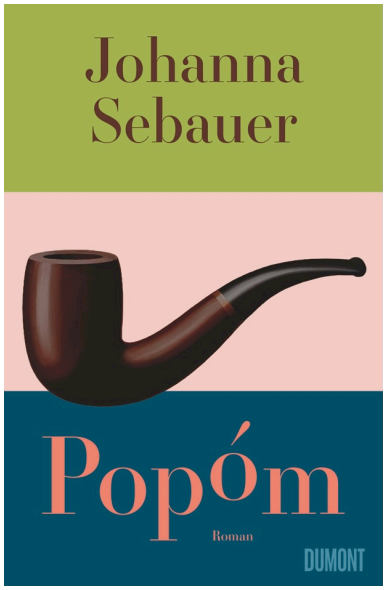


by Johanna Sebauer
DuMont Verlag
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Fiction

Popóm

Popóm

review

A witty, original novel about identity, friendship and learning to let go, ‘Popóm’ is a contemporary novel about a man in his late twenties whose life is transformed after he meets his doppelgänger.

Hendrik Popom appears to have everything he could want: a steady job, a long-term relationship with his childhood sweetheart Anja and a comfortable, predictable life. Everything changes when he unexpectedly bumps into a man who looks exactly like him. Stranger still, the man is also called Hendrik Popóm (but with the accent). Fascinated by the coincidence, Hendrik becomes increasingly obsessed with finding his double again. As the two men begin meeting, Hendrik discovers unsettling similarities between their lives and personalities. Anja is bewildered by his growing fixation and leaves him. What begins as curiosity gradually develops into an intense friendship that reshapes Hendrik’s relationships with everyone around him.

As Hendrik drifts away from his old life, Popóm becomes both mentor and mirror, encouraging him to embrace new experiences while remaining frustratingly elusive himself. Their unusual bond is interrupted as suddenly as it began, leaving Hendrik to navigate a loss that feels strangely akin to heartbreak. Supported by his irrepressible Aunt Karin and his perceptive colleague Fritzi, Hendrik gradually rebuilds his life, discovering that understanding another person may ultimately matter less than understanding himself.

Beneath its playful premise, the novel explores identity, grief and emotional dependency with remarkable tenderness, asking whether the people we meet change us because they resemble us, or because they reveal possibilities we had never recognised.

Sebauer writes with lightness, wit and impeccable comic timing. Hendrik's self-deprecating narration is consistently engaging, balancing awkward humour with genuine emotional insight, while the conversations between the two Hendriks are presented as miniature stage dialogues, lending their encounters an appealing theatrical energy. The novel moves effortlessly between comedy and quiet melancholy, creating characters who feel endearingly ordinary yet emotionally complex. Its accessible style and understated humour make profound questions about identity and connection feel entirely natural.

Following the award-winning success of her two previous novels, Sebauer confirms herself as one of the most distinctive young voices in contemporary Austrian literature. 'Popóm' will appeal to readers of Matt Haig's *The Humans* and David Nicholls's *Us* for its warmth, humour and emotional generosity. Funny, inventive and unexpectedly moving, *Popóm* is literary fiction with broad commercial appeal.

Find out more:
https://www.dumont-buchverlag.de/buch/johanna-sebauer-popom-9783755800798-t-7867

press quotes

> *A humorous masterpiece with both literary and philosophical depth.*

Carsten Otte, SWR Kultur

> *Popóm is a sensation.*

Sebastian Fasthuber, Falter

> *With subtle humour, Sebauer tells a tale of disorientation, the search for identity and an encounter that changes everything.*

Melanie Zingl, Woman

about the author



© Pamela Rußmann

Johanna Sebauer was born in Vienna in 1988 and raised in a small Burgenland village near the Hungarian border. She studied political science and journalism and worked in science communication. She has published short stories and essays in several anthologies. Her novel *Nincshof* (DuMont, 2023) won the Harbour Front Literature Festival Debut Prize in 2023 and was shortlisted for the Hamburg Book of the Year 2023. Her satirical story *Das Gurkerl* (DuMont, 2026) was awarded both the 3sat Prize and the Audience Prize at the Festival of German-Language Literature in Klagenfurt.

Previous works: *Nincshof*, DuMont Buchverlag (2023); Das *Gurkerl*, DuMont Buchverlag (2026).

rights information

DuMont Buchverlag (Germany)

Amsterdamer Strasse 192
50735 Cologne

Contact: Judith Habermas
judith.habermas@dumont.de

Tel: +49 (0)221 224-1942

www.dumont-buchverlag.de