



by Elisabeth Klar  
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Fiction

## There Is Us *Es gibt uns*

### review

Austrian author Elisabeth Klar is known for her fantastical world-building, and her fourth novel, *Es gibt uns*, is no exception. This unique work of 'post-human' literary fiction is set in a dystopian future in which humans and animals have cross-mutated in the aftermath of an unnamed apocalypse.

Referencing Shakespeare and Dylan Thomas, *Es gibt uns* is an impressive display of imagination combined with beautiful prose and a sobering touch of realism. One spring day, the castle in the fictional town of Anemos is opened to the public for the performance of a play: a re-enactment of the death of Oberon, a jellyfish who kept the local water supply clean. At the same time, Muxerl, a mysterious creature who takes the personal pronoun 'xier', will also be put on trial for having caused Oberon's death.

The novel is narrated by Anemos's ruler, Titania, and a chorus reminiscent of an Ancient Greek play. Music and dancing also have important roles to play – elements of joy and beauty that contrast with the poisonous flowers blossoming across the city and keeping visitors at bay. Without Oberon, the water supply is also at risk. And so, for the greater good, but also to right the wrong of Oberon's death, Muxerl is prevailed upon to take over the role of water purifier.

Structured as three sections like the acts of a play, each of which is further subdivided into what could be scenes, *Es gibt uns* borrows

heavily from classical drama while giving it a fascinating twist. Mostly narrated as dialogue between the characters, many details of their backstories are left unexplored. Instead, Klar wrestles with complex, universal themes such as personal responsibility, societal laws and how humanity might survive in the darkness of a post-apocalyptic world.

Notable for the beautiful language, strong dialogue and distinctive premise that typify Klar's work, *Es gibt uns* is an unusual novel that blends science fiction and fantasy to mesmerising effect.

Read more on the publisher's website

here: <https://www.residenzverlag.com/buch/es-gibt-uns>

## press quotes

*A science-fiction novel from Austria that shows how our society might look in the aftermath of an apocalypse.*

ORF ZiB

*As strange as the world of this unconventional, fascinating novel may seem to us, it isn't entirely distinct from our own. These post-human creatures are, after all, astonishingly human.*

Andreas Tesarik, Wiener Zeitung

## about the author



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Elisabeth Klar was born in Vienna in 1986. She studied comparative literature and transcultural communication and is the author of four novels. Her highly acclaimed debut, *Wie im Wald*, was shortlisted for the 2015 Rauriser Literature Prize. She has received several awards for her work and her third novel, *Himmelwärts*, was featured by NBG, Spring 2020.

Other works: *Wie im Wald*, *Residenz*

Verlag, (2014); *Wasser atmen*, Residenz  
Verlag (2017); *Himmelwärts*, Residenz  
Verlag (2020).

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