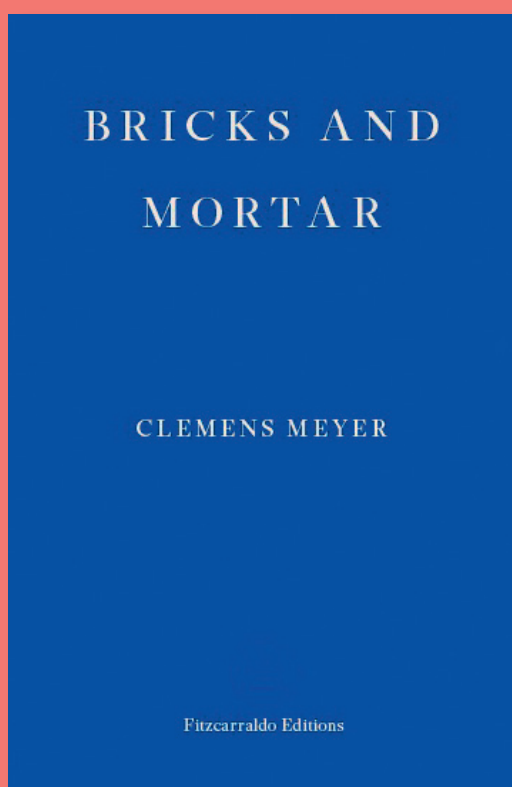




# Reader's Guide



Other novels by Clemens Meyer  
*All the Lights* (2011)

## Bricks and Mortar Clemens Meyer

Translated by Katy Derbyshire

Fitzcarraldo Editions

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### About the author

Clemens Meyer was born in 1977 in Halle, Germany. After high school he worked as a watchman, building worker and removal man. He studied creative writing at the German Literary Institute in Leipzig and was granted a scholarship by the Saxon Ministry of Science and Arts in 2002. His first novel, *Als wir träumten*, was a huge success and for his second book, *Die Nacht, die Lichter*, a collection of short stories, he was awarded the Leipzig Book Fair Prize in 2008. *Bricks and Mortar*, his latest novel, was shortlisted for the German Book Prize and was awarded the Bremer Literaturpreis 2014. Meyer lives in Leipzig.

### About the translator

Katy Derbyshire is originally from London (born in 1973) and has lived in Berlin for 20 years. She translates contemporary German writers including Inka Parei, Dorothee Elmiger, Simon Urban, Annett Gröschner and Christa Wolf. Her translation of Clemens Meyer's *Die Nacht, die Lichter* was published as *All the Lights* by And Other Stories in 2011. She occasionally teaches translation and also co-hosts a monthly translation lab and the bi-monthly Dead Ladies Show.

### About the book

*Bricks and Mortar* is the story of the sex trade in a big city in the former GDR, from just before 1989 to the present day, charting the development of the industry from absolute prohibition to full legality in the 20 years following the reunification of Germany. The focus is on the rise and fall of one man from football hooligan to large-scale landlord and service-provider for prostitutes to, ultimately, a man persecuted by those he once trusted. But we also hear other voices: many different women who work in prostitution, their clients, small-time gangsters, an ex-jockey searching for his drug-addict daughter, a businessman from the West, a girl forced into child prostitution, a detective, a pirate radio presenter...

### Discussion points

In *Bricks and Mortar* we meet many different women working in prostitution. The women involved are portrayed as active agents with individual voices of their own, rather than as helpless and faceless victims. How does this feed into discussions about the rights of women working in the sex industry?

How does Clemens Meyer's manipulation of time and fragmented storylines effect the overall experience of reading *Bricks and Mortar*?

'It's got lots of different voices, prostitutes, pimps, it's got people searching for people that they've lost, and so it's a real challenge for both the writer, Clemens Meyer, to evoke all of these different voices, but imagine the challenge for the translator...?' Preti Taneja, *Free Thinking*, BBC Radio 3. Preti Taneja mentions the challenge of capturing the different voices for both Clemens Meyer and the translator Katy Derbyshire, what other challenges might Katy have had in translating *Bricks and Mortar*?

'*Bricks and Mortar* is a movie waiting to be made. Its blunt humanity and cinematic energy are sustained through a daunting technical control, which complements the edgy artistry.' Eileen Battersby, *Irish Times*. Did this book have the same cinematic effect on you? If so, who can you see making this movie and playing the main characters?

### Themed reading

Alfred Döblin *Berlin Alexanderplatz*  
David Peace *Tokyo Year Zero*  
James Ellroy *Underworld USA Trilogy*  
Virginie Despentes *Apocalypse Baby*  
Thomas Pynchon *Inherent Vice*  
Roberto Bolaño *2666*  
Wolfgang Hilbig *The Sleep of the Righteous*