“Smells Like Teen Spirit”: The contemporary Bildungsroman and Its Problems

German philosopher Wilhelm Dilthey regards the Bildungsroman as the poetic expression of the Enlightenment concept of Bildung, and reads the novel of formation as a restricted genre, limited to a certain type of society and a certain period. The Bildungsroman, however, proved to be a world genre that has retained its influence to this day. Although it rarely follows the route that the German idealists suggest, that is to say, the one that reconciles the individual with the society, the contemporary Bildungsroman is still concerned with the young adult’s journey into self-actualization, a process historically in conflict with the existing social and cultural values.

Taking into account the ever-expanding number of coming-of-age stories marked by existential despair and anxiety, this seminar is dedicated to the Bildungsromane written in the twenty-first century. It focuses on the narratives (novels, graphic novels, and films) of a new generation of authors that describe the painful transition from adolescence to adulthood at the age of global capitalism, while at the same time offering stories of hope and resistance. The aim of the seminar is not only to problematize the concept of Bildung and the idea of maturity in the contemporary European society, but also to uncover in these texts the characteristic themes of the classical Bildungsroman, such as provinciality, alienation, ordeal by love, and the search for meaning.

Syllabus

Week 1 Introduction: What is the Bildungsroman?: The classical Bildungsroman and the Enlightenment fantasy of maturity.


Week 2: Modernity and the Bildungsroman: The discovery of youth.

**Week 3**: Modernity and the Poverty of Experience


**Week 4**: Late Modernity and the Loss of Experience


**Week 5**: Back to Childhood: The search for experience

Erlend Loe, Naïve. Super (1996) NORWAY

**Week 6**: The Dystopia: Identity and the Body

Film: Yorgos Lanthimos, *Dogtooth* (2009) GREECE

**Week 7**: The eternal child: *Puer aeternus* as the new model of the self in the culture of late capitalism

Paul Murray, excerpt from *Skippy Dies* (2010) IRELAND
Alper Canıgüz, excerpt from *Sons and Suffering Souls* (2004) TURKEY

Optional film: Disco Pigs (2001) Film - Director: Kirsten Sheridan, Writers: Enda Walsh (play), Enda Walsh (screenplay) IRELAND


**Week 8**: The Journey

Why we took the car (2010) Wolfgang Herrndorf GERMANY

**Week 9**: Family and Trauma

Out in the Open (2018) Jesus Carrasco SPAIN
Loveless (2017) Film – Director: Andrei Zvyagintsev RUSSIA

**Week 10:** Of Mountains and Islands

The Eight Mountains: A Novel (2019) Paolo Cognetti ITALY
Kruso (2014) Lutz Seiler GERMANY

**Week 11:** All About Women

Two Girls (2002) – Perihan Mağden TURKEY
Optional: Abdellatif Kechiche, Blue Is the Warmest Color (2013) Film - La vie d’Adèle (original title) FRANCE

**Week 12:** The Graphic Novel: Growing up in the Periphery

*Dare to Disappoint: Growing Up in Turkey* (2015) Özge Samanci TURKEY

**Week 13:** The Gothic Bildungsroman

Let the Right One In (2004) John Ajvide Lindqvist SWEDEN

**Week 14:** Conclusion and Review

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**Selected Bibliography**


