

CALL FOR CHAPTERS

The Handbook of Boredom in Modern Literature

Editors:

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The Handbook of Boredom in Modern Literature is to be a comprehensive monographic study examining boredom as a central aesthetic, philosophical, psychological, and socio-cultural category in the history of modern literature. Rather than relying purely on abstract theory, this volume approaches boredom through focused case studies devoted to individual authors and their works. Across these chapters, boredom—alongside adjacent states such as *ennui*, tedium, spleen, *acedia*, melancholy, existential malaise, and affective exhaustion—emerges variously as paralysis, protest, privilege, illness, and spiritual crisis. By situating close textual readings within the broader intellectual history of modernity, the volume, written by a multidisciplinary group of authors, is to demonstrate that literary boredom is a powerful diagnostic lens on social order, temporality, and the modern subject's experience of meaninglessness.

Volume Structure & Epochal Scope

The volume is planned as a Handbook or Companion and covers not only the most vital writers addressing the theme of boredom but also a broad selection of modern authors (around 60 chapters). The book is to trace the evolution of literary boredom across (tentatively) seven historical and thematic phases:

- **Early Modernity & Enlightenment Foundations:** Early reflections on existential void and social routine (e.g. *Diderot, Laclos, Austen*).
- **Romantic Ennui (1770s–1840s):** Melancholy, idealist frustration, and the world-weary anti-hero (e.g., *Goethe, de Staël, Senancour, Byron, Chateaubriand, Constant, Stendhal, Sand, Balzac, Musset*).
- **The Superfluous Man:** The Russian literary archetype of social paralysis, alienation, and unfulfilled potential (e.g. *Pushkin, Lermontov, Goncharov, Turgenev*).
- **Bourgeois Boredom, Realism, & Decadent Spleen:** Domestic stagnation, industrial monotony, social entrapment, and aesthetic decay (e.g., *Dickens, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Fontane, Chopin, Ibsen, Gilman, Conrad, Chekhov, Baudelaire, Huysmans, Wilde*).

- **Modernist Stagnation (Early 20th C.):** Temporal distortion, consciousness, alienation, and metaphysical paralysis (e.g., *Proust, Joyce, Pessoa, Mann, Kafka, Woolf*).
- **Catastrophism & Existential Absurdity (Mid-20th C.):** Totalitarian dread, the absurdity of existence, and postwar existential malaise (e.g., *Broch, Platonov, Orwell, H. Miller, Gombrowicz, Sartre, Camus, Beckett, Buzzati, Gracq*).
- **Postwar Emptiness, Consumerism, & Digital Fatigue:** Mass society, late-capitalist hyper-consumption, information overload, and contemporary affective exhaustion (e.g., *Moravia, Perec, de Beauvoir, Ernaux, Bellow, Bernhard, Duras, DeLillo, Houellebecq, Ferrante, Rourke, Moshfegh*).

Chapter Guidelines & Scope

Each chapter must offer an in-depth analysis of the theme of broadly understood boredom in the work of a **single author** (according to a formula: Boredom in...). The title should include the name and surname of a writer as a main part, and a freely formulated subtitle.

- **Analytical Approach:** Authors may focus on a single representative work but should analyse boredom across multiple texts of an author to demonstrate how boredom functions as a recurring motif in the author's oeuvre.
- **Target Audience:** Written primarily for readers seeking to deepen their understanding of boredom in a specific author's work (spoilers are permitted), while remaining accessible to a general literary audience. Comparative analysis with other writers should be kept to a minimum.
- **Required Contextual Elements:**
 - **Biographical Context:** Key details situating the writer within their epoch. Where applicable, personal engagement with boredom (e.g., excerpts from letters, diaries) may be included.
 - **Socio-Cultural Context:** Historical background necessary to understand the specific societal structures depicting boredom (e.g., aristocratic class dynamics, marital systems, late-capitalist work environments, author's country history and socio-cultural context).

Submission guidelines:

The abstract of the proposed chapter (between 250-500 words) along with a short bio (up to 150 words) and contact information should be sent to editors via e-mail before **the end of October 2026**.

Contributors may propose up to two chapters. Each submission must include a brief statement detailing: (a) how the chosen author's work relates to boredom; and (b) what the contributor's expertise is on the writer. The minimum criteria for inclusion of a writer are: the

author must address themes of boredom/ennui, possess at least some international recognition, and be available in English translation. Poetry is excluded.

The comments and decisions on the proposed chapters will be provided before the end of December 2026. Then, the proposal for the book will be sent to prospective publishers (Routledge Handbook Series, The Oxford Handbooks, The Cambridge Companions or The Palgrave Handbooks). In case of a positive answer from a publisher, the authors will be asked to prepare the chapter, between **6,000 and 8,000 words** including footnotes and references. Technical information will be provided after the publisher accepts the proposal and will depend on the publisher's style. In case of any doubts and/or questions, we encourage prospective authors to consult the editors directly.

Prospective deadline for chapters: mid-2028