



by Jens Steiner

February 2015 / 240pp

Fiction

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A Young Man of Inconspicuous Past

Junger Mann mit unauffälliger Vergangenheit

review

This highly individual, fast-paced novel reads like a psychological thriller, shot through with fantastical descriptions and a hallucinogenic vision.

The novel begins *in medias res*, showing philosophy student Paul in a very disturbed mood, frantically considering his next move. We are not sure what this pertains to, only that he is located at a strange hotel in Zurich and is being tormented by someone named Köppel. As readers we become complicit in Paul's efforts to evade the police and find the source of his distress.

Paul's story gradually emerges. We learn that he woke up one morning in an unrecognisable apartment to learn – from recurring TV reports – that a media mogul has been kidnapped by 'a young man of inconspicuous past'. A past that corresponds, in minute detail, to his own. Paul assumes that he has been set up and knows his only option is to escape. With the help of a series of friends, Paul flees to Marseille, where it dawns on him that the mysterious Köppel is none other than the brother whom his mother gave up at birth...

press quotes

'A Young Man of Inconspicuous Past creates a thriller with Kafka-esque characters.' – *Tiroler Tageszeitung Online*

about the author

Jens Steiner was born in 1975 and studied German language and literature, philosophy, and comparative literature in Zurich and Geneva. His first novel *Hasenleben* (2011) was longlisted for the German Book Prize and won the Förderpreis der Schweizerischen Schillerstiftung and other awards. In 2013 he won the Swiss Book Prize and was again longlisted for the German Book Prize with *Carambole*. www.jenssteiner.ch

Previous works include:

Carambole (2013); *Hasenleben* (2011)

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