



by Gianna Molinari
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Fiction

The World Behind the Hedge

Hinter der Hecke die Welt

review

Gianna Molinari's gem of a novel alternates between two equally captivating settings: a tiny Swiss village on the verge of disappearing, and an Arctic research expedition. The lyrical simplicity of Molinari's prose invites readers to step right into 'The World Behind the Hedge', and to feel as though they belong there.

The few remaining inhabitants of an isolated Swiss village attempt to preserve its identity and future by obsessively tending to the giant hedge which is its distinguishing feature, and by caring for the village's only two children, Lobo and Pina, who mysteriously stopped growing two years previously. The village has no interaction with the outside world other than the bus which drops off and collects tourists. The villagers are desperate to attract more tourists to the hedge, hoping some of them will move in. More than anything, they long for the children to start growing again, so that they can secure the future of the village.

Meanwhile Pina's mother, Dora, is away on an expedition to the Arctic, collecting samples of sediment from the ocean floor for analysis. She watches the landscape shifting and melting and wonders whether to go home. Her fellow expedition members, a photographer and an oceanographer, seem fixated on capturing as much of the Arctic as possible, while Dora observes and listens.

Back in the village, people and objects are inexplicably disappearing.

When Lobo disappears too, setting out in the middle of the night on his own expedition, the decline of the village accelerates. The specialists stop coming to measure Pina's growth, the bus and the tourists stop coming, and the villagers themselves retreat indoors. The school closes, and days of the week become irrelevant. In the very last paragraph, Pina's long-awaited growth spurt seems to arrive, while no one is awake to see or measure it other than Pilaster the dog.

Molinari's thoughtful approach to the natural world and the ways in which humans interact with it forms a subtle commentary on the climate crisis. The Arctic research mission highlights the human insistence on capturing, analysing and ultimately owning nature, and is contrasted with the concept of the hedge that threatens to overshadow and absorb the village. 'The World Behind the Hedge' is a beautifully idiosyncratic novel with universal appeal.

Find out more here:

<https://www.aufbau-verlage.de/aufbau/hinter-der-hecke-die-welt/978-3-351-04173-1>

press quotes

A soft blur of longing and being lost surrounds the endearing heroes in a world where everything is connected to everything else. And where everyone is on their own.

Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung

A delight. You open the book, fall into it and are carried away by the language.

SRF1 Literaturclub

A fascinating read, a unique pleasure.

Literaturblatt

Gianna Molinari is one of the most original voices in contemporary literature.

Neue Zürcher Zeitung

Gianna Molinari [...] infuses her sentences with a unique poetic energy. Like the aurora borealis, it sometimes feels like a rustle, and sometimes a glow.

Deutschlandfunk Kultur

The novel appeals to adventurous and imaginative readers, who may be inspired to explore the depths of their own thoughts.

St. Galler Tageblatt

I loved this book. Molinari moves effortlessly between the worlds of technical oceanography in the Arctic and the magical realism of a disappearing Swiss village overshadowed by an enormous hedge. This is an incredibly timely reflection on the human fixation to colonise, imperialise and analyse; to leave a mark on any landscape we come across, contrasted with a nostalgic and absurd world where reality is disappearing and a giant hedge seems to both hold and withhold the answers to survival. Molinari narrates light-heartedly and humorously, with a childlike simplicity, drawing the reader in to observe and be grateful for the mystery of the natural world.

Nyasha Mbewe, NBG Reader

about the author



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Gianna Molinari was born in Basel in 1988 and lives in Zurich. She studied Literary Writing at the Swiss Literature Institute and modern German literature at the University of Lausanne. She co-founded the art action group 'Literatur für das, was passiert' (Literature for World Events) and the RAUF authors' collective. Her debut novel 'Everything Is Still Possible Here' was nominated for the German and Swiss Book Prizes.

Previous works: *Everything is Still Possible Here*, Aufbau Verlage (2018).

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