

Elegant and measured, the three tales collected here are also admirably tough-minded; Dutch author Driessen is an opera and theater director, and he offers a sure sense of unfolding drama. In "Fleuve Sauvage: All Comes to Naught," a vainglorious actor on the verge of cirrhosis of the liver paddles down a river to ponder whether he can quit alcohol. But camping by the riverside leads to an encounter with a cow and its teenage herder that ends in gut-punch tragedy. "Voyage to the Moon: Life Is a Dream" features the parallel lives of Konrad, a logger like his forebears, and Julius, son of the local logging magnate and Konrad's friend and eventual boss. Over the decades, Konrad finally achieves his dream of sailing his log raft all the way to the North Sea. In "Pierre and Adèle: He Shall Be Purified by Fire, Water, Air, and Earth," the Huguenot Corbés and Catholic Chrétiens share a valley but are divided by long-standing hatred and a narrow creek. Throughout, humans have concerns outsized to themselves only, and the waters flow on unperturbed. VERDICT A real discovery for those who love world literature.

The review is a part of the roundup titled ["Summer Travel: In Translation, Eight Top Books That Will Take You Far"](#)