

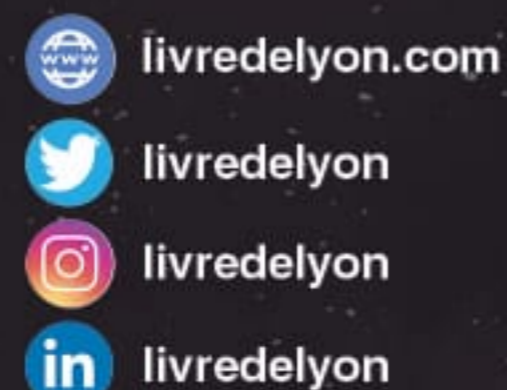
BILDUNGSROMAN TRADITION IN ENGLISH LITERATURE

This book tries to reveal the unique characteristics of the English bildungsroman and to examine the change of the English bildungsroman tradition in three centuries by analysing these characteristics in Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* of the eighteenth century, George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* of the nineteenth century, and James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* of the twentieth century.

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HALIT ALKAN



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Philology

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LIVRE DE LYON

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Bildungsroman Tradition in English Literature: Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*

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THE PREFACE

This book tries to reveal the unique elements of the English bildungsroman and to examine the change of the English bildungsroman in three centuries by analysing these elements in Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* of the eighteenth century, George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* of the nineteenth century, and James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* of the twentieth century. In this context, firstly, the sources on the bildungsroman in German literature are analysed. Afterwards, the sources on the bildungsroman in English literature are examined. The novels *Moll Flanders*, *The Mill on the Floss*, and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* are read in the light of the data obtained from aforementioned sources. For the analysis of the novels, the criticisms of various critics about the novels in question have been collected and these criticisms have been used in the book.

In this context, the general characteristics of the bildungsroman in German literature are discussed in the Introduction. Then in Chapter I, the literary genres that contributed to the formation of the English bildungsroman and the defining characteristics of the English bildungsroman are emphasised. *Moll Flanders* in Chapter II, *The Mill on the Floss* in Chapter III, and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in Chapter IV are analysed in terms of their bildungsroman characteristics. In order to provide the reader with general information about the period in which the novel was written and the plot of the novel, the social conditions of the period and the tradition of the novel are presented in each of these chapters before proceeding to the analysis. In the conclusion, the general characteristics of the bildungsroman genre and the English bildungsroman and the bildungsroman elements of the three novels are summarised and the changes in the English bildungsroman during these periods are evaluated.

INTRODUCTION

In terms of etymology, the German term “bildungsroman” derives from the word “bild”. It is pointed out that the word “bild” (picture, painting) was first used by the clergy in the sense of regaining the image of God. In order to achieve this, it was believed that one had to examine oneself and correct one’s shortcomings and defects. In the Age of Enlightenment, the religious connotations of the term “bildung” began to be replaced by more secular ones, and at the end of the eighteenth century the term “bildung” came to be used to describe the ideal model of human beings who had corrected their defects to the maximum extent. In short, “bildung” can be defined as the process of self-education and self-development. “Bildungsroman” is the name given to the genre of the novel that depicts this development process of the individual. However, the bildungsroman is not a genre of literature that can be separated with such clear lines because even its definition is subject to differences. The bildungsroman is defined as “the life story of a young, innocent man who goes out into the world to test what life has to offer him” (Gohlman, 1990: 3). The bildungsroman is described as “a novel of general development and self-development” (Howe, 1966: 6). The bildungsroman is described as “a process of development in which the individual and the external world are in constant interaction and in which the individual’s own will plays a role in addition to fate” (Minden, 1997: 19). In its most common definition, the bildungsroman can be considered as “a genre of novels, often in the form of an autobiography, which tells the story of a young protagonist’s development from adolescence to adulthood” (Drabble, 1985: 100). In the bildungsroman as a genre of novels about the early life and development of the protagonist, the childhood of the protagonist is briefly described and then his youth and young adulthood are emphasised.

The term “bildungsroman” was first used by Wilhelm Dilthey in his *Das Leben Schleiermachers* (1870) (*The Life of Schleiermacher*) (Gohlman, 1990: 12). Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795) (*Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*) is considered as the first example of bildungsroman in German literature. The novel, which consists of eight books, describes the journey of the protagonist, who bears the same name as the work, away from the lifestyle his family wants to impose on him and towards the life

CHAPTER I

Before analysing the novels in terms of bildungsroman characteristics in this book, it will be useful to examine the literary genres and their characteristics that were the source of bildungsroman until the eighteenth century in order to understand the point the novel reached by the eighteenth century.

1.1. The Literary Genres as a Source for the Bildungsroman

The novels written in ancient times can be categorised into three main groups such as the novel of trial/ordeal, the novel of travel, and the biographical novel. Among some of the characteristics of the novels written in these periods, it can be said that the concepts of experience, journey, adventure, trial/ordeal, personal history and remembrance formed the basis of the bildungsroman.

As for the Middle Ages, the romances that first appeared in this period help us to understand the history of the bildungsroman. Romances first appeared in France in the twelfth century (Barron, 1987: 208-231). The genre of romances, which was born from the lyrics of courtly poets, usually centred on the woman, the love for her, the efforts made for her and the desire to live forbidden love with her, takes its name from the Romans language. Later on, the stories of heroes who try to realise the ideal of knighthood and struggle for their love are also called romances. It is possible to find rich plots and themes in English romances. Adventure and trial/ordeal in romances are important themes for the development of the bildungsroman. Character development in romances is far from both biological and mental development from childhood to adulthood as in bildungsroman. However, the hero of the romance overcomes the difficulties of life and achieves his own identity. This adds 'individuality' to the romance because for the first time the hero of a romance discovers his humanity through his failure. In this respect it overlaps with the bildungsroman. As a literary genre, romances play a major role in the development of the novel with their themes of love, adventure, travelling, quest, trial/ordeal, mythic elements and everyday social life, leaving aside the supernatural elements.

In the novels written in Europe during the Renaissance period, the ancient themes of travelling, autobiography and the trial/ordeal are pointed out. However, unlike them, in the Renaissance novel, the narrator holds a mirror to the inner

CHAPTER II

The novel of each period has its own characteristics and the bildungsroman tradition has developed in line with these characteristics. This chapter discusses the state of the novel in the eighteenth century and then analyses Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) in terms of bildungsroman characteristics.

2.1. The Eighteenth-Century British Novel

In the eighteenth century, with the emergence of the novel genre in England, libraries were opened in Edinburgh in 1726 and in London in 1740 in order to encourage the public to read. This situation enabled every segments of society to easily access to literary works. The habit of reading was no longer only an upper class hobby. Writers of the period, who took advantage of this opportunity, wrote about the deficiencies that had been existing in society and what to do in order to overcome them.

Although *Moll Flanders* was written before the first appearance of the bildungsroman in German literature, it can be considered as an example of a bildungsroman since it has the general characteristics of the bildungsroman. On the other hand, *Moll Flanders* is also close to the picaresque novel genre, as can be seen from the novel in general. Since the picaresque novel was as influential as the German bildungsroman in the development of the English bildungsroman, these two genres are blended in the English bildungsroman. For this reason, both the picaresque novel and the bildungsroman genre characteristics of the novel are supported with quotations from the novel to be analysed in this chapter.

Daniel Defoe (1660-1731) was an English journalist, writer, and pamphleteer. He was one of the earliest proponents of the novel. He experienced the Great Plague epidemic and a great fire in London. He lost his mother when he was ten years old. Defoe, who was the son of a farmer and a housewife, wished to gain wealth and respect in society. Therefore, he was busy in trade after his school life. However, he was not very successful in business. These economic difficulties caused him to create the character of Moll as a capitalist in *Moll Flanders*. Although his real name is Daniel Foe, he, who suffered from discrimination classism, added the prefix 'De' to his surname himself in order to appear more respected in society. In 1703, he was arrested for the political and satirical works by the nonconformist Queen Anne and placed in Pillory. He went

CHAPTER III

Since the social conditions of the period leads to the shaping of the novel tradition in general, the social and economic changes in the nineteenth-century England is discussed in this chapter and then, within the specified conditions, the developing nineteenth-century novel tradition is explained. This chapter also analyses George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* (1860) in terms of bildungsroman characteristics.

3.1. The Nineteenth-Century British Novel

In the nineteenth century, a period of unprecedented change in English history, the novel genre reflected the controversial issues of the period and mirrored the problems experienced. For this reason, the novel genre gained public appreciation because it reflected life itself and taught the reader. Writers dealt with themes such as individuality, consciousness and existence in a realistic and simple language for the first time in the nineteenth-century novel. The nineteenth-century novel was born from the needs of the English society, which was undergoing a rapid change during the process of industrialisation. The transition from an agriculture-based society to an industrial society brought with it social and family changes and innovations in the field of labour. In addition, the construction of railways in 1840 gave people freedom of movement and brought speed and continuity. The achievement and preservation of individuality became central theme in the novel tradition of the period in a society dominated by many different social, moral, political, economic and historical systems. As Gail Cunningham says, the nineteenth-century novel tradition was dominated by the moral values of the middle class as follows: Women should be pure and moral, marriage should be a lifelong union, women who become prostitutes should be punished, and those who sin or defy common values are removed from society at the end of the novel (Cunningham, 1993: 31-35). In line with the values set forth in the novel, the characters are analysed together with their inner worlds and their relations within the society.

The nineteenth-century novel was born under the influence of romance and the Romanticism movement. The difference between the romance genre and the realistic novel was the main topic of discussion in nineteenth-century novel theory. In many respects, the romance genre was more influential in nineteenth-

CHAPTER IV

This chapter deals with the twentieth-century British novel tradition and then analyses James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) in terms of the characteristics of the bildungsroman.

4.1. The Twentieth-Century British Novel

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the individual and social values and beliefs that prevailed in the Victorian era began to be questioned and new values began to take their place. In the early twentieth century, World War I took place, millions of people died and economic crises occurred in many countries. New currents of thought emerged in various fields such as philosophy, psychology, physics, and visual arts. In the 1920s, the social and moral values that determined the existence of the individual began to be questioned again. These social changes led to the emergence of the modernism movement. Modernism, as a continuation of the system of thought that rejected the moral value judgements of the Victorian era at the end of the nineteenth century, opposes the positivist, traditional set of values and searches for stronger moral values that the individual can hold on to in a world where balances are shaken and conflicts prevail. Modernist writers reflect the rebellion against the traditional and the complexity of the modern world in their works and defend subjective reality (Stevenson, 1993: 29-42). Modernist writers, starting from the individual, argue that the concept of 'reality' differs according to the perception and thoughts of the individual. The Modernism movement was also influenced by the Impressionism movement that was effective at the end of the nineteenth century. According to Impressionism, 'reality' can be perceived through individual feelings and impressions (Holman and Harmon, 1986: 253). The French Symbolism movement, which emphasises imagination, was also influential on modernism. In Symbolism movement, imagination plays an important role in making connections between events and in making inference.

In the novel tradition, the modernism movement manifested itself after 1910. Modernism in the field of the novel brought many important innovations in terms of both content and genre; the use of different narrators (first person, third person, omniscient) together and thus the readers' effort to establish a unity of meaning between the parts, the removal of realist elements, the

CONCLUSION

As mentioned in the Introduction, “bildungsroman” is a German term first used by Wilhelm Dilthey in his work *Das Leben Schleiermachers* (*The Life of Schleiermacher*) published in 1870. In its most common definition, the bildungsroman is a genre of novel that deals with the biological, psychological and social development of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood. There are three sub-genres such as Entwicklungsroman (novel of development), Erziehungsroman (novel of education), and Künstlerroman (novel of the development of a writer or an artist). The bildungsroman first appeared in German literature. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister’s Apprenticeship*) published in 1795 is considered as the first example of bildungsroman in German literature. This novel is important in that it depicts for the first time a protagonist who tries to form his own identity.

As mentioned in Chapter I, the bildungsroman in English literature bears traces of the German bildungsroman as well as many other genres. Romances written in the Middle Ages also contributed to the development of the bildungsroman. The romance genre, which first appeared in France in the twelfth century, prepared the emergence of the bildungsroman genre, especially with its themes of adventure and trial/ordeal. Character development in romances is far from the biological and mental development of the protagonist from childhood to maturity as in the bildungsroman. However, it overlaps with the bildungsroman in that the character overcomes the difficulties of life and forms his own self.

In the novels written in Europe during the Renaissance period, the ancient themes of travelling, autobiography, and trial/ordeal are pointed out. However, unlike them, in the Renaissance novel, the narrator holds a mirror to the inner world of the protagonist and describes his biological and mental development as well as his finding his own self in the chaos of the external world. The greatest role in the development of the novel genre in Europe during the Renaissance was played by the picaresque novel that emerged in Spain in the sixteenth century. The picaresque novel contains the themes of experience, travelling, adventure, trial/ordeal, personal history and remembrance, which are found in novels written in ancient times. These are common features of the bildungsroman and the picaresque novel. In addition, the picaresque novel overlaps with the

bildungsroman in terms of the development of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood.

With the combination of the Renaissance novel and the picaresque novel, the general characteristics of the bildungsroman genre are largely determined. The most important of these characteristics is that the development of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood is dealt with both biologically and psychologically. The protagonist of the novel has above-average mental ability. He resembles both the characteristics of the period in which he lives and the protagonist of previous didactic and allegorical stories. His tendency towards idleness and recklessness brings him close to the picaro. He takes his desire for self-improvement and his inclination towards art from the universal Renaissance human being. However, these characteristics cause him to fail to keep up with the common values of the society he lives in. The journey that the protagonist takes by leaving the environment he has grown up in will offer him the opportunity to get to know the world and to experience life, but there are people who will guide him along the journey. His encounters with people belonging to different segments of society during his journey are also similar to the picaresque novel. In order for the protagonist of the novel to complete his development, he should reconcile his inner world with the external world. He reaches maturity by completing his deficiencies or eliminating his mistakes. The idea of reconciliation with society, which the bildungsroman preaches to the protagonist, is directed at the entire bourgeois class because the aim of the bildungsroman is to educate the whole society. The bildungsroman uses language to achieve this goal. Through language, individuals share their views, recognise their mistakes and try to correct them.

The English bildungsroman, which began in the eighteenth century as an extension of the picaresque novel, has changed over time. Although Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) analysed in Chapter II was written before Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795) (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*), which is accepted as the classical example of bildungsroman in German literature, *Moll Flanders* can be accepted as an example of bildungsroman in terms of its general characteristics of the bildungsroman genre. However, since it was written during the development phase of the English bildungsroman, it is also close to the picaresque novel genre. The protagonist Moll Flanders who was born an orphan in Newgate prison is twelve years a whore, five times a wife (once to her half-brother), twelve years a thief, eight years a transported felon in America, at last becomes rich, lives

honest and dies a penitent. In general, *Moll Flanders* which is a work with picaresque characteristics and autobiographical novel elements emphasises the development of the the protagonist Moll's individuality. The development of Moll is a result of changing conditions, events and actions. The inner world of Moll has as much influence on her destiny as the external conditions. Prostitution, marriage, sending her kids away, and theft are the result of Moll's desire for money in order to escape poverty. It is the Newgate dungeon where Moll comes closest to admitting her identity as an infamous thief. As for the characteristics of the protagonist of the picaresque novel, the protagonist comes from a lower class family and starts his life with negativities due to his family's lack of respect in society. In his sense, Moll can also be supported by the fact that she has started with negativity because her parents are not known. The theme of travelling is an important theme in the picaresque novel as well as in the bildungsroman because in this way, Moll has the opportunity to experience life itself by travelling away from the environment in which she has grown up. Places bounces from prison to the countryside to London to America, back to England, then back to America, and finally back to England again. Experience is a vital element that makes it possible for Moll to complete her development by enabling her to mature mentally. Moll's development story follows the stages of biological development. This is another indication that it can be considered an example of a bildungsroman. The fact that there are people who will guide her throughout her development again coincides with bildungsroman. Moll's above-average mental ability brings her closer to the heroine of the bildungsroman. This situation is not welcomed by those around her as it causes her to go against the 'normality' that society expects from her. It is a characteristic of bildungsroman that society expects its individuals to be 'normal', that is, to conform to social norms. Based on the representative characters of the bildungsroman, it aims to show the whole society its deficiencies and to correct them. In *Moll Flanders*, Defoe reveals social deficiencies by revealing different segments of society through Moll, especially during her journey. The best advice Defoe gives to Moll through the mouths of different people in the novel is not to be deceived by appearances and not to trust anyone, and this advice is directed to the whole society. In the novel, Defoe depicts the artificial behaviours of the upper class and the prejudices of the lower class that prevent them from knowing the world. In this way, he aims to educate the bourgeois class. The upper and lower classes live in peace in the world to be created with bildungsroman by showing people their mistakes.

Due to social conditions in the nineteenth century, women could not leave their homes and live independently. Also, they could not work for a living as this was not welcomed in society except for being governess. Women were raised and educated to get married to a suitor. For this reason, women's passions, desires and ambitions were disregarded in this male-dominated society. George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* analysed in Chapter III is not a conventional bildungsroman because the protagonist is female, there is not a journey in the novel, and there is not a happy ending. Third person narrative is used in *The Mill on the Floss*. Eliot's narrator interferes and comments on the events in the novel. Eliot was an intellectual and she was beyond her time with her ideas on philosophy, science, and literature. Maggie, like Eliot, is also beyond her time. Eliot tells the story of a young woman, Maggie, struggling with herself and society, unlike an ordinary nineteenth-century woman. In *The Mill on the Floss*, Eliot uses nostalgic and autobiographical elements as the heroine Maggie Tulliver's life has common points with Eliot's in the novel. Unlike Maggie, Eliot left home and found her way by behaving boldly. Although Maggie could control her actions, she cannot control her emotions and falls in love with Stephen, who is her 'great temptation'. However, Maggie believes in family ties and duty, so she has the courage to return single after her elopement with Stephen although she is aware that she will not be welcomed and accepted. Maggie struggles with her passion and reason because she is afraid of betraying Lucy and Philip, who cares about her a lot. When Maggie refuses to marry either of Philip or Stephen to become independent, she rebels against the traditional gender roles imposed on her by the middle-class male authority. Maggie returns to her childhood home and dies tragically. Maggie realises that her suffering is the result of fixing her heart on her own pleasures, and so she comes to believe that her happiness lies in her reconciliation with society. Eliot presents the growth of her heroine with her inner and external conflicts, desires, beliefs, and thoughts. Maggie has a silent struggle because of her conditions and environment. Her inner world is opposed to her external world. While she wants to be loved and adapt to society, she fights against society's norms and acts like a rebel. As a result, she has to deal with her dilemma throughout her story. As a bildungsroman characteristic, the novel has a circular plot. Unlike traditional stories, Maggie's story ends with death as she cannot find peace in life. Her story circulates instead of progressing in a linear way, and it ends without making her happy. Instead of depicting the ideal ending such as marriage, love and positive development, Eliot creates an unusual heroine from her memories and experiences. Eliot focuses on the

process of Maggie's growth instead of the ending and thus the process of the heroine's struggle matters in the bildungsroman. For this reason, Eliot wants to show the reader that the heroine could only exist and be extraordinary with her struggle rather than her happy ending.

In the twentieth century, with the influence of modernism, the depiction of the individual's inner world gains importance, and the development of the protagonist is revealed based on his inner world. The aim of modernist writers is to provide spiritual comfort and guide modern individual who is in search of his self due to the complexity and uncertainty of modern life. Modernist writers challenge the traditional development process by referring to the past in their works or by ending the development process as it started. James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* analysed in Chapter IV is one of the examples of the twentieth-century British bildungsroman. In the novel, the introspective method is used to describe the development of the protagonist Stephen towards the artistic life he desires. Stephen's mental development is revealed through his own thoughts. In the novel, it is possible to come across bildungsroman characteristics such as biological development from childhood to maturity, disappointment of the protagonist in family life, education at school, vocational apprenticeship period, alienation of the protagonist from his family and later from his country, search for his own identity, anxiety to find a place in life, and leaving the environment where he has grown up. Epiphanies play an important role in Stephen's development process. His mind is enlightened during epiphanies, and he looks at things from different perspectives. Thus, at the end of each chapter in the novel, he becomes more mature than in the previous chapter. The reader follows the events or people in the novel from Stephen's point of view. Stephen's mental development is traced through images and the novel ends in the form of a diary. The shift from the third person narrative to the first person narrative through the diary adds individuality to the novel and thus shows that Stephen gets rid of social norms and reaches subjectivity. By controlling his own life with his own language, Stephen breaks his connections with the past and prepares for the future. This reflects the purpose of the bildungsroman. Since Stephen's development is realised through epiphanies, it is possible to find traces of the past in his diary. When the references to the past are followed, it is seen that the novel ends as it begins. Joyce challenges the classical development process that continues without interruption through repetitions and reversed events. At the end of the novel, four different states of the protagonist Stephen are revealed such as the process of development (bildung), repetition, revision,

and withdrawal. Through the process of development, it is implied that Stephen will become the artist he wants to be; through repetition, he will remain at the point he has reached; through revision, he will reconsider the events he has taken seriously with a more flexible perspective; and through withdrawal, he will return to where he started. These features in the novel indicate that Joyce adapts the classical process of development (*bildung*) to the conditions of modern life because if modern life is full of bad surprises for the individual, there is no guarantee of anything in his life and he will face the possibility of returning to where he started at any moment.

In conclusion, the novels *Moll Flanders*, *The Mill on the Floss* and *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* have both common features with the German *bildungsroman* and unique elements of their own. In addition, each of these novels underlines that the English *bildungsroman* genre has different characteristics that vary from period to period. In this sense, it can be concluded that the English *bildungsroman* is a literary genre that can be analysed within itself in different periods.

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