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The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture, New Edition

By Franco Moretti, Albert Sbragia



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Wilhelm Meister, Elizabeth Bennet, Julien Sorel, Rastignac, Jane Eyre, Bazaroz, Dorothea Brooke ... the golden age of the European novel discovers a new collective protagonist: youth. It is problematic and restless youth—"strange" characters, as their own creators often say—arising from the downfall of traditional societies. But even more than that, youth is the symbolic figure for European modernity: that sudden mix of great expectations and lost illusions that the bourgeois world learns to "read", and to accept, as if it were a novel.

The Way of the World, with its unique combination of narrative theory and social history, interprets the *Bildungsroman* as the great cultural mediator of nineteenth-century Europe: a form which explores the many strange compromises between revolution and restoration, economic take-off and aesthetic pleasure, individual autonomy and social normality. This new edition includes an additional final chapter on the collapse of the *Bildungsroman* in the years around the First World War (a crisis which opened the way for modernist experiments), and a new preface in which the author looks back at *The Way of the World* in the light of his more recent work.



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Editorial Review

Review

“A short, brilliant, provocative and often entertainingly upbeat book.”—*New Society*

“A pointed example of the nature of youth, as represented in the novels of Austen, Balzac, Dickens, Eliot, Flaubert, Goethe and Stendhal ... [Moretti] is undoubtedly a brilliant and searching critic.”—*Independent*

About the Author

Franco Moretti teaches English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University. He is the author of *Signs Taken for Wonders*, *The Way of the World* and *Modern Epic*, all from Verso.

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