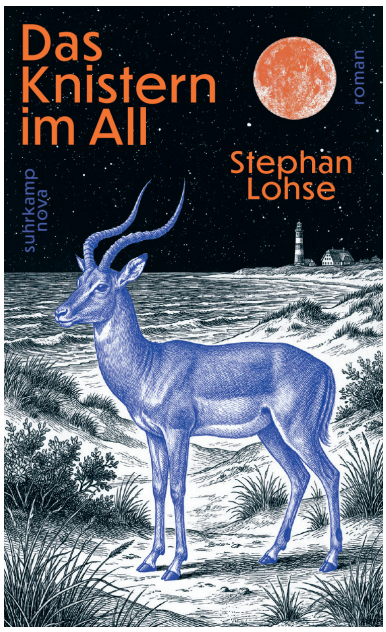


by Stephan Lohse
Suhrkamp Verlag
August 2026 / 166pp
Fiction

The Crackling in the Cosmos

Das Knistern im All

review

Stephan Lohse's tale follows Matti, a fifteen-year-old from a wealthy family, over the last two years of secondary school. The novel opens on a school trip to the island of Amrum on the Baltic coast, where Matti has a mental breakdown during a night out with his classmates and begins seeing an antelope in the dunes, a vision that recurs at later moments of crisis. His friends Anna and Can, along with the rest of the group, rally round to support him.

Over the next two years, Matti sees a therapist, Frau Schellenbach, and navigates his family's wealth (which comes from the arms industry), alongside his own sexuality. A local gallery owner, Irmi, is the first person outside his immediate circle to recognise that his behaviour goes beyond ordinary teenage excess. His mental health continues to decline, and by year twelve he is admitted to a psychiatric ward. His friends help him leave, and the group returns together to Amrum, where Matti hopes to see the antelope again and reach some resolution.

The novel is narrated in the first person and follows a linear timeline from the school trip through to the end of Matti's final Abitur exams, interspersed with reflections on his childhood. Each chapter corresponds to a school year and is divided into shorter sections covering individual incidents and therapy sessions.

The prose features short sentences and sub-chapters, incorporating

dialogue styled on group chats and exchanges from dating apps. The story of Matti's coming out unfolds against the wider social backdrop of political and generational change in Germany, including the rise of the AfD and the experience of a generation that grew up after the 2015 refugee-intake period.

This coming-of-age narrative with commentary on contemporary German identity will appeal to readers of Sally Rooney and Christian Kracht's *Eurotrash*.

Find out more:
https://www.suhrkamp.de/rights/book/lutz-seiler-the-ticking-heart-fr-9783518433157

press quotes

> *Stephan Lohse gets right up close with his characters. By the end, it feels as if you were part of it all, laughing and worrying along with them. The light of this intense but light-footed story about mental health and profound friendships shines through on every page.*

Verena Güntner

about the author



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Stephan Lohse was born in Hamburg in 1964 and studied drama at the Max Reinhardt Seminar in Vienna. He was employed at the Thalia Theater in Hamburg, the Schaubühne in Berlin and at the Schauspielhaus in Vienna. His novel *Ein fauler Gott* ('A lazy God')2017, was on the SWR Bestseller List and nominated for the aspekte Prize for Literature. He has since published the novels *Johanns Bruder* ('Johann's brother') 2020, and *Das Summen unter der Haut* ('The humming underneath the skin')2023 , which was an NDR book of the month and was also on the Deutschlandfunk-Bestenliste. He lives in

Berlin.

Previous works: *Ein fauler Gott*, Suhrkamp (2017); *Johanns Bruder*, Suhrkamp (2020); *Das Summen unter der Haut* (2023)

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