

## GOETHE AND THE MYTH OF THE BILDUNGSROMAN

Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* novels, widely held to be the most significant and influential in all of German literature, have traditionally been classed as bildungsroman, or "novels of formation." In *Goethe and the Myth of the Bildungsroman*, Frederick Amrine offers a unique reading of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* and *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre*, which posits the second novel as a sequel to the first. Deconstructing and jettisoning the notion of the bildungsroman, the features of the novels that have historically proved problematic for critics, seeming to testify to the novels' disunity, become instead the articulation points of a subtle concord between thematic and formal elements. Reading the novels in light of the eminent criticism of Northrop Frye, this book productively shifts away from social commentary toward the archetypal and symbolic, showing Goethe not to be an exception within world literature; rather, that he participates deeply in its overarching structures.

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GOETHE AND THE MYTH  
OF THE BILDUNGSROMAN

*Rethinking the Wilhelm Meister Novels*

FREDERICK AMRINE

*University of Michigan*



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*In loving memory of Alan P. Cottrell*

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