

Public Abstract

First Name:Marissa

Middle Name:

Last Name:Fugate

Adviser's First Name:Samuel

Adviser's Last Name:Cohen

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

Graduation Term:SS 2016

Department:English

Degree:PhD

Title:Midnight's Grandchildren: Adolescence in Contemporary Global Literature

"Midnight's Grandchildren: Adolescence in Contemporary Global Literature" assesses the trope of adolescence in contemporary global literature, as it is employed to describe and act as a metaphor for emerging nations. My inquiry reads against the prevailing idea of adolescence as a pejorative term indicating a transitional state, and argues for adolescence as an enduring and distinct realm of infinite possibility. I chose to investigate how this social information is delivered through narrative art, which has a long history of works on adolescence, such as the bildungsroman. Unfortunately, most narratives look specifically at how the adolescent grows up, or what happens while they are looking forward towards adulthood. These types of literature play a part in the intimate link between the accepted cultural definition of adolescence as a space to outgrow and the rhetoric used to discuss and ultimately exclude emerging nations from participation in the global community. The ramifications of reading adolescence as a transitory place that always begets maturity is a systematic marginalization of nations – and associated literary output – that do not fall into and comply with the expectations of late-stage global capitalism. One effect of this marginalization is an insistence that the emerging nation novel acknowledge its debt to the colonial "parent." I contend that the anxiety provoked by adolescent reproduction maps onto social anxiety about emerging nations. By re-imagining adolescence in the novel as a distinct plane of existence without the baggage of "growing up," I argue that it is possible to reimagine emerging nations on new terms that devalue and destabilize the current order.