

Cossee Publishers

Frankfurt Highlights 2017



15 years of independent publishing

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Jonathan Robijn *Congo Blues*

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- Contemporary political topic
- Draws from interviews and archive material
- Part of 10 Books from Belgium Brochure

Morgan is a Jazz pianist who earns his money with the occasional concerts in bars. His childhood in the tropics he has banned from his memories. An unexpected encounter on New Year's Day changes his life. When he returns home in the morning from a performance, he finds an elegant, young woman in a black dress, collapsed against the wall of the bike shop next door. To keep her from freezing, he offers her shelter without thinking twice. But it becomes quickly obvious that she – with her curious actions – triggers long-lost memories from his past. Or does she actually know him and is the meeting not as noncommittal as it seems? This chance encounter grows out into a search of gigantic proportions.

Working for Doctors Without Borders Jonathan Robijn heard about organizations in the south of Ruanda, where fifty years ago children of Belgian fathers and Congolese mothers were raised. Shortly before the Congolese Independence, these Métis-children were 'evacuated' to Belgium. Most of them never saw their biological parents, brothers, and sisters again. Just like Morgan.

Jonathan Robijn (1970) studied sociology and psychology, and has since then worked for Doctors Without Borders. He has published short stories including *De Brakke Hond*, *Dietsche Warande* and *Belfort*. In 2013 his literary debut *The City and the Time (De stad en de tijd)* was published, which was nominated for the Gouden Boekenuil.

47,000 words, published in October 2017 by Cossee Publishers

Promoted by Flanders Literature who also provides a translation grant:
<http://buitenland.vfl.be/en/52/content/126/translation-grants.html> | For more information, please contact Stella Rieck: rieck@cossee.com or visit www.cossee.com/foreignrights



Marjolijn van Heemstra *And His Name Is*

- **Film rights sold** (Bind Film)
- **8.000 copies sold** to date
- “A beautiful novel about the importance of myths and the necessity of unmasking them.” – Tommy Wieringa
- Part of the 10 Books from Holland Brochure

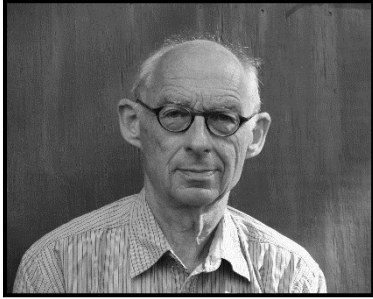
On December 5th, 1946 a bomb is delivered in The Hague, disguised as a Saint Nicholas present. Three ‘bad guys’, collaborators during the Nazi occupation of the Netherlands during WWII, are killed. The brain behind the operation is a great uncle of Marjolijn van Heemstra. In the family, the attack is subsequently considered an act of heroism.

On her eighteenth birthday Marjolijn is given the signet ring of the “bomb-nephew” bearing the family crest – with the request to name her first son after him. Years later, when she is pregnant, she starts a quest to uncover the true story of the Saint Nicholas murders. With her belly the doubts are growing: was the bomb-nephew really a hero or just an ordinary criminal? Marjolijn van Heemstra’s novel is a fascinating page-turner about a myth and about reality, about the good and the bad and about the question what connects a new-born child with its ancestors.

Marjolijn van Heemstra (1981) studied religious studies with a specialization in Islamic studies in Amsterdam. She is a successful theatre director of engaged, experimental performances, staged in the Netherlands as well as abroad. As a writer she is a multi-talent, writing poetry and novels as well as columns for the Dutch newspapers *NRC* and *Trouw*.

50,000 words, published in May 2017 by Das Mag Publishers

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Rinus Spruit *Do Write, Brother!*

- “Reminiscent of the writing of Gerard Reve. Tender, tragic and humoristic.” – *Elsevier* on *Maarten’s Perfect Day*
- Earlier work **sold to Germany**
- **Successful theatre adaptation** of *The Thatcher*

Rinus Spruit is living in his parental home in Nieuwdorp, Zeeland. He spends most of his time gardening, drinking coffee in the kitchen together with his neighbour and taking care of his cats. However, after the death of his parents, he finds himself wondering about his family history. When he comes across a box containing old letters, photographs and documents in the attic, he decides to delve deeper into his family’s fascinating past.

A lot of it is new and mysterious to him. Who was his great grandmother Catharina exactly? And why, being a young housemaid, did she leave Zeeland for Antwerp? And what on earth did two of his grandfather’s sisters do in the United States? Spruit travels to his distant relatives in Flanders to explore his family’s heritage. What effect do memories have on us? And how does the past influence our well-being today? These and other themes Rinus Spruit explores in this highly personal novel – with his native region as the leading motif.

Rinus Spruit’s (1946) debut novel *The Thatcher* (Cossee 2009) knew great success. In 2013, his second novel *Maarten’s Perfect Day*, was similarly received well by critics. His oeuvre has received the Prijs van de Zeeuwse Boekhandel and the Zeeland Refinery Culture Award in 2016. Both of his novels have been translated into German, and theatre group Zeelandia brought an adaptation of *The Thatcher* on stage.

36,000 words, published in September 2017 by Cossee Publishers

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Charlotte Mutsaers *Harness of Hansaplast*

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- The new novel by the *grande dame* of Dutch literature
- *Rachel's Skirt* and *Coachman's Autumn* **sold to Germany (Hanser)**

“Just before New Year’s Eve 2001, my brother Barend was found dead in his bed, merely clothed in a brand new pajama jacket without any bottoms. Not an ordinary death; he was only fifty-one years old and solely surrounded by big stashes of porn. Just before, I had read a newspaper article about a man who was found dead at the foot of a Spanish rock, with a bare dick, and a moribund chicken at his feet. Similar in a way.” – excerpt from *Harness of Hansaplast*

Harness of Hansaplast is Charlotte Mutsaers’ impressive search for her deceased brother: a hermit too smart and too nonconformist for this world, with *Fisherman’s* as his only remaining friend. When clearing out his home – which also happens to be their parental home – Charlotte stumbles upon complete and utter chaos: dozens of notebooks in which her brother jotted down every meal he consumed, and the endless collections of porn he purchased. Finally, she comes across a little figurine made out of Hansaplast, entitled: ‘ME.’

Harness of Hansaplast is Charlotte Mutsaers at her best: an investigation into the life of her closest family member, whom despite their strong connection, she differed from in many aspects. A diametrical opposite of a self-portrait.

Charlotte Mutsaers (1942), the *grande dame* of Dutch literature, is a writer, essayist, artist and winner of the P.C. Hooft-prijzen. After a long silence, *Harness of Hansaplast* is Charlotte Mutsaers’ spectacular new novel: personal, alienating and loving. Earlier works include *Rachel’s skirt* (1994) and *Coachman’s autumn* (2008), which have been translated into German.

63,000 words, to be published in November 2017 by Das Mag Publishers

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Eva Meijer

Animal Languages

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- Rights sold: **German (Matthes & Seitz), World English (pre-empt John Murray), French (Presses de la Cité), Arabic (Dar Oktob), Polish (Marginesy)**
- Nominated: Socrates Beker, award for best Dutch philosophy book
- Third print-run

Dolphins and parrots call each other by their names. Fork tailed drongos mimic the calls of other animals to scare them away and then steal their dinner. In the songs of many species of birds, and in skin patterns of squids, we find grammatical structures. Bats like to gossip. Most social animals have complex and nuanced ways of communicating with one another and with humans.

In *Animal Languages*, Eva Meijer discusses many examples of recent empirical research. Biologists and ethologists are only beginning to understand the meaning of these signs. Her research presents us with a new perspective on other animals, while also raising philosophical questions. Can we call nonhuman animal communication language? What exactly is language? Can we speak with other animals and if so how? After reading *Animal Languages*, you might not be able to speak with all animals, but you will see them in a different light.

Currently in the media: In her newest essay *Political Animals* Eva Meijer explores how we could live with non-human animals in a different way, organizing an alternative democracy, which includes a wide variety of species. Animals defend and protect themselves against, but also work and live alongside humans: we share our planet and our households. “A daring, original, innovative, very well-written and accessible essay.” – *Trouw******

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Eva Meijer

The Bird Cottage

- Rights sold: **German (btb), French (Presses de la Cité), World English (Pushkin Press), Arabic (Kotob Khan), Polish (Marginesy)**
- Fourth print-run
- Nominated: BNG, ECI and Librisliteratuurprijs, Halewijnprijs

Len Howard (1894 – 1973) spent the second half of her life in a small, remote house in the English countryside. She wrote two international bestsellers about robins, tits, sparrows, and other birds living in and around her house. Although not originally a biologist, she was a pioneer in the field of animal research. She studied birds on the basis of their trust and observed their character, peculiarities and habits. In the meantime, their mutual appreciation and friendship grew.

What drove Howard to choose for a life outside the well-trodden paths? What do the life stories of robins tell us about our human world? Eva Meijer encountered the research of Howard during her work as a philosopher. *The Bird Cottage* is a book about music, the songs of birds and great tit conventions. It is also a book about resistance, bringing about change and about deciding on what is important.

Eva Meijer (1980) is a philosopher, author, and singer-songwriter. Her debut *The Shiest Animal*, was nominated for the Academica Literatuurprijs, the Gouden Boekenuil, and the Vrouw&Proza Debuutprijs. In 2013, her novel *Adventures in Animal Activism* followed and in 2016 her highly successful novel *The Bird Cottage* was published. In 2017, Eva Meijer concluded her PhD on ‘Political Animal Voices’ at the University of Amsterdam.

62,500 words, published in 2016 by Cossee Publishers

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Lia Tilon

The Archivist of the World

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- *Humans of New York* avant la lettre
- Based on **fascinating archive material** from the Albert Kahn Museum in Paris

In 1907, the French banker Albert Kahn hands his driver Dutertre a brand-new camera and tells him to take pictures. Kahn wants him to realise his dream: capturing all the different inhabitants of the world on photograph in order to create an “archive of the planet”. He is convinced that his pictures will eliminate fear of and prejudice against strangers, bringing about a more peaceful world.

Soon, Kahn begins sending out a number of photographers all over the globe – to the Native Americans, to African tribes and to the plains of Mongolia. Dutertre is not convinced of the project and has problems grappling with the new equipment, but as he gets closer to Kahn, he begins to understand his by now senior employer.

In 1939, Kahn refuses to accept that the results of the collapse of the stock exchange and the impending war are rendering the realisation of his idealistic project impossible. His villa is in demise. Paris is full of anti-Semitic posters. In the last days of his empire he has nothing but his pictures to look back upon. We, the readers and Dutertre, his last and only friend, are breathlessly looking back with him.

Lia Tilon (1965) is working as a communication and writing coach. She did a residency in the Institut Néerlandais in Paris in order to research the life of Albert Kahn. After coming across the diary of his driver Dutertre, she decided it was to form the basis of *The Archivist of the World*.

57,000 words, to be published in 2017 by Cossee Publishers

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Katja Reichenfeld

Charlotte Salomon: Inspired by Berlin

- A **new perspective** on the work of Charlotte Salomon
- With **beautiful illustrations**

The tragic ending of Charlotte Salomon's life in Auschwitz in 1943 is often compared to that of Anne Frank. Just like Anne Frank, Charlotte had strong artistic ambitions and was driven by the desire to create something extraordinary. Her painting style and the often humoristic and ironic undertone of her texts, combined with the many references to music and literature, did certainly not simply fall from the clear azure skies of southern France. And there is the ultra-romantic commitment to her friend from Berlin, Alfred Wolfsohn. It is through his words that she found the courage and inspiration for her work *Life? or Theatre?*. The extensive illustrated narrative about Salomon's family explores her childhood and student years at the Berlin School of Art, and her adventures in the south of France.

Katja Reichenfeld compellingly shows us how Berlin's sparkling atmosphere and the cultural climate of the interbellum influenced Charlotte Salomon's work. Her essay investigates the way in which this extraordinary artist processed the rise of the new medium of cinema, classical and popular music, expressionism and satirical literature in her own distinctive way.

Katja Reichenfeld (1942) studied art history and worked in the Jewish Historic Museum of Amsterdam from 1977 to 1988, where she also managed the collection on Charlotte Salomon. Later, she was employed as a music journalist for the *NRC Handelsblad*, and she currently works as a freelance music producer. Earlier, she published *XYZ of Classical Music* and *Classical Music in a Nutshell*.

18,000 words, published in October 2017 by Cossee Publishers

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Josepha Mendels

Rolien and Ralien

- “The first female Bildungsroman, a high point of Dutch LGBT-literature.” – Hanna Bervoets, author
- Second **rediscovered classic** by Josepha Mendels published by Cossee

In *Rolien and Ralien* Mendels revisits her own youth. Rolien the youngest of three sisters is not taken seriously by her siblings. She feels left out, and therefore makes up her own playmate Ralien to keep her company, which subsequently comes to take over her life.

In December 1924, when Josepha Mendels begins her flight from occupied France via the Pyrenees, the manuscript of *Rolien and Ralien* is stolen along with her backpack. Luckily, a copy of the book is sent to her, when she finally arrives in England. According to critic Jan Greshoff: “It is an outstanding book, literally filled to the brim with the most exquisite discoveries. And is so stunningly clever that I cannot believe this is a debut.” Greshoff recommended the novel to Querido where it was published in 1947. The press thought it was a “dangerous” book, showing the many layers of an intense female friendship, but did praise its originality. Still today, *Rolien and Ralien* is a fascinating coming-of-age novel in a surprisingly modern style.

Josepha Mendels (1902 – 1995) grew up in a Jewish Orthodox family. She left Holland for Paris and started working as a journalist. *Rolien and Ralien* was her debut in 1947. Two years later followed by *I told you so* (sold to Wagenbach, Germany), also republished by Cossee Publishers. It is her only novel set in WWII. For her entire oeuvre Josepha Mendels received the Anna Bijns Prijs for the female voice in literature in 1986.

43,000 words, to be published in November 2017 by Cossee Publishers

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Dola de Jong *The Tree and the Vine*

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- Rights sold: **Swedish (Nilsson), Czech (Pistorius), Spanish (Siruela)**
- Moving and timely **rediscovered classic**
- “A very touching, and delicately rendered portrait of a woman.” – V.S. Naipaul
- Full English translation available

The Tree and the Vine is a novel about love and friendship between two women. Erica and Bea share an apartment in Amsterdam, but they are completely different. Erica, a reckless young journalist, pursues passionate, yet abusive affairs with various women, while Bea is a shy secretary, who leads a quiet life. The novel is set just before the outbreak of the Second World War. Erica, who believes to be half Jewish, lets the opportunity pass to flee to America. Bea finds that her feelings for her friend are growing stronger – yet denial and shame keep her from recognising her affection.

After the publication of *The Tree and the Vine*, Alice van Nahuys, then publisher at Querido, sent a telegram to Dola de Jong with the message: ‘Don’t answer your fan mail!’, since there was too much of it. A review in *Het Vaderland* made clear: ‘Writing such a portrait is not possible for just anyone. You have to be blessed with a special talent.’

Dorothea Rosalie de Jong (Arnhem, 1911 – Laguna Woods/California, 2003) wrote children’s books, novels, and short stories. She decided to flee from the Netherlands in 1940 with the tension of war increasing. She wrote *The Field* (translation rights sold to seven countries), which was an instant success and received the Edgar Allen Poe Award for her thriller *The Whirligig of Time* (1964).

39,000 words, published in 2017 by Cossee Publishers

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Aleksandr Skorobogatov *Cocaine*

- Rights sold: **Arabic (Here&There)**
- By the Russian/Flemish best-seller author
- Literary rollercoaster ride in the very best Russian tradition
- “Absolutely one of the most amazing books of 2017.” – *Noordhollands Dagblad*
- Second print-run

The main character of *Cocaine*, the hallucinatory new novel by Aleksandr Skorobogatov, as a writer is trying to make the world a better place through words, but also with the help of a hammer and a gigantic nail. Why? Because, according to Dostojevski, he has to. And also because this world of ours is becoming all too frightening.

Recently abandoned by the love of his life, our protagonist passes his days wandering through the streets of Moscow with nothing but his imagination to keep him going. He fantasises about epic battles in pubs, allots himself the roles of hero or villain in murder cases, and all of a sudden he receives an invitation to travel to Stockholm: he has won the Nobel Peace Prize.

Cocaine is a no-holds-barred celebration of the seemingly limitless possibilities of the human imagination. It is a literary rollercoaster ride in the very best Russian tradition. Overwhelmingly funny and serious!

Aleksandr Skorobogatov (1963) is considered one of the most original Russian writers of the post-communist era. He has studied in Minsk, Paris and Moscow and now lives in Antwerp. Skorobogatov has written short stories, essays, and eight novels. His work has been published to great acclaim in Russian, Dutch, French, Italian, and Greek, and has received several literary awards.

73,500 words, published in 2017 by Cossee Publishers

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Marijn Sikken *Exit Ahead*

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- Rights sold: **Arabic (East Western)**
- Promising Dutch debut
- Winner of the **Write Now! award**

Before long the village will celebrate its centenary. Suddenly the bells of the railway crossing sound almost festive. It promises to be an emotionally charged festivity. Not only for the 18-year-old Eline, who is dating an older man, but also for Alma, mother of a child that will never be able to stand on its own two feet.

Eline has seen all her classmates leave the nest: to work, study, take gap years or travel. She stayed and found a job in the local Books & More Store, where she occasionally keeps an eye on the mentally impaired Michelle. Michelle's mother, Alma, has mixed feelings, seeing the girls get along so well. She catches herself being jealous, even resentful towards Eline. At the same time, friends and family keep urging her to consider a housing facility for her daughter. A mother also has to be able to let go, they say.

Marijn Sikken debuts with a razor-sharp and compassionate sketch of a small community, and shows the reader how small the gap between love and indifference sometimes is.

Marijn Sikken (1990) won both the jury and the audience award of the writing contest Write Now! in 2011. She publishes short stories and works as an editor for *De Optimist*. Sikken wrote columns for *Youth-R-Well.com*, an online community for young arthritis patients, and writes for *Literair Nederland*. Additionally, she is active in the Wilhelmina children's hospital in Utrecht, where she deals with patient participation.

50,500 words, published in 2017 by Cossee Publishers

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Lize Spit *The Melting*

- Rights sold: **US/UK, Germany, France, Spain, Norway, Denmark, Czech Republic, Italy, Poland, Arabic world rights and Catalonia; film rights sold**
- **170,000** copies sold to date
- Won: **Dutch Booksellers' Award**
- Received a total of **9 nominations/awards**

What if you could take revenge on an entire village? 1988, in the small Flemish village of Bovenmeer. Only three children are born that year, and only one of them is a girl, Eva. Together, the three children try to make the best of the situation, until they reach puberty. Then suddenly their relationships are altered. The boys devise cruel plans and it is up to the timid Eva if she wants to join them or betray their friendship. The option is no option.

Thirteen years after a searing summer in which everything got out of hand, Eva returns to the village with a huge block of ice in the trunk of her car. We gradually learn that she is making the decisions this time. With her debut Lize Spit grabs the reader by the throat from the very first sentence, determined to keep a tight headlock for all 480 pages. Merciless but loving, *The Melting* is a novel that leaves you perplexed.

Lize Spit (1988) lives in Brussels. She writes scenarios, prose and poetry, and has a weekly editorial in Belgium's biggest newspaper. Her stories have been published in several literary magazines. Spit also teaches scenario writing. Furthermore, she is working on a feature film and on her second novel.

200,000 words, published in 2016 by Das Mag Publishers

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Recent Sales

Gerbrand Bakker, *The Twin*: sold to 27 countries/languages, US (Archipelago), UK (Harvill/Random House), ANZ (Scribe), German (Suhrkamp), French (Gallimard), Spanish (Rayo Verde), Italian (Iperborea), Brazilian (Radio Londres), Chinese (Shanghai 99), (All Prints, Lebanon), film rights (Circe, NL)

Gerbrand Bakker, *The Detour*: sold to 17 countries/languages, US (Penguin), UK (Harvill/Random House), ANZ (Scribe), German (Suhrkamp), French (Gallimard), Spanish (Rayo Verde), Italian (Einaudi), Brazilian (Radio Londres), Chinese (Shanghai 99), Arabic (All Prints, Lebanon), film rights (N279 Ent., NL)

Britta Böhler, *The Decision*: World English (Haus, UK), German (Aufbau), French (Stock), Italian (Guanda), Hebrew (Sifriat-Poalim), Danish (Turbine), Greek (Kapon)

Saskia Goldschmidt, *The Hormone Factory*: US (The Other Press), UK (Saraband), German (dtv), French (Gallimard), Turkish (Bence), Afrikaans (Protea), Bulgarian (Lettera), film rights (Film Talents, France)

Bregje Hofstede, *The Sky Over Paris*: German (C.H. Beck), Danish (Tiderne Skifter/Gyldendal), film rights (Sara Verweij, NL)

Dola de Jong, *The Field*: German (Kunstmann), Arabic (Al Kotob Khan), Norwegian (Aschehoug), Swedish (Nilsson), Danish (Turbine), Czech (Pistorius & Olsanská)

Dola de Jong, *The Tree and the Vine*: Swedish (Nilsson), Czech (Pistorius & Olsanská), Spanish (Siruela)

Eva Meijer, *Animal Languages*: German (Matthes & Seitz), World English (John Murray), French (Presses de la Cité), Polish (Marginesy), Arabic (Dar Oktob)

Eva Meijer, *The Bird Cottage*: German (btb), French (Presses de la Cité), World English (Pushkin Press), Arabic (Kotob Khan), Polish (Marginesy)

Ida Simons, *A Foolish Virgin*: sold to 18 countries/languages, World English (MacLehose/Hachette), German (Luchterhand), French (Belfond), Spanish (Alfaguara/Random House), Brazilian (Alfaguara)

Lize Spit, *The Melting*: World English (MacMillan), German (S. Fischer), Spanish (Seix Barral), French (Actes Sud), Italian (E/O), Norwegian (Cappelen Damm), Danish (Rosinante), Czech (Host), Polish (Marginesy), Arab world rights (Madarek), Catalan (Ara Llibres) and film rights (Menuet Film, BE)

Recent Acquisitions & Publications

- Bette Adriaanse – *Rus Like Everyone Else* (Greene & Heaton, London)
- Kristine Bilkau – *Die Glücklichen & Eine Liebe, in Gedanken* (Lit. Ag. Michael Gaeb, Berlin)
- Bov Bjerg – *Auerhaus* (Aufbau, Berlin)
- Christophe Boltanski – *La cache* (Éditions Stock, Paris)
- J.M. Coetzee – *The Schooldays of Jesus* (Peter Lampack, New York City)
- Sherko Fatah – *Der letzte Ort* (Random House, Munich)
- Milena Michiko Flašar – *Herr Katō spielt Familie* (Wagenbach, Berlin)
- David Foenkinos – *Le Mystère Henri Pick* (Gallimard, Paris)
- András Forgách – *No Life Files Remain* (Bence Sárközy & Co., Budapest)
- Jane Gardam – *Old Filth/The Man in the Wooden Hat/Last Friends* (Chatto & Windus, London)
- David Grossman – *Collected Essays* (Deborah Harris Agency, Jerusalem)
- Michael Ignatieff – *Ordinary Virtues. Moral Order in a Divided World* (United Agents, London)
- Husch Josten – *Hier sind Drachen* (Piper Verlag, Munich)
- Navid Kermani – *Ungläubiges Staunen/Einbruch der Wirklichkeit* (C.H. Beck, Munich)
- Stefano Mancuso – *Brilliant Green & Plant Revolution* (Giunti, Florence)
- Francesca Melandri – *Sangue giusto* (Italian Literary Agency, Milan)
- Catherine Poulain – *Le grand marin* (Wandel Cruse, Paris)
- Erich Maria Remarque – *Die Nacht von Lissabon/Arc de Triomphe* (Mohrbooks, Zürich)
- Aleksandr Skorobogatov – *Cocaine* (Cossee Publishers, Amsterdam and Regal Hoffmann & Associates LLC, New York)
- Elio Vittorini – *Il garofano rosso* (Mondadori, Milan)

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