

An abstract painting featuring a dark blue background with vertical brushstrokes. A large, flowing, yellowish-gold shape dominates the upper half, resembling a ribbon or a piece of fabric. To the right, there are vertical yellow and blue stripes, and a red border frames a white rectangular area. The overall style is expressive and textured.

Cossee  
International  
Agency  
Spring  
Highlights

2026

## FICTION

- 4 Ester Naomi Perquin – *Until Things Start to Slide*
- 5 Nisrine Mbarki Ben Ayad – *Boiling Point*
- 6 Atef Abu Saif – *A Suspended Life*
- 7 Donald Niedekker – *Cacao*
- 8 Lieselot Mariën – *The Animals Within*
- 9 Sarah Arnolds – *The Sheer Nerve*

## NON-FICTION

- 12 Michel Krielaars – *River of Blood. A Cultural History of the Volga*
- 13 Gerbrand Bakker – *Estate*
- 14 Eva Meijer – *The Life of Mice*

# FICTION

## KOOKPUNT



Nisrine Mbarki Ben Ayad

uitgeverij Palm

ESTER NAOMI PERQUIN

## *Until Things Start to Slide*

304 pages, 89,500 words  
published by Van Oorschot Publishers in 2025

**“As if it is not her first, but her latest of many novels, so subtle and confident is Ester Naomi Perquin’s writing.” – *De Volkskrant***

After years of telling stories about other people’s lives behind bars, former prison guard Ela is compelled to tell a more personal story. About a father and two brothers, the true scope of a family secret and her tendency to model reality after her own needs. Who can be called the perpetrator here? And which stories is she actually allowed to tell? ‘Not everything is yours,’ as her eldest brother says. ‘This concerns me too.’

‘In hindsight, I know that we should’ve talked about the silence; how exactly it was distributed across the members of this household, across the family, people we don’t even know, that already made choices generations before. Never do we speak of the power of the silent; talking about silence is like aiming a flashlight at a dark corner to point out the shadow.’

**“A bold debut novel, that trusts its reader. *Until Things Start to Slide* offers rich imagery, beautiful analogies, highly intriguing questions and insights. Perquin’s novel is a remarkable treatise on various forms of imprisonment.”**  
– *NRC*♦♦♦



**Ester Naomi Perquin** (1980) lives in Rotterdam. She has worked as a prison guard for several years, paying for her creative writing studies in Amsterdam. Her three poetry collections *Servetten halfstok* (2007), *Namens de ander* (2009), and *Celinspecties* (2012) have been very well received, and awarded a number of literary prizes. In 2017-2018, she was *Dichter der Nederlanden*, the official Dutch Poet Laureate.

### **Sales**

7,000 copies sold, since publication in November

### **Nominations**

Longlist Libris Literatuur Prijs 2026

### **Material**

English sample, part of the ‘2026 Highlights’ by the Dutch Foundation for Literature

# NISRINE MBARKI BEN AYAD

## *Boiling Point*

160 pages, 34.800 words  
published by Pluim Publishers in 2025

**“A composition of subtle and light, yet extremely strong material. With world history as a backdrop, Mbarki Ben Ayad immerses you in stories about life, death and all shades of humanity and of course, love.” – *Nooit meer slapen***

*Boiling Point* is the story of a century: from 1961 in Algeria until 2061 in Amsterdam. It is a century that repeatedly destroys and reinvents itself. Seven stories, in seven decades, in different places in the world, but the turning points in history connect all these people to each other. The French nuclear tests in the Algerian Sahara cause Ydder to lose his great love. But they also mean he meets Salma, who fled Damascus. Who marries Bern in Belleville. Who, years later, in a church in Utrecht calls out to him from the realm of the dead. Invisible threads of human shortcomings crisscross the world. Nothing in history remains without consequences, everything has a lasting impact on future generations.

**“In her debut novel Mbarki Ben Ayad displays an impressive array of her skills.” – *De Standaard*\*\*\*\*\***

**“Reading it once really is not enough for Mbarki Ben Ayad’s clever fiction debut.” – *De Volkskrant***



**Nisrine Mbarki Ben Ayad** (1977) is a versatile writer. She is a poet, novelist, playwright, translator and literary curator for international festivals. As a literary translator she translates poetry from Arabic and English to Dutch. She has been nominated for several Dutch and Belgian prizes. Mbarki Ben Ayad is appointed Dichter der Nederlanden, the official Dutch Poet Laureate, for the upcoming two years.

### **Material**

English sample available, part of the ‘2026 Highlights’ by the Dutch Foundation for Literature

# ATEF ABU SAIF

## *A Suspended Life*

437 pages

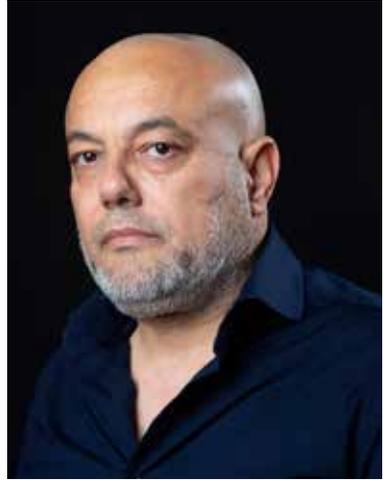
to be published by Cossee Publishers in the fall of 2026  
originally published in Arabic in 2014 with Al Dar Al Ahlia

**“Saif paints a picture of a city that, despite being broken by multiple hardships, is held together by a complex social structure in which each character finds their way, wherever it may lead. *A Suspended Life* is a family and city history in one.”**

– *FAZ* on the German translation

Right before his office in Gaza, Naim, a typographer in his late fifties who prints posters of young martyrs, is killed by a ‘misdled’ bullet. His death marks the beginning of a story that intertwines private tragedy and collective destiny: his son Saleem, returning from Italy where he works as a researcher, must reckon with a past he thought he had left behind and a present that lays claim on him. When Saleem decides not to print a poster for his deceased father, against local custom, the decision sparks a deep discussion within the community about the nature of heroism.

Around Saleem, the stories of his childhood friends unfold: some choosing the resistance, some pursuing a career in the great “news factory” that Gaza has become, some dreaming of going abroad, some climbing the ranks of power – while the past resurfaces in the older generation’s stories, filled with sorrow and perseverance. From the memory of the Nakba to the Intifadas, from literary evenings in cafés to prisons, from property speculation to civil protest movements, the novel draws us into the life of the city of Gaza.



**Atef Abu Saif**, born in 1973 in a refugee camp in Jabalia in Gaza, is a researcher at the European University Institute in Florence, former Palestinian Minister of Culture and one of the most accomplished Palestinian writers. He has published six novels, some translated into several languages. His novels *A Suspended Life* (2014) and *Hajji Christina* (2016) were both shortlisted for the International Prize for Arabic Fiction.

### **Rights sold**

German (Sujet Verlag), Italian (Alessandro Polidoro Editore)

### **Material**

English sample, full Arabic original, and German and Italian translations available

# DONALD NIEDEKKER

## *Cacao*

208 pages, 50.000 words  
published by Koppertnik Publishers in 2026

**“Donald Niedekker’s *Cacao* is reminiscent of *The Years* by Nobel Prize laureate Annie Ernaux. And of Proust. And of Tarkovski. What an astonishingly inspired book this is.” – *De Standaard*\*\*\*\*\***

Two boys, two worlds; one grows up under the smoke of a cacao factory in Zaandam, the other works on a plantation in West-Africa. They are taken on a journey through the seventies by millers, shopkeepers, a stone eagle, a travelling storyteller, a chauffeur, a panther and a crocodile. Their lives intersect – connected by the smell of cacao and the whims of the Aztec god of creation Quetzalcoatl and the god of songs and flowers Xochipilli, who, high above the two young protagonists, attempt to regain their glory.

In his signature sparkling style, Donald Niedekker once again demonstrates in the both witty and moving *Cacao* how myth and reality, past and present constantly mirror each other.

**“Niedekker has been an interesting writer for some time. One that with a few literary tricks can keep you entirely spellbound.” – NRC**



**Donald Niedekker** (1963)

published the novel *Like a Tiger, Like a Snail* in 2014. His novels *Oksana, Clouds &c.* and *This Is How You See Everything* have also gained prize nominations. Niedekker received the Luc Bucquoye-prijs for idiosyncratic literature in 2021. His novel *Strange and Perfect Account from the Permafrost* (2022) has won the F. Bordewijk-prijs 2022, and has been shortlisted for the Boekenbon and Libris Literatuur Prijs.

### Material

English sample available

### Rights sold

Earlier work, *Permafrost*, sold to Sandorf Passage (English), Sandorf (Croatian), Art Rage (Polish), Ramus (Sweden)

# LIESELOT MARIËN

## *The Animals Within*

312 pages, 32.500 words  
published by Das Mag Publishers in 2025

**“The story is so intimate it cuts to the bone; a formidable achievement for a debut.”**

– *De Standaard*\*\*\*\*\*

In this inventive, poetic debut, Lieselot Mariën tells the story of a young mother who, after giving birth, becomes estranged from her new reality and struggles to inhabit her role. Drawing on mythology and the animal kingdom, Mariën weaves form and content into an exploration of language and meaning, in an attempt to capture an experience that resists both.

**“In her utterly ingenious debut novel about a young mother with postpartum depression, Lieselot Mariën skillfully plays with form and content. The result is a gripping narrative that forces the reader to think, feeling their way through the text.”** – *NRC*\*\*\*\*\*

**“A confronting, essential, and profoundly moving book.”**

– *Humo*\*\*\*\*\*



**Lieselot Mariën** is a trained philosopher and lawyer. She has worked in theater, in the kitchen, and as an attorney. Today, she creates audio dramas and documentaries. *The Animals Within* is her debut novel.

### **Nominations**

Shortlisted for the Bronzen Uil 2025 and the De Boon Literatuurprijs 2026, longlisted Libris Literatuur Prijs 2026

### **Material**

English and German sample available, part of the ‘2025 Highlights’ by Flanders Literature

# SARAH ARNOLDS

## *The Sheer Nerve*

168 pages, 31.000 words  
published by Das Mag Publishers in 2025

**“So good it gives you separation anxiety: you don’t want to let go of the characters.”** – *De Volkskrant*

**“These stories are reminiscent of Jeffrey Eugenides and Lana Del Rey.”** – *Knack*\*\*\*\*\*

In the stories in this collection, lying is everywhere. Because a lie is a wonderful way to escape the truth – which is often too painful, or too boring. And it’s so easy. Anyone can do it. You lie to your friends, your masseur, your parents, your children, your partner, or to yourself. Stopping, however, is the hard part.

**“The stories of Sarah Arnolds are remarkably good. Heart-rending yet gentle, laconic yet full of mystery. They slip quietly but with purpose into your mind, and refuse to leave anytime soon. Hard to believe this is a debut; every story hits its mark.”** – Rob van Essen, two-time winner of the Libris Literatuur Prijs

**“Arnolds’ writing is diligent, in a subtle way ingenious, and completely on point. There is a mastery and accuracy to it that you rarely encounter, especially not in a debut.”**  
– *NRC*\*\*\*\*



**Sarah Arnolds** (1992) graduated from the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam. She wrote screenplays and published stories in *De Gids*, *Extra Extra Magazine*, and *MacGuffin*. *The Sheer Nerve* is her debut.

### **Rights sold**

World English (Scribe), Swedish (Flo Förlag), German (Aufbau)

### **Sales**

10.000 copies sold

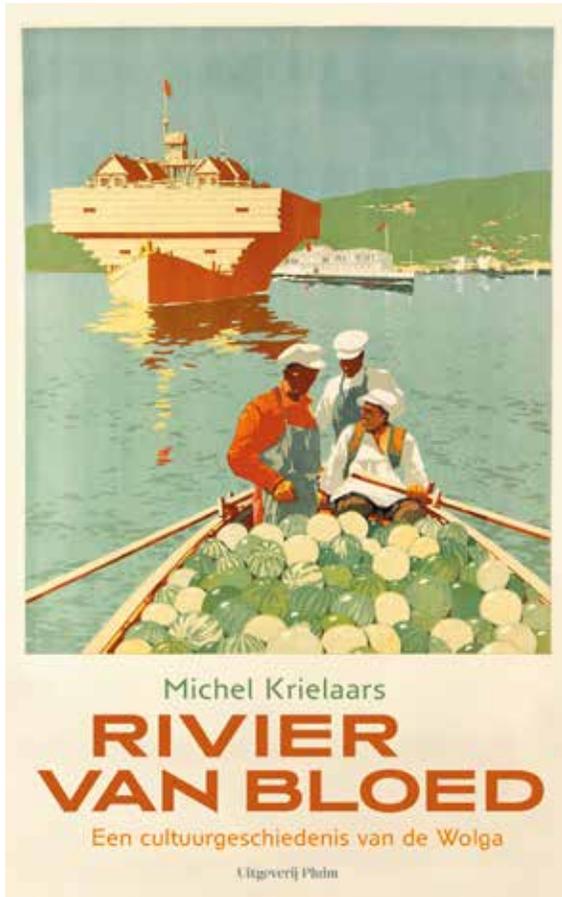
### **Nominations**

Boekenbon Literatuurprijs 2025,  
De Boon Literatuurprijs 2026

### **Material**

English sample, part of the ‘2025 Highlights’ by the Dutch Foundation for Literature

# NON-FICTION



# MICHEL KRIELAARS

## *River of Blood.*

### *A Cultural History of the Volga*

336 pages, 85,700 words  
published by Pluim Publishers in 2026

**“This really is a compact cultural history of Russia in its entirety, as there is little that isn’t connected to the Volga river.” – *De Volkskrant***

It seems to become increasingly impossible to truly understand Russia and its actions. The Volga river, spanning 3500 kilometers, is the heart of the country, and a source of the formative ideas and myths that shaped the country into what it is: an imperial power that still does not accept the disintegration of its empire in 1992. Michel Krielaars traveled on and along the Volga in search of precisely those founding myths.

Coming across Ivan the Terrible for example, who really speaks to the imagination. Dressed in black robes with dog heads strapped to their saddles, his troops crossed the land on horseback, plundering and raping, to keep the nobility in line. It is no coincidence that there are parallels to Putin’s reign of terror. Using a wealth of examples and anecdotes, Michel Krielaars shows that the roots of today’s Russia lie in its past.

**“Krielaars, who worked as a newspaper correspondent in Moscow, speaks Russian and knows the culture’s tender spots, especially now that Putin is reviving the Soviet playbook of violence and silence.” – *The Guardian* on *The Sound of Utopia***



**Michel Krielaars** (1961) is a writer and a journalist specialising in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, who currently writes for the Dutch daily newspaper *NRC*. He was a correspondent in Russia between 2007 and 2012. Krielaars has written novels, short-story collections and several books about Russia, including most recently *The Sound of Utopia*.

#### **Rights sold**

Earlier work, *The Sound of Utopia*, sold to Azerbaijan (Alatoran), Italy (Mondadori), Spain (Galaxia Gutenberg), and World English rights to Pushkin Press

#### **Material**

English sample & summary available, part of the ‘2026 Highlights’ by the Dutch Foundation for Literature

# GERBRAND BAKKER

## *Estate*

144 pages, 30.600  
published by Cossee Publishers in 2025

**“In *Estate* you get to know the group dynamics of a family, without much explanation from the author. In just a few sentences you learn a lot about their interpersonal relationships. Which is also the strength in Bakker’s entire oeuvre: telling the story between the lines.” – *Tzum***

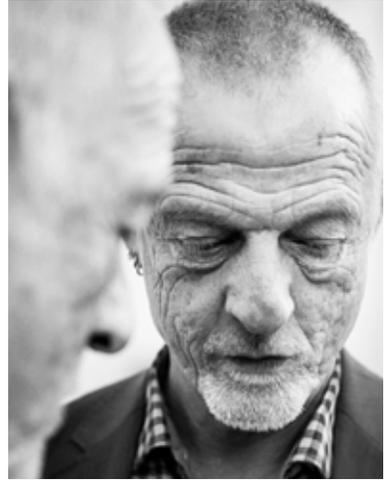
After the passing of their mother, Gerbrand Bakker and his brothers and sister have to clear out their parental home. Which stories hide behind all these objects? And why do they sometimes contradict each other? Is it maybe better to just let the stuff be stuff, setting aside its emotional value?

Some objects become the cause of serious debates. Not only the expensive things, even a few packs of paracetamol can lead to heated discussions. But in the end the six siblings always figure it out, maybe because their mother’s words still ring true: ‘Who argues, gets nothing!’

**“Wasn’t it Proust who said that after the death of a loved one it is not the loss that is important, but rather that all relationships will shift and you suddenly find yourself in a completely different place in life? That is what makes it so odd that someone suddenly is no longer there. Bakker has written a beautiful, earnest book about it.” – *NRC***

### Material

English sample available



**Gerbrand Bakker** (1962) is an author and landscaping gardener. His debut novel *The Twin* (2006) was awarded with, among others, the prestigious International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. His novels *Pear Trees Blossom White*, *June*, *The Detour* and *The Hairdresser’s Son* were also bestsellers and have been translated worldwide. He has recently written books in the prestigious *Privé-domein* series.

### Rights sold

Earlier work, *The Hairdresser’s Son*, sold to Grasset (French), Rayo Verde (Spanish and Catalan), Archipelago (US), Scribe (Commonwealth/UK), Metis (Turkish), Suhrkamp (German), Iperborea (Iperborea), Libri Kiado (Hungarian), Fraktura (Croatian), HaKibbutz (Hebrew)

# EVA MEIJER

## *The Life of Mice*

128 pages, 21.000 words  
published by Cossee Publishers in 2025

**“Touchingly beautiful and well-designed. (...) This is a book that’s truly worth reading, coming to it with the same open mind and curiosity that Meijer has for the mice.” – NRC ••••**

For the past three years twenty-five mice lived in the house of philosopher and writer Eva Meijer. They came from Utrecht University’s laboratory and had been lucky enough to be part of a project to rehome laboratory animals. Meijer took care of the mice and learned, as best as they could, to live with them.

In *The Life of Mice*, Eva Meijer argues against anthropocentric thinking that puts humans at the center of society marginalizing other creatures, organisms and things. Along the lines of bird researcher Len Howard, whom Meijer depicts in their best-selling novel *Bird Cottage*, Meijer also suggests a different way of studying animals: only by looking closely at them can you get to know them. Indeed, living with mice showed Meijer that we can learn a whole lot from them – including about ourselves. Meijer bought a multi-storey mouse house, played music to them, talked to them, and fed them. Some were timid, others inquisitive. A few became friends.

**“This publication, illustrated with drawings and large photographs made by the author, presents the life of mice in a beautiful, engaging, and accessible way.” – Boekenkrant**



**Eva Meijer** (1980) is a writer and philosopher. They are the author of an extensive oeuvre, which has been translated into over twenty languages. Their work often deals with questions of language and politics, also in relation to other animals and the natural world. They currently work as a postdoctoral researcher at the University of Amsterdam.

### **Rights sold**

German (Matthes & Seitz), Turkish (Kaplumbaa), Polish (Linia), Spanish (Penguin Editorial)

### **Nominations**

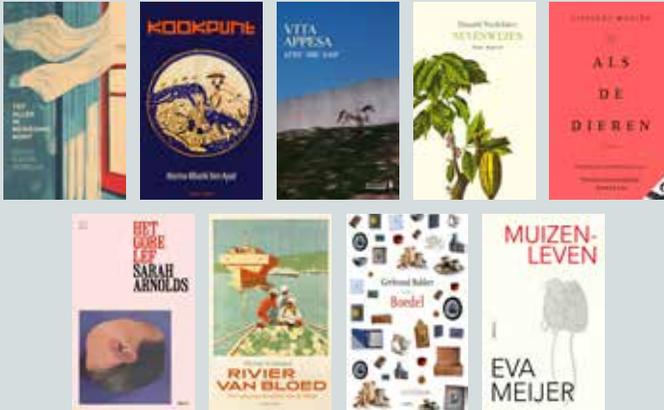
Winner Natuurboekenprijs 2025

### **Material**

English sample available

- Gerbrand Bakker**, *The Hairdresser's Son*: French (Grasset), Spanish and Catalan (Rayo Verde), US (Archipelago), Commonwealth/UK (Scribe), Turkish (Metis), German (Suhrkamp), Italian (Iperborea), Hungarian (Libri Kiado), Croatian (Fraktura), Hebrew (HaKibbutz)
- Gerda Blees**, *We Are Light*: Albanian (Muza), Bulgarian (Perseus), Croatian (Hena Com), English (World Editions), German (Paul Zsolnay), Macedonian (Antolog), Serbian (Treci Trg), Slovenian (Goga), Italian (Iperborea), Spanish/Argentina (Serapis), Tamil (Emerald), Turkish (April), Arabic (Al Arabi)
- Toine Heijmans**, *Oxygen Debt*: Italian (SEM), German (Mairisch), French (Belfond), Spanish (Acantilado), Persian (AnaPol)
- Tiemen Hiemstra**, *W.*: German (Kein & Aber), Italian (Adelphi), Turkish (Kaplumbaa), Croatian (Naklada Ljevak)
- William Kentridge**, *A Natural History of the Studio*: World Spanish (Anagrama), World English (Grove), Czech (Kunsthalle Praha), French (Editions Delpire), Turkish (offer)
- Sander Kollaard**, *A Dog's Day*: German (Kanon), French (Heloise d'Ormesson), Shinchosha (Japanese), Next Wave Media Corporation (Korean), Turkish (İş Kultur), Croatian (Naklada Ljevak)
- Gerrit Kouwenaar**, *Fall, Bomb, Fall*: German (Beck), Italian (Bompiani), World English (Pushkin Press), Spanish (Gatopardo), Portuguese (Dom Quixote), French (Robert Laffont)
- Michel Krielaars**, *The Sound of Utopia*: Azerbaijani (Alatoran), Italian (Mondadori), Spanish (Galaxia Gutenberg), World English (Pushkin Press)
- Tobi Lakmaker**, *The History of my Sexuality*: German (Piper), World English (Granta), Italian (Mondadori), Norwegian (Aschehoug), Swedish (it-lit), Serbian (Treći trg), French (La Peuplade), Slovakian (Okraj Publishing), Spanish/Spain (Aristas Martinez), Finnish (Kosmos), Greek (Ekdoseis Nisos), Bulgarian (Janet 45), Hungarian (Vince) and film rights under option
- Jennifer Makumbi**, *The First Woman*: French (Métailié), German (Interkontinental), Dutch (Cossee), Turkish (Sola Unitas), Ukrainian (Knigolove), Spanish (Deleste)
- Eva Meijer**, *Sea Now*: German (btb), English (Peirene), US (Two Lines Press), Hungarian (Magveto), Turkish (Kaplumbaa)
- Donald Niedekker**, *Strange and Perfect Account from the Permafrost*: US/Canada (Sandorf Passage), Polish (ArtRage), Croatian (Sandorf), Swedish (Ramus)
- Chaja Polak**, *Letter in the Night*: English (New Menard Press), German (Droemer), Italian (RCS)
- Jente Posthuma**, *What I'd Rather not Think About*: World English (Scribe), Spanish (Bunker Books), Bulgarian (Colibri), German (Luchterhand/PRH), Norwegian (pax), Swedish (Ramus), Korean (Munhakdongne), Arabic (Sefsafa), Polish (Glowbook), Portuguese (Dom Quixote), Brazilian (Record), Ukrainian (Knigolove), Turkish (Koridor), Czech (Vyšehrad), Albanian (Onufri), Latvian (Satori), Macedonian (Bata), Serbian (option)
- Bea Vianen**, *My Name is Sita*: US/Canada (Sandorf Passage), German (Transit), Polish (Art Rage), Tamil (Emerald Publishers)
- Nadia de Vries**, *Surrender on Demand*: World English (Bloomsbury US), German (Dumont), Danish (Jensen & Dalgaard), Turkish (offer)

- Yasmin Abdel-Magied** – *At Sea* (Canongate)
- Atef Abu Saif** – *A Suspended Life*
- Nathacha Appanah** – *La nuit au cœur* (Gallimard)
- Kristine Bilkau** – *Halbinsel* (Michael Gaeb)
- Italo Calvino** – *Palomar* (Wylie Agency)
- J.M. Coetzee** – *Speaking in Tongues* (Peter Lampack)
- Osamu Dazai** – *Ningen Shikkaku, Shayo*
- David Diop** – *Où s'adosse le ciel* (So Far So Good Agency)
- Cordelia Edvardson** – *Bränt barn söker sig till elden* (Carl Hanser)
- Jane Gardam** – *Bilgewater* (David Higham)
- David Grossman** – *The Price We Pay* (Deborah Harris Agency)
- Annett Gröschner** – *Schwebende Lasten* (C.H. Beck)
- Ayelet Gundar Goshen** – *Uninvited Guests* (Kein und Aber)
- Christoph Hein** – *Das Narrenschiff* (Suhrkamp)
- Saou Ichikawa** – *Hunchback* (New River Agency)
- Sacha Naspini** – *Nives* (Edizioni E/O)
- Luisa Neubauer** – *Was wäre, wenn wir mutig sind?* (Rowohlt)
- Doireann Ní Ghríofa** – *Said the Dead* (Wylie Agency)
- Yoko Ogawa** – *Hotel Iris* (CAA)
- Cesare Pavese** – *La casa in collina*
- Maria Reva** – *Endling* (CAA)
- Montserrat Roig** – *The Barcelona Trilogy* (Casanovas & Lynch)
- Bernhard Schlink** – *Das späte Leben* (Diogenes)
- Ásta Sigurðardóttir** – *Streichhölzer* (Reykjavík Literary Agency)
- Charles Simmons** – *Salt Water* (C.H. Beck)
- Irene Solà** – *Et vaig donar ulls i vas mirar les tenebres* (Casanovas & Lynch)
- Wisława Szymborska** – *Począta literacka* (Fundacja Wisławy Szymborskiej)
- Nathan Thrall** – *A Day in the Life of Abed Salama* (FSG)
- Miriam Toews** – *A Truce That Is Not Peace* (Wylie Agency)
- Justin Torres** – *Blackouts* (Wylie Agency)
- Oksana Zabuzhko** – *Muzej Pokynutykh Sekretiv* (Beata Stasińska Literary Agency)



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