



CLOSED SOCIETY

BY VERENA STAUFFER



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»Stauffer's texts do not shy away from the ›sharp pains‹ that a comprehensive look at the splendor and misery of human existence brings. In addition to their formal range, the unpredictability of these texts is fascinating. Time after time, it hits its mark: straight into the heart.« From the jury's statement of the Manuscript Advancement Award.

»I live in this text, floating from line to line, playing the dead woman. Only here in this sea can I swim, but now it freezes over on all sides.«

Only in appearance do the records oscillate between reality and dreams in their outer chronology, which begins in November 2020 in Vienna. In fact, the text immediately emancipates itself, plunging deeper into a elaborate clockwork whose hands stand still: We accompany the narrator on walks through the deserted Prater neighborhood, and stroll through the nocturnal, closed city, while her precise observations alternate small sharp sequences with lyrical passages. In what paradise can we observe ourselves living today, and what will come in the summer? Witty and cheeky, both sad and comforting, Verena Stauffer reveals an »I« as a center in a time when the longing for touch grows as people are banished to their rooms. She forms a protocol of the »madness that now reveals all the flaws in the entire construction of society,« and offers a testimony to the ways poetry and imagination can offer a lifeline. Verena Stauffer takes on a poetic and humorously biting form as she describes everyday life in times of pandemic.

Verena Stauffer was born in 1978 in Kirchdorf an der Krems in Austria. Her debut novel *Orchis* (2018) was nominated for the Alpha Literary Prize, the Independents' Hotlist, and the Blogger Debut Prize. Most recently her poetry collection *Ousia* was published by Kookbooks and nominated for the Austrian Book Prize. She is living in Vienna.

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