

[Call for Chapter Proposals for Edited Volume: The Postcolonial Bildungsroman](#)

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Originally an 18th-century German innovation, the bildungsroman became a popular literary genre across the Anglo-American world during the 19th century. A 'coming of age' novel about young adults in search of meaning and happiness, the bildungsroman was the literary medium of choice for many writers - including Twain, Dickens, and Kipling - looking to explore the moral and psychological developments of characters traversing unfamiliar worlds, and thereby, encountering new challenges, experiences, and adventures. Since the 20th century, there has been a revival of interest in this genre in the Global South. Writers and thinkers from post-colonies across Asia, Europe, Africa, the Americas, and New Zealand, have turned to the bildungsroman to explore new stories about belonging, self-determinacy, cultural authenticity and spiritual awakening. South Asian writers such as Amitav Ghosh, U.R. Ananthamurthy, and Anita Desai, for instance, have engaged the genre by drawing on literary tropes, such as the pilgrimage, from classical Hindu, Sufi, and Buddhist literary traditions. They have often deployed the genre to explore how youth in India confront questions of decolonization, independence, and self-determinacy. Similarly, writers from Africa and African diaspora such as Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Abdulrazak Gurnah have found the bildungsroman to be an effective platform for exploring revolution and radical social change in relation to socio-political developments in Kenya and Tanzania. Maori writers such as Witi Ihimaera have also employed the genre to express conflicts of modernity and tradition facing Maori youth in contemporary New Zealand. Such literary projects have also inspired work in critical theory. The human rights scholar Joseph Slaughter has identified in the bildungsroman an influential model that 'normalizes the story of enfranchisement' by making socially marginal figures representative. Similarly, the post-colonialist, Mark Stein, in tracing modern black British fiction's departure from classical literary models, has argued that the postcolonial bildungsroman should be best understood as a novel of transformation and adaptation rather than as a novel of formation and development. The bildungsroman has likewise become a crucial element of recent Four Nations concerns revolving around, for instance, core and periphery, Irish independence, and Welsh crises of language, class, and identity.

We aim to investigate how a nineteenth-century literary genre, originally meant for expressing local European concerns, has now been resurrected as one of the most cosmopolitan mediums for communicating global ideas. This volume will bring together essays on diverse fields of literature,

narrative, and critical theory that interrogate the different articulations of the bildungsroman and examine the intersection of traditional forms with modern questions of identity and disruption. Contributors can consider the following questions as possible starting points (without being limited by them): how can focusing on the 'coming of age' story-cycle engage, for instance, recent concerns highlighted by eco-critical, queer, and/or Marxist readings of 20th- and 21st century texts; in what ways can the genre inform readings of human rights and personhood; how does examining texts through bildungsroman generic explications amplify voices reacting to colonial pasts?

Please submit a CV and a 300-word abstract by 15th June 2021. Full Drafts of approximately 6000 to 7000 words will be due in January 2022. We have received positive interest for publication from Routledge.

Contact Info:

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