NEW BOOKS IN GERMAN

A SELECTION FROM AUSTRIA, GERMANY AND SWITZERLAND

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Children’s and Young Adults’ › History
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Dear Reader,

There are several ways of marking distinction in the book world, be it citing ‘critical acclaim’, tallying sales figures or listing literary awards. That third category is a particularly thorny one when it comes to the literature scene in Austria, Germany and Switzerland – the huge number of prizes and scholarships is testimony to a culture that sets great store by its writers, but it can also make it difficult to see the wood for the trees, to single out the exceptional writers. With our special focus on prizes in this issue, we hope to go some way to demystifying that scene.

Our introduction to some of the key awards for German-language literature provides international editors with a useful guide. More details are available on our website, where information about the various prizes and their winners is regularly updated. Meanwhile our article on ‘Prizing Translation’ looks at awards and other forms of support for literary translators. Here, emerging translator Alyson Coombes introduces NBG’s new ‘Opportunities for Translators’ database, which compiles information about all prizes, scholarships and residencies for those translating out of German. We also introduce a brand new prize for non-fiction translation, and of course this issue is full of reviews of new titles by award-winning authors.

One of the awards featured in our new database is the major UK prize for literary translation out of German: the Schlegel-Tieck Award. Named after the great Romantic writers and Shakespeare translators August Wilhelm Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck, the prize celebrates its fiftieth anniversary this year. The latest award went to stellar translator (and member of NBG’s editorial committee) Jamie Bulloch, for Birgit Vanderbeke’s The Mussel Feast; meanwhile, Anthea Bell (stellar translator and former member of NBG’s editorial committee) received a special commendation for her rendering of Eugen Ruge’s In Times of Fading Light. Anthea’s outstanding contribution to German literature was recognised earlier this year with the award of a different kind of prize – the German Cross of the Order of Merit, an equivalent to the British OBE (which she already holds for services to literature and translation).

Eugen Ruge’s novel was awarded the German Book Prize in 2011. That prize – ‘Germany’s Booker’ – celebrates its tenth anniversary this year, and here Sally-Ann Spencer looks back over those ten years, focusing on the winning novels’ journeys into other languages. NBG works in partnership with the German Book Prize to showcase German literary talent to an international readership, and the 2014 winner provides a perfect example of this relationship: Lutz Seiler’s Kruzo was the lead review in our autumn issue and subsequently featured in our online Book Prize special, before going on to win the prize and almost immediately being bought for publication in English. Fittingly, in this issue we review the latest novel by the first ever winner of the German Book Prize, Arno Geiger, trusting that his ‘Self-portrait with Hippo’ will become his third book to appear in English. Other highlights by our award-winning authors include an outstanding epic by Georgian author Nino Haratischwili, a Berlin novel by the ever-inventive Iris Hanika, and Franz Dobler’s tense railroad thriller.

So please delve into these pages, seek out the next generation of prize-winners, and help us to bring these authors to a wider readership. I am grateful as ever for the support of our partners, committee members, the German Book Office New York and the NBG team in London. Particular thanks are due to our editorial assistants, Alyson Coombes, Georgina Edwards and Hannah Schröder. This issue is dedicated to Martin Chalmers, great champion of German literature and superb translator, whose warmth and support will be greatly missed by all at NBG.

Charlotte Ryland

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Information for Editors

- **The selection process** for books that we review in NBG is entirely independent.

- For each issue, we start with approximately 150 titles. At our first editorial meeting we select around seventy of these to send to our experienced team of reviewers.

- Our reviewers are translators, academics, editors and agents – all extremely well-read and with a good feel for the market.

- At our second editorial meeting, our committee discusses the reviews and selects approximately thirty titles for the issue.

- Our Editorial Committee comprises some regular members – translators Jamie Bulloch and Shaun Whiteside, literary agent Tanja Howarth and scout Daniela Schlingmann – as well as representatives from the Austrian, German and Swiss cultural institutes in London.

- Different guest members are invited to join the committee each time, and include publishers, literary agents, booksellers and translators.

- We have juries in both London and the United States. The American jury consists of literary scouts, critics and editors, as well as members of the German Book Office and Goethe-Institut in New York.

- Our only guiding principle when selecting the books is quality: we are looking for outstanding works and voices, works which should have a chance even in the tricky British and American market and internationally.

- All fiction books featured in New Books in German in the last five years and bought by an English-language publisher are guaranteed a grant. Applications for fiction titles outside this period will still be considered. Non-fiction books by German and Swiss authors are guaranteed a grant (see page 40).
Nino Haratischwili is one of the most important voices in contemporary German literature. — Die Zeit

No doubt Nino Haratischwili is one of the most important voices in contemporary German literature. — Die Zeit

Frankfurter Verlagsanstalt, headed by Joachim Unseld, publishes the latest contemporary literary voices. Their programme has successfully provided an important forum for significant new discoveries since they were established in 1994. Outstanding contemporary writers, such as Bodo Kirchhoff and Nino Haratischwili, Ulla Lenze, Zoë Jenny, Claire Beyer and Helmut Kuhn, have all been published by the Frankfurter Verlagsanstalt.

Frankfurter Verlagssanstalt, September 2014, 1280 pp. ISBN: 978-3-627-00208-4

Nino Haratischwili
Das Achte Leben (für Brilka)
(The Eighth Life (for Brilka))

Das Achte Leben (für Brilka)
(The Eighth Life (for Brilka))

Nino Haratischwili’s latest book is a monumental family saga spanning six generations between 1900 and the present day, set in Georgia, Moscow, London and Berlin. It combines a Tolstoyesque epic narrative with lightness and humour as well as elements of magic realism.

The Eighth Life (for Brilka) recounts eight exceptional lives from one Georgian family. The story starts at the dawn of the twentieth century in a small town between Georgia and Azerbaijan, where a gifted chocolatier concocts a secret recipe for a delicious hot chocolate drink with dangerous powers. The hot chocolate proves to be a huge commercial success and the chocolatier soon prospers with his own factory. His four daughters are brought up in high society. Stasia, the eldest, dreams of a life in Paris and a career as a ballerina, but at seventeen she marries a soldier of the White Guard who is transferred to Moscow on the eve of the October Revolution, far away from his wife. When Stalin becomes the sole leader of the Soviet Union, Stasia and her children seek shelter in the house of her youngest sister, Christine, in Tbilisi. While the socialist upper classes enjoy the good life, the country’s impoverished population suffers at the mercy of aggressive reforms. And when Stalin’s right-hand man begins to take notice of Christine’s striking beauty and unworldly manner, disastrous consequences ensue.

Niza, the novel’s brilliant narrator, is Stasia’s great-granddaughter. Born in 1973 in Tbilisi and now living in Berlin, she is a fascinating character who achieves an epic voice without affectation, recounting her family’s dramatic history and reflecting with wit and irony on successive events. The sweeping narrative covers a crucial century of European history, illuminating Georgia’s position at the geographical and political crossroads of Europe as it charts the Soviet Union’s rise and fall, the collapse of the Iron Curtain and perestroika.

Haratischwili’s large cast of characters are well-drawn and credible, with their own distinctive passions, foibles and contradictions. Their fates are skilfully interwoven and vividly described and none of them leaves the reader untouched. With this richly imagined masterpiece full of passion, love and drama, Nino Haratischwili has proved herself as one of the most interesting and original writers of her generation.
A hippo in the garden

Self-portrait with Hippo is a beautiful coming-of-age story, set in Vienna and packed with astute observations of modern, urban life.

A chance encounter with his ex-girlfriend takes Julian back to the summer they split up, ten years ago. Although the break-up was originally his idea, he drifts through the first weeks of summer feeling miserable and heartbroken. An old friend, Tibor, suggests that Julian takes over his job for a couple of weeks while he goes on holiday, to help Julian earn some money and take his mind off the break-up. Tibor has been looking after a pygmy hippo belonging to Professor Beham, a wheelchair-bound old man in the last stages of a terminal illness. The hippo’s days in Professor Beham’s garden are numbered too, as the professor cannot heat its enclosure over the winter. It will be placed in a zoo as soon as the weather turns. The last member of this temporary household is the professor’s complicated, hot-tempered daughter, Aiko, who has returned from Paris to stay with him. Julian finds himself falling in love with Aiko and they enjoy a brief, intense affair.

Autumn is approaching, heralding the time when Julian will have to return to university, Aiko to Paris, and the hippo to the zoo. Just before she leaves, Aiko reveals she is pregnant, although she doesn’t know whether Julian is the father or if she wants to keep the baby. As Julian digs over the hippo’s old enclosure in the professor’s garden, he decides to go after her and try to make their relationship work.

The novel explores themes of displacement, death, change and renewal, and Geiger’s lightness of touch enables these elements to float to the surface in beautifully drawn vignettes. His descriptions of the hippo going about its daily routine and fulfilling its animal needs in the middle of the household’s emotional turmoil are particularly compelling. It eats, sleeps, and spends several hours a day ‘marching up and down the bottom of the pond’, but it also has its individual quirks: it loves hearing familiar voices and gallops up to the fence to listen to conversations. There are plenty of unanswered questions: will Aiko go through with her pregnancy? Whose baby is it? Did she have an affair with Tibor? Like the hippo, the human characters have their own mysterious lives that the reader doesn’t get to see, which makes the novel all the more intriguing.

Arno Geiger was born in 1968 in Bregenz and lives in Vienna. Previous publications at Hanser include the novels Es geht uns gut (2005), and most recently, Der alte König in seinem Exil (2011), which has been translated into numerous languages and will soon be published in English. His work has won him the Friedrich Hölderlin Prize (2005), the German Book Prize (2005), and the Johann Peter Hebbel Prize (2008).

Previous works:
Der alte König in seinem Exil (2011); Alles über Sally (2010); Anna nicht vergessen (2007); Es geht uns gut (2005); Schöne Freunde (2002)

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‘Geiger writes with love for his characters, with empathy – and with humour.’
– Hannoversche Allgemeine Zeitung

‘Arno Geiger has an unmistakable eye for the comic.’
– Neue Zürcher Zeitung

‘Arno Geiger tells the story of growing up in an unintelligible world with a light touch’
– SRF

Application for assistance with translation costs:
Austria (see page 40)
Vienna’s dark side

Lucia Binar and the Russian Soul is a gripping, darkly entertaining novel full of wit and wisdom – a work of world literature.

Lucia Binar is an eighty-three-year-old retired school teacher who has lived almost her entire life in an apartment building on ‘Great Moor Lane’ in Vienna. The century-old building is falling to pieces because its real-estate tycoon owner is planning to convert it into luxury apartments. But Lucia Binar is going nowhere. She couldn’t care less about the street’s supposedly offensive name – unlike her neighbour Moritz, a young political-science student who is gathering signatures for a petition to rename it. Moritz and Lucia become unlikely allies when he uses jujitsu to defend the old woman from a drunken squatter. He also offers his help when he learns that Lucia is intent on finding the call-centre employee who insulted her on the phone.

Elisabeth Klamm’s story is narrated in parallel: a tortured young mother who lost her husband in a traffic accident. Elisabeth works at a call centre until she meets Alexander, a young Russian immigrant trying to establish himself in Vienna. Then there’s the mysterious Viktor Viktorowitsch Vint, by his own account a ‘magician, facilitator of self-awareness, expert on the Russian soul, psychotherapist without a gun license, and charlatan of the highest order’. Alexander encounters Viktor while still in Russia, at his aunt’s funeral, and it is with Viktor’s help that he is able to come to Vienna. Everything comes together when Lucia and Moritz attend a séance conducted by Viktor Viktorowitsch and his new assistants, Alexander and Elisabeth.

The book begins in a comic vein as we watch the clever and level-headed Lucia Binar confront the absurdities of the modern world, including its harsh economic realities. Then darker undercurrents materialise as inexplicable things begin to happen. Vertlib portrays the bleakness and corruption of modern-day Russia, depicting Alexander’s former life in provincial Siberia as well as the more refined depravity of modern-day Vienna.

Vladimir Vertlib’s style is accessible and ironic with sparing but devastatingly accurate character descriptions. Vertlib is a well-established author whose work has been translated into Italian, French and Russian; Lucia Binar and the Russian Soul would be a perfect English-language debut.
For better, for worse

In her latest novel Sibylle Berg applies her keen observation and acerbic humour to the dynamics of sex in contemporary life.

Married couple Chloe and Rasmus have left Germany for the tropics, where Rasmus, a failing theatre director, has been assigned a project which is supposed to relaunch his career. Rasmus’ project is stalling but Chloe is there to comfort and stand by her man, until the day they find their way into a massage parlour for tourists. While Rasmus succumbs to the opium pipe and sleeps peacefully, Chloe experiences the best sex of her life with Benny, and becomes addicted to it to a degree which she cannot rationally understand. Her body rules her as it has never done before and brings her to the brink of desperation. She returns to the parlour day after day until the masseur’s wife throws her out, seeing that her partner is forming a relationship with Chloe, who has by now become a very special customer. While Rasmus fails to realise what is happening around him, he increasingly feels Chloe’s distance and contempt.

Back in Europe, the marriage seems to have fallen apart. Benny announces that he wants to move to Europe to be with Chloe and duly installs himself in the couple’s designer apartment. His arrival initiates a downward spiral of excitement, sexual fulfilment, desperation, humiliation and abuse. Rasmus ends up having a heart attack and Chloe follows him into hospital with an almost lethal combination of syphilis and streptococcal infection. Benny finally leaves, disgusted by the way he feels he has been used and abused. Rasmus and Chloe emerge from the hospital as reborn and determined to be there for one another, with a disillusioned but utterly clear vision of their life together, or of what must pass for togetherness.

In her tersely poetic style, Sibylle Berg gives us a deep analysis of the way in which mutual dependence functions, as Rasmus and Chloe narrate their experiences in alternating chapters. This is a devastatingly clear-sighted account of the demise of the moral, emotional and financial certainties of a generation and of a class that lives on the brink of the abyss and cannot but look down into it. The Day My Wife Found a Husband is a great novel that will appeal to a wide audience for its stylish writing, its tense dramaturgy and its topical themes.
Martin Lechner

Kleine Kassa
(Petty Cash)
Residenz Verlag, February 2014, 264 pp. ISBN: 978-3-701-71622-7

A fool and his money are soon parted

Georg's boss has sent him on a bus journey to deliver a suitcase of dirty money to a business associate. Georg has performed such missions before and has always acquitted himself well. But on this occasion he sees a billboard with what he thinks is a picture of his former girlfriend and, on a sudden impulse, gets off the bus. The picture turns out to be of somebody else, but it is too late now – Georg's inexorable slide into the life of a homeless outlaw has begun.

He flees through a wood where he comes across a dead body, a man who has been shot through the head. Now a murder suspect as well as a thief, Georg goes on the run with the suitcase, disguising himself with a set of hair extensions. Although Georg's intention is always to leave, he only ever manages to stumble from one small town to the next and from one absurdist encounter to another. He finally ends up back at the bus stop where his bizarre journey began, without ever having managed to open the suitcase which was the source of all the trouble.

Petty Cash takes readers on a playful, fast-paced romp through a series of literary genres – often thriller-like, but with some surreal comedy thrown in.

Jens Steiner

Junger Mann mit unauffälliger Vergangenheit
(A Young Man of Inconspicuous Past)
Dörlemann Verlag, February 2015, 240 pp. ISBN: 978-3-038-20015-4

Framed

This highly individual, fast-paced novel reads like a psychological thriller, shot through with fantastical descriptions and a hallucinogenic vision.

The novel begins in medias res, showing philosophy student Paul in a very disturbed mood, frantically considering his next move. We are not sure what this pertains to, only that he is located at a strange hotel in Zurich and is being tormented by someone named Köppel. As readers we become complicit in Paul's efforts to evade the police and find the source of his distress.

Paul's story gradually emerges. We learn that he woke up one morning in an unrecognisable apartment to learn – from recurring TV reports – that a media mogul has been kidnapped by 'a young man of inconspicuous past'. A past that corresponds, in minute detail, to his own. Paul assumes that he has been set up and knows his only option is to escape. With the help of a series of friends, Paul flees to Marseille, where it dawns on him that the mysterious Köppel is none other than the brother whom his mother gave up at birth…
Wolfgang Popp

Die Verschwundenen
(The Disappeared)

Into thin air

What becomes of those who disappear from our lives? What becomes of those they leave behind? These questions are the focus of The Disappeared, which tells the story of five people who have suddenly, inexplicably, broken off all contact with their home country, only to come back into view many years later.

Each of the novel’s five chapters is related by a different narrator, moved by the reappearance of their old acquaintance to delve into their shared past. In the novel’s centrepiece, Philip and Raphael attempt to track down a species of owl that was thought to have died out in ancient Greece. The Athene noctua has been sighted amongst the ruins of Delphi, and an American foundation has offered $75,000 to the first person who can successfully photograph it. Philip, an ornithologist who left Vienna without so much as a word ten years previously, has now returned to seek out his old school friend, Raphael, a photographer at the city’s archaeological institute. The narrative alternates between past and present as Raphael tries to get to grips with the reasons for his friend’s disappearance and makes a few discoveries about himself along the way.

The Disappeared is a stylish, original and artfully constructed piece of literature.

Tex Rubinowitz

Irma
(Irma)

Blast from the past

Tex Rubinowitz’s extraordinary novel recounts how a Facebook friendship request triggers a journey of self-discovery through the narrator’s own past. The request comes from Irma, the narrator’s flatmate and sexual partner of three decades ago. Their relationship came to an end with an enigmatic note left on the kitchen table and they haven’t seen one another since. The narrator’s musings on his time with Irma spark wider reflections on other aspects of his life: his love of 1980s Berlin rock music, his provincial childhood, experiences of abuse, various significant holidays, as well as stints living in Vienna and Hamburg. His train of thought always returns to Irma, however.

Rubinowitz’s fragmentary and informal style of writing makes for a novel and stimulating reading experience. This is heightened by the inclusion of assorted images, such as old LP covers, photos and flyers, in a technique reminiscent of W. G. Sebald. All the objects that appear in Rubinowitz’s narrative were sketched by his friend, the artist Max Müller.

Irma offers a highly original take on the issues of youth, past relationships, and the passage of time and it is easy to see how an excerpt from the novel was awarded the prestigious Bachmann Prize in 2014.

© Hertha Hurnaus
A decade ago, a panel of writers and critics – accompanied and scrutinised by the media and reading public – took on the task of finding the ‘best’ new German-language novel of the year. Between March and October, they narrowed down 150 submissions from publishers in Austria, Germany and Switzerland to a longlist of twenty, then a shortlist of six, and finally to a single book: Arno Geiger’s *Es geht uns gut*, a multi-generational saga that journeys into Austrian history through the memories embedded in an inherited house. Praising the novel for its ‘balance between the transitory and actual moment, the historic and the private, between holding on and forgetting’, the organisers of the German Book Prize presented their first winner with twenty-five thousand Euros at the inaugural ceremony in Frankfurt. The panel’s choice was welcomed by critics and the media, and the readership for Geiger’s work expanded dramatically overnight. *Es geht uns gut* – a reference to the years when the Austrian Post Office charged a reduced fee for postcards of fewer than six words – became an instant bestseller and has since appeared in sixteen languages: in French as *Tout va bien* and in English as *We Are Doing Fine*.

Ten years on, the German Book Prize is a major literary event and its winners have found recognition within and beyond the borders of the German-speaking world. For many of the commended writers, the prize marked the start of a journey into multiple languages. Here we take a look at their travels.

Melinda Nadj Abonji has the distinction of winning the German Book Prize and the Swiss Book Prize for the same novel in 2010. Born into the Hungarian-speaking minority in the Vojvodina (now Serbia), Nadj Abonji moved to Switzerland at the age of five and writes in German. Her winning novel *Tauben fliegen auf* is a semi-autobiographical account of an immigrant family living outside of Zurich. Translated into nineteen languages, it was published in English as *Fly Away, Pigeon*. Nadj Abonji was a guest writer at the Festival Neue Literatur in New York last year.

Author Melinda Nadj Abonji

For a week in September 2009, the translators’ centre in Straelen was occupied by Uwe Tellkamp and translators from around the world working on his German Book Prize-winning novel from the previous year. *Der Turm* poses numerous translation challenges, including regional dialect, medical vocabulary, military jargon and details from the fabric of East German life. His English-language translator Mike Mitchell started work much later: it took the innovative publishing strategy of digital-only Frisch & Co. to get the thousand-page English-language edition underway, and Penguin joined in last year to produce a print version of *The Tower* in time for the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the wall.

Julia Franck, a winner of the German Book Prize in 2006, was only the start of an international publishing expedition for her remarkable novel *In Times of Fading Light*. The title translates as ‘You’re Not Going to Die’. The novel was only the start of an engagement with Franck’s work, leading to two further translations so far – most recently, West. Her rendering of Franck’s work have been nominated for numerous awards including the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize and the IMPAC. Last year a short story by Franck became the basis for a different type of translation award: the Harvill Secker Young Translators’ Prize, for which ‘Der Hausfreund’ was chosen as the competition text. The winning version – ‘The Family Friend’, translated by Eleanor Collins – was selected from over two hundred entries and can be read online at Granta.

The trajectory of Julia Franck’s work exemplifies perfectly how the German Book Prize can set books and authors off on travels around the world. Ten years in, it has found an established place in the international publishing scene, and the the next winner will be announced on 12 October to coincide with the Frankfurt Book Fair. Extracts in English from the six shortlisted books will be published in advance on the NBG website, where you can also find details of past winners and nominees.

Sally-Ann Spencer is a literary translator and translation researcher.

### Winning Novels and their English-language Translations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Title (Original)</th>
<th>Publisher</th>
<th>Translator</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Katharina Hacker</td>
<td><em>Die Habenichtse</em> (Suhrkamp)</td>
<td>Kiepenheuer &amp; Witsch</td>
<td>Anthea Bell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Julia Franck</td>
<td><em>The Have-Nots</em> (Europa, 2008)</td>
<td>Kiepenheuer &amp; Witsch</td>
<td>tr. Helen Atkins</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Katharina Hacker</td>
<td><em>The Habenichtse</em> (Suhrkamp)</td>
<td>Kiepenheuer &amp; Witsch</td>
<td>tr. Anthea Bell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Kathrin Schmidt</td>
<td><em>In Times of Fading Light</em> (FaberGraywolf, 2013)</td>
<td>Harvill Secker</td>
<td>tr. Tess Lewis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Kathrin Schmidt</td>
<td><em>The Family Friend</em> (Kiepenheuer &amp; Witsch)</td>
<td>Neukölln Verlag</td>
<td>tr. M. Poglitsch-Bauer</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Terézia Mora</td>
<td><em>Das Ungeheuer</em> (Luchterhand)</td>
<td>Kiepenheuer &amp; Witsch</td>
<td>tr. Anthea Bell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Lutz Seiler</td>
<td><em>Kruso</em> (Suhrkamp)</td>
<td>Kiepenheuer &amp; Witsch</td>
<td>tr. Anthea Bell</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>Julia Franck</td>
<td><em>In Zeiten des abnehmenden Lichts</em> (Rowohlt)</td>
<td>Granta</td>
<td>tr. M. Poglitsch-Bauer</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Kathrin Schmidt</td>
<td><em>Du stirbst nicht</em> (Kiepenheuer &amp; Witsch)</td>
<td>Kiepenheuer &amp; Witsch</td>
<td>tr. Anthea Bell</td>
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<td>2017</td>
<td>Arno Geiger</td>
<td><em>Es geht uns gut</em> (Europa, 2008)</td>
<td>Kiepenheuer &amp; Witsch</td>
<td>tr. Anthea Bell</td>
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The image features a photograph of Arno Geiger’s subsequent book, an exploration of his father’s Alzheimer’s, which will soon be available to readers in twenty-four languages, with an English-language edition in preparation.
Prizing German Books: An Introduction

The literary landscapes of Germany, Austria and Switzerland are home to numerous prizes. Here, NBG introduces some of the key awards, their judges, juries and recent recipients. For more detailed information, visit www.new-books-in-german.com.

The Georg Büchner Prize is Germany’s most prestigious literary award. It honours a lifetime’s work, and is awarded annually by the Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung (‘German Academy for Language and Literature’). The award is given to authors ‘writing in the German language whose oeuvre shows them to be vital contributors to the shaping of contemporary German cultural life’, and is endowed with EUR 50,000.

Four winners of the Georg Büchner Prize have since been awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature: Günter Grass (1965), Heinrich Böll (1967), Elias Canetti (1972) andElfriede Jelinek (1998).

Recent winners include: Jürgen Becker (2014), Sibylle Lewitscharoff (2013), Felicitas Hoppe (2012)

Translations into English include: Sibylle Lewitscharoff, Apoloostoff, tr. Katy Derbyshire (Seagull, 2013)
Felicitas Hoppe, Picnic of the Virtues, tr. Katy Derbyshire (Readux, 2014)
Friedrich Christian Delius, Portrait of the Mother as a Young Woman, tr. Jamie Bulloch (Peirene Press, 2010)
Jörg Winkler, Natura Morta: A Roman Novella and When the Time Comes, both tr. Adrian West (Contra Mundum Press, 2013-14).

The Bremen Prize honours a single work in German, and is awarded by the Rudolf Alexander Schröder Foundation. It is endowed with EUR 20,000, along with a ‘Förderpreis’ for emerging talent. The prize-giving takes place at the end of January and is accompanied by a literature festival, consisting of talks, workshops, lectures and discussions, as well as readings from the work of the prize-winners.

Recent winners include: Marcel Beyer for Graphit. Gedichte (2015)
Clemens Meyer, Im Stein (2014)
Wolf Haas, Verteidigung der Missionarstellung (2013)

Translations into English include: Clemens Meyer’s All the Lights was translated by Katy Derbyshire (And Other Stories, 2011) and Im Stein is forthcoming in English.

Several novels by Wolf Haas have been published by Melville International Crime.

The Chamisso Prize is the most important prize for authors whose native language is not German. It is now defined as a prize ‘to reward German-language literature that has been affected by cultural change’. Run by the Robert Bosch Foundation, it has been awarded every year since 1985 and the winner receives EUR 15,000.

Recent winners include: Ann Cotten (2014)
Marjana Gaponenko (2013)
Michael Stavaric (2012)

Translations into English include: Marjana Gaponenko, Who is Martha? (New Vessel Press, 2014)
Ann Cotten was born in the USA and also writes in English. She has published an illustrated book of poetry, I, Coleoptile, in English (Broken Dimanche Press).

The Swiss Book Prize is awarded every November to an author writing in German who has been living in Switzerland for at least two years. Founded in 2008, it is coordinated by the Basel Literature Association and the Swiss Booksellers and Publishers Association and is funded by private sponsors. The winner receives CHF 30,000 (c. £20,000) and the four shortlisted authors each receive CHF 2,500.

Recent winners include: Lukas Bärffuss, Koala (Wallstein, 2014)
Jens Steiner, Carambole (Dörlemann, 2013)
Melinda Nadj Abonji, Tauben fliegen auf (Jung & Jung, 2010)

Translations into English include: Several of Lukas Bärffuss’ plays have been translated into English, as well as his first novel: One Hundred Days, tr. Tess Lewis (Granta, 2012).
Melinda Nadj Abonji’s novel has been translated into English by Tess Lewis (Fly Away, Pigeon; Seagull, 2014).

The Ingeborg Bachmann Prize is unusual amongst literary prizes in that it honours an author for a literary excerpt rather than a whole work or oeuvre. Often the excerpt is taken from a work that has yet to be published. In addition, it is one of the most public prizes, with the shortlisted authors reading from their works during the Festival of German-Language Literature at Klagenfurt, Austria, and receiving often biting criticism from the jury. The prize money is EUR 25,000 and is funded by the city of Klagenfurt.

Recent winners include: Tex Rubinowitz, Wir waren niemals hier (2014) – see review p. 7
Maja Haderlap, Im Kessel (2011)

Translations into English include: Poems by Olga Martynowa have been translated into English. The rights for Katja Petrowska’s work (‘Maybe Esther’, winner of 2013 prize) have been sold to HarperCollins.

The German Crime Fiction Prize has been running since 1985 and is the longest-running prize for crime fiction. The winner is selected by a panel of journalists and critics. Two prizes are awarded each year: one for the best crime novel written in German and the other for the best international crime novel.

Recent winners include: Franz Dobler, Ein Bulle im Zug (Klett-Cotta, 2015) – see review p. 24
Frederich Ani, M (Droemer Knaur, 2014)
Merle Kröger, Grenzfall (Argument, 2013)
Machtild Bormann, Wer das Schweigen bricht (Pendragon, 2012) – see review p. 25

Translations into English include: Machtild Bormann, Silence, tr. Aubrey Botsford (AmazonCrossing, 2015)

By Alyson Coombes, Georgina Edwards and Hannah Schroder
Nagars Nacht
(Nagar's Night)

Steidl Verlag, September 2014, 208 pp. ISBN: 978-3-86930-829-6

Living with the past

Shalom Nagar, a Yemenite who came to Israel as a teenager, served as the executioner of Adolf Eichmann on 31 May 1962. Nagar had been one of Eichmann's guards during both his trial and subsequent imprisonment. In the absence of trained executioners in Israel, the twenty-two guards involved in Eichmann's imprisonment were required to draw lots. Nagar – the only guard who had specifically asked not to be involved with the execution – drew the short straw. Since that day in May 1962, Nagar has thought of little else and has been haunted by the ghost of Eichmann.

Fast forward fifty years to just outside Tel Aviv, where Nagar, now in his seventies, raises chickens, sheep, and goats. He is often visited by his friend Ben, who brings with him the wheelchair-bound Moshe, whom Ben met on a kibbutz years before. Nagar can talk of nothing but Eichmann, mulling over their time together at the prison and his role in Eichmann's death, and recounting fantastic stories concerning the Eichmann who visits him after death.

Halfway through the novel, Moshe reveals his own story to Nagar and Ben. His father, named Schneider, had worked for Eichmann in the mid-1930s, but an investigation into the backgrounds of SS members revealed that Schneider was Jewish. Eichmann spared his life and sent him away to Switzerland to start a family. Moshe, whose real name is Adolf Schneider, rebelled against his family background and emigrated to Israel. Now Moshe, who was also present at Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem, begins to question Nagar's account and its inconsistencies, drawing on his own knowledge and research. Exasperated by Nagar's contradictory account, Moshe begins writing his own version of events. But Nagar has an explanation for everything and will not waver from his story. Until it comes to the oven in which Eichmann was reputedly cremated after his death…

Interspersed with quotes from Eichmann's testimony and writings, this novel considers memory's role in history and the differing, often conflicting versions of recorded history. At the same time it reflects each character's own identity conflicts. Does Moshe, a Jew named for Adolf Hitler, owe Eichmann, who spared his father, his own life? Is Nagar, with Eichmann's blood on him, now also part Eichmann?
**One man’s rubbish…**

*Taking Out the Trash* is immensely enjoyable both as a warm-hearted Berlin novel and as an unlikely love story.

The first part of the story focuses on Adrian Antonius, one of the most entertaining and idiosyncratic characters to emerge in German literature in recent years. Antonius is an eccentric in his early fifties who is at odds with the world. He spends a lot of time making lists and also surfs the Internet, cycles aimlessly through Berlin and writes poetry. One of his more curious habits is that of checking the waste and recycling bins where he lives, making sure that everything ends up in the correct container. One day he finds a notebook in the wrong bin. It is full of thoughts and feelings jotted down by one Renate, a middle-aged woman who has recently lost her husband. Antonius reads the notes and would have us believe that he and Renate meet and become friends. When he admits that he has made this up, the reader realises that he doesn’t care about fact and fiction in the normal way, making him a somewhat unreliable – but all the more intriguing – narrator.

The second part of the book takes the reader back to the spring of 1990. A young couple – Markus and another Renate – want to split up. Dorothea, who used to go out with Markus, returns after five years in the U.S. to find Berlin much changed. The divided city on the verge of unification springs to life: snippets of conversation, a taxi ride, music on the radio and Dorothea’s own musings brilliantly capture the extraordinary atmosphere. Dorothea works for Professor Amos Mann, whose parents were murdered when a book was stolen from their home in the seventies. Mann believes that the missing book might be located in the private collection of wealthy Berlin industrialist Kurt Marschner. Meanwhile Marschner’s introverted son Adrian has been having a cautious affair with Renate. Dorothea locates the missing book and, in a dramatic escalation of events, Adrian ends up attacking her with a knife.

In the final part of the story, Adrian Antonius writes letters to Dorothea and the Renate who wrote the notebook and the different threads of the story are brought together. Antonius is left to reflect upon the breadth of childhood and old age, while the world and the people in it spin on through the universe unprotected. Iris Hanika’s gift for characterisation is employed to full effect in this witty, wryly observed portrait of intersecting lives in Berlin.
Men of stature

Thomas Meyer delights his readers with this witty, scurrilous account of an intriguing chapter in European history, brimful of comic episodes.

This is the story of Friedrich Wilhelm I of Prussia, of his third year on the throne, and of his fascination with very tall men. Friedrich Wilhelm inherited Prussia, along with a massive national debt, from his spendthrift father in 1713. As a result of his father’s extraordinary wastefulness, the young king is compulsively frugal and begins his reign by selling off palaces and other royal assets. Contemptuous of culture and the arts, which he deems unfit for proper Prussian men, he is intent on building an army to bring the troublesome French to their knees.

Yet contrary to this picture of a sober young monarch, Meyer’s depiction of Friedrich Wilhelm is that of a true eccentric. The king’s pleasures and whims are cruel and arbitrary, directed both at his long-suffering subjects and the wellborn men of his court. Thus he makes the Jews in Berlin wear foolish red hats for no apparent reason and he humiliates his toady court historian daily by making him the butt of elaborate and dangerous jokes. But chief among Friedrich Wilhelm’s eccentricities is his love of giants. He is willing to pay any amount of money to acquire them, to the point of ruining his kingdom. His most fervent dream is to create a regiment consisting only of tall men, his own personal battalion of titans, and to that end he recruits unusually tall men from every corner of the known world. The recruitment process is by no means voluntary, however. The king’s secret agents comb the countryside, press-ganging all suitable candidates into service. The kidnappings are so common that tall men have taken to hiding or fleeing central Europe altogether. The book begins with just such a kidnapping – that of Gerlach, a tall young man from Saxony. But Gerlach’s arrival at the royal court sets in motion a series of events that spell the beginning of the end for Friedrich Wilhelm’s army of giants.

Meyer’s style is light and funny without being trivial. The tone of the book is light-hearted and uproarious, but never loses sight of what is, at its core, a dark subject matter. The historical setting is beautifully rendered and full of colourful details. Above all, Meyer has an eye for what is funny and fantastical, and All my Ducats is a cavalcade of both.
Circus of life

It is 2007 and Maik Kleine is about to leave Germany for the USA when he receives news that his surrogate father has died. Albert Bellman was also Maik’s employer and the ringleader of Alberto Bellmonti’s Circus. Maik heads to Berlin to take part in the funeral procession, which includes an elephant, a New Orleans jazz band, and a host of mourners from the circus world. The procession ends in Friedrichsfelde, the cemetery for socialists of the former GDR.

The mourners at Bellman’s grave have no idea why he would have chosen to be buried in the socialist cemetery. Maik has uncomfortable memories of the GDR: he was born in Leipzig and left for West Germany in 1979, aged thirteen, after his mother was accused of starting a fire that killed his younger brother and sister. The day after the funeral, Bellman’s grave is vandalised and Maik resolves to investigate, assisted by Szymbo, the bandleader, and Albina, the circus’s ‘Floating Virgin’. Szymbo, a staunchly Catholic Pole and aspiring avant-garde jazz musician, and Albina, a fallen prima donna who now lives in a communal apartment in Moscow, are both vocally scornful of Maik’s plans to go to America.

The narrative alternates between Maik’s life story and the days following the funeral. Maik learns of his siblings’ deaths while he is on a skiing holiday with the Free German Youth in Poland. His mother is incarcerated in an asylum and Maik grows up in a Jesuit boarding school. On his eighteenth birthday he leaves to join the circus and finds solace in the permanent homelessness of life on the road. The entertaining dynamic between Maik, Szymbo and Albina produces plenty of comic moments as they try to solve the mystery of Bellman’s life. What they discover is a complex riddle intimately linked with a past that Maik has willed himself to forget.

This exuberant new title from Rolf Bauerdick follows his prize-winning debut novel, *The Madonna on the Moon*, which appeared in English translation last year. *Packages for Frau Blech* has a sweeping scope and draws on an extraordinary array of high and pop culture. The book moves between a gently elegiac mood in the scenes dealing with Maik’s past to a comic, irreverent tone in the present day. Bauerdick performs the impressive feat of tying up every single lose thread, guaranteeing a satisfying end to this rollicking read.
**Dörte Hansen**

**Altes Land**

*(Old Country)*


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**Country house**

‘Altes Land’ is a region of northern Germany known for its scenic waterways, fruit orchards, and half-timbered farmhouses. One such house, an imposing, centuries-old structure that has gradually fallen into disrepair, plays a central role in the novel. With its welcoming inscription, ‘This house is mine but not mine alone, it also belongs to the one who comes after me’, the house represents a site of refuge for the novel’s two protagonists, Vera Eckhoff and Anne Hove.

Vera first comes to the house in 1945 as a five-year-old refugee from eastern Prussia. She and her mother Hildegard are taken in by the house’s owner, Ida Eckhoff. Compelled by economic necessity to live together under a single roof, the two women clash immediately. The conflict escalates when Hildegard marries Ida’s only surviving son Karl, a soldier who has returned from the eastern front with considerable physical and psychological scars. Hildegard goes on to have an affair with an architect and leaves Karl and Vera to go and live with him. The adult Vera studies to become a dentist and returns to set up her practice in Altes Land, motivated by a mixture of loyalty to Karl and a stubbornness to prove her worth in an environment that has not always been welcoming to her.

Vera’s story alternates with that of Anne Hove. Anne is a young mother in present-day Hamburg, in a neighbourhood where young mothers walk their children to the park in expensive strollers, cappuccinos in hand, organic groceries in their shopping bags. When she discovers that her partner is being unfaithful, she flees with their young son to Altes Land, offering to oversee the renovation of her Aunt Vera’s dilapidated house in return for room and board. By the novel’s end Anne has regained her sense of self-confidence, while Vera begins to conquer her fear of emotional attachment and is no longer paralysed by her family’s past. Dörte Hansen interweaves the two protagonists’ stories with several subplots and an array of supporting characters who enrich the novel. Hansen has an impressive talent for characterisation, skilfully capturing the characters’ differing perspectives.

*Old Country* is an engaging read that chimes with the growing interest on both sides of the Atlantic in the experience of German civilian refugees at the end of the Second World War. It also reflects intelligently on the widespread phenomenon of a culture clash between long-time residents and wealthy newcomers in rural communities.

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**Dörte Hansen** was born in 1964, learned several languages including Gaelic, Finnish, and Basque, and completed a PhD in linguistics. She then turned to journalism, spent several years working as an editor for NDR (Norddeutscher Rundfunk), and is now an author for radio and print. *Altes Land* is her first novel.

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‘Dörte Hansen always finds just the right tone for her headstrong characters: at times ironic, at others touching.’ – Brigitte

‘A wonderful, lively and entertaining book that you won’t want to put down.’ – NDR 1 Welle Nord

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**Albrecht Knaus Verlag** was founded in 1978 by Albrecht Knaus and the Bertelsmann group. Its list (both fiction and non-fiction) is liberal and broad, and aims to be both entertaining and informative, linked to the present while remaining aware of the past. Authors include Walter Kempowski, Irène Némirovsky, Peter Ackroyd, Aleksandar Hemon, Walter Moers and John Burnside, Nassim Nicholas Taleb, Ben Schott and Michel Onfray.

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A sample translation of this title is available on the NBG website

**Application for assistance with translation costs:**
Germany (see page 40)
Massum Faryar
Buskaschi oder Der Teppich meiner Mutter
(Buzkashi or My Mother’s Carpet)

Afghan adventure

Buzkashi paints a fascinating picture of life in twentieth-century Afghanistan through its detailed portrait of two generations of one family. The novel’s title is derived from a scene in which a son living in Germany returns to Afghanistan after many years to visit his mother. She is suffering from dementia and stares at the rich carpet on the floor of her bedroom, an engagement gift from her husband. The pattern on the carpet depicts a buzkashi game, the national sport of Afghanistan in which a pack of riders battle at high speed over a dead goat: the winner is the one who can keep hold of the goat carcass for long enough to ride it through the goal. The buzkashi motif serves to illuminate both the politics at play in this particular family and the global history of Afghanistan.

The two central characters whose past and present are interwoven are the narrator, Sha’ir, and his father. The story begins with a formative event from the narrator’s childhood in which he encounters the naked wife of a neighbour in the hamam. Banned from returning to this paradise by his mother, his father sweetens the transition to the men’s hamam with the promise that for each visit he will narrate an episode from the story of his own rise from simple farmer’s son to influential trader and respected imam, responsible for delivering the Friday sermon in the local mosque.

Faryar creates richly-sketched tableaux of multicultural Afghan society, populated by a myriad of fascinating characters that include members of Afghanistan’s Jewish and Hindu minorities. The novel has a number of strong female characters, such as Sha’ir’s sister who matches with the Maoists, becomes a gynaecologist and tortures and shoots the Sultan for killing one of her brothers. Faryar employs an array of characters on the fringes of history as well as encounters with key historical figures to conduct a subtle exploration of ethnic, religious and political rivalries. The narrative is interspersed with short fairytales and fables that often carry warnings for the characters and serve to heighten Buzkashi’s pleasurable, easy-reading style.

Buzkashi will appeal to readers of Khaled Hosseini’s bestseller The Kite-Runner as well as Atiq Rahimi’s A Thousand Rooms of Dream and Fear. While sharing their potential to succeed as a film, Buzkashi stands out both for its sweeping historical scope and its affectionately delineated characters.
Doris Knecht was born in 1966 and hails from Vorarlberg. She is one of the most original and humorous writers in Austrian journalism today. She was assistant editor-in-chief of Vienna’s Falter magazine and a columnist for the Swiss Tages-Anzeiger. She has a daily column at the Kurier and she DJs regularly at Vienna’s Rhiz bar.

Her debut novel, Gruber geht, was a surprise hit and was longlisted for the German Book Award. Doris Knecht lives in Vienna with her family.

Previous works:
Besser (2013); Gruber geht (2011)

The good life

Marian is a high-flyer. She owns a fashion label and is accustomed to a luxurious city lifestyle. Then the financial crisis takes hold and she loses her job, her home and her relationship in one fell swoop. Marian flees to the country, taking refuge in a house in the forest owned by her aunt. She embraces a primitive way of life that is utterly alien to the coddled existence she led before. She learns how to fend for herself in the wilderness, where she has plenty of time to reflect upon what went wrong in her past. Marian starts an affair with Franz, a local farmer, who teaches her how to fish and brings her food. She learns how to appreciate the small things in life, rediscovering the pleasures of homemade jam, sandwiches wrapped in old-fashioned greaseproof paper and woollen socks that she would once have scorned.

But Marian also feels the threat of living at the mercy of the elements and the seasons, without any money or safety net. Her new life in the country is far from idyllic: the locals resent her and she has ‘whore’ scrawled on her door. In this phase of her life she grapples with fundamental questions, reflecting on subjects such as food, luxury, talent, gender roles and happiness. In a series of flashbacks we are let into details about her past relationships and her estranged daughter.

Doris Knecht’s novel addresses serious themes with a light – yet not superficial – touch and a refreshingly self-deprecatory tone, making this book a pleasurable, smart read. Knecht avoids pathos and clichés, and has an original way of putting things. Marian has lost everything – her wealth, her home and her relationship – yet manages to laugh at herself and reflect on why it has happened. She is straight-talking and down to earth, clever yet not cynical. The novel demonstrates how it is possible for a woman to take an unflinching look at her life after a huge failure and manage to retain a sense of humour. With its consideration of the financial crisis, misunderstandings between men and women in relationships, the lack of meaning in wealthy Western lifestyles, going back to nature and finding one’s true strengths, the story has a strong contemporary relevance. The Forest is a diverting, thought-provoking book that will resonate with readers.

© Pamela Russmann
Erwin Schrödinger, the Nobel Prize-winning physicist and associate of Albert Einstein, one of the most remarkable minds of the twentieth century, lies dying in a Viennese hospital. Travels in Relativity follows this great man as he takes stock of his life with all its scientific – and amorous – adventures.

Schrödinger has suffered from repeated bouts of tuberculosis during his life, but this is to be his last. The medication causes vivid dreams, which frequently take the form of excursions into his colourful past. His life has been a perpetual quest for knowledge which has taken him all around the world, and the book’s chapters are set in various places that Schrödinger has called home. We learn about his formative years, learning English from his British maternal grandmother and growing up in Vienna. He begins a passionate love affair with Maya but loses touch with her during the First World War while fighting on the front line. Schrödinger then meets his wife, Annemarie Bertel, known as Anny. His early career is punctuated by spells in a sanatorium in Arosa, Switzerland, where he receives treatment for tuberculosis and formulates his famous wave equation. It is here that he resumes his relationship with Maya, while Anny also begins an affair with another man.

Schrödinger opposes Nazism and flees Germany, shortly before being awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics. Meanwhile Maya becomes pregnant with Schrödinger’s child and lives as his mistress. His unconventional family situation causes problems at Princeton, where Schrödinger gives lectures and associates with Einstein and other eminent scientists but is prohibited from taking up a professorship. He moves to Oxford instead, with Anny, Maya and the baby, Ruth, where together they settle into some sort of routine. Schrödinger eventually moves his family back to Graz, Austria, but the Nazi regime has taken hold and he is wanted by the Gestapo. He and Anny escape through Europe, ending up in Dublin, where Maya and Ruth join them. Maya eventually leaves the family and remarries after Schrödinger fathers two more children by different women. The novel’s final chapters return to Schrödinger’s hospital bed, with Anny by his side.

Manfred Rumpl’s inventive novel follows the life of a scientific genius, illuminating his private doubts and public triumphs. Schrödinger’s difficult personal life is laid bare alongside his continual quest to expand the possibilities of human knowledge.

A life scientific

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Manfred Rumpl’s inventive novel follows the life of a scientific genius, illuminating his private doubts and public triumphs. Schrödinger’s difficult personal life is laid bare alongside his continual quest to expand the possibilities of human knowledge.
Prizing Translation: Opportunities for Translators

Despite the widespread belief that people in the UK are just not interested in foreign languages, there is a growing group of literary translators who, alongside numerous counterparts around the world, are fighting for the art of translation and are helping to achieve significant developments in the world of literary translation. Experienced and emerging literary translators alike are playing an increasingly important role, not only working tirelessly to allow English speakers vital access to texts from a wide range of source languages and cultures, but also acting as scouts and agents, discovering works and approaching publishers, sealing deals and publicising their work. This commitment has certainly contributed to the recent increase in sales of translated literature in the UK, helped along by bestselling authors such as Jo Nesbo and Stieg Larsson.

For me, halfway through an MA in Literary Translation and hoping to emerge from the other side with at least one foot in the literary translation door, the willingness of established translators to offer support and advice to those just starting out has been particularly encouraging. Even at this early stage in my career I feel part of a huge support network that is committed to helping its members. The highly successful Emerging Translators Network (a forum in which translators can pool ideas and ask and answer questions), founded by Jamie Searle Romanelli and Rosalind Harvey in 2011, has shown the desire for concentrated information and increased networking opportunities.

In 2014 this need to pool and share information was recognised by New Books in German, the Germany Embassy London and the Goethe-Institut London, who collaborated to put together a database of all the possibilities open to translators to help kick-start or further their careers. I took on the task of translating and compiling the resulting research and, in November 2014, the new Opportunities for Translators database was published on the New Books in German website. This database contains a host of information on translation programmes, grants, competitions, awards and residencies. Although the focus is on programmes available to those translating into or out of German, some of the initiatives are also open to other language combinations.

Among the programmes mentioned is New Books in German’s own Emerging Translators Programme, an annual programme founded in 2011. As-yet-unpublished translators are invited to submit a translation into English of a short extract from a German novel, and the six successful applicants are then commissioned to prepare a further sample translation for New Books in German and to attend a translation workshop with translator Shaun Whiteside. Other competitions featured include the Harvill Secker Young Translators’ Prize (which focuses on a different language combination each year) and the John Dryden Translation Competition, held annually in February and open to translators from any language into English. Prizes such as the Independent Foreign Fiction Prize, for which books published in the UK that have been translated from any other language into English are eligible, are available for published translations. Residencies can be a great way for translators to escape the demands of daily life and focus on a specific project; the Looren Translator House in Zurich and at the Baltic Centre in Visby, Sweden offer support for translators working on projects to be published.

The scope of the database has opened my eyes to the incredible number of opportunities open to literary translators. With brief details on each programme and links to the relevant websites, this is a unique source of information and a must-read for all translators wanting a change of pace or scenery, or for those needing ideas for how they can get their talent discovered.

By Alyson Coombes

50 Books That Travel

Those working with literature in translation can quickly tire of the ‘3%’ mantra, with its focus on the paucity of translated literature in the British and American markets. Working with these books every day, the impression is rather of the richness of the field, the wonderful books that inspirational publishers are bringing to our shelves -- and the strong sense that this is a field that is growing day by day, too. So when the New Books in German team was asked, together with our partners at the German Book Office in New York, to curate a new book collection that would showcase the latest German-language books to be published in English, we knew that we would be spoilt for choice.

The result, 50 Books That Travel, is not a virtual but a real collection. The German originals and their English translations are currently on tour around the world, docking in London in April for the London Book Fair before moving on to numerous other fairs worldwide, from Bogota to Beijing, Abu Dhabi to Istanbul. The task of curating was not an easy one. Initially overwhelmed by the numbers of fiction, non-fiction and children’s books that had appeared over the past few years, we quickly realised that filtering was going to be necessary, and so limited the collection to books that have been published in the past two years. Still we had to leave out books close to our hearts, in order to produce a collection that shows the great breadth, depth and quality of German books in English translation. So rather than bemoaning the 3%, let’s keep celebrating the books that are making it across the breach -- the surest way of increasing that percentage and bringing yet more stunning international books to readers.

The Frankfurt Book Fair’s book collections are funded by the German Federal Foreign Office. www.buchmesse.de/en/international/books_on_tour
The Backstory
Allessandro Gallenzi and his wife Elisabetta founded Alma in 2005, four years after founding Hesperus Press and amidst great challenges facing publishers: the closure of many high-street chains and independent stores, the emergence of Amazon as a dominant force, and the pressure of e-books. Despite the unfavourable climate, their aim to continue the work they had begun at Hesperus flourished into an ambitious list of classics, fiction, non-fiction and children’s books. Now they have carved out their niche in the market: their business has grown from turning over £250,000 and publishing twenty-five books to a company turning over around £1M and publishing between seventy and eighty titles a year.

The List
Classic literature is close to the pair’s hearts: ‘It’s what we read the most.’ Apart from creating beautiful editions that their readers can treasure, the team at Alma also go to great efforts to provide more, such as extra material about the authors’ lives and works, as well as illustrations, reader resources and – of course – high quality translations.

How does Alma consistently produce quality fiction and non-fiction? Its trick is in remaining a company small enough to continue to work closely with its authors and translators, but large enough for success. ‘Small is beautiful’ for businesses, according to Allessandro, but Alma has also seen some huge successes – most recently Jane Hawking’s memoir Travelling to Infinity: My Life with Stephen, which has been turned into an Oscar-nominated film and has sold more than 75,000 copies so far. Commercially their classics list has also seen steady success, with their new and stylishly designed translations of Mikhail Bulgakov’s work and their F. Scott Fitzgerald series, which sprang from the runaway success of last year’s publication of The Great Gatsby.

Alma has plenty of exciting upcoming titles, too: there is a trilogy by a young Jamaican author called Roland Watson-Grant, which centres around a dysfunctional family living in a swamp near New Orleans; and there is also a travelogue-cum-biography of Mary Wollstonecraft by non-fiction writer Bee Rowatt, who recounts the life of the mother of Mary Shelley and therefore the ‘grandmother’ of Frankenstein.

Translation
Alma is particularly dedicated to work in translation. Alma acquires new titles through its trusted network of contacts with reliable knowledge and taste for specific literatures. Whenever possible the proposed text is read and appraised in the original – Italian, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese and Russian can be read in the office. A select panel of experienced translators is not only regularly called upon for translations, but is also very much involved in the editorial process. Its small size means that Alma can take a hands-on, personal approach to working with its translators and authors, achieving a higher standard of focused, committed work.

Promoting translated fiction is very much part of Alma’s ethos, and as a passionate prize-winning translator himself, Allessandro advocates translation as an ‘essential part of a healthy, outward- and forward-looking society.’

The Future
Alma’s outlook for the future is realistic, yet positive. Right now, the economic climate and the availability of free e-books of classic texts pose considerable problems for publishing. Yet the popularity of translated fiction is gradually increasing, and Allessandro is confident that in terms of sales and critical success translated titles are just as rewarding as English titles;

How did you get into translation and how has your career developed?
I discovered German literature in my early teens, thanks to an inspiring teacher who kept me supplied with off-curriculum titles. As I read on, I became increasingly aware of how few made it into English translation. Later, while working as a translator at Reuters, I began to research UK-based initiatives promoting German literature. I contacted NBG and was invited to write a reader’s report by the editor at the time, Rebecca Morrison. She became a friend and mentor, recommending me for many projects over the years. I then did a part-time MA in Anglo-German Cultural Relations alongside working at the German Welfare Council.

I fell increasingly in love with translation, taking part in summer academies at the BCLT and Literarischen Kollegium Berlin. In 2011, I was granted a BCLT/TA Mentorship with Dr Lyn Marven. My first full-length commission for a UK publisher was a co-translation of Frank Schätzing’s Limit with Shaun Whiteside and Samuel Willcocks. Shaun and I went on to do Florian Illies’ 1913 together, which became a Sunday Times bestseller. Over the last few years I’ve translated novels for publishers including Harvill Secker, Quercus and Little, Brown, and am working closely with Frisch & Co on a series by Andreas Maier.

What have been your most enjoyable translation projects?
I recently translated Sirius by Jonathan Crown (out later this year with Head of Zeus), which was full of delightful challenges. I also loved working on 1913. Co-translation is something I’d recommend; it’s a great way to gain experience, and benefits both the emerging and established translator in different ways.

What are you working on at the moment? Do you tend to translate one book at a time, or have several projects on the go at once?
Right now I’m working on a new translation of a Kafka short story, to be published by Deep Wood Press as a letterpress edition with intaglio prints, and The House by Andreas Maier for Frisch & Co. I prefer to immerse myself in one book at a time, but there are always shorter projects and edits interspersed.

You are currently living in Brazil – what effect, if any, do you think living in a country that speaks neither your source nor target language has on your translation work?
In terms of my work routine, surprisingly little has changed. I remain immersed in German throughout the day, and speak English with my Brazilian husband. The Internet, Skype and e-books allow me to read, listen to and speak English and German on a daily basis. We live in Santa Catarina; once heavily colonised by Germans, there are a surprising number of native speakers. My fluency in Brazilian Portuguese is growing steadily; I would love to translate from it once I feel at home with the literary landscape.

What advice would you give to new translators?
Seek out initiatives supporting emerging translators, such as the ETN, the BCLT summer school and its mentorships scheme. Enter competitions, submit short translations to journals, and when you feel ready to take on a full-length book, approach a more experienced translator whose work you admire and suggest a collaboration. Get to know the UK market – my years working as a bookseller and doing internships with publishers were invaluable for discovering how publishing works from a different perspective.

And what’s next?
I’m currently setting up the TA Diaspora, a network for literary translators who work into English but live outside English-speaking countries. More information can be found at www.translators-association-diaspora.com.

Interview with Georgina Edwards

NBG interviews the translator Jamie Searle Romanelli

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Interview with Alyson Coombes
NBG Choices: Books in English

FICTION

**A Whole Life**
*Robert Seethaler*
Translated by Charlotte Collins
Picador

“This exquisite novella tells the story of a hardworking, solitary man in an isolated village in the Austrian Alps. In gentle, pellucid prose, Seethaler manages to convey the intensity with which even the simplest of lives is lived – its tenderness, despair, and moments of extraordinary beauty. Each word is weighed with care, and his descriptions of the natural world are especially vivid. I found the book profoundly moving.”
— Charlotte Collins, translator

**Melnitz**
*Charles Lewinsky*
Translated by Shaun Whiteside
Atlantic Books

In the tradition of the great family romances of the nineteenth century, *Melnitz* is the saga of the Swiss-Jewish Meijer family, spanning five generations from the Franco-Prussian War to World War II. It is a novel of fate, fortune and great falls; a homage to the sunken world of Yiddish culture and a celebration of the enduring spirit of biting Jewish humour.

**This Place Holds No Fear**
*Monika Held*
Translated by Anne Posner
Haus Publishing

Heiner, testifying at the Auschwitz trials about his deportation as a young man, meets Lena, a court translator. He and Lena begin a cautious love affair, but Heiner knows that if they are going to stay together Lena will have to accept the shadow of Auschwitz that marks him. Slowly, as the years pass, they’re able to find freedom and a sense of peace they have not known before.

**Woman of the Dead**
*Bernhard Aichner*
Translated by Anthea Bell
Orion Books

*Kill Bill* meets *Dexter* via *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo*, *Woman of the Dead* is a wild ride of a thriller where the first stage of grief is revenge. And revenge is a dish best served bloody.

In Bernhard Aichner, European crime fiction has found a startlingly original new voice, and *Woman of the Dead* is as stylish as it is unputdownable.

**All Days Are Night**
*Peter Stamm*
Translated by Michael Hofmann
Granta Books (UK) / Other Press (US)

After an argument with her husband, beautiful and successful Gillian crashes her car. When she wakes in the hospital, she is a widow with a ruined face. It is only when she begins to piece together the painful shards of her present existence and revisits a relationship from her past that she is able to glimpse the freedom that might come with her loss.

**The Child**
*Sebastian Fitzek*
Translated by Jamie Searle Romanelli
Little, Brown

Robert Stern, a defence lawyer, doesn’t know what to expect when he meets a new client, a ten-year-old boy called Simon who insists that he was a murderer in a former life. Stern’s surprise quickly turns to horror as he searches the cellar Simon has directed him to and discovers the skeletal remains of a man – just as Simon told him. But this is only the beginning...
A selection of books in English translation recommended for reviewers, booksellers, literary festivals and readers

**CRIME**

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<tr>
<td>The Girl Who Wasn’t There</td>
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**MODERN CLASSICS**

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<td>The Tower</td>
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**US JURY PICKS**

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<td>Blood Brothers</td>
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<td>A Gushing Fountain</td>
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Morality and Mirth

Steph Morris talked to German novelist, playwright and translator Kristof Magnusson on a visit to the EÜK (Europäisches Übersetzer-Kollegium) in Straelen, northern Germany.

We set the tone by talking about morality: what role does it play in Kristof’s work? A conscious one for sure, he says. His new book, Arztroman (‘Doctors – A Novel’), is a portrait of Berlin and its inhabitants, and describes the work of medics and the emergency services; these two aspects are presented with (deceptive) ease. The novel’s third aspect is more demonstrative. Two characters with opposing world views are pitched against each other: Anita, an emergency doctor, who believes in helping others, and Heidi, writer of self-help literature, who believes people should take responsibility for themselves, espousing a philosophy we in the UK still call ‘Thatcherite’. An international thing really, Kristof says, the Kohl-Reagan-Thatcher era.

Kristof’s baddie, Heidi, is a figure the reader can delight in hating. Yet Anita, although an excellent doctor, is always getting it wrong in her private life, annoying everyone around her. I suggest it’s possible for someone more on Heidi’s wavelength to engage with the story too. Certainly some have dismissed the book as do-gooder literature. Kristof says, but he’s happy to have got people talking about the issue of solidarity. Have we given up on it, he asks? His novel’s psychodrama ends on a note of equilibrium, where some readers might have been hoping Anita would wreak a final act of revenge on Heidi. No, Kristof says, I think not; instead Anita must learn to keep her oar out and let things be.

Observation is one of Kristof’s strengths. His first novel, Zuhause (‘Home’, 2005), is set in Hamburg and Reykjavik, both home territory to the author; in the second, Das war ich nicht (‘It Wasn’t Me’, 2010), three characters’ lives are contrasted and interwoven: a bestselling author, a literary translator and an investment banker. The detailed, nail-biting descriptions of the latter at ‘work’ – risking millions in speculative transactions which bring an entire bank down – required extensive research among bankers in Frankfurt. Arztroman is set in the city he now lives in, but its main protagonist is an emergency doctor. This research involved six months shadowing the medics who work with the emergency services, who drive separately from the ambulances to each scene to decide what treatment is needed. Kristof admits he enjoys research. The emergency scenes are some of the most gripping passages, the relevant factual information distilled and dramatised. It turns out he got the doctors he’d consulted to read successive drafts of these scenes. He turned medics into literary editors? Yes, he bought them dinner in return. Using an emergency doctor was also a good way to get his novel’s tentacles into a lot of people’s private lives. A hospital setting would have been too narrow; Anita and her assistant Maik attend to patients on the streets, in their houses and flats, on an allotment site in one case. Anita’s split-second diagnoses are informed by observations of the patients’ lifestyles.

In addition to these three critically and commercially successful novels, Kristof Magnusson’s first published work – the play Männerhort (‘men’s crèche’) – has now been made into a film. As we speak 1.2 million tickets have been sold in Germany. Männerhort is classed squarely as a comedy, and has made a lot of people laugh in Germany; while Kristof’s novels fall into the category of literary fiction, but demonstrate more humour than this genre typically offers. In English we have writers such as Roddy Doyle and Hilary Mantel who can juggle the comic and the sobering – what about German literature? What does humour mean to him as a writer? There’s an expression in German: man muss mal lachen – you have to laugh sometimes – which makes laughing sound like emptying your bowels, Kristof says, an unfortunate, base instinct. In fact it’s a literary instinct, a crucial one. A creative and subversive one, I suggest. Yes, he says, and writing which can handle important subjects with humour demonstrates the real power of literature. It can be a tool to change perceptions. He finds people – and writing – devoid of humour deeply suspect. Like Heidi? Yes, and in the German mainstream there’s a misunderstanding about what humour is. It isn’t a deadpan anecdote enlivened by a joke at the end, then another anecdote followed by another joke, ad infinitum; it’s a sensibility, a perspective. I assure him the former is prevalent in Anglo-Saxon culture too; now can he name some German writers who demonstrate humour in the wider sense? Only pre-war ones, he says. Tucholsky? Yes, or Erich Kästner, Thomas Mann even; he wrote beautifully ironic prose. The Nazis killed humour for the foreseeable.

NBG readers will of course find rumours of the death of irony in German literature greatly exaggerated. Try the books reviewed on pages 11 and 12 of this issue, and read Kristof Magnusson’s novels.

Kristof Magnusson lives in Berlin and divides his time between writing and translating (from Icelandic into German). Before becoming a bestselling author he worked for a charity helping the homeless in New York and trained to be a church musician.

In 2013 he spent time in London as writer-in-residence at Queen Mary, University of London.

A longer version of this interview is available on www.new-books-in-german.com.
Jewish Book Week 2015

This year’s Jewish Book Week saw three German-language authors take to the stage: Doron Rabinovici, Jenny Erpenbeck and Charles Lewinsky. Georgina Edwards reports.

The Jewish cultural community is something not easily defined, therefore not taken for granted. Wary of labels and over-generalisation, Charles Lewinsky, author of the very recently translated Melnitz, said, ‘I am a Jew and I am a writer. I am a German-language author who happens to be a Jew. I’m not a Jew by profession.’ Later, laughing at a question about his Orthodox relatives’ reception of his choice of career, he says ‘Writing is a very Jewish profession.’ Celebrating Jewish literature always circles round to the question of what we can call ‘Jewish’.

It seems a free, liberal approach to these definitions is embodied in the act of writing. Melnitz, a 640-page novel, was dubbed an ‘old-fashioned’ sweeping family saga in the style of Tolstoy by journalist John Glancy, yet Lewinsky veers away from this idea of austere literary genius: ‘I didn’t want to write that type of book.’ It just happened. The book, originally planned to span a Jewish family’s history through the First and Second World Wars, took on a life of its own. You had to go further back, Lewinsky realised, to take account of the historical events that moved the characters in the present. The ostracisation of the Jews in Switzerland began in the middle ages, continuing on through to the twentieth century. Uncle Melnitz, the ominous voice of Jewish history in the novel, remains an embodiment and reminder of Jewish persecution throughout history. Yet Lewinsky argues that this leaves his other characters relatively free to laugh and to live their lives as normal. In order to live your life, or to write the lives of characters, you don’t need to be a master of events. As Lewinsky writes Melnitz, he knows where an aunt and her niece are going as they step out of their house onto a street in Zurich – he knows the city and its street, he knows what his characters are going to do. Then suddenly they turn and walk down the street in the other direction. ‘I thought: you’re going the wrong way!’ Lewinsky explained to his audience, ‘So I followed them.’ That is the moment a character comes alive, when he won’t do what you tell him.

In contrast to this rather intimate conversation with the anecdotal, humorous storyteller Lewinsky, whose writing largely threw up personal and historical questions, the atmosphere at the open discussion later the same day with writers Jenny Erpenbeck and Doron Rabinovici was subtly different, more actively and earnestly engaged in relevant political events such as the Jewish-Palestinian conflict. Yet both writers seemed reluctant to publicise their work as didactic in this way. When asked, ‘Do you consider your book a Jewish book?’ Rabinovici laughed and answered wryly, ‘I do when I’m invited to Jewish Book Week.’ The book is also an Austrian book, Rabinovici explains, and Erpenbeck agrees – her book is Jewish in the beginning and German at the end. Yet the audience aren’t satisfied with ambiguity. ‘What about the moral continuity of the main character throughout the novel?’ is one question directed at Erpenbeck but she prefers to get away from this linear view, instead thinking of her narrative as a spherical exploration of the many possible lives a dead baby girl could have had throughout the twentieth century. Rabinovici firmly believes that writing about Jewish problems is relevant and very much ‘not about a different time’, and that it therefore reaches out to people, yet he has to pause for thought when a member of the audience asks ‘What should European Jews do now?’ The spectators turn expectantly to the novelists on the elevated stage, hold their breath, waiting for the unelected spokespersons’ reply. After exchanging a glance with Rabinovici, Erpenbeck replies, a little uncertainly, but not without a hint of a smile, ‘That’s not a very literary question.’ The background forces of cultural celebration, literary interest and political awareness pulled the discussion to and fro, none ending with precedence over the others. This uncertainty (the writers’ reluctance to make authoritative statements on the lives of others outside their writing) was productive and fuelled a discussion which could have continued long after the event came to an end.
Franz Dobler
Ein Bulle im Zug
(A Cop on the Train)
Klett-Cotta / Tropen, August 2014, 352pp. ISBN: 978-3-608-50125-4

The wrong side of the tracks

Chief Superintendent Fallner has been suspended from duty for the alleged shooting and killing of a teenage boy. A Cop on the Train follows Fallner on a long exploratory rail journey through Germany as he tries to recover.

The circumstances of Maarouf F.’s death have never been fully clear, least of all in Fallner’s head. His colleague Maier was dead. Maier seems far less affected by what happened, but is it possible he knows more than he’s letting on? Fallner’s partner Jacqueline is a feisty policewoman who is initially supportive and sympathetic but grows exasperated by his introspective behaviour following the shooting. On the joint advice of his boss and his therapist, Fallner gets a railcard and embarks on an epic train journey to give himself some time to come to terms with what has happened.

Fallner’s journey takes him from Munich to Hamburg and onward to Berlin. He relives the incident over and over again in his mind but cannot make sense of it. Although dead, Maarouf is omnipresent and Fallner imagines that he sees and has conversations with him throughout the train journey. Fallner meets old friends during his trip, visiting his father and reconnecting with an old flame – the girl-next-door from his childhood with whom he had his first sexual experiences two decades previously. He meets new faces too, both in the on-board bistro and in his local bar back home. They are invariably people who live on the margins of society, people with whom he feels at ease during this period of personal confusion. Fallner tries to make notes as advised by his therapist, chats to others and to himself with his customary wry humour and reflects on various aspects of life: his love of jazz, his mother’s untimely death and the prevalence of a right-wing mentality among the police. The climax of the book comes when Fallner confronts Maier, who he realises is not only sleeping with Jacqueline, but has been concealing vital information about the shooting. Maier’s confession changes everything.

Dobler captures the experience of life onboard the train perfectly, documenting the rhythm of days and nights shaped by its relentless motion. This is a sensitive literary portrayal of a life in turmoil – a crime novel with a difference and a deserving winner of the German Crime Fiction Prize.
Mechthild Borrmann

Die andere Hälfte der Hoffnung
(The Other Half of Hope)
Droemer Verlag, September 2014, 320 pp. ISBN: 978-3-426-28100-0

Desperate times

In present-day Ukraine a number of young girls have disappeared without trace. A special police unit is set up and the search for the missing girls soon leads to a trafficking trail – the girls were forced into prostitution in the Netherlands after travelling to Germany to work and study. As detective Leonid Kyan’s investigation hones in on a number of powerful Ukrainians it becomes clear that he must battle the corrupt establishment, including other members of his own group, with at least as much determination as the traffickers.

The most intriguing section of the novel is narrated by the mother of one of the missing girls and provides a pensive backdrop to the rest of the action, linking the various characters in unexpected ways. Walentyna lives a destitute, largely uneventful life in the alienation zone around Chernobyl. In a letter to her daughter she tells of her life in Ukraine during the last decades of the Soviet Union, describing the luxurious, newly constructed city of Prypyat, built to serve the nuclear plant across the lake, and the disaster that struck in April 1986. Borrmann’s seamless novel stands out amongst its competitors for its novel subject matter, and makes for an original, fascinating read.

Mechthild Borrmann was born in 1960 and spent her childhood and youth on the Lower Rhine. Before she turned to writing, she worked in the food service industry, and as a dance and theatre pedagogue. Her crime novel Wer das Schweigen bricht became a bestseller and was awarded the German Crime Fiction Prize 2012. Mechthild Borrmann lives in Bielefeld, where she works as a freelance author.

Previous works:
- Wer das Schweigen bricht (2011)
- Die andere Hälfte der Hoffnung (2014)

Translation rights available from:
Verlagsgruppe Droemer Knaur
Contact: Kerstin Schuster
Tel: +49 89 9271 279
kerstin.schuster@droemer-knaur.de
www.droemer-knaur.de

Application for assistance with translation costs:
Germany (see page 40)

Thomas Raab

Still – Chronik eines Mörders
(Deathly Silence – Chronicle of a Killer)
Droemer Verlag, January 2015, 368 pp. ISBN: 978-3-426-19956-5

Killing me softly

Deathly Silence invites comparisons with Patrick Süskind’s Perfume but stands alone as a compelling and provocatively macabre read.

Karl Heidemann is born with hyper-sensitive hearing. Even before his premature birth, Karl is overwhelmed by the painful cacophony of sounds around him. During his first involuntary excursion outside the soundproofed cellar where he spends his early childhood, Karl witnesses his mother’s suicide. Instead of being traumatised, the young boy experiences a reassuring and exhilarating sense of peace in the silence that emanates from death. This early discovery piques Karl’s private fascination with the act of dying, which he at first explores through despatching sick and maimed animals. Eventually – and inevitably – Karl becomes a murderer, drowning two people he holds responsible for driving his mother to the grave.

What follows is a path of self-exile and roaming on the fringes of society until the mass murderer finds a kind of home within the walls of a monastery. But monkhood only warps Karl’s relationship to death further until he finally seeks peace in his own death rather than continuing to visit it upon others.

Thomas Raab was born in 1970 and lives in Vienna with his family. He studied mathematics and physical education and now works as a writer, composer, and musician. He has been nominated for and won numerous literary and musical prizes, most recently Buchliebling 2011 and the 2013 Leo Perutz Prize. His crime novels featuring art restorer Willibald Adrian Metzger are among Austria’s most popular and are being adapted for film.

Previous works:
- The Metzger series

Translation rights available from:
Verlagsgruppe Droemer Knaur
Contact: Kerstin Schuster
Tel: +49 89 9271 279
kerstin.schuster@droemer-knaur.de
www.droemer-knaur.de

Application for assistance with translation costs:
Austria (see page 40)

A sample translation of this title is available on the NBG website.
Anne Goldmann

_Lichtschacht_ (Light Well)

A midsummer murder

A newcomer to Vienna, Lena is soaking up the summer’s evening on her roof terrace when she sees something she can’t explain: a woman simply disappears from a neighbouring terrace, while her companions carry on drinking champagne as though nothing has happened. Lena can hardly believe her eyes. Did the woman fall or was she pushed? Did Lena just witness a murder? Who does she trust enough to confide in about what she has seen? The plot thickens as crows begin to circle above the building’s light well and the police find a woman’s body…

_Light Well_ is a convincing and sophisticated thriller worthy of Alfred Hitchcock, artfully constructed and mesmerisingly atmospheric. Anne Goldmann’s elegant writing hooks readers from the outset, enthralling them with her complex metropolitan tale of deep passions and divided loyalties. While the story captures a universal sense of the joys and travails of modern city living, this is also a beautifully evoked picture of contemporary Vienna. _Light Well_ is a slick, sinuously-plotted novel which keeps readers guessing until its surprising end.

Translation rights available from:
Argument Verlag
Contact: Else Laudan
Tel: +49 40-4018 0011
Email: e.laudan@argument.de
www.argument.de

Application for assistance with translation costs:
Austria (see page 40)

Mario Giordano

_Tante Poldi und die sizilianischen Löwen_ (Aunt Poldi and the Sicilian Lions)

A Sicilian Miss Marple

The first in a series of crime novels starring the intrepid Aunt Poldi. Thoroughly sick of life, Poldi moves from Bavaria to Sicily in order to drink herself to death with a sea view. Aided by her nephew, an aspiring author who is also the narrator of this novel, she drives to Sicily and finds the home of her dreams, conveniently located by a hypermarket with a plentiful supply of alcohol. But before hard liquor and depression get the better of her, fate intervenes with a mission.

Valentino, an attractive young man from the village who has been doing odd jobs in Poldi’s house, disappears without trace. Poldi sets out to investigate his disappearance herself, but when she finds Valentino’s corpse on the beach, his face blown off with a sawn-off shotgun, she becomes a potential suspect in his murder case. Poldi soon falls for the gorgeous Commissario Montana assigned to lead the case, and after some initial misunderstandings they form an investigative – and romantic – partnership. The delightful detail of this romance, and the extreme awkwardness of its retelling to her mortified nephew, produce some of the novel’s many high points, and exemplify the work’s warmth and wit.

Translation rights available from:
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Application for assistance with translation costs:
Germany (see page 40)

Anne Goldmann was born in 1961. She worked as a waitress, kitchen hand, and chamber maid to finance her training to become a social worker. Later she worked in a prison, and now she cares for recently released prisoners. Goldmann began writing at a young age, won two writing competitions, published a few texts, and then gave it all up, only to rediscover writing years later. She received great acclaim for her first two novels. _Lichtschacht_ is her third.

Previous works: _Das Leben ist schmutzig_ (2011); _Triangel_ (2012)

Argument Verlag publishes a strong list of crime fiction by female writers and with female detectives.

Mario Giordano was born in Munich in 1963 and studied psychology at the University of Düsseldorf. He writes novels, books for adolescents, and screenplays. He lives in Cologne.

Previous works: _Apocalypsis_ (trilogy)

Bastei Lübbe is one of Germany’s largest independent trade publishers. With its imprints Lübbe Hardcover, Ehrenwirth, Lübbe Paperback, Lübbe Taschenbuch, and Lübbe Audio, Bastei Lübbe publishes about 550 titles per year. Its main publishing fields are thrillers, historical novels, women’s fiction, mystery novels, memoirs, gift books, humour, history, biographies and documentaries.
Set in the tangled world of finance, politics and the media, *Monte Cristo* is a pacy thriller full of betrayal and underhand tactics - a sharp and entertaining demonstration of the topical maxim that some banks are simply ‘too big to fail’.

Video journalist Jonas Brand is on a rail journey from Zurich to Basel when stock trader Paolo Contini appears to throw himself from the train to his death. Brand sets his footage of the aftermath of the incident aside to investigate a strange coincidence: two 100-Swiss-franc banknotes bearing the same serial number have come into his possession. Sensing an opportunity to graduate from celebrity journalism to serious investigation, he has the banknotes analysed, with bizarrely contradictory results. It dawns on Brand that Contini’s ‘accident’ might somehow be connected to the dubious bank notes. With the help of his former colleague Max Gantmann, a respected TV financial journalist gone to seed, Brand discovers that a major Swiss bank has been colluding with the printers to acquire vast quantities of banknotes with duplicate serial numbers. Contini had run up huge losses and seems to have been done away with before he could inform the regulator.

Meanwhile Brand’s half-abandoned feature film project – an updated version of *The Count of Monte Cristo* – unexpectedly receives funding, and Brand narrowly avoids being caught with planted drugs during a police raid on his hotel. Someone wants him off the case for good. When Max dies in a house fire, Brand realises he cannot trust anyone anymore. He ends up being kidnapped and brought face to face with the Swiss Finance Minister and the Swiss National Bank supremo. He is warned that his findings would destroy the Swiss financial industry, causing untold economic suffering. Finally, Brand discovers that his film colleagues and the press are all members of a prestigious, conspiratorial society – the Lily Club – that has been stymying his investigation. The novel closes with the premiere of *Monte Cristo*, attended by Switzerland’s great and good: a happy ending with the bitter aftertaste of compromise and defeat.

*Monte Cristo* is a lively, finely-tuned read and a real page-turner. Brand endears himself to readers as a bungling amateur in a world of establishment villains. The novel would translate brilliantly onto the screen and seems certain to continue Suter’s success in English.
Running scared

Reinhard Kleist’s latest graphic novel relates a harrowing real-life story, drawing attention to one of the lives behind the all-too-familiar news headlines in which desperate fugitives risk everything to try and enter Europe.

Samia Yusuf Omar is a young Somali woman, a sprinter who dreams of competing at the London 2012 Olympics. She has already participated in the 2008 Peking games, where she came last but still proved her considerable athletic potential. Samia grew up as the oldest of six children in Mogadishu, under the regime of militant Islamic group Al-Shabaab, and since her father’s brutal murder she has been unable to move around freely, let alone train professionally. She lives with her mother and nephews in a state of limbo until she hears of an opportunity to travel to Ethiopia, where conditions are better. Despite her mother’s protests she leaves, only to find that she cannot stay there and that she will have to embark on a much longer and more dangerous journey, via Sudan and Libya towards the coast of Italy. What follows is an endless test of her endurance. One crushing disappointment follows another as the people who arrange the transport ask for more money and it becomes clear that those who deal in promises of freedom are not to be trusted. Samia’s story ends when she drowns off the coast of Malta in April 2012, aged just twenty-one.

Kleist tells this simple, tragic life story in an unflinching, straightforward style, taking advantage of his medium by letting anguished expressions and world-weary gestures as well as renewed bursts of youthful optimism and enthusiasm speak for themselves. His pared-down graphic style, with classic page composition, echoes that of legendary artist Mazzucchelli who created Batman: Year One. Kleist also includes social media elements in his drawings, reflecting the way a young person would naturally relate to the world. He gives a good sense of the resilience of this young woman who tries to bounce back after every disheartening setback, both because she is following her personal dream and because she knows there is no life for her back at home.

Kleist brings Samia’s chilling experiences to a wider audience, concluding with an appeal to honour her as Somalia’s hero – something that she would never have dreamed of calling herself.
Ulrike Almut Sandig is a master storyteller who writes in beautiful poetic prose. The six substantial short stories that make up this flawlessly crafted collection all deal with different forms of disappearance and disappearing worlds.

‘Far Beneath Us The Molten Rock’ is an engrossing story of a man losing his wife. During her illness the man regales his wife with wonderfully detailed descriptions of what is happening in the depths of the earth underneath the house he has built for them. When she dies unexpectedly the man is thrown into panic. He becomes convinced that he too is ill, but is told that although he is old he is extremely fit. Though depressed and unresponsive, he eventually warms to the cleaner who visits him, the young man who brings him meals-on-wheels, and the young couple expecting a baby who own the bookshop he frequents in town. He comes privately to regard the couple as a new family, which sustains him in his final years.

In ‘Birthday Story’ a man is looking forward to having the biggest birthday party of his life. He plans to invite all his friends and show them how perfect his life is with his wife and daughter. But while he is writing the invitations his wife tells him that she is leaving him and taking their daughter with her. He is so caught up in his fantasy that he hardly listens to her and barely reacts, yet the spells of dizziness that subsequently overwhelm him point to a state of inner crisis behind his calm outward appearance. In fact, the dizziness is the manifestation of a debilitating illness – the persistent denial of which has led to the end of the couple’s marriage.

The stories in Against Disappearing explore various modes of disappearance and the consequences for those involved, illuminating perennial questions about the human relationship to the world. Sandig presents the reader with a sequence of intriguing characters whose responses to their curious predicaments generate an array of insights into human behaviour and relationships. Her self-conscious writing style adds to the charm of the stories, encouraging the reader to share in the creative process. Sandig’s perfectly poised narrative continues at just the right pace for readers to appreciate the exquisite detail of her writing. This innovative collection is an absolute delight from start to finish.

Ulrike Almut Sandig was born in 1979 and lives in Berlin. In 2001, she collaborated with the songwriter Marlen Pelny to found the literary projects augepost (eyemail) and ohrenpost (earmail), in which they pasted poems onto construction fences, spread them using flyers and free postcards, and held their first performances. In 2005, Sandig completed her Master’s in Religious Studies and Modern Indology. From 2007 to 2009 she was the co-editor of the literary magazine EDIT and in 2010 she received her diploma from the German Creative Writing Program Leipzig.

Sandig has been granted literary residencies in Sydney and in Helsinki. Her works have been awarded several literary prizes. Several of her texts have been translated into English, French, Polish, Turkish, Serbian, Bulgarian, Rumanian, Spanish, Arabic, Ukrainian, and Hindi.

Previous works: Flamingos (2010)

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‘Ulrike Almut Sandig calls up the charm of narration against oblivion. Simply beautiful.’ – Hessischer Rundfunk

Schöffling & Co. has a simple credo: the focus is on the authors. It has gained the reputation of being a ‘publishing house that plays a significant role in the shaping of Germany’s literary future’ (SPIEGEL online). Founded in November 1993, Schöffling & Co. has since emerged as one of Germany’s most innovative independent literary publishing houses with a tightly-woven international network. An atmosphere of mutual confidence and esteem and an unceasing commitment to its authors and their works provide the basis for a fruitful literary relationship.

New German voices are recognised and published alongside established and famous names, while authors in translation include Sadie Jones, Olga Tokarczuk, Jennifer Egan, Peter Behrens, Nir Baram or Miljenko Jergovic.
In Search of the Best Non-Fiction Translators

New translation talent is discovered in a translation competition run by Geisteswissenschaften International and the German Book Office New York.

'We were overwhelmed by the interest shown in this competition, and the very fine submissions we were privileged to read,' said the jurors, acclaimed translator Shelley Frisch and Laura Leichum, translator and Digital Publishing & Rights Manager at Georgetown University Press.

In this inaugural year of the Geisteswissenschaften International Non-Fiction Translation (‘GINT’) Prize, approximately 200 contestants chose to translate one of three set excerpts, comprising short texts from Holocaust studies, law and film studies. 'Each excerpt posed a set of unique semantic and syntactic challenges. We sought out translations that would best enable English-language readers to engage successfully with some of the finest non-fiction writing being published in Germany today. The winning translators needed to demonstrate an ability to handle specialised vocabulary and scholarly apparatus and to display a flair for language that would make these texts not just accessible to their new English-language readership, but enjoyable and rewarding,' said the jurors. Of the many submissions received for this competition, the following three stood out as shining examples of fine translation.

First prize ($1,500) went to Sarah Pybus, who said the following: 'I have always been interested in literary translation, and began to pursue this interest more actively when I went freelance. I am also a huge film fan, and so found the translation a really exciting challenge. I am absolutely thrilled that my translation was chosen by such a distinguished jury.' The jurors found much to praise in her translation of the excerpt from Martin Seel’s Künstle des Kinos, and said that 'This entry stood out as a beautifully crafted essay with soaring prose. Rising to the complex challenges the text posed, [Sarah Pybus] came up with elegant renditions that resulted in a felicitous meeting of medium and message.'

The third and final prize ($500) was given to Sinéad Crowe, who also chose the excerpt from Steinke’s Fritz Bauer. This translation demonstrated a fine potential for handling complex syntax. Crowe was thrilled, and said, 'Winning this prize has been hugely encouraging and has inspired me to find out more about translating non-fiction.'

The competition was organised by Geisteswissenschaften International and the German Book Office New York. Geisteswissenschaften International is a project to provide translation funding for German academic titles in the humanities, administered by the Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels (German Publishers & Booksellers Association), the Fritz Thyssen Foundation, the German Foreign Office, and the VG Wort. Riky Stock of the German Book Office saw this as an opportunity to discover new translators. ‘US editors often ask us for translator recommendations. I am thrilled by the quality of the many submissions we received and we have been able to identify some talented translators even beyond the three winners.’

The texts for translation

Martin Seel: Künstle des Kinos
(‘Arts of Cinema’, S. Fischer Verlag, 2013, 256pp.)

Martin Seel analyses the connection between cinema and other arts, revealing how film has adopted many practices from architecture, painting and music.

Ronen Steinke: Fritz Bauer oder Auschwitz vor Gericht
(‘Fritz Bauer or Auschwitz on Trial’, Piper Verlag, 2013, 352pp.)

Fritz Bauer, chief public prosecutor in Hessen, was the man who brought Adolf Eichmann to trial in Israel.

Markus Roth & Andrea Löw: Das Warschauer Getto

In 1943, 500,000 people were living in the Warsaw Ghetto. Here, those people are given a chance to speak for themselves through their diaries and memories.

English-language rights are still available for these three great texts.

The prize-winners

Sarah Pybus studied English Literature, German, and Translation at the University of Sheffield, and has been translating commercially from German to English for eight years. Since 2012, she has worked as a freelance translator out of Sheffield, UK.

Fiona Graham was born and educated in the UK, is a professional translator, and is fluent in German, Dutch, Swedish, French, and Spanish. She started out by translating for the Dutch Ministry in 1987, then worked as a translator at the European Parliament in Luxembourg until she started translating for the European Commission in Brussels in 1997. She is also the co-editor at Swedish Book Review.

Sinéad Crowe is a native of Dublin, Ireland with a PhD in contemporary German theatre from the Trinity College Dublin. She has taught at various Irish universities as well as in Berlin, and is now a translator and copy editor based in Hamburg, Germany.
Anna Ruhe, illustrated by Max Meinzold
Seeland. Per Anhalter zum Strudelschlund
(Sealand – Hitchhiking to the end of the Vortex)
Arena Verlag, January 2015, 288 pp. ISBN: 978-3-40160-043-7

Age range 10+

We all live in a yellow submarine

Anna Ruhe’s talented debut is an adventure story that pushes the boundaries of the imagination and leaves readers eager to return to her enthralling underwater world.

Max’s father was a famous scientist who disappeared years ago. When Max decides to leave his quiet home town and go in search of him, he has no way of knowing where his journey will take him. Max follows his companion – the independent and adventurous Emma – down a well, where they are sucked into the depths by rapids and deposited in a world they never knew existed. Sealand is populated by people and magical beings perfectly adapted to their subterranean environment, living in cities where life carries on both above and below water. Max finds out that his father discovered a gateway to another world, but refused to relinquish his knowledge to the powerful Schaar – a secretive leader or group of leaders who are controlling Sealand with clouds of debilitating white mist. Many other people have also disappeared without trace.

On their way to visit Sealand’s ancient library, where centuries-old mermaids guard the world’s knowledge, Max and Emma encounter Ari, another boy in search of his lost family, who offers them a lift in his submarine. After thwarting a band of underwater pirates and piecing together a series of enigmatic clues they manage to identify the likely place where all kidnapped Sealanders are held. They visit a high security prison where the inventor of the white mist is held captive, his own mind clouded by the toxic mixture. After braving the deepest, most dangerous waters of all, at the end of their oxygen supplies and having survived the grasp of python-like killer jellyfish as well as shoals of warrior fish, their submarine runs aground in the Schaar’s headquarters. Max finally meets his father and manages to disable the mist-producing machinery.

Sealand is richly imagined and full of brilliant details which allow readers to revel in a fantasy land where people and mermaids live together. Ruhe balances lively dialogue with engaging prose to paint a picture of a world that is both believable and utterly compelling. The extraordinary subterranean realm is brought to life even more vividly through the book’s delightful illustrations and detailed maps which help the reader keep track of Max’s adventures. Its accessible, fast-paced narrative will have even the most reluctant readers hooked.

Anna Ruhe was born in Berlin in 1977. After a detour to the English coast, she financed her graphic design studies by working as an assistant photographer. Since then she has worked as a corporate designer and co-founded a software company. She has always had exciting stories in her head and started to write them down after her two children were born. She and her family make their home in Berlin. Seeland is her debut novel.

Max Meinzold was born in 1987 and is a freelance graphic designer and illustrator, specialising in science fiction and fantasy as well as children’s and teen literature. He has been nominated for numerous awards. He lives and works in Munich.

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Arena Verlag was founded in 1949 and is one of the most important publishers of books for children and young adults in Germany. They publish a broad range of titles in their fiction and non-fiction lists, including titles for all age groups – from toddlers to young adults. Arena was the first German children’s book publisher to start a paperback programme in 1958. Arena books have won numerous awards and been translated into many languages. They are also the German home of such internationally renowned authors as Cassandra Clare, Roderick Gordon and Brian Williams, Tove Jansson, Steve Augarde, Neil Gaiman and Jo Nesbo.

Application for assistance with translation costs:
Germany (see page 40)
Andreas Steinhöfel

Anders
(Different)

A life less ordinary

Felix Winter appears to be a fairly conventional eleven-year-old boy until a bizarre accident changes his life completely. After falling off the roof of his parents’ house and then being run over by his own mother, Felix falls into a coma for 263 days – exactly the length of his mother’s pregnancy with him eleven years previously. Then, one glorious summer’s day, he suddenly returns to life. Everyone is overwhelmed and happy, but Felix is not the same person anymore. He remembers neither the accident nor anything that happened before it. Felix embarks on a quest for his own identity, engaging in a series of bizarre experiments that question the fine line between life and death and bring him closer to a disturbing truth.

Andreas Steinhöfel’s latest title breaks all the rules of the typical young adult novel, with triumphant results. Its calm, often philosophical narrative combines symbolic episodes with witty observations and includes crime elements as well as pieces of poetry, resulting in a complex, keenly observed narrative that will appeal to its young target audience as well as to a much older readership.

Andreas Steinhöfel was born in 1962. He works as a translator, reviewer and screenwriter and is the author of numerous award-winning children’s and young adult books.

Previous works: Rico, Oskar und die Tieferschatten Band 1 (2008); Rico, Oskar und das Herzgebreche Band (2009); Rico, Oskar und der Diebstahlstein Band 3 (2011); Die Mitte der Welt (2004); Dirk und ich (2006)

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Application for assistance with translation costs:
Germany (see page 40)

Corina Bomann

Krähenmann
(Ravenman)
COPPENRATH Verlag, August 2014, 448 pp. ISBN: 978-3-649-61676-4

Murder most fowl

Ravenman is a hair-raising thriller which will keep young readers on the edge of their seats.

On her first day at an exclusive boarding school, sixteen-year-old Clara Hansen finds a dead sparrow in her bed – the signature of a vicious serial killer who has murdered the bed’s previous occupant. The victim is discovered in a nearby forest with the wings of a dead crow sewn to her naked shoulders. A short time later another girl suffers a similarly gruesome fate.

Clara starts her own investigations into the murders, while trying to make friends at school and standing up to a girl gang headed by the despotic Melanie. She is supported by a handsome older boy with whom she slowly but surely falls in love, and by a mysterious adviser who sends her text messages that cannot be traced. An abundance of false leads and intriguing suspicions maintain the suspense until the novel’s dramatic climax, when Clara finds herself in league with her arch enemy Melanie and eye to eye with the murderer. As the killer’s identity and motivations are revealed, the different pieces of the story fall into place to form a mesmerising whole.

‘An exciting book about the freedom and independence of childhood.’ – Süddeutsche Zeitung

‘Magic.’ – Der Spiegel

Andreas Steinhöfel was one of Germany’s finest authors for children and young adults.’ – Die Zeit

Corinna Bomann

Krähenmann
(Ravenman)
COPPENRATH Verlag, August 2014, 448 pp. ISBN: 978-3-649-61676-4

A dark young adult thriller.’ – Cellesche Zeitung

Age range 12+

Age range 14+
Learning to fly

Thirteen-year-old Meeri Ehrlich is having a difficult time. She misses her deceased mother terribly, but her father is already trying to find a new wife; her younger brother is being picked on by the village gang; and Meeri has fallen head-over-heels in love with her next-door neighbour Rocco, who has eyes only for his girlfriend.

Meeri’s love for Rocco reveals to her an amazing family secret: falling in love comes with the gift of flight. Soon Meeri is unable to speak to Rocco or stand near him without accidentally taking off! Although this is initially alarming — not to mention awkward at parties — she soon learns to control her flight and to use it to her advantage. But as long as her love remains unrequited, she will always fly alone.

Between her attempts to sabotage her father’s new relationships, watching out for her brother and dreaming up ever crazier ways of propositioning Rocco, Meeri has a lot of things to juggle. It takes a while for her to notice Rocco’s shy younger brother Matti — and to discover that when love is mutual, it gives you both wings!

Rodent cop

Valentine lives above her family’s funeral parlour and occasionally helps out. She has no friends and carries her guinea pig, Bully, around with her at all times. But one day Bully chews through a wire, and the resulting electric shock transfers the soul of a deceased policeman into his body. Bully now speaks with the voice of Herr Kasimir, the very tetchy police commissioner.

Valentine and her tiny police advisor, aided by his enormous sniffer-dog, proceed to thwart an evil scheme by a wicked carer with a habit of murdering her elderly patients. Valentine is a thoroughly modern child, making great use of her smart phone to photograph evidence, summon help and communicate vital information. She is a whizz on the Internet too, of course, and can find any information that the police commissioner needs. At least he manages to enter his password with his little paws so she can read his emails...

Endres tackles serious themes alongside plenty of laugh-out-loud moments. The Day My Guinea Pig Became A Police Inspector is a wonderfully wacky story with an unlikely hero and a delightful heroine.

Mattea Bernet / Heike Fink
Die Sache mit der Liebe und den Flügeln
(When Love Comes with Wings)

Brigitte Endres
Der Tag an dem mein Meerschweinchen Kriminaloberkommissar wurde
(The Day My Guinea Pig Became A Police Inspector)

Translation rights available from:
Mattea Bernet studied Theatre and Film at the Freie Universität Berlin and at the Academy of Media Arts Cologne. She has worked as a film producer, film director, and screenwriter, and has garnered numerous awards for her efforts.
Heike Fink studied Literature and Applied Social Studies. She has worked as a journalist, author and screenwriter and has received several awards and scholarships. Together with Mattea Bernet, Fink was nominated for the German Screenwriting Award for Die Sache mit der Liebe und den Flügeln.

Brigitte Endres was born in Würzburg, and studied history and German literature before becoming a teacher. She discovered her talent for making up stories when she started writing for her pupils, and it was not long before she published her first book for children. This was followed by several others for various publishing houses and Bavarian broadcasting companies. Today Endres works full-time as a freelance author.

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Application for assistance with translation costs:
Germany (see page 40)

Application for assistance with translation costs:
Germany (see page 40)

Previous works: Hallo, ich bin auch noch da! (2014)

Thieinemann-Esslinger Verlag was formed in 2014 when two of the oldest and most renowned children’s book publishers in Germany joined forces, combining the imprints Thieinemann, Esslinger, Planet Girl and Gabriel.
Reiner Engelmann
Der Fotograf von Auschwitz
(The Photographer of Auschwitz)
cbj Verlag, January 2015, 192 pp. ISBN: 978-3-570-15919-4

Pictures of horror
Reiner Engelmann’s remarkable book is an account of life in Auschwitz told through the eyes of the Polish survivor and camp photographer Wilhelm Brasse. Aimed at secondary school children, the book reflects the author’s training as a teacher and years of experience leading school trips to Auschwitz. The short chapters and accessible writing are augmented by a glossary and biographical sketches of key figures in the Nazi regime.

Wilhelm Brasse was deported to Auschwitz on 31 August 1940, aged twenty-two. His appointment as a photographer in the camp records department ensured his survival. Brasse was required to photograph all sorts of things in addition to the stream of prisoners being admitted to Auschwitz, including a highly unusual tattoo on a prisoner’s back, portrait shots of the SS officers and Josef Mengele’s victims. His impromptu shot of a jar of flowers was turned into a postcard and hundreds of copies were sold to the Nazi guards to send home to their families.

Brasse’s long experience of camp life generates insights into diverse aspects of the Auschwitz concentration camp and will prompt young readers to reflect upon how and why it was even possible for a place like Auschwitz to exist.

Alwin Meyer
Vergiss deinen Namen nicht. Die Kinder von Auschwitz
(Never Forget Your Name – The Children of Auschwitz)
Steidl Verlag, January 2015, 758 pp. ISBN: 978-3-86930-949-1

Out of the mouths of babes
For the past forty years Alwin Meyer has interviewed survivors who were still children when Auschwitz was liberated in early 1945. In this book, he gathers the testimonies of several dozen survivors from all over Europe, reflecting on their lives before they were deported to Auschwitz, their recollections of their time in the camp, and their lives after liberation.

Meyer interweaves historical data with the survivors’ testimonies, including official Auschwitz records. The book explores the survivors’ early lives before the persecutions started, going on to document their experiences in different ghettos and in the Theresienstadt concentration camp. Survivors remember the train journey to Auschwitz, the first selection, daily life in the camp and how they were separated from family and friends. We hear about the small acts of kindness that gave them hope as well as the mind-numbing scale of the violence surrounding them.

Never Forget Your Name is the first full-length study devoted to the children of Auschwitz. It could be read as an introduction to life in Auschwitz, as well as providing new information for readers who have in-depth knowledge of the concentration camps.
Jürgen Kaumkötter

Der Tod hat nicht das letzte Wort.
Kunst in der Katastrophe 1933-1945
(And Death shall have no Dominion: Art in the Holocaust 1933-1945)
ISBN: 978-3-86971-103-4

Art after Auschwitz

And Death shall have no Dominion is a captivating book which makes an important contribution to the discussion of Holocaust art. Jürgen Kaumkötter considers artists working in the concentration camps as well as post-war artists producing Holocaust art and public memorials to the Holocaust. The artworks come from every possible medium, ranging from rough sketches to accomplished paintings, from cartoons to sculptures and carvings.

Alongside the discussion of the artworks themselves are a range of other fascinating historical documents, including letters, diaries, photographs, camp documents and trial protocols. These materials furnish the reader with chilling insights into the extraordinary sufferings of those who survived the concentration camps and of the millions who were murdered.

And Death shall have no Dominion will find a wide international audience. As well as being accessible it presents a great deal of fascinating and little-known material, and furthers the debate about the relationship between art and human suffering. This book makes a naïve view of the Holocaust, and a naïve reaction to it, almost impossible and deserves to be translated soon.

Jürgen Kaumkötter was born in 1969 and is an art historian and historian specialising in the works of exiled artists and Holocaust art. He has curated numerous renowned exhibitions, including ‘Die verbrannten Dichter: Zwischen Himmel und Hölle 1918-1989’ (The Burned Poets. Heaven and Hell 1918-1989), ‘Die Unsterblichkeit der Sterne. Von Francisco de Goya über Walter Benjamin zu Václav Havel’ (The Immortality of the Stars. From Francisco de Goya to Walter Benjamin and Václav Havel), and ‘Kunst in Auschwitz 1940-1945’. Jürgen Kaumkötter has written many academic papers on the subject and spent more than fifteen years conducting research for this latest exhibition and book.

For information on Kiepenheuer & Witsch please see page 15.

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Application for assistance with translation costs:
Germany (see page 40)

Miriam Gebhardt

Als die Soldaten kamen
(When the Soldiers Came)

Uncomfortable truths

When the Soldiers Came deals with the period between the final days of the Second World War and the end of the occupation of Germany in 1955. The soldiers who liberated Germany from Nazi rule in 1945 also brought new suffering to many women. An estimated one million women and girls – and a considerable number of men – became victims of sexual violence all over the country. Contrary to popular opinion it was not just Russian soldiers who committed rape, but also a large number of American, British and French soldiers.

The historian and journalist Miriam Gebhardt draws on extensive source material, including police, church and hospital documents as well as personal diaries, to chart the widespread sexual violence in the decade after the war. She also demonstrates the dismissive treatment of the victims by doctors, social workers and lawyers in later years.

Gebhardt presents some harrowing truths about the behaviour of allied soldiers in post-war Germany and her account will attract significant interest in Britain and the USA. As a study of sexual violence in wartime it is an invaluable contribution to the ongoing discussion of rape as a weapon in many contemporary conflicts.

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Application for assistance with translation costs:
Germany (see page 40)

Miriam Gebhardt is a historian and journalist and teaches history at the University of Konstanz. She completed a PhD with the title ‘Fear of the Juvenile Tyrant. A History of Upbringing in the 20th Century’ (2009). DVA published her books Rudolf Steiner. A Modern Prophet (2011) and Alice in No-Man’s Land. How the German women’s movement lost the women (2012).

Previous works: Rudolf Steiner (2011); Alice im Niemandsland (2012); Die Angst vor dem kindlichen Tyrannen (2009)

Translation rights sold:
Bulgaria (Kibea)
For information on Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt please see page 13.
This is the autobiography of Sven Marquardt, doorman at Berghain, the ultra-cool Berlin nightclub. Located in a former power station in East Berlin, Berghain is well known internationally and has become one of Berlin’s biggest tourist magnets. Regarded by many as the epicentre of the world’s techno and party culture, the queues outside the building are legendary – clubbers habitually wait for three or four hours, only to be turned away by the doorman. Blogs and internet forums discuss the best strategies for getting into Berghain, which is also the focus of the last chapter in this book.

To most people, Marquardt is known only as the heavily tattooed and greatly feared Berghain doorman. Night Life delves deeper and reveals Marquardt’s fascinating life story. Born in 1962 in the GDR, the year after the Wall was built, he grew up in East Berlin’s Pankow district. As a teenager Marquardt became part of a thriving gay scene, socialising with Prenzlauer Berg’s bohemian artistic community and living in one of the district’s characteristic old apartment blocks. Later he trained as a photographer and worked for a prestigious GDR fashion magazine. After the fall of the Wall, Marquardt, like many of his friends, struggled to come to terms with his new life. His edgy, darkly glamorous photos were rejected by fashion magazines in the West as they did not fit with the cliché of the ‘dull, grey East’. For some years Marquardt abandoned photography altogether, working in a West Berlin shoe shop and spending the 1990s taking drugs, nightclubbing, and getting pierced and tattooed. He eventually began working as a bouncer in East Berlin’s techno club scene, and the vast, semi-derelict, former industrial buildings where the clubs are based prompted his renewed interest – and success – in photography. The book is full of Marquardt’s own photographs as well as portraits taken by his friends.

This is an absorbing snapshot of life in the GDR, of pre-gentrification Prenzlauer Berg, and a countercultural coming-of-age story played out both in the old East and in the new unified Germany. Marquardt’s life story is all the more interesting precisely because it is not a typical GDR resistance story. Despite being observed by the Stasi, he managed to carve out a fulfilling life of extreme individuality and hedonism. The derelict, dark beauty of Germany’s capital is magnificently evoked in the book – an alternative love letter to Berlin.
Anne Weber’s biography of her great-grandfather is a highly original and intelligent piece of writing. Thought-provoking and moving, *Forefathers* leaves a lasting impression upon its readers.

Florens Christian Rang (1864-1924) studied law and began a career in the civil service before becoming a Protestant pastor near Poznań in modern-day Poland, at that time part of Prussia. He then abandoned the church and wrote an angry ‘reckoning with God’. Rang was a friend and contemporary of several great early-twentieth-century thinkers, including Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Martin Buber and Walter Benjamin.

The book is written in loose journal form, and Weber’s research is interspersed with frequent references to literature and philosophy, from Nietzsche to Sebald, from Susan Sontag to André Stasiuik. Weber is concerned with trying to understand her ancestor’s personality and motivations at over a century’s remove. From the beginning, it is clear that the main hurdle to be breached is German history since his death. This history is summed up in a single word alluded to but not printed in the book until the very last pages: Auschwitz. Did Rang help to lay the ground for the Holocaust through his part in ‘Germanising’ Poland? Or did his friendships with Jews make him a counterexample to those Germans who went along with the Nazis?

Significantly, Rang’s son – Anne Weber’s grandfather – was an opportunist during the Third Reich. Weber tells the story of a grandfather she never met, because he refused to acknowledge his son’s illegitimate daughter. While reluctant to conform to clichés – ‘Should I perhaps write the hundred thousandth Nazi grandfather or father story?’ – she obtains his files and establishes that he was friendly with the SS and built a good career as a librarian, compiling political reports on books to be banned. By the end of the book, Weber has moved from fascinated admiration for her unknown great-grandfather via horror at some of his ideas to a more realistic viewpoint. While there is no room for hero-worship, she still admires his passion and lack of conformity. The final section consists of a description of a research trip to Poland, visiting the village where Rang preached and once again adjusting her image of him. And then comes a beautifully written closing passage depicting All Saints’ Day in Warsaw: a magnificent and thoughtful climax.

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Anne Weber was born in Offenbach in 1964 and now lives in Paris as a writer and translator. She translates German authors into French (Wilhelm Genazino and Sybille Lewitscharoff among others) as well as French authors into German (among them Pierre Michon and Marguerite Duras). She has received numerous prizes for her work, including the 2010 Kranichstein Literature Prize. Weber writes her own books in both German and French.

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Tel: +49 69 60 62 346
katrin.meerkamp@fischerverlage.de
www.fischerverlage.de

‘Tremendously graceful, wryly self-deprecating but not coquettish, a great deal of wit and irony, extremely intelligent, interesting and lively.’ – Hessischer Rundfunk auf Luft und Liebe

‘Anne Weber is one of today’s most exciting authors.’ – Hessischer Rundfunk

‘Anne Weber is a great artist with language.’ – Ijoma Mangold, ZDF

S. Fischer Verlag was founded by Samuel Fischer in Berlin in 1886. He was the first to publish many now famous authors such as Franz Kafka, Arthur Schnitzler, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Thomas Mann. Both S. Fischer Verlag and Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag focus on literature, psychology and history. Contemporary authors writing in German include Julia Franck, Michael Lenz, Marlene Streeruwitz, Christoph Ransmayr and Wolfgang Hilbig. The firm’s distinguished list also includes many leading international authors in translation.

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Application for assistance with translation costs:
Germany (see page 40)
The second volume of Bernard von Brentano’s series ‘The Story of a German Family’, Franziska Scheler (1945), will be published by Schöffling & Co. in 2015.

Bernard von Brentano

Theodor Chindler: Roman einer deutschen Familie

(‘Theodor Chindler: The Story of a German Family’)


Bernard von Brentano’s debut novel follows a German family grappling with both personal and political turmoil during the First World War. The book was written in Switzerland in 1936 after Brentano was forced to leave his job as a correspondent at the Frankfurter Zeitung and go into exile due to his political convictions. It was first released in Switzerland, but was eventually published in 1951 in Wiesbaden, two years after he moved back to Germany. Following a month-long literary festival in Wiesbaden in celebration of Brentano and to mark the fiftieth anniversary of his death, Theodor Chindler has been republished by Schöffling & Co. as the culmination of a revival of his popularity in Germany.

The middle-class Chindlers are a respectable, church-going family presided over by Theodor Chindler, a member of parliament for the Catholic Centre Party who works in the Reichstag in Berlin. The patriarchal Theodor initially believes that politics can be left at the door and that his place at the head of the family cannot be challenged, but then cracks start to appear in his once harmonious household. Political opinion at home becomes divided, and when daughter Maggie joins the workers’ movement against his wishes and son Leopold falls in love with a male classmate, life as they know it changes irrevocably. Disaster descends, and only one member of the family emerges triumphant: but at what price?

Theodor is a highly religious man, but also extremely ambitious. He believes in the power of Catholicism to save Germany and is staunchly opposed to the war and those in power. Longing for order and peace at home, he finds himself in constant disputes with his dissenting daughter and his wife Elisabeth, who wishes to blank out the horrors of war, as well as the idea that those in power can be challenged. Elisabeth married Theodor in her youth to escape her father’s alcoholism and is now permanently installed in their villa in Neustadt, vaguely in mourning for her own ambitions in life, which she had to put aside for her husband’s own career. A matriarch in the purest sense of the word, she loves her children greatly, but uses this as justification for surveying every aspect of their lives. She pushes them further and further away from her through her hysterical outbursts and preoccupation with saving face.

Theodor and Elisabeth have well-meaning intentions, but their preoccupations have caused a rift between them and their children. When their son Ernst comes home from the war for a brief visit, Elisabeth hounds him as to when he will see his wife Lilli again and forbids him to talk about the war; and Theodor himself is more concerned with getting information about the commanding ranks on the frontline for his own gain in parliament than he is with welcoming his son home. Ernst, exhausted and much changed from his time at war, is disappointed and exasperated by his father’s politic nature and disregard for his son’s liability to get shot should any information reach parliament through him.

Ernst is not the only Chindler sibling who goes through a transformation in the book. Maggie longs to escape from her parents and the family home, much as her own mother did when she was young. When she falls for socialist revolutionary Caspar Koch she enters unknown and dangerous territory, also realising that leaving the family home for a man doesn’t lead to freedom. She ends up in jail for a time, but finds prison not much different from being at home, telling Elisabeth when she visits that she acts more like a policeman or judge than a mother. Leopold finds himself captivated by romantic genius and close friend Balthasar Vierling, whose passionate affections he tries to fend off for fear of scandal while simultaneously not being able to bear being without him. Karl, the other Chindler brother at war, has conversely fully adopted his parents’ cool sobriety, writes of the necessity of sacrifice in his letters home – which worries Theodor greatly – and openly says that he finds his sister’s arrest an annoying embarrassment that could jeopardise his prospect of getting engaged.

Brentano’s close familial ties to the political stage of the time afforded him a unique insight into Germany’s transition between the Weimar Republic and the National Socialist government. The writer and critic Oskar Jancke praised Brentano’s writing style for being ‘concise and hard, sober and precise, tender and mysterious, but always restrained’ rather than musical, yet not without a ‘sharp, ironic and melancholic’ undertone. There is certainly an effortless control and a persuasive touch to Brentano’s highly readable prose. The book has often been compared to Heinrich Mann’s works Man of Straw and The Blue Angel and secured Brentano deep admiration from contemporaries including Bertolt Brecht (who recommended it to Walter Benjamin) and Thomas Mann.

Bernard von Brentano tells the story of backroom politics and the wretched deaths in the trenches, but the book is ultimately an engrossing family saga set in times of social upheaval. Theodor Chindler is a bittersweet snapshot in time that remains potent to this day.

By Jen Calleja
Ron Winkler, born in 1973, is the author of five collections of poetry and two volumes of flash fiction. Winkler has given readings in thirteen countries and his poems have been translated into twenty-one languages, with English translations appearing in over a dozen literary journals including Circumference, the Chicago Review, Washington Square, and Jubilat. His poetry collection Fragmented Waters, excerpted here, has been translated on a grant from the US National Endowment for the Arts and is currently seeking a publisher.

Jake Schneider is a writer, translator, and New Jersey native. After studying creative writing at Sarah Lawrence College, in 2012 he received a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship to translate Ron Winkler’s poetry—the youngest recipient to date—and has lived in Berlin ever since. He has also translated poetry by Marius Hulpe, Silke Scheuermann, and Thien Tran; an assortment of Austrian fiction excerpts for the Literaturhaus in Vienna; and an eclectic range of non-fiction including books about cave climbing, paper planes, and narcissism. In February 2015 he hosted ‘Untranslatable: Exploring the Boundaries of Translation’, a reading and concert featuring nine translators’ original renditions of allegedly untranslatable texts.

Poems by Ron Winkler
Translated by Jake Schneider

BAMBOO WINTER, PARIS

it was more than touristy
the way you laid shadows in Montmartre,
incessant crucivisitor at Place Sacré Coeur,
in the robes of a sacred, atheist gesture…

you said it lacked for height, multiple layers
of springtime, that and what you called
home linguistics, which was just as wrong
as your recap for that garçon:
I had the snow – can we pay please? – and with a
gulp: bitten-off language.

then we tossed the tip to the guys
sipping Saint Pigalle with their dogs
for the smell of endearment in the streets,
akin to wax and dish soap,
that rinsed around your one-lane
show, right on target, but

harder to substantiate
than our renewable, Sahel-colored impression
of the city in one of its bamboo winters,
where you harvested walking sticks
for cobweb days.
the time was now.

JOURNAL, LAGO MOMENTANE

our arrival was catastrophically lovely,
the sky scenically colorless, and the present
like a precise body of water.
we collected gods and polished
them late into the night. the air was
big. there were chanted animals,
apparitions with idiosyncratic panicles.
most of it looked possible.
we felt strikingly now.

GIZEH MON AMOUR
for Christiane Wohlrab
the pyramids seem
lifted from a textbook on aesthetics.
hawkers swoop in with vocabulary
for withstanding their beauty.
the hieroglyph for stoicism
must be a camel.
pretty soon everyone succumbs
to the heliopuncture of the sun.
to see other old gods, there’s
an entrance fee. the Sphinx
has been known to convey
a rather inaccurate picture.

ALTAR INCLINATION

the way I knew you, as a chant from naked fragrant June,
and the way you could hasten your hair, was a trip
to a southern condition. there were four-lipped coasts there,
the touch of acacia, and in the dunes behind them we exchanged
unalternate light, an almost genetic correspondence
that we called an altar and where we deposited deep sea nights,
little jellyfish sensualities under the auspices
of our eye bugs and sometimes our heron joints.
I researched in you the most fantastical metaphors
of this century and tended to the feral zoo
of your glances. we oystered around each other oceanically, as
we belonged among those who had shamanic dreams
and those who are dreamt of shamanically. I was
never so two as with you.

Ron Winkler, Fragmentierte Gewässer, Berlin Verlag 2007 © Schöffling & Co. Verlagsbuchhandlung, Frankfurt am Main

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NBG CHOICES: NEW POETRY TRANSLATIONS

Rubble Flora: Selected Poems
Volker Braun
Translated by David Constantine and Karen Leeder
Seagull Press

Last Day of the Year: Selected Poems
Michael Krüger
Translated by Karen Leeder and Richard Dove
Carcanet Press
Martin Chalmers (1948-2014)

Martin Chalmers, who has died of cancer at the age of 65, was a polymathic translator and a keen champion of German-language writing. Although the works he translated were enormously wide-ranging, he is perhaps best known for his translation of the evocative wartime diaries of the Jewish-German academic Victor Klemperer, *I Shall Bear Witness*, for the second volume of which, *The Lesser Evil* 1945-1959, he was awarded the Schlegel-Tieck Prize in 2004.

Martin was born in Bielefeld to a Scottish father and German mother, and grew up in Glasgow, speaking both languages. He studied history at the universities of Glasgow, Birmingham and Bochum, before moving to London to work on a PhD in German history until funds finally ran out. It was during this time that he had the good fortune to meet an editor at Pluto Press, Pete Aytton, who offered him his first translation job. Pete would go on to found the adventurous avant-garde publisher Serpent’s Tail, for which Martin went on to translate numerous German and Austrian writers and also worked as an occasional editor.

Martin’s many book translations include *Europe, Europe*, *Mediocrity and Delusion* and *The Silences of Hammerstein* by Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *The Passport* by Herta Müller and *Greed* by Elfriede Jelinek, *Detlev’s Imitations* by Hubert Fichte and *The Bridge of the Golden Horn* by Emine Sevgi Özdamar. Latterly he struck up a highly productive relationship with Naveen Kishore of Seagull Books in Kolkata, for whom he made some of his best translations – *The Dark Ship* by Sherko Fatah, *December* by Alexander Kluge (a particular favourite of Martin’s) and *Storm Still* by Peter Handke.

In 2004 Martin, his partner the writer and translator Esther Kinsky and their three black cats (Kalman, Shwartzie and Franz) left England to travel between Bottanya in Hungary and the village of Ringenwalde near Berlin (the writer Karin Duve, a neighbour, would sometimes ride by on her white horse, much to Martin’s amusement). It was here that Martin’s illness finally took hold, but to the end he maintained wry and forthright views on all his many interests – among them politics, nature, food, clothes, music, cinema as well as literature. Martin was always a kind, funny and erudite companion, and he will be sorely missed by everyone who knew him.

By Shaun Whiteside

Martin Chalmers, translator and writer, born 11 November 1948; died 22 October 2014.

Translation Grants – How to Apply

All fiction books featured in *New Books in German* in the last five years (ten issues) and bought by an English-language publisher are guaranteed a grant. Applications for fiction titles outside this period will still be considered. Non-fiction books by German and Swiss authors are guaranteed a grant.

**Germany**

Applications should be made to the Goethe-Institut in your country. The local Goethe-Institut will then check whether your application is complete and pass it on to the Goethe-Institut’s head office in Munich with their comments.

If you are interested in publishing a title not featured in *New Books in German*, please contact your local Goethe-Institut directly.

The form to be filled out for these applications is available at the following webpage, which has much useful information in English: http://www.goethe.de/kue/lit/prj/uef/enindex.htm

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Tel: +44 20 7596 4020 jens.boyer@london.goethe.org

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**Contact person in the Goethe-Institut Head Office:**

Andreas Schmohl, Goethe-Institut Munich
Tel: +49 89 15921-852 schmohl@goethe.de

**Switzerland**

Pro Helvetia covers up to 100% of the effective translation costs for literary works by Swiss authors (fiction and poetry), books for children and teenagers (where they may cover part of the licensing fees), non-fiction books by Swiss authors on cultural and artistic topics pertaining to Switzerland, and plays by Swiss dramatists (including surtitles).

Applications must be submitted to Pro Helvetia, Swiss Arts Council by the licensed publisher. Pro Helvetia accepts applications at any time, but they must be submitted at least three months before a book goes to print.

**Application portal:** www.myprohelvetia.ch

Applications should include:

- signed copies of the licence agreement and the translation contract
- original text and its translation (at least 20 pages)

Translation fees will be paid out directly to the translator by Pro Helvetia upon publication. Translation fees are based on the translation contract and calculated according to the established rates in the country in question.

**Contact Person:**

Angelika Salvisberg, Head, Literature and Society
Tel: +41 44 267 71 26 asalvisberg@prohelvetia.ch www.prohelvetia.ch.

**Austria**

Applications for adult fiction or children’s books should be made to the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture in good time before the book goes to print.

Applications should include:

- copies of the contracts between the publishing houses and with the translator
- information about the translator (CV and list of translated works)
- the translation or partial translation (where possible)

The application form can be downloaded from: http://www.kunstkultur.bka.gv.at/site/8052/default.aspx#a2

This form is in German but help is on hand from:

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