

Prof. Dr. Joseph Vogl: World Literature and the Art of Beginning (Undergraduate)

Description

The beginning of a story or a novel marks a delicate threshold. It signifies both the entrance into a fictitious world and the advent of a new order. Narrative openings not only determine a story's further course and continuation, they also offer fundamental insights into the logic of narration as such. In order to address all of these questions properly, a selection of canonical works of German and European literature will be the basis of discussion.

Syllabus

Beginning of beginnings:

Genesis (Gen 1-3)

Immanuel Kant, *Mutmaßlicher Anfang der Menschengeschichte* (1786)

Beginning and crisis:

Homer, *Ilias* (first song)

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Die Wahlverwandtschaften. Ein Roman* (1809; first chapter)

Ab ovo (from the beginning):

Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy Gentleman* (vol. 1, 1759; chapter 1-9)

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1811; Erster Teil / Erstes Buch)

Uncanny Beginning:

E. T. A. Hoffmann, *Der Sandmann* (1816)

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein: Or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818/1831)

Beginning of modernity:

Thomas Mann, *Der Zauberberg* (1926; „Vorsatz“, „Erstes Kapitel: Ankunft“)

Robert Musil, *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* (1930, „Erster Teil: Eine Art Einleitung“, Erstes Kapitel: „Woraus bemerkenswerter Weise nichts hervorgeht“)