

Genealogical Fictions: Cultural Periphery and Historical Change in the Modern Novel

Jobst Welge



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Taking its cue from recent theories of literary geography and fiction, *Genealogical Fictions* argues that narratives of familial decline shape the history of the modern novel, as well as the novel's relationship to history. Stories of families in crisis, Jobst Welge argues, reflect the experience of historical and social change in regions or nations perceived as "peripheral." Though geographically and temporally diverse, the novels Welge considers all demonstrate a relation among family and national history, genealogical succession, and generational experience, along with social change and modernization.

Welge's wide-ranging comparative study focuses on the novels of the late nineteenth century, but it also includes detailed analyses of the pre-Victorian origin of the genealogical-historical novel and the evolution of similar themes in twentieth-century literature. Moving through time, he uncovers often-unsuspected novelistic continuities and international transformations and echoes, from Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*, published in 1800, to G. Tomasi di Lampedusa's 1958 book *Il Gattopardo*.

By revealing the "family resemblance" of novels from Great Britain, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Brazil, this volume shows how genealogical narratives take on special significance in contexts of cultural periphery. Welge links private and public histories, while simultaneously integrating detailed accounts of various literary fields across the globe. In combining theories of the novel, recent discussions of cultural geography, and new approaches to genealogical narratives, *Genealogical Fictions* addresses a significant part of European and Latin American literary history in which texts from different national cultures illuminate each other in unsuspected ways and reveal the repetition, as well as the variation, among them. This book should be of interest to students and scholars of comparative literature, world literature, and the history and theory of the modern novel.

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