

MIDNIGHT'S GRANDCHILDREN:
ADOLESCENCE IN CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL LITERATURE

Marissa Fugate

Dr. Samuel Cohen, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

“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. I contend that the anxiety provoked by adolescent reproduction maps on to 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.