



Coney

Amram Ducovny

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Coney Island, 1939: On the eve of World War II, fifteen-year-old Harry Carzker spends his after-school hours on his bike, picking up betting slips from Coney Island carnival freaks for the local bookie and racing his imaginary sworn enemy, German Captain Ziegenbaum, whose ship menaces the coastline. His parents are in their own world: his father writes a serial novel for the local Yiddish newspaper by day and hangs out with other intellectuals at the Cafe Royal by night; his beautiful mother grows increasingly bitter, yearning for a glamorous life that is certain to be denied to the wife of a writer.

As the lights of the Cyclone and Luna Park glow in the Coney Island night. Harry finds a surrogate family in the freaks and low-lives. A premature victim of Welischmerz, "lovingly applied by loved ones, ignorant of its toxicity on the young", Harry ponders life, art, and philosophy with Aba, a Yiddish poet who boards with his family, yet he is unable to shake the dark foreboding of a disaster that finally materializes, changing his life utterly.

Coney, soaked through with atmosphere and guided by an uncommon comic touch, captures the essence of a young man's coming of age in an extraordinary place and time. Depicting Coney Island in all its garish and gritty human spectacle. Amram Ducovny's dark and brilliant first novel has the stark intensity of a Weegee photograph, the heart of E. L. Doctorow's *Ragtime*, and the soul of an Isaac Bashevis Singer novel.

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