



by
Hanser Berlin
July 2016 / 288pp
Fiction

This book is outside of the five-year window for guaranteed assistance with English language translation. We suggest getting in touch with the relevant funding body for an informal conversation about the possibility of support. Please refer to our recommendations page for books that are currently covered by our funding guarantee.

My Invisible Father's Smile

Das Lächeln meines unsichtbaren Vaters

review

In his autobiographical debut novel, German-Ukrainian writer Dimitrij Kapitelman explores questions of identity in the funny and moving journey of a son and a difficult father.

To Dimitrij, his father is an enigma. Twenty years ago they moved to Germany from Ukraine, where his father was a mathematician and a businessman. Is it his father's Jewish identity that makes it difficult for him to feel at home anywhere? Dimitrij is determined to find out, and suggests they travel to Israel together. His father agrees – his stamp collection is there, and his tea service, taken by friends who thought that Dimitrij's family would join them soon. Instead they moved to Germany, where his father quit swimming, stopped going to the cinema and participating in New Year's celebrations, instead hiding in his apartment and the Russian delicatessen he runs. Dimitrij himself feels out of place as well; having come to Germany at the age of eight, he is not sure if he is German, Ukrainian, Jewish, or everything at once.

They set out on a trip that will change both their lives in profound and often comical ways: visiting old and new friends, experiencing Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, Orthodox Jews, their first prayers, Dimitrij's Bar Mitzvah. Dimitrij sets out on his own to Bethlehem, Ramallah, and Nablus, joining a group of young Palestinians on a trip. In the end, Dimitrij will come to accept his father with all his idiosyncrasies.

Part literary novel, part travel-memoir, this is a strong debut novel about identity, migration, Jewishness, and a complex father-son relationship. Kapitelman has a candid, honest voice and sense of humour with an instinct for the absurdities of daily life. His father in particular is a unique, hilarious presence. He constantly contradicts himself, and his attitude towards his Jewish identity perplexes Dimitrij.

Raising important questions in a lightweight, entertaining manner, *My Invisible Father's Smile* recalls Gary Shteingart's *Little Failure*. It is ultimately the story of an attempt to finally understand one's father – challenges that are familiar to us all.

rights information

Carl Hanser Verlag

Kolbergerstrasse 22, 81679 Munich, Germany

Contact: Friederike Barakat

Tel: +49 89 99830 509

Email: friederike.barakat@hanser.de

www.hanser-literaturverlage.de

Carl Hanser Verlag was established by its eponymous owner in 1928 in Munich, and its founder's interests in both literature and science have been maintained to the present day. The firm publishes fiction and non-fiction for both adults and children. Its authors include Italo Calvino, Umberto Eco, Jostein Gaarder, Lars Gustafsson, Milan Kundera, Harry Mulisch, Philip Roth, Susan Sontag, Botho Strauß, Raoul Schrott, Rafik Schami, Alfred Brendel, Elke Heidenreich and ten Nobel prizewinners, among them Elias Canetti, whose works have been translated into more than thirty different languages.