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The Name and Nature of the *Bildungsroman*

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Abstract

One of the most familiar and recurrent novelistic forms which narrates the story of a young hero's transition from childhood to maturity or adulthood is the *Bildungsroman*. Ever since the publication of Goethe's novel *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1796), considered the first *Bildungsroman*, the term has been used for a novel that presents the formative years of the protagonist with a particular focus on his or her psychological development and moral education. The *Bildungsroman* novel charts the main character's actual or metaphorical journey from youth to maturity, the goal of which is to achieve a reconciliation between the desire for individuation (self-fulfillment) and the demands of socialization (adaptation to a given social reality).

Keywords: Bildungsroman, novel of education, novel of development

The *Bildungsroman* is a study of the way a person accounts for the existence of one's unique identity. The individual in a *Bildungsroman* novel doesn't passively accept identity, it negotiates various personal and social forces that act upon it and tries to balance and integrate them in a harmonious existence within one's personality. The genre stresses the importance and value of the unique individual, not as a part of the group but distinct from the group, and emphasizes the necessity of full flowering of the full potential of a personality. The genre is an account of the formation of a man's unique identity. The *Bildungsroman's* uniqueness lies in its focus on one particular individual and how he comes to whom and what he is. The hero of the *Bildungsroman* is more concerned about his internal harmony and selfhood than about external characters or events. The tradition of this type of novel is founded upon the value and significance of the unique individual as distinguished from his group. The genre is based upon the

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ideal of the complete development of the potential of an individual and adaptation to his society of which he is an integral part.

Even after two decades today of the existence of the *Bildungsroman*, there exists no consensus on various central issues concerning the genre among critics and scholars of the *Bildungsroman*. The disagreement about the *Bildungsroman* is not new today but existed since the term was used for the first time by Friedrich von Blanckenburg in 1774 when there were only a few novels which could claim their affiliation to the *Bildungsroman*. Another prominent *Bildungsroman* critic Thomas P. Saine echoes the critical quagmire that surrounds the genre when he says, "[w]hat a *Bildungsroman* actually is ... and how many of them there are in German literature or in world literature at large, are questions still under discussion and probably unsolvable. (119). Saine even goes to the extreme of denying the status of *Bildungsroman* to Goethe's novel and claims that, "*Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* is a novel about *Bildung*, although it is not a *Bildungsroman* in the sense in which the term has come to be used by critics and scholars" (139). In a similar vein, Susan Gohlman, in her 1990 essay, observes "there is virtually no agreement on either what constitutes a *Bildungsroman* or which novels belong to this tradition (Gohlman228).

About the existence of the genre beyond the boundaries of German letters, Francois Jost observes that, the "second half of the English nineteenth century offers only a few *Bildungsromane* in the traditional sense of the word (Introduction 136). These are some of the views which illustrate that there is no critical consensus about certain issues related to the genre such as to how the genre should be defined, whether the term can be translated into other languages, whether such a novel exists outside the cultural and social boundaries of the country of its origin Germany, whether the process of *Bildung* is possible in the postmodern era, whether the genre is to be confined to a specific historical period, whether the *Bildungsroman* is a living or dead tradition of novel writing, whether it exists out of the boundaries of Germany, and what constitute the essential and distinguishing characteristics of the genre.

Despite the critical confusion existing regarding the genre, it is well agreed upon that ever since Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (1796) there has been a tradition of writing novels for which Goethe's novel is seen as a prototype and as the first *Bildungsroman*. Critics like Martin Swales, however, argue that Christoph Martin Wieland's *The History of Agathon* (1767) should be considered the

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first *Bildungsroman*. Ever since Wieland's *Agathon* and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, the *Bildungsroman* genre has been seen as the most prominent novelistic genre in Germany and the most important contribution of Germany to World Literature. This unique novelistic tradition was believed to represent the nationhood of Germany, its ideals and ethos and spirit. The famous novelist Thomas Mann described the *Bildungsroman* genre as "typically German, legitimately national" (qtd. in Sammons 240).

Generally, the German critic Karl von Morgenstern is credited for first using the term *Bildungsroman* to refer to this unique genre which appeared in German literature. Morgenstern used the term in the 1820's to refer to certain German novels that presented the *Bildung* of the hero to a certain stage of completeness. However, few scholars assert that the term was used even earlier by Friedrich von Blackenberg in his "Essay on the Novel" in 1774 much before Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, which was first published in 1795, and which is traditionally regarded as the first *Bildungsroman*. The term was however popularized by the 19th century English literary historian William Dilthey in the 1870s.

The *Bildungsroman* which is a German term is a compound of two words: *Bildung*, which loosely means "education, but has greater connotations as established by Goethe's novel as discussed later in the chapter " and *Roman*, which means "novel." The equivalent of *Bildung* in Latin is *formatio*, and in English the closest word is "formation," consequently, the label "novel of formation" most approximates the German term. However, there is no critical consensus on its equivalent in English as term is considered untranslatable.

The *Bildungsroman* is sometimes loosely translated as "coming-of-age novel," "novel of development," "novel of education." The use of these labels to refer to the *Bildungsroman* blurs specific connotations and generic traits. These labels can be used to refer to some of the variants or sub-genres of the *Bildungsroman*.

Critics distinguish between three variants or sub-genres of the *Bildungsroman* which have as its subject matter the growth of an individual from childhood to a certain stage of maturity but differ in their focus and treatment. The first variant *Entwicklungsroman* or the "novel of development" is a story of general growth rather than conscious self-cultivation or apprenticeship. The second label *Erziehungsroman* or "novel of education" is a story of the formal education of the protagonist in an

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educational institution in the pedagogical sense of the term, whereas the *Bildungsroman* differs from the *Erziehungsroman* in that its hero is educated by his social environment rather than in an environment of an educational institution. The third sub-genre is the *Künstlerroman* or artist novel which is a narrative of the growth of its protagonist into the vocation of an artist. The *Bildungsroman* critic Marianne Hirsch further distinguishes the *Bildungsroman*, *Erziehungsroman* and *Entwicklungsroman* as follows:

Bildungsroman is limited to those novels that actually illustrate Goethe's concept of *Bildung*; *Erziehungsroman*, or novel of education, describes works that deal specifically with problems of schooling or education ... rather than more generally with growth and development; *Entwicklungsroman*, an umbrella term more broadly applicable within the German tradition, includes those representatives of the genre that, though conscious of Goethe, depart from specific Goethean norms ... and incorporates as well the more specific *Bildungsromans* (294-295).

However, it is Wilhelm Dilthey's definition of the *Bildungsroman* which has achieved wider and lasting currency due to his voluminous writings as a scholar, literary historian and philosopher. According to Dilthey, the *Bildungsroman* was a novel that portrayed the "regulated development within the life of the individual," through a series of stages "each having its own intrinsic value and at the same time for basis for a higher stage" in his/her progress toward "maturity and harmony." Dilthey's definition emphasizes not only the hero's awareness of his self but also his choice of vocation. Dilthey writes in *Experience and Poetry* (1906) that the novels which belong to the genre *Bildungsroman*:

all portray a young man of their time: how he enters life in a happy state of naiveté seeking kindred souls, finds friendship and love, how he comes into conflict with the hard realities of the world, how he grows to maturity through diverse life-experiences, finds himself, and attains certainty about his purpose in the world." (qtd. in Swales 98)

Dilthey's definition is echoed by the G. B. Tennyson in his analysis of the Victorian *Bildungsroman* who described the *Bildung* as "the cultivation and harmonious development of the whole personality (137). The *Bildungsroman*'s uniqueness among all

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other novelistic forms is that it "portrays the harmonic cultivation of the individual" (Steinecke 93).

Michael Beddow in his book *The Fiction of Humanity* (1982) puts forth a new definition of the *Bildungsroman*. Beddow reiterates Dilthey's views stating that the *Bildungsroman* shows "a concern with the portrayal of an individual's 'Bildung,' where *Bildung* denotes a distinctively German pursuit of harmonious self-development, generally conducted at some remove from the domain of public experience" (2). According to Beddow, the *Bildungsroman* is an investigation of the nature of man which can only be presented through fiction. The novelistic form is about "what it is that makes men and women human"(285). According to another prominent *Bildungsroman* critic Jeffrey L. Sammons, the *Bildungsroman* novel is about the *Bildung* of the hero. Sammons defines *Bildung* as "the early bourgeois, humanistic concept of the shaping of the individual from its innate potentialities through acculturation and social experience to the threshold of maturity" (42). Francois Jost considers that the *Bildungsroman* is concerned with a protagonist who confronts his environment and is shaped and nurtured by the outside world till a point when he is ready to live his life in his own way (99).

Critical attention to *Bildungsroman* novels followed soon followed after Thomas Carlyle's translation of Goethe's novel in English. However, the *Bildungsroman* didn't achieve the predominance in English novelists as it did among German novelists. The first book on the English *Bildungsroman* Susanne Howe's *Wilhelm Meister and His English Kinsmen* (1930) in which, being inspired by the term used in Carlyle's translation of Goethe's text, defines the genre in terms of "apprentice" and "apprenticeship patterns":

The adolescent hero of the typical 'apprentice' novel sets out on his way through the world, meets with reverses usually due to his own temperament, falls in with various guides and counsellors, makes many false starts in choosing his friends, his wife, and his life work, and finally adjusts himself in some way to the demands of his time and environment by finding a sphere of action in which he may work effectively. (4)

Jerome H. Buckley's in his book *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding* (1974) discovered the presence of a strong impact of the *Bildungsroman* in English in the works of Charles Dickens, George Eliot, D H

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Lawrence, Thomas Hardy and James Joyce. He gives a typical outline of a *Bildungsroman* plot in his book as follows:

A child of some sensibility grows up in the country or in a provincial town, where he finds constraints, social and intellectual, placed upon the free imagination. [...] He therefore, sometimes at quite an early age, leaves the repressive atmosphere of home (and also the relative innocence), to make his way independently to the city [...]. There his real 'education' begins, not only his preparation for a career but also -- and often more importantly -- his direct experience of urban life. The latter involves at least two love affairs or sexual encounters, one debasing, one exalting, and demands that in this respect and others the hero reappraise his values. By the time he has decided, after painful soul-searching, the sort of accommodation to the modern world he can honestly make, he has left his adolescence behind and entered upon his maturity. (17-18)

The controversy over the definition of the *Bildungsroman*, as evident from the statements of the aforementioned scholars largely arise due to two extreme views regarding the genre: the first view puts a historical and geographical limit to the *Bildungsroman* confining it the period 1770 and 1815 in Germany and the second view uses the term so widely removed from its historical and ideological context, that the concept loses its classificatory value. Apart from its rootedness in German culture and society, there are many other aspects of the genre which has not received much critical attention. There exists a strong *Bildungsroman* tradition beyond the German realm of letters, especially in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Many female, minority, and postcolonial writers have appropriated and subverted the traditional *Bildungsroman* to assert alternative subjectivity and models of formation which has not received adequate critical attention.

The central concept which forms the foundation of the *Bildungsroman* genre is the notion of *Bildung* which refers to a German ideal of self-cultivation, of which Goethe's Wilhelm Meister is a prime example. In this concept, philosophy of life and education are linked in a manner that refers to a process of both personal and cultural maturation. This maturation implied by the term consists of the harmonization of the individual's mind and heart and in a unified selfhood and identity within the broader society. This process of harmonization of mind, heart, selfhood and identity is achieved

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through a personal transformation, which presents a challenge to the individual's accepted beliefs.

The term however had different connotation before the eighteenth century. The term *Bildung* was "a synonym, up to the eighteenth century, of *Bild*, of *imago* or "portrait" (*Introduction*, Jost 135). Before the advent or Enlightenment, the concept of "*Bild*" referred to man's relationship to God. The Bible says " God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him " (*King James Version*, Genesis 1.27). In the patristic tradition, "*Bild*" is the process through which a man must rebuild himself through self-realization and make himself worthy of God's grace. According to Francois Jost, "the church fathers explained the action of divine grace with the image of clay kneaded and shaped by the potter (*Introduction* 135-136). " According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, man "carries the image of God within itself, thus lives up to its parentage letting its talents flourish and by realizing what they are destined to accomplish, that is, by elevating mankind ever closer to the level of God" (Grondin 118). *Bildung*, in its pre-Enlightenment conception, meant a spiritual self-cultivation rather than a self-cultivation aimed at social integration. The Enlightenment concept of *Bildung* is a secularization of patristic concept which entails a self-cultivation in the context of society.

According to Susan Gohlman, the Enlightenment version of *Bildung* is synonymous with the "humanistic ideal of perfected man" (17). The *Bildungsroman* grew out of this late eighteenth-century German *Humanitatsideal*, the ideal of the wholistic and organic unfolding of man's latent potentialities to the fullest extent possible. In Germany between 1770 and 1815, *Bildung* became a Universalist ideal of individual autonomy, self-realization, self-determination and a harmonious personality. Susan Gohlman describes that the process of *Bildung* is "the notion of the individual in contact with a world whose meaning must be actively shaped and reshaped from within up to the point when the hero is in a position to say, 'I think I can live with it now.'" (25). The role of self-transformation and self-education to accommodate oneself with social roles and expectations is the mainstay of the *Bildung* process.

The genre's deep rootedness in the values of classical humanism of eighteenth-century Germany handcuffs it to a specific historical period. Martin Swales seconds this view of the *Bildungsroman* as a manifestation of the "*Humanitatsideal* of late eighteenth-century Germany in that it is concerned with the whole person unfolding in

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all his complexity and elusiveness" (49). Swales further says, "In its portrayal of the hero's psychology the *Bildungsroman* operates with a tension between a concern for the sheer complexity of individual potentiality on the one hand, on the other, a recognition that a practical reality—marriage, family, a career—is a necessary dimension of the hero's self-realization, albeit one that by definition implies a limitation, indeed constriction, of the self " (49).

Jerome Buckley in his book *Season of Youth* equates *Bildung* to the "quest for self-culture" (13) whereas James Hardin, who discusses the historical evolution of the meaning of the word *Bildung*, points out two important implications of the word: "first, *Bildung* as a developmental process and, second, as a collective name for the cultural and spiritual values of a specific people or social stratum in a given historical epoch and by extension the achievement of learning about the same body of knowledge and acceptance of the value system it implies" (xi-xii). Hardin, further defines the process of *Bildung*, as "the intellectual and social development of a central figure who, after going out into the world and experience both defeats and triumphs, comes to a better understanding of self and to a generally affirmative view of the world" (xiii).

It is a staple goal of *Bildungsroman* criticism is to find common characteristics, elements, features which can be used to label a novel as a *Bildungsroman*. Following, Jerome H. Buckley, Marianne Hirsch in her 1979 article translates the term *Bildungsroman* as "the novel of formation" and seeks to establish formal and thematic similarities between German *Bildungsroman* novels and their French and British counterparts. Hirsch finds it irrelevant that the German *Bildungsroman* have inward focus whereas the English ones are more outward looking and concerned with politics and social criticism. Hirsch postulates a list of thematic and formal features such as the *Bildungsroman* avoids to render a panorama of society, differentiates between the perspective of the protagonist and that of the narrator as the voice of the author, shows that the protagonist as a representative member of the society, and on the whole presenting a series of connected events leading to a definite denouement. Hirsch considers "the development of selfhood ... is the primary concern of the novel of formation, and that "its projected resolution is an accommodation to the existing society. Further, Hirsch claims that the genre is marked by irony, the minor characters with fixed functions, and is didactic in aim (296-298). Marianne Hirsch's definition and characteristics of the *Bildungsroman* is very significant as it vindicated the existence of

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the genre outside Germany and has formed the basis of analysis of English *Bildungsroman* novels by later critics.

In addition to identifying the typical plot of the *Bildungsroman*, Buckley also enumerates what he calls the 'principal elements' of the *Bildungsroman*: "childhood, the conflict of generations, provinciality, the larger society, self-education, alienation, ordeal by love and the search for a vocation and a working philosophy—answers the requirements of the *Bildungsroman* as I am here seeking to describe and define it" (18).

Martin Swales too reaffirms the Germanic nature of the genre by distinguishing it from the English *Bildungsroman* by its focus on the inward harmonious cultivation and lack of political and social concerns. In his 1969 article, Jost argues that there exists no literary tradition of the *Bildungsroman* in France. In his 1983 article entitled *Variations of a Species: The Bildungsroman* excludes many of the English novels which were earlier recognized as belonging to the genre in his earlier French article.

He prefers to categorise the English examples as *Erziehungsroman* or "novel of elementary education" which is a subgenre of *Bildungsroman*. Thus, Jost confines the *Bildungsroman* to novels written in Germany during a particular historical period, and suggests that later novels of development should not be labelled *Bildungsroman* and should be categorised as something else. Justifying the exclusion of English novels from affiliation to the *Bildungsroman*, Jost enumerates the essential features of the *Bildungsroman* which is missing in the British novels like the hero's family supporting the hero's education and cultivation, an engagement with the *Bildung* and Enlightenment ideals, predominance of too much hardship for the hero and the prevalence of happy and positive endings. In his 1983 article Jost writes:

The second half of the English nineteenth century offers only a few *Bildungsromane* in the traditional sense of the word. Most of them are centered on the life of outcast or underprivileged children, or of prepubescent youths. ... David Copperfield is not Wilhelm Meister. The former quenches his thirst with milk, the latter with wine (Jost 136).

Christoph Martin Wieland's *The History of Agathon* (1766-67) is considered to be a precursor to *Goethe's Wilhelm Meister* and considered by some critics to be the first real German *Bildungsroman*. Written during the historical period of German Enlightenment, the novel with its Greek title is based upon the classical concept of man as the measure

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of things as an ideal. The novel's young hero is saved from his fatal idealist dreams by the worldly wise teachings of a sophist and a courtesan, who help him balance out the sensual and spiritual side of his self so that he can live in accordance with the true nature of things. Agathon paved the way for the modern novel by placing character rather than plot at the center, by revealing the inner state of people, and by demonstrating how their inner state affected their actions. The narrative traces the young Agathon's formation as he finds his way in the word and ends with his reconciliation with society as he finds a niche where he can flourish.

As emphasized by Marianne Hirsch, Goethe's model of *Bildung* has been a lasting "touchstone" for later novels both within and outside Germany. Goethe's prototypical *Bildungsroman* deals with the life and adventures of the young eponymous hero, Wilhelm Meister, the son of a wealthy merchant, in late eighteenth-century Germany. Wilhelm is not interested in his father's business and instead wants to become a poet, playwright and actor. Wilhelm is drawn towards the theatre both by his personal enthusiasm for the stage and for his noble ambition to raise the standards of German theatre. An unsuccessful love affair with an actress, with whom he has an illegitimate child, he gives up on his theatrical passion and focuses on his father's business. Wilhelm's love for the theatre is rekindled when he offers financial help to a troupe of actors on a business trip. Wilhelm becomes a business partner in the theatre company which offers him opportunity to write, act and direct. Wilhelm feels at a crossroad after he becomes financially independent after the death of his father, which gave him the freedom to return to theatre.

Wilhelm's theatrical engagement culminates in the production of Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*. Wilhelm encounters many characters like the child Mignon and the melancholic Harpist in the course of his theatrical life. The actors and audience of the theatre company give up the high standards of literary drama and preferred opera, slapstick and farce which made the theatre a place of cheap amusement instead of a place for edification. A fire destroys the theatre during a performance forcing the troupe to disband. Wilhelm is again weaned away from the theatre under the influence of a secret society of nobles called the Society of the Tower. Wilhelm is inducted into the secret society, which has kept a watch over him from his very beginning, and which made him realize that his education has just begun. The society aims to solve the problem which is common to all men that is the attainment of a complete and harmonious personality through the reconciliation of the ideal and the real, the moral and

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the sensual, and the art and religion. The novel ends with the betrothal of Wilhelm with a beautiful and spiritual girl from a noble family associated with a secret society. Wilhelm feels at home with secret society where he finds real culture and higher standards.

In Britain, the *Bildungsroman* emerged in the Victorian period with Charles Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1849) and *Great Expectations* (1861). The novels present the development of two orphans who educate themselves and move from the English countryside to the city of London with the goal of becoming gentlemen. The Victorian *Bildungsroman* portrays the values of the Victorian age such as family, education, labour, money and marriage in the context of social dislocation and stifled individuation. *Copperfield* embodies the Victorian middle-class work ethic which entailed that the individual should learn a trade and earn his way to success. *Copperfield* is an individual who works for his own salvation, facing tribulations, through active repentance, attaining happiness and domestic security. Dicken's Pip too rejects the wealth offered by his secret benefactor and chooses to make his own fortune.

The English *Bildungsroman* usually complicates the hero or heroine's struggle to attain an individual identity with conflicts outside the self. Whereas the German *Bildungsroman* focuses on the internal conflict faced by the protagonist in establishing his or her individual identity, the English *Bildungsroman* focused on the protagonist's external conflict in his or her struggle for individual identity. Samuel Butler's *The Way of All Flesh* (1903) attacks the hypocrisy of the Victorian period and traces four generations of the protagonist Ernest Pontifex's family. The artistic protagonist liberates himself from the stifling influences and beliefs of his family, education and religion and is able to achieve his vocation as a writer.

The female *Bildungsroman* novels like Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* (1860) and *Middlemarch* (1871) focused on the heroine's quest for development in an oppressive patriarchal society, and dramatize the female quest for development in an oppressive environment. *Jane Eyre*'s journey from an adopted orphan to a gentleman's mistress represents a desire for romance and maturation outside marriage which breached the contemporary society's conception of transition to womanhood. In *Mill on the Floss*, Maggie Tulliver's growth is characterized by subordination of her individual aspirations for emotional, intellectual

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and spiritual fulfillment to the requirements of an intellectually barren and spiritually impoverished society of St. Ogg.

According to Susan J. Rosowski, the female *Bildung* is an "awakening to limitations" in a patriarchal society that denies women a physical journey to growth (67). In *Middlemarch*, Dorothea Brooke's *Bildung* is left unfulfilled by her disastrous marriage with Edward Casaubon, a middle-aged scholar she hopes to assist, who proves both pompous and ineffectual. In France, Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* (1857) presents its heroine's formation as intrinsically connected with the fulfillment of a sexualized subjectivity which transgresses the norms of society. According to Elaine Hoffman Baruch, "From *Emma* to *Jane Eyre* to *Madame Bovary* to *Middlemarch* to *Anna Karenina* to *Portrait of a Lady* to *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and beyond, the novel presents a search for self, an education of the mind and feelings. But unlike the male *Bildungsroman*, the feminine *Bildung* takes place in or on the periphery of marriage" (335).

In the twentieth-century and the twenty-first century, the genre has been subverted, fragmented and reinvented. Modernism and postmodernism's obsession with the internal life rather than an external social interaction has brought the focus of the *Bildungsroman* on the complexities of the fragmented self. D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913) traces the formation of Paul Morel against the background of financial hardship, industrial revolution and social turmoil. The modernist female *Bildungsroman* novels like Virginia Woolf's *The Voyage Out* (1915) and May Sinclair's *The Life and Death of Harriett Frean* (1922) rather than presenting the psychological development and social integration of its female protagonists, demonstrated the impossibility of individuation under the pressures of patriarchal structures. Unlike the female *Bildungsroman* of the nineteenth century who found the promise of maturation in their domestic and marital life, the heroines of the twentieth century female *Bildungsroman* fail to find their self-actualization in domesticity and in marriage.

The novel which narrates growth of the protagonist as an artist is another recurrent variant of the genre which is known as *Künstlerroman*. In James Joyce's *Künstlerroman A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916), the young protagonist Stephen Dedalus in order to become a writer liberates himself from the family, country and religion which were restrictions on his art. This novel presents the belief that the artist is an outcast and that alienation and exile are necessary for creative endeavors. Thomas Mann's *Doktor Faustus* (1947) is another *Künstlerroman* which narrates the

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growth of an ambitious artist who enters a pact with the devil to overcome creative stagnation and produce innovative art.

The *Bildungsroman* traditionally told the story that was white, male, heterosexual and middle class. The attention given to erased narratives and a marginalized community in the postmodern era has undermined the genre's conservative social values and has expanded the scope of the genre. In the words of Meredith Miller, "[a]t the turn of the twentieth century, lesbian, gay and transgender writers strategically deployed existing discourses of sexology and psychoanalysis within the framework of the *Bildungsroman* specifically in order to pit the sexually dissident self against the social world. This strategy necessarily involved both a repositioning of the relation between self and social scripts which had typified the European *Bildungsroman* up to this point, and a renegotiation of the novel's relationship to grand historical narrative" (Miller 243). Jeannette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* (1985) charts the formation of its young female protagonist in the course of her realisation of her identity as a woman who is sexually attracted to other women. Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) and Alan Hollinghurst's debut-novel *The Swimming-Pool Library* (1988) narrate the awakening of its young protagonists into awareness of their non-heterosexual desire.

Franco Moretti in his book *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (1987) claims that the *Bildungsroman* brought a paradigm shift in the conception of the hero. Whereas the earlier classical hero was a mature adult, the hero of the *Bildungsroman* was an immature youth. Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* gave birth to a series of immature youthful heroes such as David Copperfield, Julien Sorel, Eugene Onegin, Frederic Moreau, Elizabeth Bennet, and Dorothea Brooke.

The youthful hero shouldn't be seen as an incidental element of the *Bildungsroman* but as necessary and intrinsic to the genre. Moretti considers youth as the "material sign" and the "*Bildungsroman* as the "symbolic form" of modernity, "a bewitching and risky process full of 'great expectations' and 'lost illusions.'" (5). Moretti visualizes "a specific image of modernity" in the "youthful attributes of mobility and inner restlessness. Through the representation of youth in the *Bildungsroman*, modern society constructs an image of itself.

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Morreti finds a correspondence between the historical moment of a nation and individual personal development and social expectations; and discerns four historical and national phases in the development of the *Bildungsroman*. When the *Bildungsroman* first appeared in Germany in the early eighteenth century, Germany was in pre-industrial phase, in which there was no conflict between individual and society. The second phase, which Morreti calls Stendhal's "Restoration *Bildungsroman*" shows for the first time the conflict between individuation and socialization. Morreti's third phase is that of the capitalistic world of Balzac, where social integration and material success dominate concerns over individual autonomy, values and ethics. The English *Bildungsroman* like Tom Jones, David Copperfield, Jane Eyre, and Great Expectations constitute Morreti's fourth phase which rules out any opposition between individual aspirations and social demands. After the fourth phase in the life of the genre, Moretti finds that the *Bildungsroman* disappears in the European soil. Accounting for its extinction Morreti writes:

If one wonders about the disappearance of the novel of the youth, then, the youth of 1919—maimed, shocked, speechless, decimated—provide quite a clear answer. We tend to see social and political history as a creative influence on literary evolution, yet its destructed role may be just as relevant. If history can make cultural forms necessary, it can make them impossible as well, and this is what the war [WWI] did to the *Bildungsroman*. More precisely, perhaps, the war was the final act in a longer process – the cosmic coup de grâce to a genre that, at the turn of the century, was already doomed.(229-230)

In other words, Moretti announces the breakdown of the genre around after the World War I. The war, according to Moretti, shattered the hopes and aspirations of the European youth for individual existence and ushered an era of individual insignificance. In other words, the world changed so drastically after the First World War that the process of *Bildung* incorporated in the *Bildungsroman* was rendered impossible. Postmodernism has dealt the final nail in the coffin of the "unified humanistic" selfhood which is central to the genre. As will be discussed in the next chapter, this pronouncement of the death of the genre appears premature when the postcolonial reincarnation of the genre is taken into account. In the postcolonial *Bildungsromane*, the very failure of the process of *Bildung*, performs the useful function to expose the irresolvable conflicts of colonial and postcolonial societies. *Bildungsroman* in the

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postcolonial context, despite its failure in constructing a viable identity in the face of hardships, losses and regrets, continues to be a useful and meaningful genre for postcolonial writers trying to decolonize their nations and assert alternative subjectivities and indigenous models of identity formation.

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