

Press Release

German Book Prize 2020: The six finalists

The jury has selected six novels for the shortlist of the German Book Prize 2020:

- Bov Bjerg, **Serpentinen** (Claassen, January 2020)
- Dorothee Elmiger, **Aus der Zuckerfabrik** (Carl Hanser, August 2020)
- Thomas Hettche, **Herzfaden** (Kiepenheuer & Witsch, September 2020)
- Deniz Ohde, **Streulicht** (Suhrkamp, August 2020)
- Anne Weber, **Annette, ein Heldinnenepos** (Matthes & Seitz Berlin, February 2020)
- Christine Wunnicke, **Die Dame mit der bemalten Hand** (Berenberg, August 2020)

Regarding this selection, jury spokesperson Hanna Engelmeier, Kulturwissenschaftliches Institut Essen (Institute for Advanced Study in the Humanities) and Author, says: "We have nominated six novels that won us over with the power of their linguistic expression and their formal innovation while also demonstrating political urgency in a particularly clever manner. Some draw on unexpected sources or turn to historical material to arrive at major universal questions. At the same time, the shortlist also includes outstanding titles that address biographical and contemporary topics in surprising ways."

Since the submission process began, the seven members of the jury have reviewed 206 titles published between October 2019 and 15 September 2020.

In addition to Hanna Engelmeier, the members of the jury for the German Book Prize 2020 are: Katharina Borchardt (literature editor, SWR2), David Hugendick (literature editor, *Zeit Online*), Chris Möller (propagator of literature at Kabeljau & Dorsch, Berlin), Maria-Christina Piwowarski ("ocelot" bookstore, Berlin), Felix Stephan (literature editor, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*) and Denise Zumbrunnen ("Never Stop Reading" bookstore, Zurich).

The Stiftung Buchkultur und Leseförderung des Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels (Foundation for Book Culture and the Promotion of Reading of the German Publishers and Booksellers Association) awards the German Book Prize 2020 to the best German-language novel of the year. The winner receives 25,000 euros, the five finalists 2,500 euros each. The award ceremony will be broadcast live on 12 October 2020 at 6 PM from the Kaisersaal of the Frankfurt Römer to coincide with the start of Frankfurter Buchmesse.

The German Book Prize receives financial support from Deutsche Bank Stiftung (Deutsche Bank Foundation), and other partners include Frankfurter Buchmesse and the city of Frankfurt am Main. The television network Deutsche Welle supports the German Book Prize in its media activities both at home and abroad. Those interested can watch the award ceremony via live stream at www.deutscher-buchpreis.de.

The radio stations Deutschlandfunk and Deutschlandfunk Kultur will also broadcast the ceremony live via the special "Dokumente und Debatten" channel on digital radio and as a live stream on www.deutschlandradio.de/debatten.

Starting on 1 October 2020, the website www.new-books-in-german.com will feature English translations of excerpts from the shortlisted titles, along with an English-language dossier about the shortlist.

Video portraits posted on the website and social media channels of the German Book Prize offer an impression of the nominated works and their authors.

The hashtag for the German Book Prize is: **#dbp20**

Downloads

[Press photo and information about the nominated titles for download](#)

Frankfurt am Main, 15 September 2020



Contacts for the media:

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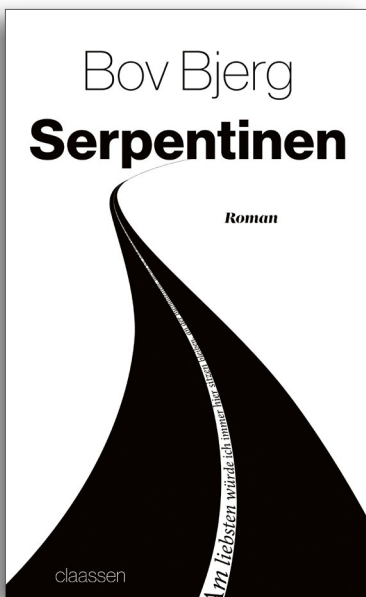
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German Book Prize: Shortlist

Bov Bjerg • Dorothee Elmiger • Thomas Hettche •
Deniz Ohde • Anne Weber • Christine Wunnicke



Bov Bjerg **Switchbacks**

Claassen

Jury evaluation:

A father sets off on a journey with his son, not just into the hilly landscape of his childhood but also into his own oppressive family history and Germany's past. "Serpentinen" offers a deeply sociological and simultaneously very literary account of oppressive gloom – often with surprising wit. Not a single word is out of place in this novel, rendering it capable of relating the unspeakable.



Biography:

Bov Bjerg, born in 1965, is a writer and reader. Together with friends, he founded various reading stages in Berlin, including Dr. Seltsams Frühschoppen, Mittwochsfaizit and Reformbühne Heim & Welt. His first novel was titled "Deadline", the second "Auerhaus"; the latter has been adapted and produced for various renowned German theatres.

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German Book Prize: Shortlist

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Dorothee Elmiger

Out of the Sugar Factory

Carl Hanser

Jury evaluation:

The starting point of Dorothee Elmiger's novel is a simple question: Where does sugar actually come from? The narrator assembles her research into a highly essayistic form, more like a collage. These investigations lead her not only into world history but literary history as well, which is why a text can find itself landing in Haiti, one of the major sugar exporters, only to encounter Heinrich von Kleist's novel "Betrothal in Santo Domingo" there. This method demonstrates that colonialism is inseparably interwoven with European history and that whenever Europeans tell each other anything different they are recognising only half the truth.



Biography:

Dorothee Elmiger, born in 1985, lives and works in Zurich. In 2010 her debut novel "Einladung an die Waghalsigen" was published, followed in 2014 by the novel "Schlafgänger". Her texts have been translated into various languages and adapted for the stage. Dorothee Elmiger has received numerous awards for her work, including the Aspekte Literature Prize for best German-language prose debut, Rauriser Literature Prize and Erich Fried Prize.

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German Book Prize: Shortlist

Bov Bjerg • Dorothee Elmiger • **Thomas Hettche** •
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Thomas Hettche **Heartstring**

Kiepenheuer & Witsch

Jury evaluation:

With a light and elegant touch, this novel interweaves major themes from the present and Germany's past. From an enchanted attic, it takes us into the world of wooden marionettes, World War II and post-war West Germany to the loss of innocence and the end of childhood. It is about imagination and recapturing it – and, in the process, Thomas Hettche succeeds in creating a work of illusionist art as playful and melancholy as the one the novel itself describes so impressively.



Biography:

The novelist Thomas Hettche has been considered one of Germany's often polarising, always surprising literary voices since 1989, when he published his debut "Ludwig muß sterben". "Der Fall Arbogast" was translated into 13 languages, and his best-selling novel "Pfaueninsel", which tells the atmospheric story of a female dwarf in 19th century Prussia, received the Wilhelm Raabe Prize, Wolfgang Koeppen Prize, Solothurn Literature Prize and Bavarian Book Prize, among others.

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German Book Prize: Shortlist

Bov Bjerg • Dorothee Elmiger • Thomas Hettche •
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Deniz Ohde **Sky Glow**

Suhrkamp

Jury evaluation:

Deniz Ohde writes with captivating clarity about a segment of society we otherwise only very rarely get to hear from. It is a text about a (post-)migrant worker milieu, about a small family and its hopeful wish to belong in an education and incentive system unable to keep its promise of equal opportunity. Ohde not only renders three dimensionally a world and its actors that usually remain hidden behind the doors of cluttered rental flats but manages to do so without ever resorting to clichés or didactic finger-pointing.



Biography:

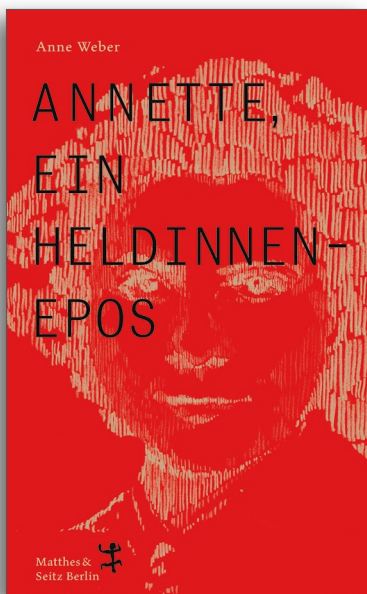
Deniz Ohde, born in Frankfurt am Main in 1988, studied German language and literature in Leipzig, where she lives. In 2016 she was a finalist in the 24th open mike and 10th poet | bewegt literature competition, in 2017 the holder of a 21st Klagenfurt Literature Course scholarship and in 2019 she was shortlisted for the Wortmeldungen Advancement Award. "Streu-licht" is her first novel.

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German Book Prize: Shortlist

Bov Bjerg • Dorothee Elmiger • Thomas Hettche •
Deniz Ohde • **Anne Weber** • Christine Wunnicke



Anne Weber

Epic Annette

Matthes & Seitz Berlin

Jury evaluation:

Anne Weber has succeeded in transforming the real life of 96-year-old Anne Beaumanoir into a magnificent piece of literature in the form of an epic. With subtle humour, she writes about a woman utterly steadfast in her determination to fight for her ideal of justice. In mostly unrhymed verses that develop a flowing rhythm, playfully and with great sensitivity, Anne Weber sets the stage for her heroine. Enthralled, we follow Annette from the French Resistance to the Algerian War of Independence. Philosophical, political and reflective, the novel discreetly establishes a connection to the present. A wonderful and convincing homage to an extraordinary woman.



Biography:

The writer and translator Anne Weber was born in Offenbach in 1964 and has been living in Paris since 1983. She has translated both from German into French (Sibylle Lewitscharoff and Wilhelm Genazino, among others) and vice versa (Pierre Michon and Marguerite Duras). She writes her own books in both German and French. Her work has received, among other awards, the Heimito von Doderer Literature Prize, 3sat Prize, Kranichstein Literature Prize and Johann Heinrich Voß Prize. Her books "Luft und Liebe", "Ahnen" and "Kirio", among others, appeared from S. Fischer Verlag. Matthes & Seitz Berlin has published her translations of the works of Georges Perros, "Luft-schnappen war sein Beruf" and "Klebebilder".

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German Book Prize: Shortlist

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Deniz Ohde • Anne Weber • **Christine Wunnicke**



Christine Wunnicke

The Lady with the Painted Hand

Berenberg

Jury evaluation:

"Die Dame mit der bemalten Hand" recounts migration the other way around. In 1764, the German explorer Carsten Niebuhr becomes stranded on the Indian island of Elephanta. Suffering from swamp fever, he is found and nursed back to health by the locals. "Die Dame mit der bemalten Hand" is a breezy novel about curiosity, traveling and the early scientific exploration of the world. It is also a novel about the friendly welcome that, with a little luck, one can experience in a foreign country. All of it told with a great deal of mischief and quirky wit. Self-assured and absolutely captivating.



Biography:

Christine Wunnicke was born in 1966 and lives in Munich. She has received the Bavarian State Advancement Award for Literature and Tukan Prize. Berenberg has published, among other books, her novels "Der Fuchs und Dr. Shimamura" (2015) and "Katie" (2017), which were both nominated for the German Book Prize (longlist), as well as the novella "Nagasaki, ca. 1642" in paperback (2020).