

German Book Prize 2018

The Novel of the Year

Shortlist-Nominee

2018
deutscher
buch
preis 



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María Cecilia Barbeta
Nachtleuchten
(Nightglowing)
S. Fischer

Jury evaluation

A glowing figure makes the rounds in an Argentinian suburb: the fluorescent and blessing-bestowing Maria, carried from house to house by the impudent convent student Teresa. Also inhabiting the city are a hysterical little dog, a poetry-writing car mechanic, the cleaning-obsessed owner of a laundrette and two foolhardy policemen. This novel is brimming with ideas; it is a volcano full of intricate sentences that keep us turning page after page, breathlessly. The cheerful scenario plays out against an increasingly sinister backdrop: It is 1974, Juan Domingo Perón is dead and the military junta is preparing a coup d'état.

Biography

María Cecilia Barbeta was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1972. She studied German as a foreign language and, in 1996, received a DAAD stipend to come to Berlin, where she has remained ever since. In 2008, she published her first novel, "Änderungsschneiderei Los Milagros" ("The Los Milagros Tailor Shop"). In 2013, she received a fellowship for a residency at the Villa Massimo in Rome. María Cecilia Barbeta writes in German and lives in Berlin.



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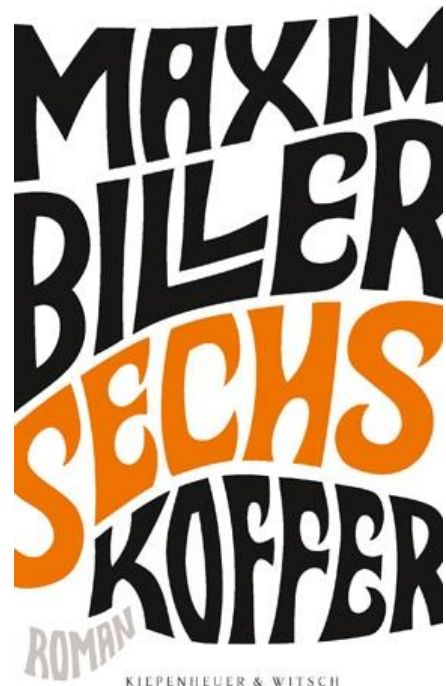
Maxim Biller
Sechs Koffer
(Six Suitcases)
Kiepenheuer & Witsch

Jury evaluation

The manner in which Maxim Biller succeeds in unfolding this complex family saga is a major feat of storytelling – incredibly economical in limited space, elegant, laconic, with subtle humour and great tenderness for his characters. At the core of the story is the famous question of guilt – in this case: Who betrayed grandfather and his smuggling operations and thus has his violent death on his or her conscience? From six different points-of-view the narrator sheds light on the dark secret of a Russian-Jewish family. The novel examines betrayal and hurt, eros and jealousy, but also family loyalty and sibling love – and the impossibility of one single truth.

Biography

Maxim Biller was born in Prague in 1960 and has been living in Germany since 1970. He has published numerous novels and short story collections. He is a columnist for the Sunday edition of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and for Die Zeit. His volume of short stories "Liebe heute" (2007) was published in the United States as "Love Today". His most recent works include the novella "Im Kopf von Bruno Schulz" ("Inside the Head of Bruno Schulz", 2013) and the novel "Biographie" ("Biography", 2016).



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Sollsuchstelle*

Nino Haratischwili
Die Katze und der General
(The Cat And The General)
Frankfurter Verlagsanstalt

Jury evaluation

Every sentence here attests to the joy of storytelling. From the first page, the reader is right in the middle of this novel of guilt and atonement, feverishly following the general's plan for revenge. He wants to atone for a crime in which he himself participated during the Chechen war. Narrative threads full of questions run below the novel's thriller-like surface: What effect does the "toxic past" have on the present? Are wars never over? Why does the Georgian family living in Germany long for home, even though life there was hell? The characters – all of them "stuck between times and worlds" – are brimming with vitality, and everything is told with powerful imagery and sensuousness.

Biography

Nino Haratischwili, born in Tbilisi in 1983, is an award-winning playwright, theatre director and author of the family saga "Das achte Leben (Für Brillka)" ("The Eighth Life (For Brillka)") (2014), which has been translated into many languages and has received, amongst other awards, the Literaturpreis des Kulturkreises der deutschen Wirtschaft (literary prize of the Association of Arts and Culture of the German Economy), Anna Seghers Prize, Lessing Prize scholarship and, most recently, the Bertolt Brecht Prize 2018.



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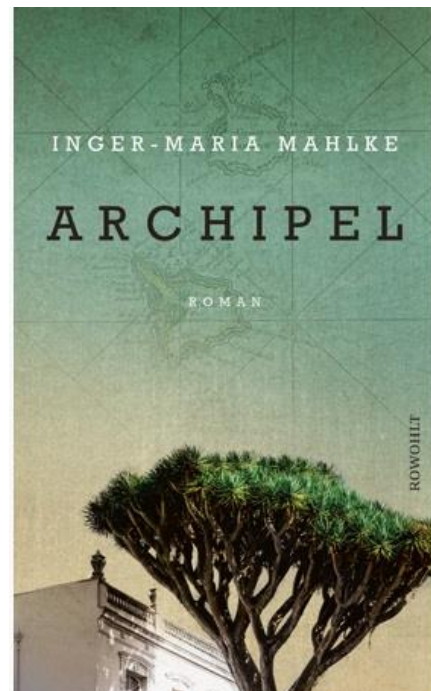
Inger-Maria Mahlke
Archipel (Archipelago)
Rowohlt

Jury evaluation

Inger-Maria Mahlke's novel "Archipelago" is a major journey through time and to the ends of Europe. The cities of Tenerife breathe eternal summer, but between all the scents and sounds of the south you can feel the rush of air of an entire century. While the people in a nursing home go their final ways, the young set out full of new hope – it is the cycle of private life, which Inger-Maria Mahlke brilliantly interweaves with the political. And so one finds oneself paging through a hundred years like through an album filled with painfully beautiful and detailed pictures – witnessing descendants of the Spanish conquistadors and majestic cleaning ladies, rises and falls, love and corruption.

Biography

Inger-Maria Mahlke grew up in Lübeck and Tenerife and studied law at the Free University of Berlin, where she worked in the Department of Criminology. In 2009, she won the Berlin "open mike" competition. The following year, her debut novel "Silberfischchen" ("Silverfish") received the Klaus Michael Kühne Prize. Most recently, she published the novel "Wie Ihr wollt" ("As You Wish"), which was shortlisted for the German Book Prize. Inger-Maria Mahlke lives in Berlin.



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Susanne Röckel
Der Vogelgott (The Bird God)
Jung und Jung

Jury evaluation

"The Bird God" is an unsettling book: a contemporary gothic novel, a modern descendant of Dark Romanticism. A feathered higher being, more myth than real presence, unleashes fear and horror – above all in those who want to get close to it. It downright drives to madness three curious siblings from a family with an ornithological bent, living on different continents. What's behind it all? Susanne Röckel wouldn't dream of revealing secrets – which makes it even harder to shake the novel's oppressive atmosphere.

Biography

Susanne Röckel, born in Darmstadt in 1953, studied Romance Languages and Literature and German Language and Literature in Berlin and Paris. She lives in Munich, where she works as a writer and translator (of Paula Fox, Antonia S. Byatt, Irène Némirovsky and Joyce Carol Oates, amongst others). She has won numerous distinctions, including the Mara Cassens Prize 1998 and the Tukan Prize 1999.



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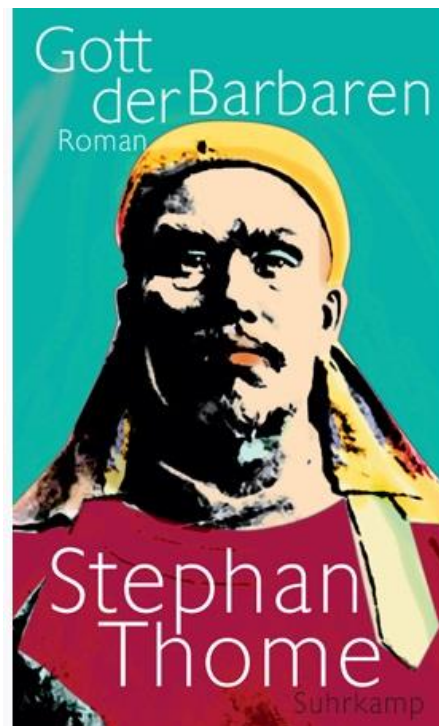
Stephan Thome
Gott der Barbaren (God of the Barbarians)
Suhrkamp Verlag

Jury evaluation

China, circa 1860. The enormous empire has suffered a major blow: A rapidly spreading uprising by religious fanatics threatens to overthrow social structures, while European powers simultaneously force access to trade through military force. Stephan Thome does an impressive job of depicting an era in which everything seems to be falling apart. The narrative rhythm of this broad work remains unhurried, yet never feels tedious, thanks to the elegant writing – and thanks also to the disconcerting feeling of seeing our own world in a mirror that reaches back more than 150 years into history.

Biography

Stephan Thome was born in Biedenkopf (Hesse) in 1972. He studied Philosophy and Sinology and lived and worked in East Asia for ten years. His novels "Grenzgang" ("Border Walk") (2009) und "Fliehkräfte" ("Centrifugal Forces") (2012) were shortlisted for the German Book Prize. In 2014, he received the Kunstpreis Berlin for literature. Stephan Thome lives in Taipei.



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