

BILDUNGSROMAN: A JOURNEY OF PERSONAL GROWTH

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Z.T.Safarova

Associate professor, BuxSU

Gulnoza Amonova

MA student of AIU

Abstract

As one of the famous genres of literature Bildungsroman became popular in European literature at the end of the XVIII century. First example of the Bildungsroman originated in German literature. This genre focuses on protagonist's personal and societal growth from childhood to adulthood, as well as exploring literary hero's self-discovery, maturity and meeting societal expectations come to mind. This article analyzes the origins of the Bildungsroman, its main features, prominent examples, and its development in contemporary literature.

Introduction. The Bildungsroman (from the German Bildung, meaning "education" or "formation" and Roman meaning "novel") concerns the protagonist's growth. It is clear that whenever a person encounters life challenges, they develop, grow, and an internalization of this change is navigated by life teachers and mentors within such narratives. Samuel Schwartz provides insights into this genre:

"While the Bildungsroman is also often labeled using slightly different terminology – like "the novel of education" or the "coming-of-age novel," the essence of the Bildungsroman is the process of the main character forming his or her own self through whatever degree of freedom and individuality they can wrest from forces that are larger than them".⁴⁵

According to S.Schwartz this genre can be used by multiple names, however, Bildungsroman is widely accepted and common term for the novels showing the psychological and physical formation of the main hero.

Uzbek researcher N.A.Mahmudova used the term "Tarbiya romanlari" as an equivalent to "Bildungsroman".⁴⁶ Russian researchers also used a similar term "Роман воспитания" in their works.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Schwartz, Samuel. "What is a Bildungsroman?" Oregon State Guide to English Literary Terms, 4 Feb 2024, Oregon State University.

⁴⁶ Махмудова Н.А. Чарльз Диккенс и жодиди тарбия романи жанри типологияси: Филология фанлари бўйича фалсафа доктори (PhD) диссертацияси автореф. – Тошкент, 2020. – 176 б.

From the time it emerges as a separate genre during the Enlightenment in late 18th-century Germany, the Bildungsroman is still relevant today, offering insights into lifelong process of human learning and growth.

Bildungsroman centers on individualism, development and education. It emerged in Germany in the Age of Enlightenment, with Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship (1795-96) is regarded as the prototype of genre because it includes many features of today's Bildungsromans. According to Allison Bulger, *main character Wilhelm is a person who seeks to escape the mediocrity of his middle-class upbringing and lead the life of an artist instead. The book contains many of the plot elements that later became hallmarks of the genre: Wilhelm endures heartbreak, has his artistic aspirations crushed, gets sent away from home by his parents to learn a thing or two, squanders his fortune unwisely, and faces financial ruin. By the end of the novel, however, Wilhelm shows signs of having matured as a result of his experiences.*⁴⁷

The Bildungsroman is defined by the following elements:

1. **Coming of Age:** Protagonist's adventures begin with a specific event serving as a key factor in self-discovery.
2. **Conflict and Growth:** The challenges protagonist face forces him to redefine values.
3. **Societal Interaction:** In most cases, protagonist's ambitions need to be adapted to traditional norms .
4. **Guidance from Relationships:** Mentors, friends, and life teachers influence the protagonist's development, serving as reason for change.
5. **Resolution and Self-Realization:** By the time the novel finishes, the protagonist achieves better understanding of themselves and keep a balance their own identity with social obligations.

From English literature a prominent novelist Charles Dickens is famous for his coming-of-age novels, such as David Copperfield (1850) and Great Expectations

⁴⁷ Садриева А.Н. Трансформация западноевропейского романа воспитания в культурном контексте современности. Автореферат диссертации на соискание ученой степени кандидата культурологии. – Екатеринбург, 2007; Шалимова Н.С. Жанровая динамика англоязычного романа воспитания второй половины XX века. Автореферат диссертации на соискание ученой степени кандидата филологических наук. – Москва, 2018; Камардина Ю.С. Тема воспитания в романе ч. Диккенса “Жизнь и приключения Дэвида Копперфильда”. Вестник Челябинского государственного педагогического университета. 2015. № 9. – С. 142-145; Конкина Л.С. Роман воспитания в концепции М.М.Бахтина (к Бахтинской типологии романа.) Специальный выпуск “Актуальные проблемы гуманитарных наук”. Сентябрь. 2003 г. – стр. 139-145; Крупенина М.И. Роман Ч. Диккенса “Большие надежды” как роман-инициация // Историческая и социально-образовательная мысль, Т. 8, по. 3-2, 2016. – С. 162-165; Осипова Н. “Дэвид Копперфильд” Ч. Диккенса и “Пенденнис” У. Теккерея – два варианта воспитательного романа: Автореф. канд. филол. наук. – М., 2001. – 24 с; Влодавская И.А. Поэтика английского романа воспитания начала XX века. Типология жанра. – Киев: Вища школа, 1983. – 183 с; Пашигорев В.Н. Роман воспитания в немецкой литературе XVIII-XX веков. Генезис и эволюция: Автореферат диссертации. – Моск. пед. гос. ун-т, 2005. – С. 7-36; Рыжанова Е.В. “Вильгельм Мейстер” И.В.Гете как роман воспитания: соответствие жанру. – Вестник Пермского университета. – Выпуск 1 (17). – 2017. – С. 97-105.

⁴⁸ Bulger, Allison. “Bildungsroman”, LitCharts. LLC, 5 May 2017.

(1861). Donald R. Price states, *"These two Bildungsroman novels, seem almost identical treatments of the two young heroes on their way to maturity"*.⁴⁹

Sh.Bronte also created her novel *"Jane Eyre"* in the genre of Bildungsroman, illustrating the personal growth of the hero Jane. This novel can be considered as a first female Bildungsroman. A tale of resilience, Jane Eyre highlights a young woman's journey to independence and self-realization despite societal constraints.

James Joyce's *"A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man"* (1916), a modernist Bildungsroman, it portrays Stephen Dedalus's both intellectual and artistic awakening.

American Bildungsroman Mark Twain's *"The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn"* (1884) explores moral growth as Huck grapples with themes of freedom and racism.

Contemporary Bildungsroman reflect diverse identities and address modern challenges, such as immigration, race, and cultural dislocation.

In the theory of literature, the scholars identify some subgenres of Bildungsroman based on their theme and main focus. The following subgenres are common in world literature:

Entwicklungsroman ("Novel of development") – displays the story about general growth of a person rather than self-discovery

Erziehungsroman ("Novel of education") – focuses on education and criticizes the societal obstacles in the process of education.

Künstlerroman ("Novel of artistic development") – shows the growth as an creator and artist.

Conclusion. For centuries, Bildungsroman has remained a significant genre since each person in life faces some difficulties on their way to maturity and this genre will mirror lifelong journey into self-discovery. The following words of the Samuel supports this opinion: *"A universal truth seems constant: reaching maturity is often achieved at great cost and only after severe heartbreak. The Bildungsroman has enjoyed its staying power because it has proven adaptable, the same adaptability that it requires of its protagonists for them to emerge through the crucible of youth"*.⁵⁰ Thus, the Bildungsroman continues to evolve, reflecting the ever-changing nature of personal and societal growth.

⁴⁹ Price, Donald R., *"David Copperfield and Great Expectations: A Comparison of Dickens Bildungsromane"*. – Illinois, University of Charleston, 1990. – P.3.

⁵⁰ Schwartz, Samuel. *"What is a Bildungsroman?"* Oregon State Guide to English Literary Terms, 4 Feb 2024, Oregon State University.

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