

Goethe-Institut New York
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PHILIP BOEHM WINS 2020 HELEN & KURT WOLFF TRANSLATOR'S PRIZE FOR *THE FOX AND DR. SHIMAMURA*

New York, NY (May 1, 2020)–The Goethe-Institut is pleased to announce Philip Boehm, translator of *The Fox and Dr. Shimamura* by Christine Wunnicke (New Directions), as the winner of the 2020 Helen & Kurt Wolff Translator's Prize. This is the second time that Boehm has won the Wolff Prize: he last received it in 2013 for his translation of *An Ermine in Czernopol* by Gregor von Rezzori. Boehm is the only translator to have been awarded it twice since the prize's establishment in 1996.

The shortlist was determined by a jury of five, consisting of Shelley Frisch (Chair), Bettina Abarbanell, John Hargraves, Susan Harris, and Damion Searls.

“The jury for the Helen and Kurt Wolff Translator's Prize is delighted to award the prize for 2020 to Philip Boehm for his translation of Christine Wunnicke's *The Fox and Dr. Shimamura*. Wunnicke is a contemporary writer known for her historical characters drawn from eccentric corners of real life. Her sly novel is both subtle and startling: a retired Japanese psychiatrist, helped (or perhaps tricked) by the four women in his household, is remembering (or perhaps misremembering) his younger days when he struggled to master cases of both Japanese spirit-possession and Parisian hysteria under Charcot. Through all the surprising turns of the story, Wunnicke conveys Dr. Shimamura's strange outer and inner life without exoticizing or overidentifying, in an ironic yet compassionate authorial voice. Boehm's sensitive and versatile translation, making admirable choices of both tone and vocabulary throughout, captures all the sparkle and slanting energy of this fresh, original, and very modern novel. The jury is especially pleased to honor Boehm as a translator this year since his superb retranslation of Arthur Koestler's gripping masterpiece *Darkness at Noon* (Scribner) was a strong contender for the prize as well. Boehm has given English-language readers the many kinds of beauty, terror, and quiet flashes of wit and insight in these extraordinary works of literature.”

The Goethe-Institut will celebrate Boehm in a virtual event “Translating Unconventional Narratives: A Conversation with 2020 Wolff Prizewinner Philip Boehm” on May 9th at 3pm ET featuring a discussion with Boehm and chair of the jury Shelley Frisch about *The Fox and Dr. Shimamura*, translation today, and a reading from the book. To register for the event, click [here](#).

Other finalists included Joel Agee for his translation of Robert Musil's *Agathe, or the Forgotten Sister*, published by New York Review of Books; New Directions; David Dollenmayer for his translation of Martin Walser's *A Man in Love*, Arcade Publishing;

DATE
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Elizabeth Janik for her translation of Marie-Janine Calic's *The Great Cauldron: A History of Southeastern Europe*, Harvard University Press.

The Helen and Kurt Wolff Translator's Prize is awarded annually to honor an outstanding literary translation from German into English published in the USA the previous year. The translator of the winning translation receives \$10,000. Funded by the German government, the prize was established in 1996. For more information, visit

[www.goethe.de/us/helenandkurtwolffprize.](http://www.goethe.de/us/helenandkurtwolffprize)

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