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awards grants

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support for
translation

for translations of contemporary
literary works from Switzerland,
with an eye to promoting cultural
and linguistic diversity and helping
Swiss authors reach larger
audiences, both within the country
and around the world.

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lation support see page 41
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[www.prohelvetia.ch/en/
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Dear Friends of Literature, Publishers and Translators

Sample translations online
www.12swissbooks.ch



In the last seven editions of *12 Swiss Books*, we have presented 131 books, which have resulted in more than 160 translation projects. Some books were translated into one or two languages, others into ten to fifteen. Readers across the globe can delve into these books in a total of 34 languages. What a gratifying outcome! We at Pro Helvetia are always delighted when a book 'has legs' and – thanks to the work of a translator – can be enjoyed by people in other parts of the world, giving them a taste of our literature and a glimpse into our culture. That is why, this year again, in the eighth edition of *12 Swiss Books*, we recommend new books from Switzerland that are close to our hearts: because they are particularly funny or particularly touching; because we truly believe they are beautifully suited to a journey into other languages and cultures. One of the most widely translated of the books from the past *12 Swiss Books* is, by the way, Pedro Lenz's *Der Goalie bin ig* (in English, *Naw Much of a Talker*, translated by Donal McLaughlin) – a book written in Bernese dialect, which is often claimed to be untranslatable. Untranslatable? The numbers give the lie to this claim: *Der Goalie bin ig* has been translated into 10 languages, including English, Italian and Russian. Untranslatable, dear authors, publishers and readers? There's no such thing!

All that remains for us now is to hope you enjoy the new edition of our magazine and that you find it as inspiring as the more than 160 publishers who, over the past seven years, have sent books from Switzerland out on their journeys into the wider world.

On behalf of the editorial team, Angelika Salvisberg (Head of Literature) and Eva Stensrud (Editor-in-chief), Pro Helvetia

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GRM. Brainfuck

Sibylle Berg
Novel
German

The Brave New World will be here in a few years. Perhaps it has already arrived. Every day, another western country turns autocratic. There is the looming threat that algorithms will replace human beings. Great Britain, the birthplace of capitalism, has now perfected it. But four children have decided to break – rather than obey – the rules. Very thoroughly. Welcome to the world of GRM.

This is a manifesto for fury, for escape, for individual revolt. It is the story of four feral children from highly unstable homes in one of the bleakest regions in England, the de-industrialised north-west. Rochdale is a town devoid of hope, a town in which poverty, violence and abuse are part of daily life, a place where kids have to grow up too quickly. The only thing that binds together the angry, martial-arts-obsessed Don(atella), the traumatised Polish boy Peter, the albino girl Karen and Hannah, an orphan from Liverpool, is their hatred of their lives, of reality; their love of grime (or GRM) – the music style that has replaced punk as the music of the angry and dispossessed – and their determination to get revenge on the people responsible for their misery.

This thirst for revenge leads them to London, where they encounter degenerate conservatives, conspiracy theorists, computer-programmers who vacillate between megalomania and impotence, cynical secret agents, Chinese power

Title
GRM. Brainfuck

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634

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Iris Brandt
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“Grime seemed to have been invented just for her. Don didn’t know who had invented it or out of what components – that was the stuff of discussions between young men who were able to project an aura of invincibility by deploying insider terminology – Don just knew that the music sounded the way she wanted to feel. Angry and dangerous.”

brokers, algorithms that have developed a life of their own, and multitudes of losers who spend their days reliving their own pathetic pasts by means of virtual reality. But what started out as a hit squad turns into a makeshift family as the four outcasts attempt, with limited success, to create a home for themselves in an abandoned factory on the city’s outskirts.

Text © Kiepenheuer & Witsch



Sibylle Berg lives in Zürich. She is the author of 24 plays, 14 novels and numerous radio plays and essays. The awards she has received include the Wolfgang Koeppen Prize (2008), the Else Lasker-Schüler Drama Award (2016) and the Kassel Literary Prize for Grotesque Humour (2019). Her novels, journalism and theatre plays have been translated into 34 languages.

Photo: Katharina Lütcher

Sample translation

by Tim Mohr

12swissbooks.ch/Berg



The Pachinko Marbles

Elisa Shua Dusapin

Novel

French



"When I use Japanese to talk about my grandparents, they feel like strangers to me."

"Pachinko is a game for both groups and individuals." This quotation from Roland Barthes opens Elisa Shua Dusapin's most recent novel, *The Pachinko Marbles*. A group game because the arcades where pachinko – a Japanese variation on pinball – is played are full of rows of adjacent slot machines and an individual game because, when you play, you are intensely alone. The Swiss-Korean author uses this metaphor to tell a story; a story that tackles the issues of identity and otherness, through the prism of language and culture.

Thirty-something Claire is a Swiss citizen of Korean background, a country she has never visited. The novel opens with her travelling to Tokyo, where her grandparents live. On arrival at Shinagawa station, her objective is simple: to persuade them to return for a time to Korea, the country they loved, fled from during the Korean War and have since learned to forget. In Japan, she also gives French lessons to Mieko, a Japanese girl who constantly mirrors Claire's own deformed image of herself, divided between the familiar and the foreign, the self and the other.

After Elisa Shua Dusapin's first novel, *Winter in Sokcho*, which was a narrative reflection on feeling foreign and unfamiliar in a familiar world, *The Pachinko Marbles* takes the opposite view. As soon as she alights from the Tokyo train, Claire enters a puzzling world of unintelligible symbols, fake appearances and all-pervading fog. Her grandparents' presence can do nothing to help. At times she sees that "a layer of pollution hangs over the metropolis", and at other times "a mist masks the horizon". When Claire approaches a church in a theme park devoted to the Swiss character Heidi, believing she has at last found a familiar environment, she realises "it's only a façade, made of plaster, supported by a metal framework".

At the heart of this world of indistinct landmarks and confused identities, the author seizes on games as the best mediator between herself and others, a familiar tool for taming otherness. Be it Monopoly, Tetris or Playmobil, the rules and themes differ little from one country to another,

Title

Les Billes du Pachinko

Publisher

Editions Zoé, Chêne-Bourg

Publication date

August 2018

Pages

144

ISBN

978-2-88927-579-3

Translation rights

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Of French and Korean parentage, Elisa Shua Dusapin grew up in Paris, Seoul and Porrentruy in the canton of Jura. She graduated from the Swiss Literature Institute in Biel/Bienne, and in 2016 she published her first novel, *Hiver à Sokcho* (*Winter in Sokcho*, soon to appear in English), winner of a number of literary prizes, translated into several languages, and adapted for the theatre. Her second novel, *The Pachinko Marbles*, has already been awarded a Swiss Literature Award.

Photo: Romain Guélat

Sample translation

by Hyunmin Park

12swissbooks.ch/Dusapin



holding out the promise of transcultural communion. But the intimacy she experiences is merely superficial; and language actually creates a barrier.

The game of pachinko sums up this impasse. Instead of a game that brings people together, it divides: it is incomprehensible and constantly trips you up. Pachinko's very existence is in fact based on fake identity: invented by the Koreans, it has become the symbol of an exclusively Japanese culture. Elisa Shua Dusapin uses this multi-faceted abstraction in a variety of ways: she writes of a creature to which a person attaches themselves "like a tick" and whose coat one caresses "like that of a beast of burden after a day's ploughing". Through the whole novel Claire strives tirelessly to familiarise herself with Japan, playing the game, enduring defeat but never abandoning her hope of victory, of winning the jackpot and of reaching the main prize – getting closer to her roots.

A novel about identity and ancestry, *The Pachinko Marbles* depicts the ambivalence of family relations and the difficulty of discovering one's true origins. The reader is drawn into an atmosphere of restrained violence but sustained intensity in this stylistically austere novel.

Text by Valentin Kolly

The Moods of Love

Markus Gasser
Essays
German



Title
Die Launen der Liebe

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January 2019

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320

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978-3-446-25839-6

Translation rights
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How much real life can be found in a book? The literary scholar, essayist and critic Markus Gasser explores the various bonds of love depicted in the works and life experiences of a range of writers, from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe to Gabriel García Márquez, from Emily Brontë to Sylvia Plath. He shows how they transform their own experiences into literature; how their longing and desire, unions and marital bliss, unrequited love, crisis, betrayal and separation become part of their works, and how literature itself enters and transforms their lives.

The debate about how much of themselves artists include in their own work is as old as art itself. Purists treat an author's work as completely separate from their life, while at the other extreme, critics often view an artist's work solely as a reflection of their life, with many nuanced and differentiated positions in between.

For this volume, Markus Gasser has selected 15 love stories involving authors who explicitly endorsed the autobiographical aspect of their work. The book covers passionate relationships such as that between the writers Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes; then, there's Gabriel García Márquez's story of two lovers in one of his novels. In another chapter we read of Bettine von Arnim's adoration of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe; in further chapters of the lives and loves of



“He was there for her and her alone; he fixed his eyes on hers with hypnotic insistence and she felt the very foundations of the universe shaking.”

John Updike, Marguerite Duras, George Eliot, Vladimir Nabokov and John Galsworthy. Markus Gasser analyses the great names of world literature at the very moment when their love lives and literary output intersect. All these authors turned their love stories into literature; at other times, it was the other way around, as their literature miraculously worked its way back into their love lives.

Gasser is interested not only in how real life inspires the great works of world literature, but also in the whole process of transforming life into literature; how an author draws on personal experience in order to create a unique literary world. Thanks to Markus Gasser, we are granted this unique opportunity to see how they do this, to look over their shoulders as they create their art. That is the really original aspect of Gasser’s book. It provides a fascinating and sensuous account of the exhilaration of literary and romantic fulfilment, at the same time showing us how literature can help transcend disappointment, loss and death itself.



Markus Gasser was born in 1967 and studied German and English in Innsbruck. He lives in Zürich and works as a writer and critic. Hanser has published the following: *Das Buch der Bücher für die Insel* (*The Book of Books for a Deserted Island*) and *Eine Weltgeschichte in 33 Romanen* (*A History of the World in 33 Novels*). Markus Gasser hosts a regular YouTube series in which he discusses new literary publications: youtube.com/c/literaturistalles

Photo: Peter-Andreas Hassiepen

Sample translation
by Alyson Coombes
12swissbooks.ch/Gasser



Write my Name on the Waters

Jean-François Haas

Novel

French



Title

Tu écriras mon nom sur les eaux

Publisher

Éditions du Seuil, Paris

Publication date

January 2019

Pages

469

ISBN

978-2-02-139003-2

Translation rights

Jennie Dorny

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“Time opens its floodgates and engulfs you, like those fish swept along by the water from a dam.”

Write my Name on the Waters sets up a dialogue between the history and literature of a whole century as seen through the eyes of a young Swiss man, who goes to make his fortune in the USA. The novel has echoes of Flaubert and Valéry, of Proust, Joyce and Thomas Mann. After five novels and a collection of short stories, Jean-François Haas is back with his most ambitious work yet. Never before has he liberated, collected and mixed the human voice with the direct experience of history to this degree; never before has he so daringly exposed the ways of the world.

Jean-François Haas' specialty is to bring together individual lives and the collective history of the 20th century, a century weighed down by war and disaster. More than ever, *Write my Name on the Waters* projects, compares and crosses frontiers. In its 469 pages, this novel is nothing if not ambitious, following the personal histories of the many characters listed at the beginning of the book. Jean-François Haas roams the world, from Fribourg in Switzerland to San Francisco, via Odessa and Cologne. In so doing, with mastery and humility, he collects fragments of more than 100 years of history.

The main narrator, Jonas, is thirty-five years old. The story he tells is that of Tobie Ruan, born in 1895, the illegitimate child of Jonas' great-great-grandmother. Tobie sets out for

the United States to try to find his father, who lives in exile in the USA. On the way, he meets another immigrant, Isaac Milstein, haunted by the loss of his wife and son in 1905 in a tragic shooting incident during a pogrom on the Odessa Steppes. Accompanied by Isaac, whom he looks up to as a source of wisdom, Tobie roams the violent and tortured century.

The author releases a fascinating flow and polyphony of voices. Through Jean-François Haas' beautiful and skilled writing these voices multiply and merge with memory, history and the stories of others. Jonas, the last link in the family chain, is well aware of this: "Sometimes I wonder if I am telling your story or my own [...], because we resemble so closely what others are", he says at the end of the prologue. Indeed, memory, and the fictions that memory invents, are the raw material of the novel: "How would I be able to go out and find you if I did not use my imagination?", Jonas asks himself as he approaches his ancestor's life-story. He must resort to fiction to track down the story, in the same way that Jean-François Haas must do in order to resurrect a century of history. Haas also summons up a constellation of literary stars to help him, from Tolstoy to Hemingway, Roth to Solzhenitsyn, Proust to Kenzaburo Ōé. But always it is Haas we are reading. His strong narrative voice, that of a writer aware of the extraordinary power of memory and the word, brings everything together.

In setting up a dialogue between reality and fiction, the meanderings of the genealogical labyrinth and the human connections we all share, Haas manages to fill the gaping emptiness of a whole century, described by Jonas like this: "You do not come from a place, but from an absence."

Text by Valentin Kolly



Jean-François Haas was born in Fribourg in 1952. After a career as a teacher, he devoted himself to writing. His first three novels, published by Éditions du Seuil – *Dans la gueule de la baleine guerre* (*In the Mouth of the Whale of War*), *J'ai avancé comme la nuit vient* (*I Advanced as Night Falls*) and *Le Chemin sauvage* (*The Wild Path*) – have won several literary prizes.

Photo: Hermance Triay

Sample translation
by Jackie Smith
12swissbooks.ch/Haas

The Rome Zoo

Pascal Janovjak

Novel

French



Title

Le Zoo de Rome

Publisher

Actes Sud, Arles

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April 2019

Pages

256


ISBN

978-2-330-12082-5

Translation rights

Nathalie Alliel

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"At nightfall he'd given the animal one last sugar lump, and that evening the tamandua had almost eaten out of his hand, its twitching snout practically touching the skin of his palm. Then Salvatore had taken out the old shotgun."



Born in Basel in 1975 to a French mother and Slovakian father, Pascal Janovjak studied comparative literature and art history in Strasbourg before moving to the Middle East. He worked first in Jordan for an Aid and Development programme, then in Libya, where he taught literature at the University of Tripoli. His works include: *Coléoptères (Beetles)*, *L'Invisible (The Invisible One)* and *À Toi (To You)*, which he wrote with Kim Thuy.

Photo: Laura Salvinelli

Sample translation

by Romy Fursland

12swissbooks.ch/Janovjak



The Rome Zoo was established in 1911 in the gardens of the Villa Borghese; over the last hundred years it has undergone constant transformation and expansion, with accompanying changes of name and appearance. Pascal Janovjak has lived in Rome since 2011 and has made a painstakingly detailed study of the city's zoo. His novel, *The Rome Zoo*, is an investigation, based on ethology, animal behaviour, in a century of human and animal confrontation and co-operation; two realms today more disunited than ever before, in spite of inhabiting the same territory.

Pascal Janovjak's zoo is a microcosm of the 20th century. He writes fully and freely of Mussolini's fascism and of 'Italia' – its feline allegory; of Nazi rationalism and of the colonial imperialism to which the zoo owes quite a few of its famous animal residents. As the novel develops, an Italy of capitalist ideals emerges, an Italy that "from now on lists everything, documents and registers its progress", while the animal species decrease in number and their living conditions in the zoo deteriorate.

In *The Rome Zoo*, the historical disasters of the 20th century appear between the lines, reflected, for example, in the fluctuating visitor numbers. Visitors come and go, disappear for a time, then reappear, sometimes flooding in, before disappearing again. Only the animals remain, involuntary guarantors of stability in the eye of the storm.

Originally The Rome Zoo aspired to bring life and living things to an Italy that had been left "only with yellowing statues to remind people of epic combats between man and beast". But the exact opposite emerges in the zoo described by Pascal Janovjak: his zoo is a counterfeit, an illusion, a place haunted by the ghosts of dead men and extinct species, a world "in which the Coliseums are made of polystyrene" and the icebergs sculpted by hand. The writer supplies plenty of evidence: whether a map of the zoo or a photographic portrait, nothing on display in fact corresponds to reality. The novel thus achieves its main ambition: to deconstruct, to expose the true appearance of the zoo and reveal it as no more, no less, than an artefact. One of Janovjak's protagonists is Guido Anselmo Moro, an ethologist working for the Rome Zoo, who perfectly embodies the novel's ambition and intention, and whose name cannot but remind us of the mad vivisectionist, Doctor Moreau, invented by H.G. Wells.

Switching between past and present, *The Rome Zoo* paints the picture of a century characterised by a problematic relationship with history. Looking back to the past and attempting a balance with the present, the novel is many things: spellbinding and disturbing, precise and dream-like. Sometimes it sounds like a warning: "Maybe Rome Zoo no longer makes history, but it continues to be a bitter reflection of it."

Text by Valentin Kolly

Jump

Simone Lappert
Novel
German

A young woman stands on a roof throwing tiles. What is she doing up there? Does she intend to jump off? Will she leap or not leap? More and more people gather to gawp, to film her on their mobiles and to comment on what's happening. Some are smug, some irritated, some sympathetic. Simone Lappert creates a tapestry of ten different perspectives on one and the same event, each displayed with passion and depth to the eyes of her spellbound readers.

At the heart of the story is Manu, the young woman on the roof. What is going on inside her head as she watches a curious crowd gather in the square below her? Is there a way back? Is there any escape except jumping off?

Title
Der Sprung

Publisher
Diogenes, Zürich

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336

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Translation rights
Susanne Bauknecht
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Nominated
for the Swiss
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2019



“Between the lines of heating wire on the rear windshield, she saw the roof. She saw Manu balancing on it, pulling roofing tiles away from their moorings and piling them up next to the chimney, her head a music note that bobbed up and down between the lines on the pane. Out of tune, thought Astrid.”

The situation drags on for hours. The police cordon off the building, the town centre descends into chaos, the authorities can't cope. The identity of the young woman on the roof is unclear, and not even her boyfriend – who is there among the crowd – knows her last name. Meanwhile, Manu is battling with herself and the onlookers, moving right to the edge of the roof and then back again, furiously hurling objects and tiles. No one knows why she is up there. Could she be prevented from jumping, and if so, how? Maybe by the police officer with psychology training? Or will she leap just when he nips off to the loo? Chapter by chapter, the reader experiences the same event through the eyes of Manu's boyfriend, her sister, a policeman, and seven other people. You suspect that all these people have something to do with the young woman. But what? What is clear is that nothing in their lives will be the same again: they all go off course, lose their footing – or topple into a freedom that they had never thought possible.

From the start, the author reveals that Manu will end up making the jump. Readers experience the slow-motion jump in convincing close-up. This knowledge means that we can become totally involved with the different perspectives and characters. It is no longer a question of whether, but rather of how and why – and also of what this exceptional situation does to ten very different people.



Simone Lappert was born in Aarau, Switzerland, in 1985; she studied at the Swiss Literature Institute in Biel/Bienne. Her debut novel *Wurfschatten (Shadow Casters)* was published in 2014. She won the Wartholz Prize Newcomer Award. She is President of the International Poetry Festival Basel and one of the Swiss curators of the poetry project *Babelsprech.International*. She lives and works in Basel and Zürich.

Photo: Ayse Yavas

Sample translation
by Katy Derbyshire
12swissbooks.ch/Lappert



The Last of My Kind

Lukas Linder

Novel

German



Title

Der Letzte meiner Art

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September 2018

Pages

272

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Translation rights

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“The tattoo was an immense mutilation that seemed to incorporate the entire colour spectrum. And other colours too, which only existed on Mother’s back. Nevertheless, I was firmly convinced that the tattoo must portray something more. An image. An object. A story. I didn’t like abstract art back then.”

This the story of Alfred von Ärmel, the last scion of a genteel Swiss lineage: a book about a young man with high-flying plans and a burning desire to be a hero – all in a bid to boost the flagging reputation of his ramshackle family. But how on earth does he become a hero, especially when his favourite pastimes are napping in the afternoon, watering the flowers, taking a stroll and – to top it all – he is notoriously plagued by bad luck? Lukas Linder has no interest in painting a delicate watercolour of this once-grand family: his tale is quirky, outlandish and achingly sad.

Young Alfred lurches from one fiasco to the next; his family is a perfect chamber of horrors. He struggles to understand them and keep up with them, from the myth-enshrouded progenitor, known as the ‘Butcher of Marignano’ to the domineering grandmother, the diva-like mother and the good-for-nothing father, not forgetting the ridiculously over-talented ‘uber-brother’. This is the chaotic and dysfunctional backdrop against which Alfred – sickly, unappealing Alfred, who has not been blessed with many talents – seeks to do his one great thing and finally find his place in the world. That his thoughts also turn to romance is appropriate enough, but even falling in love has a knack to it and requires a certain feel for the moment – something that is woefully lacking in poor Alfred von Ärmel. Yet despite all this, he continues his quest, for which we must be thankful. Because not only



Lukas Linder was born in the canton of Zürich in 1984 and studied German and philosophy in Basel. He has written plays for Theater Basel, amongst others, and has been awarded a number of prizes, including the Kleist Prize for Young Dramatists and the Heidelberger Stückemarkt Audience Prize. *The Last of My Kind* is his first novel.

Photo: Dominique Meienberg

Sample translation
by Alyson Coombes
12swissbooks.ch/Linder



does Lukas Linder manage to craft and elicit unexpected and rare insights from this panoply of the grotesque, he also manages to evoke in the reader a sense of his or her own unfulfilled ambitions – perhaps not as far removed from Alfred von Ärmel’s own far-fetched life.

Lukas Linder writes with such precision and unflinching accuracy about everyday failings that readers may find themselves surprised by how much they laugh and apply this prism of the grotesque to their own lives.

Uncertain Manifesto 7: Emily Dickinson, Marina Tsvetaeva. Immense Poetry

Frédéric Pajak
Graphic Essay
French

What do Emily Dickinson and Marina Tsvetaeva have in common? Not a century; not a country, but the sheer inability to take the easy path in their art. They are both also tireless in their efforts to “reinvent it, each one in her own fashion”. In this volume of *Uncertain Manifesto*, Frédéric Pajak tries out different forms, part novel, part poetry, to give us two stories of two exceptional lives on the fringes of society. He writes that he can only hope to scratch the surface: Marina Tsvetaeva, he says, “can only elude me”, and Emily Dickinson “can only elude me more”.

So far, Pajak has profiled, amongst others, Walter Benjamin, Ezra Pound, André Breton and Vincent Van Gogh. In his seventh volume of *Uncertain Manifesto*, he has, for the first time, turned the spotlight on two women who created – to use his own words – “female poetry”.

From the first lines of their respective biographies, it would seem that these two women have nothing in common. Dickinson grew up in a peaceful, prosperous household and was so solitary that she was almost not of this world: “My friends are very few. I can count them on my fingers – and besides, have fingers to spare.” As for Tsvetaeva, she experienced growing and often miserable poverty. She collected companions and amorous encounters, and was a keen observer of the political upheavals in Europe during her

Title

Manifeste incertain 7. Emily Dickinson, Marina Tsvetaeva. L'immense poésie

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320

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Translation rights

Christine Bonnard-Legrand
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Prix
Goncourt
for Biography
2019



"In reality she is not writing for anyone, not even for herself: she is addressing Eternity, an Eternity which she calls out to, whose presence she senses, and which responds to her through the flowers, the bees or even just the falling night."

lifetime. She was bold in her views and never hesitated to take risks. So in spite of the deep differences in the lives of the two women, they shared a common core: similar souls. More important than the body, more essential than the outside world, for them and for Pajak, the soul symbolises eternity, a recurring theme in the lives of the two poets, for whom vulnerability was their very essence. This is what enables them – through their poetry – to maintain a distance between themselves and their misery. “What am I here for?” asks Tsvetaeva. “To listen to my soul.”

As well as text, Frédéric Pajak illustrates the lives of Dickinson and Tsvetaeva with a series of black-and-white drawings. Often mimetic, sometimes metaphorical, the images intensify the poetic force of the text. Thus, when in 1922 Tsvetaeva leaves Berlin for the Czechoslovakian countryside, the drawings likewise ‘leave the city’, plunging into a forest which has at its very centre – in black and white – a cemetery.

Biographies and histories are often illustrated with photographs which create, or dictate, an oppressive reflection of the person or place. Pajak’s drawings set out to do something very different: by showing less, he shows more. His sketches prefer the reality of the soul to that of the world and thus bring the biographer and reader closer than ever to the essence of what Dickinson and Tsvetaeva themselves were trying to express.

When Pajak depicts an existence, he does not just content himself with setting things down for posterity; he views the events that have marked humanity through the prism of individual lives. He turns things on their head, ignoring the bigger picture in favour of the smallest detail. Wednesday, 18 June 1941: Marina Tsvetaeva heads off on an outing, visits a château, relaxes next to a lake. In this scene, the German invasion of Russia is only mentioned at the very end of the paragraph, almost as an inconsequential afterthought. This is what makes *Uncertain Manifesto 7* special: History is retold through the experience of *human* stories.

Text by Valentin Kolly



Frédéric Pajak is a Swiss French writer, graphic artist and editor. His works combine both prose and drawings to create his own unique prize-winning genre. Following *L'Étrange Beauté du monde* (*The World's Strange Beauty*) and *En souvenir du monde* (*In Memory of the World*), the new edition of *L'Immense Solitude* (*Immense Solitude*) and the first seven volumes of *Manifeste incertain* (the first one translated into English as *Uncertain Manifesto*), Éditions Noir sur Blanc continues its publication of the works of Frédéric Pajak. He won the Médicis Essay Prize 2014 for *Manifeste incertain 3*, as well as a Swiss Literature Award in 2015; in 2019 he won the Prix Goncourt for Biography for *Manifeste incertain 7*.

Photo: Louise Oligny

Sample translation
by Romy Fursland
12swissbooks.ch/Pajak



Those Dark Days

Ruth Schweikert
Autobiographical Novel
German

“And what am I waiting for now?” – in her latest and most deeply personal book, Ruth Schweikert writes of her experience of breast cancer. On 9 February 2016, she was diagnosed with a particularly aggressive form of breast-cancer. Guesswork and fear become reality. But what is that reality?

We expect precision and insight from an author. When the subject of the story is the author’s own illness, however, this ambition becomes a literary and personal challenge. She



Ruth Schweikert was born in Lörrach in southern Germany in 1965 and grew up in Switzerland. She now lives in Zürich with her family and works as an author and playwright. In 1994 she made her debut with an acclaimed collection of short stories entitled *Erdnüsse. Totschlagen* (*Peanuts. Killing*), followed by her novels *Augen zu* (*Eyes Closed*), *Ohio* and *Wie wir älter werden* (*How We Grow Old*). She has won numerous awards for her work, including the Ingeborg Bachmann Competition’s Bertelsmann Scholarship (1994) and the City of Zürich Art Prize (2016).

Photo: Sibylle Meier

Sample translation
by Jen Calleja
12swissbooks.ch/Schweikert



Title

Tage wie Hunde

Publisher

S. Fischer, Frankfurt am Main

Publication date

March 2019

Pages

208

ISBN

978-3-10-397386-0

Translation rights

Myriam Alfano

myriam.alfano@fischerverlage.de



“Tuesday 9th February 2016, 1.09 pm; I’m standing in my winter coat in front of the Café zur Weltkugel in Zürich smoking what could be my last cigarette; the almost full pack I tapped it from with my numb fingers is striped a dainty sky blue and white, like the material for a summer dress, or a baby blanket.”

has to see past her own feelings, past her own fear, sadness and pain. So nothing is certain in Ruth Schweikert’s latest work, which sets out to describe the reality of illness with radical precision. She writes of sleepless nights, injections, catheters, but also of her own writing and reading during her illness, and – surprisingly – the wonderful world of text messaging.

She explores not only her illness, but the possibilities of portraying illness in literary form. Ruth Schweikert tells her story without self-pity. Nothing is whitewashed in this detailed, gritty account from a writer who is shaken to her very core and who peppers her story with text messages from friends. While adding an extra voice and a painfully authentic perspective, these texts serve the purpose of saying more about how she is faring than her own words. The result is a voyage of literary discovery – of the author’s sense of self, of her fears and – not least – of her battered body. This is a book about the challenge of writing about real life and the value of a life.

Those Dark Days is a stark, brutally honest book about loneliness and shame, illness and death. Yet it is simultaneously a joyful, life-affirming story of friendship, love and the liberating power of literature.

There

Niko Stoifberg
Novel
German



Title

Dort

Publisher

Nagel & Kimche, Zürich

Publication date

February 2019

Pages

328

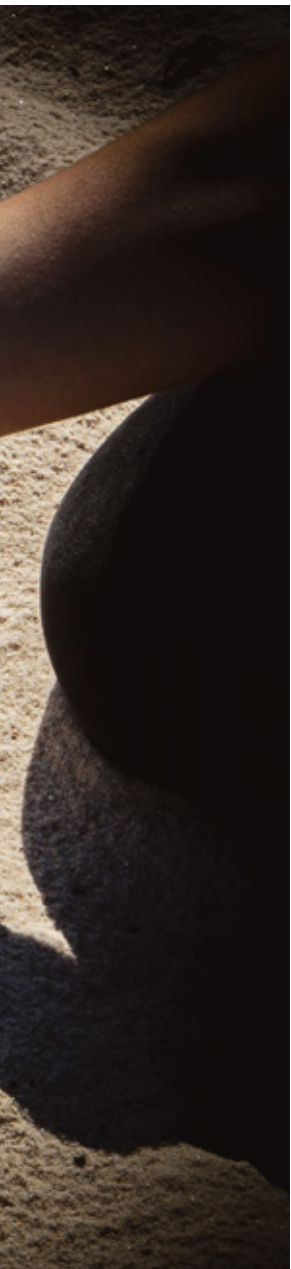
ISBN

978-3-312-01120-9

Translation rights

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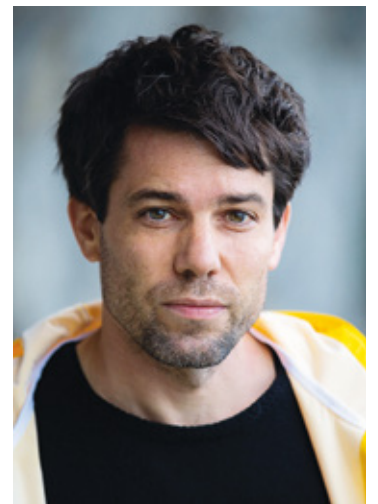
Sebi Zünd has a project, 'Nature directe'. He wants to create a direct link between houses and nature with a series of wooden walkways. It's a trendy project with great promise. But then he meets Lydia and knows within seconds that, "She's the one, she's what I've been missing." So how can he attract her attention? Keeping out of sight for just long enough, Sebi Zünd pushes the child Lydia is with on the shore – her little brother – into the lake, not in order to kill him but with the aim of staging a heroic rescue in front of the woman. However, his plan goes awry: the little boy drowns. The unsuspecting Lydia sees Sebi as the tragically unsuccessful saviour of her young brother, and a love story develops between them. Yet, can Sebi keep his secret? Does he want to keep it? The tension is sustained from the first page to the last, and once you start reading this action-packed novel you won't be able to put it down.

The love story between Sebi and Lydia is ill-starred from the beginning. A carefree love affair is impossible, as the secret gnaws at his emotions and his conscience. Finally the mother of the drowned boy begins to unravel the mystery and the story takes a completely absurd turn: she doesn't report him to the police, but forces him to do something dangerous: to build a walkway to a remote chapel as part of his 'Nature directe' project. The abyss beckons. One false move and Sebi will die. One false word and his dark secret will be exposed.

“With time I will learn. There will be moments like this, again and again, but then they pass, like now. No pain can be so great that it doesn’t stop, at some point, eventually.”

Sebi is not however the only one weighed down with guilt. At the hotel in the mountains where Sebi is forced to stay by the dead boy’s mother, and which belongs to Lydia’s family, the atmosphere becomes steadily more menacing, suffocating and bizarre, especially as the hotel staff are also more than a little odd – in fact, at times they resemble something out of the legendary and controversial classic 1932 film *Freaks*. Sebi lives with them, but is never accepted as one of them, moving among these weird figures as if in a dream. Things start to come to a head and the story speeds up, becoming breathless and unstable. The focus is no longer on the question of ‘guilt’ and ‘moral behaviour’, but on the unconscious, the unfathomable and the uncontrollable.

Niko Stoifberg’s debut novel is a cleverly narrated, tension-packed thriller. It is also a parody of all the trendy ideas of ‘mindfulness’ and ‘minimalism’, and our attempt to reduce life’s unfathomable mysteries to the lowest common denominator.



Niko Stoifberg, who was born in Lucerne in 1976, studied English and German and has worked as a waiter, newspaper deliveryman, journalist, cartoonist and editor. A selection of his *Vermutungen* (*Conjectures*), which appeared as a column in the cultural magazine *O41*, is available as *Das Blaue Büchlein* (*The Little Blue Book*). *There* is his first novel.

Photo: Hendrik Dietrich

Sample translation

by Amy Bojang

12swissbooks.ch/Stoifberg



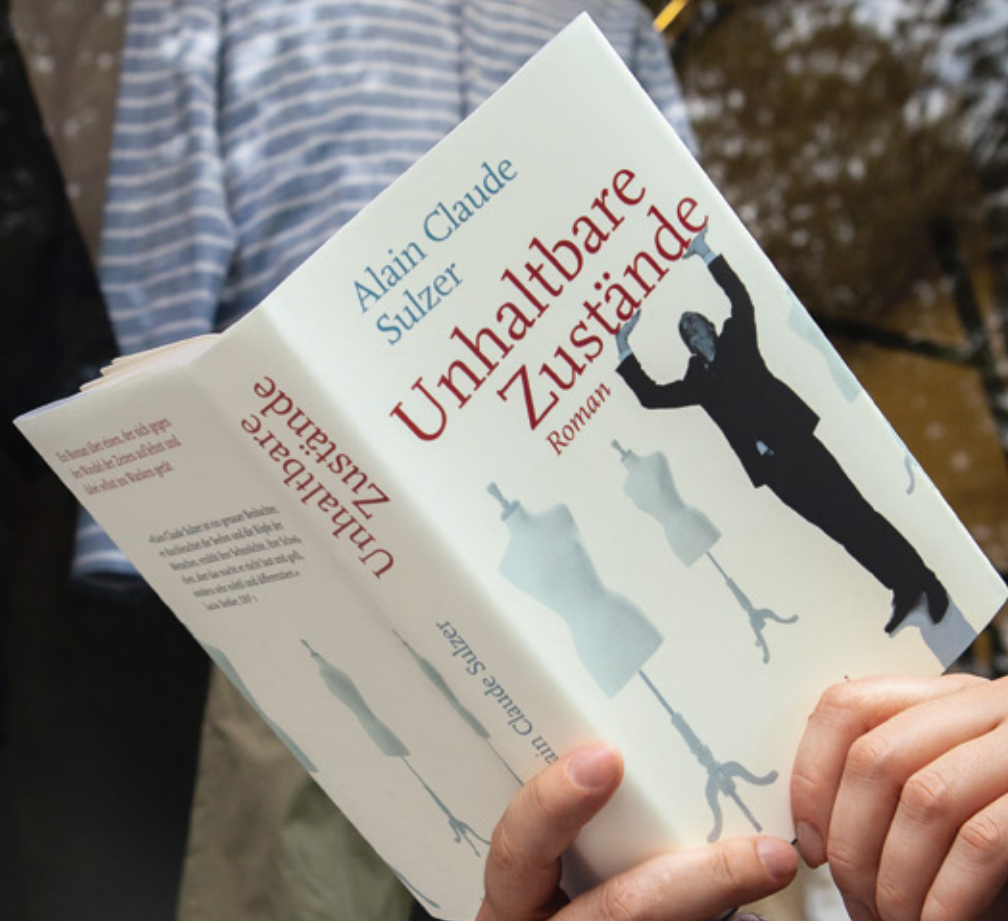
Intolerable Conditions

Alain Claude Sulzer

Novel

German

Nominated
for the Swiss
Book Prize
2019



Title
Unhaltbare Zustände

Publisher
Galiani, Berlin

Publication date
August 2019

Pages
272

ISBN
978-3-86971-194-2

Translation rights
For Spanish, Finnish, Slovak:
Iris Brandt
ibrandt@kiwi-verlag.de
For all other languages:
Anna Webber
awebber@unitedagents.co.uk



Alain Claude Sulzer was born in 1953, and works as a freelance writer in Basel, Berlin and Alsace. He has published a number of novels, including the recent bestsellers *Zur falschen Zeit* (*At the Wrong Time*) and *Aus den Fugen* (*Going to Pieces*). His books have been translated into all major languages. He has won several prizes for his work, including the Prix Médicis Étranger, the Hermann Hesse Prize and the Culture Prize of the City of Basel.

Photo: Gaëtan Bally, keystone

Sample translation

by Steph Morris

12swissbooks.ch/Sulzer



Stettler is an aesthete who lives for his work, and particularly for the moment when his newly decorated window display is ceremonially unveiled at the Quatre Saisons department store. Customers, passers-by and the managing director all adore his creations. Until suddenly everyone's talking about the 'new age' which has apparently dawned. What could this be, since over the last 30 years his creations have always captured the spirit of the times? Stettler, who is almost 60, finds that the arrival of the 1968 protest movement changes everything. Suddenly a new employee is put in charge of the window displays... and it's now Stettler's life that's turned upside down – except for one thing: his enthusiastic pen-friendship with the pianist Lotte Zerbst. Their first-ever meeting lies ahead, as Lotte has been invited to perform at a concert in Switzerland.

Up to that moment, Stettler had been a contented man; his life ran along calm, orderly lines, with no great tragedies or overwhelming joys. His mother remained an important influence on him up to her death – including in aesthetic matters. His correspondence with Lotte Zerbst transports him into the world of great art and music. Yet the pianist, it turns out, is a crushed and lonely figure who had hoped for more from her life and career. The 'new age' is not auspicious for her, either. Stettler feels threatened by all these new things, and particularly his younger work colleagues. He resorts to spying


“Seduce them and you’ve got them in the palm of your hand. And once there, they’ll come into the shop. They’ll look around and discreetly check their purses. It must be love at first sight.”

on his rival and dreams up acts of revenge, contemplating actions and emotions previously totally alien to his scrupulous and emotionally balanced nature. Thus the new age provokes change even in those who would prefer to ignore it. Moreover, this is a novel about a man fighting battles he is doomed to lose, against social change and old age – and he is not alone in this. Both Lotte and Stettler cling to tiny glimmers of hope and indulge in fanciful ideas. What would happen if Stettler sat naked in the display window? Would that be in tune with the new age?!

Alain Claude Sulzer’s novel goes inside the head of someone whose values, convictions and skills are no longer required or valued. In a clever narrative move, Sulzer sets the story in 1968 and not today, which means that Stettler’s inner chaos and uncertainty are reflected in the shocks triggered by student unrest.

Alain Claude Sulzer’s novel *Intolerable Conditions* is a shrewd, sensitive and witty work which shows what a time of upheaval can mean for individuals – then and now.

The Earth and its Satellite



Matteo Terzaghi

Essays

Italian

Title

La Terra e il suo satellite

Publisher

Quodlibet, Macerata

Publication date

May 2019

Pages

112

ISBN

9788822903020

Translation rights

Valentina Parlato

valentinaparlato@quodlibet.it

“When we woke up the city was entirely white, so silent that when you opened the window you could hear the sound of the flakes falling slowly and abundantly, each along its own trajectory. It went on snowing like that for a good part of the day, until the evening. How beautiful it is to go out in the middle of the streets, in the middle of the snow, in the nocturnal light of the snow!”

This is a collection of short prose pieces, some very short indeed, that seeks to describe the complex system of relationships in which human beings now live their lives. Drawing inspiration from astrophysics, the myriads of galaxies and stars, their interdependence and their mystery, Matteo Terzaghi celebrates the exceptional quality of our daily life on Earth, immersed as we are in minor miracles of nature (rain, eclipses, the regenerative capability of worms) and continual wonder at the products of our culture.

Though published fifty years after the first moon landing, *The Earth and its Satellite* is not a book that looks exclusively at the past. It does look back to some extent, of course – as must all books that draw on autobiography. The nub of Matteo Terzaghi’s new work lies in its stylistic peculiarity: the ‘school essay’ – that least noble of literary genres, which the author nevertheless feels to be intimately his own, and which he traces through literature and the cinema, from the prose of Robert Walser (for example: *Fritz Kocher’s Essays*) to François Truffaut’s 1959 masterpiece *The 400 Blows*.

In the thirty-four pieces that make up this book, ranging from the six pages of *The Moon is ours* (the longest and possibly the key text) to the single sentence of *The Science Classroom* (“In the science classroom there is a skeleton that stares at us from its empty eye sockets”), we follow Terzaghi’s



Matteo Terzaghi was born in Bellinzona in 1970. He studied philosophy, and is the author of *Il merito del linguaggio* (*The Merit of Language*); he has also been responsible for many exhibitions and publications in conjunction with the artist and illustrator Marco Zürcher, including such works as *The Tower Bridge e altri racconti fotografici* (*The Tower Bridge and Other Photographic Tales*) and *Hotel Silesia*. For *Ufficio proiezioni luminose* (*Light Show Office*) he won a Swiss Literature Award in 2013.

Photo: Sébastien Agnetti

Sample translation

by Shaun Whiteside

12swissbooks.ch/Terzaghi



thoughts in the form of sentences, carefully considered ideas and bold connections, anecdotes and memories of childhood, learned quotations and descriptions of famous photographs. The mysterious relationship between the Earth and its satellite becomes the measure of all relationships that govern the universe and the daily life of human beings.

What distinguishes Terzaghi's work from our own school compositions is his rigorous formatting and control. It is based on a series of themes (discovery, travel, death, silence, absence, escape), which occur in cycles and eventually come together to make up a complex, non-narrative whole, following the 'laws' of a poetry anthology. 'Poetry in prose' is probably the best definition of Terzaghi's work, as he aspires to create a language that is simple and colloquial, with just the necessary touch of irony, an attempt at a naturalistic vehicle for serious content, reminding us of Osip Mandelstam's judgement on the 'literary style' of Charles Darwin: "The organisation of the scientific material is the style of the naturalist". An Italian-speaking Swiss author, Terzaghi offers us a hybrid form of writing with cultural references drawing on both his Swiss and Italian roots, from the works of Robert Walser to the prose and imagination of Giacomo Leopardi and Italo Calvino.

Text by Pietro Montorfani

Information on Translation Funding

Pro Helvetia's support for translation

The Swiss Arts Council Pro Helvetia awards grants for translations of contemporary literary works from Switzerland, with an eye to promoting cultural and linguistic diversity and helping Swiss authors reach larger audiences, both within the country and around the world.

Pro Helvetia supports the translation of:

- literary works by Swiss authors (fiction and poetry)
- books for children and young adults
- non-fiction books by Swiss authors on cultural and artistic topics relating to Switzerland
- plays by Swiss dramatists (including theatre surtitles)
- samples of up to 15 pages upon request

To help promote Swiss literature in translation, Pro Helvetia also contributes financially to literary tours by Swiss authors and translators of recently translated books.

How to proceed

Applications must be submitted by the licensed publisher. An application must contain the licence and translation contracts, as well as a significant part of the proof-read translation manuscript and the corresponding original text. For detailed information on the application procedure, please see the guidelines on our website: www.prohelvetia.ch/en/translation-funding-and-support

Deadline

We accept applications at any time, but they must be submitted at least three months before the date of printing.

We accept applications exclusively via our online portal www.myprohelvetia.ch.

For translations of Swiss texts into the languages from South-east Europe, Pro Helvetia is a partner of the European Network for Literature and Books TRADUKI. All requests involving a translation into Albanian, Bosnian, Bulgarian, Croatian, Macedonian, Montenegrin, Romanian, Serbian and Slovenian should be addressed directly to Traduki at: www.traduki.eu.

Please contact us if you have any further questions. We look forward to receiving your application.

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And you can find more information about, and samples of, other new Swiss books on the following websites:

New Books in German, a selection of Fiction, Non-Fiction, Children's and Young Adults' from Austria, Germany and Switzerland, www.new-books-in-german.com.

Books First, the Goethe-Institut's new programme for bringing literature in German to English-speaking readers, goethe.de/en/kul/lit/ser/lit/bof.html.

Translation House Looren

Translation House Looren in the Swiss canton of Zürich offers professional literary translators from all over the world a place to work and study. At Translation House Looren all language combinations are welcome. As the first institution of its kind in a country that, with its four national languages, has always been a land of translation, Translation House Looren sees itself primarily as a location for concentrated work. In addition, a programme of events aims to increase the visibility of literary translation and to support its practitioners.

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So, What Is Swiss Literature?

By Rosie Goldsmith

I've been reading Swiss literature since I was a child. I discovered the comforts of Heidi's alpine paradise of meadows, *Dörfli*, *Dirndls* and dairy products early on, and later, at university, as a student of French and German, I obsessed over Rousseau's romantics and the innovative narratives of Robert Walser, Friedrich Dürrenmatt and Max Frisch. After learning Italian, reading Giorgio Orelli's exquisite poetry in the original became an emotional milestone. So, several decades and several hundred Swiss books later, am I any closer to being able to define Swiss literature? Working with Pro Helvetia on *12 Swiss Books* and launching *Literally Swiss* to promote Swiss writing in the UK have certainly helped, but hindered too, as I'm now frustratingly aware just how many languages, dialects and micro-literatures there are.

Swiss literature has never been homogeneous. It has evolved over several centuries and in four national languages: German (spoken today by 63 % of the population), French (23 %), Italian (8 %) and Romansh (0.5 %). Additionally, there are the local dialects and Swiss-German – which is altogether another language (dialect soup to my ears). For a population of 8 ½ million, languages – and their attendant cultures – are obviously more important than geographical borders in defining Swiss literature.

The question of definition is tough even for the Swiss. Whomever you ask, you are drawn into a discussion about Switzerland and Swiss identity – its famous neutrality, infamous banks, the Gotthard Pass, chalets, cuckoo clocks, fondue, chocolate and its enviable train network: to be considered a Swiss author must you write about these things? Must you be born in Switzerland? Hermann Hesse was born in Germany but moved to Switzerland: is he a 'Swiss Great'?

Max Frisch described a Swiss writer as a "citizen of the world" – outward-looking, cosmopolitan, multicultural and multilingual. Admirable attributes indeed, but equally, the Swiss are seen as private, guarded and dependent on the vitality of incomers. Its writers are expected to be both local and global. It's clear that geography is destiny for writers

when you live in a landlocked, composite nation with a small population and big brother neighbours; a quasi-island in the centre of Europe. Switzerland is also one of the most breathtakingly beautiful countries in that continent, which has inspired both its own and foreign praise-singers. Friedrich Nietzsche, the German philosopher and famous mountain-climber, wrote several major works there. Thomas Mann, Emily Dickinson, the Shelleys, Byron, Dickens and Goethe all succumbed to the charms of this welcoming and generous country.

Swiss authors know they need to invite us in by writing stories for the world beyond their borders. I find modern Swiss writing refreshingly clear; often daring but not overly tricky – like the novels of Peter Stamm: direct, distinctive and sensitive. They can be funny too: I’ve witnessed large crowds laugh out loud (very un-Swiss) at the linguistic pyrotechnics of writers such as Arno Camenisch and Pedro Lenz, fluently funny in their native Romansh and Bernese. Switzerland is a well-functioning hybrid of local and global, home to many international organisations, its stories set equally comfortably in the Alps or Australia – check out *Koala*, for example, by novelist Lukas Bärfuss. I’ve also met several expat Swiss writers, like the philosopher Alain de Botton, born in Zürich, living in London, or novelist Monique Schwitter in Hamburg, still talking about the pull of the *Heimat*. “Switzerland is a great country to be a writer in”, Pedro Lenz told me: “It’s brilliant railway network means you can give five readings a week, sleep in your own bed every night and earn enough to feed your family.” Switzerland treats its writers as professionals. They earn good fees and expenses for readings and festivals; literary events are included in the cultural calendars of the tiniest villages and the largest cities – and because there are so many local councils and cantons in the Swiss Confederation, there are manifold pots of money to draw on.

Outside Switzerland I often hear Swiss writers dismissed as wealthy or privileged. This is ridiculous. It is more a reflection of how tough cultural survival is in the rest of Europe. To earn your living as a writer is a rare position to be in

these days but, as a result, Swiss writers can be eloquent and entertaining in explaining and defending Switzerland's uniqueness, holding forth on its dialects, architecture, art, design, lakes and mountains; its unique political system, referendums, banking secrecy and corruption. Incidentally, all ample material for crime writers and, contrary to belief, Switzerland does have them: Joel Dicker, Nicolas Verdan and Peter Beck, to name but three. But dystopias? Science fiction? No – they don't need them.

Swiss writers often maintain that they have more in common with their German, French or Italian literary neighbours, and may feel they have succeeded only if they are celebrated outside Switzerland. For publishers that is a challenge. One of my favourite Swiss writers, Peter Stamm, who writes in German, was snapped up by a leading publisher in Germany. In November 2018 he won the Swiss Book Prize, which is, however, only awarded to Swiss writers in German. So, does that make him the best Swiss writer or simply the best Swiss writer writing in German? You decide. Interestingly, when I was in the French-speaking canton of Valais recently, I asked a voracious Swiss French reader if she'd read Peter Stamm. She had never heard of him. "Why would I read German writers" she responded, "when I can read French writers from across the border?" This is quite a common reaction. "I have never read a Swiss-Italian book," a Swiss German told me this summer, "or Romansh: why would I?" Perhaps that is the secret of Swiss literature: a loose confederation, like the country itself.

I speak three of the Swiss languages – German, French and Italian – and, like the majority of Swiss, I can hop about linguistically enjoying the quirks, genres, festivals and literature prizes of the different regions. In the past few years I've made some astonishing personal literary discoveries, such as Michael Fehr, Vanni Bianconi, Nora Gomringer, Julia von Lucadou, Simone Lappert, Pascale Kramer and Elvira Dones (so many women too, making up for the preponderance of Swiss males in times past). However, the truth is, a few years ago I hardly knew their names. Because that is another, sadder, aspect of Swiss literature: it is not well known

outside Switzerland and successful writers, like Frisch or Stamm or Jaeggy, are often assumed to be German or French anyway. But now I'd like to stick my neck out and declare that, of all the European literatures I am reading these days, Swiss literature is the most original, diverse and exciting. There's a lively performance, poetry and spoken word culture. Villages, cities and mountains are alive with the sound of literature – as are social media and online platforms. It is buzzing. Swiss literature today comprises a mix of youthful innovation and celebrated classics. Being at ease with different languages and cultures makes it more inventive – a quality greatly boosted in recent years by immigration. Today a third of the population comes from elsewhere, and migrant Swiss writers are producing some thrilling prose and poetry and linguistic innovations: for example, Nicolas Verdan (Greek); Melinda Nadj Abonji (former Yugoslavia); Dana Grigorcea (Romania) and Elvira Dones (Albania).

Switzerland today offers a treasure trove of sparkling writing and deserves wider readership. So, here's how I define Swiss literature: it's world literature and we should all be translating, publishing and reading much, much more of it. My beloved *Heidi* is a shining example: it's been translated into 50 languages and sold 50 million copies worldwide.

6 More Unmissable Books



1



3



5



2



4



6

1

Les battantes The Combatants

Author [Simona Brunel-Ferrarelli](#)

Genre Novel

Pages 164

Publisher Editions Encre Fraiche, Geneva
ISBN 978-2-9701171-9-3

Translation rights Adriana Passini,
encrefraiche@gmail.com

Life in Rocca Patrizia is harsh; its inhabitants have been numbed and beaten down by life. The families in the village watch, judge and vie jealously with one another, but the ties that bind them are subtly revealed as the novel progresses. Through the sheer force of her writing, Simona Brunel-Ferrarelli brings this Italy of days gone by back to life and weaves a tale that is as dramatic as it is spellbinding.

2

Succede sempre qualcosa Something Always Turns Up

Author [Andrea Fazioli](#)

Genre Novel

Pages 224

Publisher Casagrande, Bellinzona
ISBN 9788877137982

Translation rights Ilaria Antognoli,
edizioni@casagrande-online.ch

What happens if a narrator decides to visit an anonymous little square on the edge of a town once a month for an entire year? And if the much-feared head of Human Resources at a large company fires a young man who is passionate about tigers? How does one survive a descent into the inferno of the famous Bellinzona carnival or an expedition into the largest shopping mall in Europe?

Perhaps for a writer, as for any avid reader, the realm of the possible and the real world are closer than one tends to believe. In this collection of tales, reality and fiction co-exist happily, and a fictitious character may therefore be more real than a first-person narrator called Andrea. What really matters, after all, are the freshness of their voices and the moving imponderability of their destinies.

3

Poema Poema

Author [Eugen Gomringer](#)

Genre Poetry

Pages 212

Publisher Nimbus, Wädenswil
ISBN 978-3-03850-047-6

Translation rights Eva-Maria Mahr,
verlag@nimbusbooks.ch

A collection of Eugen Gomringer's essential poems, annotated by the author himself and featuring essays by well-known fellow authors. A look back at the development of a literary movement – concrete poetry – whose minimalist reductionism was initially dismissed as a whim, but has since revealed the full extent of its creative potential and has resonated around the globe.

4

Der Stotterer The Stutterer

Author [Charles Lewinsky](#)

Genre Novel

Pages 416

Publisher Diogenes, Zürich
ISBN 978-3-257-07067-5

Translation rights Susanne Bauknecht,
bau@diogenes.ch

As a stutterer, Johannes Hosea Stärckle places his trust entirely in the power of the written word and uses it ruthlessly, both in self-defence and to further his career. A fraud case – he calls it "writerly carelessness" – lands him in prison. Using letters, testimonials, affidavits and pure fiction, he tries to win over to his cause the people controlling his life behind bars: the prison chaplain, the drugs boss, his publisher.

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5

Die Nachkommende The Latecomer

Author [Ivana Žic](#)

Genre Novel

Pages 168

Publisher Matthes & Seitz, Berlin
ISBN 978-3-95757-769-6

Translation rights Loan Nguyen,
l.nguyen@matthes-seitz-berlin.de

A young woman travels by train from Paris to Croatia, where each summer the whole family gathers on their grandmother's island. She is thinking of the man she had a year-long relationship with – it was going nowhere as the man was married. He was a painter who no longer paints. She is joined on the train by her dead grandfather. He too was a painter, and he too stopped painting. These two men – there but not there – accompany her on her journey into the past and into memory, together forming the narrative of a family's life.

6

Stremblidas e s-chima Tremors and Foam

Author [Jessica Zuan](#)

Genre Poetry

Pages 145, trilingual edition

Publisher Chasa Editura Rumantscha, Chur
ISBN 978-3-03845-064-1

Translation rights Anita Capaul,
anita.capaul@chasaeditura.ch

The threads running through these figurative poems by the young Engadine-born poet Jessica Zuan are homeland, nature, tradition, waiting, hoping, otherness and coming home. Pictures of the Engadine blend with new landscapes and observations. An additional layer of expression is provided by the typographical setting of the page, which turns each poem into visual poetry.

Prize-winning Swiss authors

Zsuzsanna Gahse

On 14 February 2019, Zsuzsanna Gahse was awarded the Swiss Grand Prix for Literature for her life's work. Her oeuvre consists of over 40 books which oscillate between poetry and prose. Jury member Ruth Gantert described Gahse's work in her laudatory speech as follows:

Right from the start, Zsuzsanna Gahse's books have inhabited the space between prose and poetry. She blurs the lines between genres, combining essayistic passages with poetry, dramatic texts and 'narrative islands'. Zsuzsanna Gahse calls such experiments 'Störe' – the German name for 'sturgeons', but which also recalls the word 'stören' for 'bother' or 'disrupt'. In other words, shimmering fish that alter their appearance, elude capture and can transform themselves at any time. And disrupt, in the best sense of the word. [...] For Zsuzsanna Gahse, verbal wit and irony are not simply playful but express a critical view of society and politics, although without pointing the finger. Light as her work may seem at times, the dark themes of life are also present: social injustice, collective and private suffering, illness and death. For example, one of her books is haunted by a man who lays his shabby fur coat on the parapet of a bridge and throws himself into the Danube. Ferdinand, the waiter, also kills himself by leaping off Mount Pilatus. Meanwhile, the author never psychologises: she always remains unsentimental and avoids pathos.

Pro Helvetia warmly congratulates Zsuzsanna Gahse on winning the Swiss Grand Prix 2019 for Literature.



Zsuzsanna Gahse was born in Budapest in 1946. In 1956 she fled to Vienna with her family and attended grammar school there and in Kassel, Germany. Her first literary work in German was published in 1983. Since 1998 Zsuzsanna Gahse has lived in Switzerland. She has received numerous prizes, both as a translator and as an author.

Photo: Christian Beutler, keystone

Publications (Selection)

Stadt Land Fluss. List Verlag 1988

Kellnerroman. Europäische Verlagsanstalt 1996

Instabile Texte / zu zweit. Edition Korrespondenzen 2005

Erzählinself. Reden für Dresden 2008. Thelem Verlag 2009

Donauwürfel. Edition Korrespondenzen 2010

Südsudelbuch. Edition Korrespondenzen 2012

Die Erbschaft. Edition Korrespondenzen 2013

Jan, Janka, Sara und ich. Edition Korrespondenzen 2015

Heissenbüttel weit vorne. Verlag Ulrich Keicher 2016

Siebenundsiebzig Geschwister, Edition Korrespondenzen 2017

Lukas Bärfuss

The German Academy for Language and Literature has awarded the Georg Büchner Prize for 2019 to the writer Lukas Bärfuss. The prize will be presented in Darmstadt on 2 November 2019. The jury honored the author as follows:

By awarding the prize to Lukas Bärfuss, the German Academy for Language and Literature is honouring one of the outstanding storytellers and dramatists of contemporary German-speaking literature. His distinctive yet enigmatic imagery, which is sparse, limpid and clear-cut, is pervaded by a tense awareness of political crisis and the ability to use individual examples for social analysis, together with psychological sensitivity and a commitment to truth. With great stylistic confidence and using a rich variety of forms, his plays and novels constantly explore new and different existential situations in modern life. These qualities also characterise Bärfuss' essays, in which he casts a fearlessly searching, wondering and appreciative eye on the world of today.



Lukas Bärfuss, born in Thun on 30 December 1971, is a playwright, storyteller and essayist. He is one of the most successful German-speaking dramatists. His plays have been translated into around a dozen languages and are performed throughout the world. Bärfuss is also a very successful storyteller. His novel *Koala* won the Swiss Book Prize in 2014. Lukas Bärfuss regularly presents the public with trenchant essays and contributions to the debate on political events. His volume of essays entitled *Stil und Moral (Style and Morality)* was published in 2015, and a volume entitled *Krieg und Liebe (War and Love)* appeared in 2018.

Photo: Claudia Herzog

Pro Helvetia warmly congratulates Lukas Bärfuss on winning the Georg Büchner Prize 2019.

Publications

Prose:

Die toten Männer. Suhrkamp 2002

Hundert Tage. Wallstein 2008

Koala. Wallstein 2014

Stil und Moral. Wallstein 2015

Hagard. Wallstein 2017

Krieg und Liebe. Wallstein 2018

Contact. With illustrations by Michael Günzburger. Edition Patrick Frey 2018

Malinois. Wallstein 2019

Plays (Selection):

Sophokles' Oedipus (1998)

Siebzehn Uhr siebzehn (2000)

Meienbergs Tod (2001)

Die sexuellen Neurosen unserer Eltern (2003)

Alices Reise in die Schweiz (2005)

Der Bus (Das Zeug einer Heiligen) (2005)

Jemand schreit in unseren Rosen (2005)

Amygdala (2007)

Öl (2009)

Malaga (2010)

Parzival (2010)

Zwanzigtausend Seiten (2012)

Die schwarze Halle (2013)

Frau Schmitz (2016)

Der Elefantengeist (2018)

Swiss Literature Awards



Elisa Shua Dusapin



Alexandre Hmine



Anna Ruchat



Patrick Savolainen



José-Flore Tappy



Christina Viragh



Julia von Lucadou



Translation House Looren / CTL



Zsuzsanna Gahse

Swiss Literature Awards presented by the Federal Office of Culture FOC

Every year, the Federal Office of Culture awards the Swiss Grand Award for Literature as well as five to seven Swiss Literature Awards. The latter are awarded for literary works that have been published in the previous year, in one of the national languages or in a Swiss dialect. The Swiss Grand Prix for Literature honours a personality who stands out through their exceptional dedication to Swiss literature. In addition, every other year a special prize is awarded, in recognition of exceptional commitment to Swiss literature and to its public promotion. For more information, visit www.literaturpreise.ch

Sample translations of the 2019 laureates' texts can be provided upon request.

Les Billes du Pachinko The Pachinko Marbles

Author [Elisa Shua Dusapin](#)
Genre Novel
Publisher Editions Zoé, Chêne-Bourg
ISBN 978-2-88927-579-3
Translation rights Agency Astier-Pécher,
Laure Pécher, lpacher@pierreastier.com

La chiave nel latte The Key in the Milk

Author [Alexandre Hmine](#)
Genre Novel
Publisher Gabriele Capelli Editore, Mendrisio
ISBN 978-8-89730-864-5
Translation rights Gabriele Capelli,
gabrielecapellieditore@gmail.com

Gli anni di Nettuno sulla terra Neptune's Years on Earth

Author [Anna Ruchat](#)
Genre Short stories
Publisher Ibis, Como/Pavia
ISBN 978-8-87164-571-1
Translation rights Sarah Veronesi,
sarahveronesi@ibisedizioni.it

Farantheiner Farantheiner

Author [Patrick Savolainen](#)
Genre Novel
Publisher Verlag die brotsuppe, Biel
ISBN 978-3-03867-007-0
Translation rights Ursi Aeschbacher,
aeschbacher@diebrotsuppe.ch

Trás-os-Montes Trás-os-Montes

Author [José-Flore Tappy](#)
Genre Poetry
Publisher La Dogana, Chêne-Bourg
ISBN 978-2940055869
Translation rights
informations@LaDogana.ch

Eine dieser Nächte One Of Those Nights

Author [Christina Viragh](#)
Genre Novel
Publisher Dörlemann, Zurich
ISBN 978-3-03820-056-7
Translation rights Sabine Dörlemann,
sd@doerlemann.com

Die Hochhausspringerin The High-Rise Diver

Author [Julia von Lucadou](#)
Genre Novel
Publisher Hanser, Berlin
ISBN 978-3-44626-039-9
Translation rights Friederike Barakat,
Friederike.barakat@hanser.de

Special Award for Literary Promotion

This year, the Special Award for Literary Promotion went to two institutions that promote translation in two language regions of Switzerland: the [Centre de traduction littéraire \(CTL\)](#) in Lausanne and the [Translation House Looren](#) in Wernetshausen, Canton Zürich.

[CTL](#) was founded in 1989, since when it has made the often misunderstood or overlooked art of translation visible to the key players of literature – as well as to researchers, students and the wider public – thanks to a rich programme of lectures, exchanges, teaching and editorial work. CTL demonstrates the importance of translation and engages with its challenges, its riches and the pleasure it brings.

With its library, communal areas and work spaces, courses, grants and events, [Translation House Looren](#) is an excellent and indispensable sanctuary for literary translators from a diverse range of fields. There they can find an ideal environment in which to absorb knowledge, gather documentation and exchange views – and, of course, to write. As a venue for creativity and communication, the Übersetzerhaus also provides these translators with a vital setting for producing, reviewing and revitalising their literary works.

By conferring the Special Award for Literary Promotion to the Centre de traduction littéraire in Lausanne (CTL) and Translation House Looren, the jury recognises the pioneering work these two institutions are doing to promote literary translation and the inspiration that radiates out from them: they are committed to inquisitive, multi-faceted literature which – by dint of being translated – is able to reinvent itself and acquire fresh vitality.

Swiss Grand Award for Literature

The Swiss Grand Award for Literature was awarded to [Zsuzsanna Gahse](#). Read more about her life and work on page 48.

*“Even if we prefer to deny it,
the world’s oldest profession is
actually translation. For in
the beginning was The Word,
but no one understood it.
Even today our understanding
of any word is so imperfect
that the necessity for transla-
tions and interpretations is
limitless. Translators might
sit financially at the bottom of
the pyramid but their signifi-
cance to cultural history is right
up there at the top.”*

Roger Willemsen, German publicist, author, essayist and
TV host, in: “Oui, totalement, tendrement, tragiquement.
Das Übersetzen und die Schönheit des Nichtverstehens”,
Süddeutsche Zeitung, 27 July 2007

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