

Prof. Berns – Seminar III

Contemporary British Fiction – The Latest!

In this seminar, we will discuss different forms of contemporary British writing, asking: what are the literary traditions as well as the innovative force that the texts under consideration display? All texts were published in 2021 and they represent a tiny fraction of the multitude and richness of voices that partake in British and Anglophone literary expression. One of the texts, Simon Hanselmann's graphic novel, *Crisis Zone (Megg, Mogg and Owl)*, is also one of the first novels with a "pandemic plot," i.e. a novel that broaches the impact of Covid and life under pandemic conditions.

In addition to the text by the Tasmanian author Hanselmann we will read the latest novel by the recent Booker-Prize winner, Sally Rooney, *My Beautiful World Where Are You*, the stunning debut novel *Assembly* by Black British Writer Natasha Brown and the latest creation by the senior Asian British master, Kazuo Ishiguro, *Klara and the Sun*, featuring a posthuman protagonist. Representing ethnically diverse voices in British and Anglophone literature, these novels bring different lenses to the structures of contemporary society and its cultural histories while exploring the complex subjectivities taking shape in them. Our discussion of the novels will alternate with sessions focusing on both recent and classical pieces of literary theory (some of them referenced in the fictional texts). These sessions will train your expertise in handling theoretical texts and offer *optional* points of reference for our discussion of the novels.

Please note:

You will have to purchase most of the texts and, as they are so recent, most are still only in the hard cover version on the market. There will, of course, be copies in the library; the theoretical texts will be provided on Agora. There will also be 8 quizzes meant as encouragement to keep up with the assigned reading of which you will have to pass at least 6 in order to get credit for the course.

To help you organize your reading: the texts will be tackled in the following order: *My Beautiful World Where Are You*; *Assembly*; *Klara and the Sun*; *Crisis Zone (Megg, Mogg and Owl)*.

Credit requirements:

- Regular attendance
- 7 quizzes (pass 6)
- participation in an expert group
- 3 short written responses preparatory to theory sessions
- Oral contribution
- Seminar paper of 15-20 pages