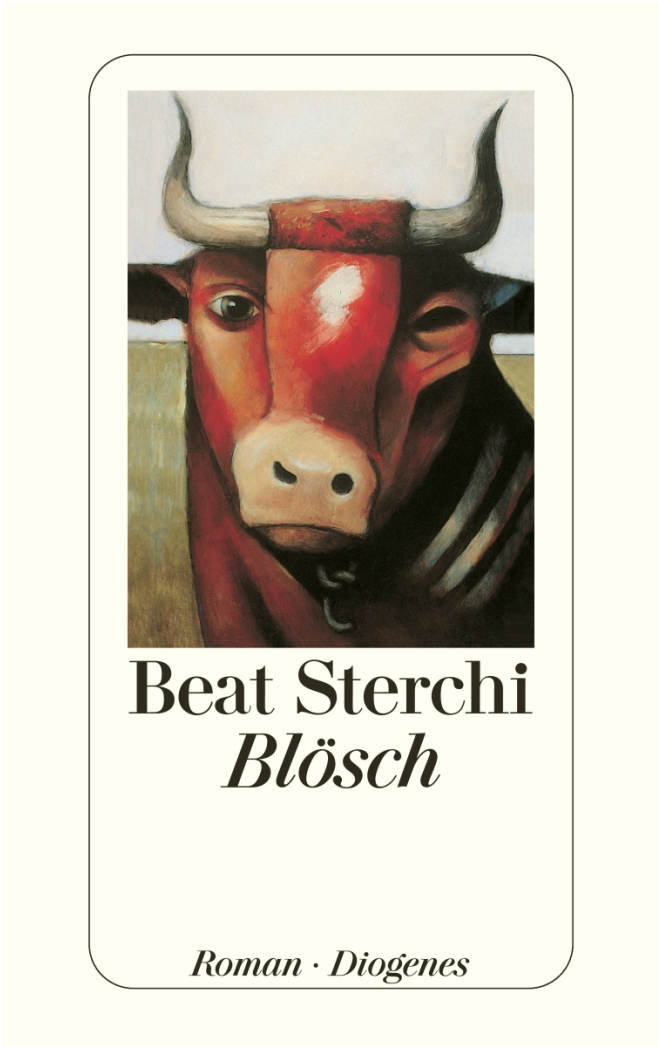
Diogenes

Book factsheet

Beat Sterchi
Cow

Published by Diogenes as *Blösch*
Original title: *Blösch*



›The Cow‹ is a magnificent novel, which happens to be about cows and dairy workers, but which transcends its immediate theme to become a powerful and moving piece of fiction about man, his work, and his food at the end of the twentieth century. Not since Herman Melville has an author so powerfully and intricately explored the life- and death– cycle of an animal preyed upon by man. From pasture to dairy to abattoir, Sterchi follows Blösch, the lead cow of farmer Knuchel's herd, describing in exquisite prose each detail – glorious and stomach-turning – of bovine existence.
At the same time Sterchi creates a modern-day Ahab named Ambrosio – a dark-skinned Spanish guest-worker in milk-white Switzerland, who is not pristine enough, according to the Swiss, to handle live cows, and who is thus relegated to cutting up dead ones. Starting with these two unlikely characters, Sterchi creates a monumental and important work of fiction about beast and men, about how they prey upon each other and upon themselves.

Contemporary Literature
440 pages
11.6 × 18.4 cm
February 1983

World rights are handled by Diogenes

Rights currently sold:
Dutch (Atlas-Contact)
English/world (Head of Zeus)
French (Zoé)
Serbian (Karpos)

Award

2018 ›Literaturpreis‹ Kanton Bern für *Aber gibt es keins*

Praise

Cow

»The irruption of Sterchi's *Cow* on our tame and anemic literary scene recalls nothing so much as the appearance of *The Tin Drum*« – Der Spiegel, Hamburg

»A savage, demonic work, but also a gentle, magically lyrical one.« – Die Zeit, Hamburg

»*Cow* is firm-fleshed, straight-backed, warm, impressive, like the large Swiss cattle it describes [. . .] an original, powerful, important novel, with a great ancient theme that is so modern and immediate as well.« – Sunday Telegraph

»*Cow* is extraordinary [. . .] it conveys a owerful tragi-comic sense of the reek and frenzy of the yard-workers world. The book is a kind of ›de profundis‹ of the cattle-sheds, a milker's epic.« – Seamus Heany / (Irish author)

»Beat Sterchi is a kind of prose Ted Hughes: the archaic and archetypal joys of the udder were never more joyfully or lengthily celebrated [. . .] Beat Sterchi's astonishing fiction never relents [. . .] *Cow* is a memorable and great fiction: hurt, and hurting, with the power for (one hopes) positive hurt.« – The Observer, London

»An important [. . .] stir-causing novel with a gentle, lyrical flavour.« – London Review of Books

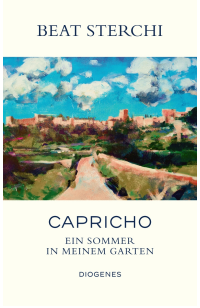
»The dignity of humans and animals is the focus of this debut by the Swiss writer, which was published ahead of its time in 1983.« – Pierre Deshusses / Le Monde, Paris

»A masterpiece of German language literature.« – Deutschlandradio Kultur, Berlin



Photo: © Franziska Rothenbühler

Beat Sterchi, born in Berne in 1949, moved to Canada in 1970 and studied English. From 1975 to 1977 he was a language teacher in Tegucigalpa (Honduras) and studied Latin American literature. Until 1982 he engaged in further studies in Canada and taught German and English in Montreal. Beat Sterchi now lives in Berne as a freelance writer.



Capricho
272 pages
2021