



by Deniz Utlu
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Fiction

🏆 winner of the Bayerischer
Buchpreis 2023

🏆 Special Mention
European Union Prize for
Literature 2024

🏆 winner of the
Literaturpreis der Literatur
Nord 2024

The English language
translation rights to the book
have sold.

This page will be updated
once an English language

Father's Sea *Vaters Meer*

review

A novel about memory and migration set between Germany and Turkey, *Father's Sea* is a gentle and moving portrait of a family within the framework of a father–son relationship. Even as it explores political and social issues specific to its dual setting, this is a novel that focuses on the human aspect and as such will have broad appeal.

First-person narrator Yunus grows up as an only child in Hanover, but visits Turkey with his parents every summer. He is thirteen when his father, Zeki, has two strokes that leave him almost entirely paralysed – unable to speak or move beyond blinking, he has “locked-in syndrome”. Zeki is looked after in a care home before being transferred back to the family house, where Yunus’ mother cares for him until his death ten years later.

Thematically engaged with memory, *Father's Sea* is structured as Yunus’ attempts to retrace his father’s life and remember the man he was before he became paralysed. Like the titular sea, his memories flow into one another, with a few distinct moments standing out for their emotional significance. In a reflection of memory’s non-linear nature, Utlu makes large chronological leaps; however, these are interwoven skilfully so as never to interrupt the narrative. From start to finish, we see how Yunus develops from a self-centred teenager to a thoughtful young man, struggling to hold on to his father and re-evaluate what he knows of the past.

translation is published.

Other family members and friends play more of a supporting role – even Yunus' mother, Senem, is a comparatively minor figure in the novel. This close perspective allows us to see how Yunus slowly changes, and also allows Utlu to explore related themes such as masculinity, identity and belonging. While Zeki's condition is very specific, the experience of coming to terms with a close relative's serious medical diagnosis is one that will sadly be familiar to many readers, lending the novel emotional weight and relatability.

Unflinching when it comes to complex emotions and the effect that profound loss can have on a life, *Father's Sea* is a melancholic yet compelling work that demonstrates Utlu's great skill as a storyteller.

Find out more:

<https://www.suhrkamp.de/buch/deniz-utlu-vaters-meer-t-9783518431443>,

<https://www.suhrkamp.de/rights/book/deniz-utlu-father-s-sea-fr-9783518431443>

press quotes

In touching and humorous language, Deniz Utlu gives us an insight into the conflicts, celebrations, and everyday life of a family. He opens up a geography of memories for German literature that stretches from Hanover deep into Turkey, to the Syrian border.

Jury statement of the Alfred-Döblin-Preis 2021

It is a book full of grief and respect for the things one can't know but must try to learn: as a child about one's parents, as a narrator about one's characters, as a society about the individuals that live in it.

Marie Schmidt, Süddeutsche Zeitung

*What makes memory possible, how it enriches our lives, how our imagination closes gaps and how all of this eventually transforms into a magnificent novel – this is what Deniz Utlu demonstrates with *Father's Sea*.*

Joachim Dicks, NDR

about the author



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Deniz Utlu was born in Hannover in 1983 and studied Economics at the Free University of Berlin and at the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne. His debut novel *Die Ungehaltenen* [The Indignant] was published in 2014 and was adapted for the stage at the Maxim Gorki Theatre in Berlin in 2015. His second novel, *Gegen Morgen* [Towards Morning], was published by Suhrkamp Verlag in 2019. He is also the author of plays, poetry and essays and conducts research at the German Institute for Human Rights. In 2021 he won the

Alfred-Döblin Prize for an extract from
Vaters Meer [Father's Ocean]. Utlu lives in
Berlin.

Previous works: *Gegen Morgen* (2019)

rights information

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