

**HENRY JAMES AND THE BILDUNGSROMAN: BETWEEN
CONVENTION AND ITS ALTERATION**

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Abstract

Some of the most important and popular Victorian novels are Bildungsromane, in which authors construct or rather reconstruct their own life experiences as formative processes. To mention just *David Copperfield*, *Great Expectations*, *Jane Eyre*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Marius the Epicurean*, and so on. Following its long development history from ancient narratives to Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, the Bildungsroman enters as a newly established fictional tradition into Victorian culture and literature through Carlyle's threefold literary reception of the novel of formation and displays its subsequent flourishing and complexity as a literary system encompassing particular thematic and narrative patterns. In this study, a number of novelistic works by Henry James are scrutinized, and each faces the question as to whether its thematic and narrative perspectives fit the pattern and shape of the Bildungsroman.

Keywords: Bildungsroman, Victorian Age, novel, thematic pattern, Henry James

**HENRY JAMES VE BILDUNGSROMAN: GELENEK VE GELENEĞİN
DEĞİŞİMİ ARASINDA**

Öz

En önemli ve popüler Viktorya dönemi romanlarından bazıları, yazarların kendi yaşam tecrübelerini, biçimlendirici süreçler olarak tasarladıkları ve hatta yeniden kurguladıkları Bildungsromanlardır. *David Copperfield*, *Büyük Umutlar*, *Jane Eyre*, *Kıyadaki Değirmen*, *Marius the Epicurean* ve benzeri kitaplar bunlara örnek verilebilir. Bildungsroman, antik anlatılardan başlayarak, Goethe'nin *Wilhelm Meister'in Çıraklık Yılları* eserine kadar gelişim halinde olduğu uzun tarihi sürecin ardından, Carlyle'in oluşum romanı üzerine yazdığı üç bölümden oluşan kabul yazısıyla, yeni oluşmakta olan bir kurgusal gelenek olarak Viktoryan kültürüne ve edebiyatına girmiştir ve ortaya çıkışını, kendi içindeki karmaşıklığı, belli başlı tematik

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ve anlatısal modelleri kapsayan bir edebi sistem olarak ortaya koymuştur. Bu çalışmada, Henry James'in roman türüne ait bazı eserleri incelenerek her bir eser, tematik ve anlatısal açılardan Bildungsroman modeline ve şekline uyup uymadıkları sorusuyla karşı karşıya getirilmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Bildungsroman, Viktorya Dönemi, roman, tematik model, Henry James

Introduction: The Writer-Critic Henry James

Henry James, a famous nineteenth-century Anglo-American writer-critic, enriched world literature with novels which are among the best works of fiction and as independent entities they have received much criticism from different points of view. None, however, has been regarded with direct reference to the conventions of the Bildungsroman. Moreover, no special critical efforts were made to assess them comparatively with regard to other Victorian Bildungsromane. Among Henry James's novels that can be termed Bildungsromane are *Roderick Hudson* and *The Portrait of a Lady*, and in order to overcome this critical handicap, in the following we will thematically scrutinize and compare these two novels, concerning the degree of textualization of the main thematic elements of the Bildungsroman literary system, with the realist *Great Expectations* and *Jane Eyre*, and the non-realist *Marius the Epicurean: His Sensations and Ideas*.

The Victorian Bildungsroman is largely realist but not exclusively since the first English Bildungsroman, *Sartor Resartus* by Carlyle, is heavily influenced by Goethe and romanticism; *Wuthering Heights* is gothic as well as romantic; and *Marius the Epicurean* by Pater deploys the principles of aesthetic hedonism. Another author of the Bildungsroman that would alter the Victorian realist tradition is Henry James, who emphasizes the inner perspectives of formation in his attempt to achieve psychologization of the thematic material.

In matters of narrative technique, James rejects the author's involvement, the direct statement, and the omniscient point of view, by which the narrator is the controlling voice in the narrative, allowing his/her characters no freedom to act and speak on their own behalf, and hurrying up with assumptions and interpretations so the reader concludes and understands the narrative message from the authorial point of view. James rejects hereby a very popular mode of narration in Victorian fiction, known as "moral retrospect", found especially in the Bildungsromane, in which the character is the narrator situated at the end of the narrative process, more mature, able to remember, "to judge and interpret his own activities in the light of his later, greater wisdom" (Lawrence, Seifter, and Ratner, 1985, p. 210).

James's theoretical criticism of the novel might have no intrinsic value, or his ideas might be viewed as obsolete and redundant. However, his merit is the raising of the interest in the critical and theoretical potential of the novel, which is proved by the fact that in the twentieth century and nowadays the novel has been critically the most discussed literary form.

In the Victorian age, the novel was a form of entertainment, and the majority of the Victorian population was actually prose-readers. Also, for the Victorians, the modern distinction between the literary novel and the popular best-seller had not yet come into existence. The novels of Brontë sisters, Dickens, George Eliot, Trollope, and Hardy were read not merely by the literary elite, but widely throughout the expanding middle-class and, particularly in the case of Dickens, by the working-class as well. The establishment of the novel as a dominant literary form resulted in the need for its critical evaluation and theorisation. In James's famous *The Art of Fiction*, the aim is clear: as English novel "had no air of having a theory, a conviction, a consciousness of itself behind it – of being the expression of an artistic faith, the result of choice and comparison", then in this study and in the prefaces to his own novels, James assumes the task to provide such a theory of writing for the novel. In doing so, he insists on the aesthetic value of fiction, on the fact that the novel should be viewed as art and as the expression of the author's personal impressions of life, not just as a form of entertainment subject to the principle of realism that requires fidelity to actuality in its representation as well as the moral effect of art. For James, the novel is not a depository of "realist data from real-life experiences", but is "organic" and "has a life of its own that grows according to its own principles or themes" (Bressler, 2007, p. 43).

Apart from realism, James reacts against the biographical method in critical assessment and promotes a method which focuses on psychology of the writer and which would demonstrate the art of writers' texts by outlining "their unique individuality of style, tone and vision, their artistic, but not biographical, personalities" (Dutton, 1984, p. 65).

Henry James exposes his own methods of writing fiction and insists on the "artistic personality" of the author, which he describes impressionistically. In terms reminiscent of Pater, James, in *The Art of Fiction*, asserts impression to be an essential condition of fiction: "A novel is in its broadest definition a personal, a direct impression of life; that, to begin with, constitutes its value, which is greater or less according to the intensity of the impression". James insists also on the unique "personality" of the work of fiction and describes the novel, in terms reminiscent of Coleridge's theories of growth and of the interrelationship between the whole and the parts in literature, as "a living thing, all one and continuous, like any other organism, and in proportion as it lives will it be found, I think, that in each of the parts there is

something of each of the other parts.” Like Coleridge with poetry, James insists on the need of the work of fiction to achieve “organic form”, since “form alone takes, and holds and preserves, substance – saves it from the welter of helpless verbiage that we swim in as in a sea of tasteless tepid pudding”. James’s approach shows resemblance to a Formalist one, as he “implies the same interdependence and kinship for all other aspects of a work of fiction – setting, theme, scene and narrative, image and symbol” (Guerin, Labor, Morgan, Reesman, and Willingham, 2005, p. 100).

The Bildungsroman: Definition and Thematic Pattern

In English literature, the Bildungsroman – or the novel of identity formation – flourished in Victorian Age and became a fruitful subgenre in particular among the realists, such as Thackeray, Dickens, Eliot, who found in its fictional model, consisting of the literary treatment of the process of development and formation of a character in relation to society, the necessary extension and complexity to the realist literary concern with individual experience and the social background, a concern which is framed within a large-scale diachronic model of human existence.

In this respect, the Bildungsroman can be defined as a type of autobiographical fiction typically starting from some point in early-childhood and leading the protagonist towards further stages of life, where he or she is shaped by experience or social factors at the instance of living in a chronotope that is operating in a certain value system.

To the present, the definitions given to the novel of formation have been many and often confusing. As it often happens in the field of literary history and literary theory, and insofar as writing about writing (literary criticism) is concerned, the word “Bildungsroman” has become a term of abuse, flexible and vague, and often misleading; to the present, its meaning and value have been continuously changed, defended, disputed, and expanded. Some critics use the term very broadly also applying it to verse narratives; others obsessively declare a canon and tradition, and offer, like Buckley, taxonomic definitions. Dilthey considers the Bildungsroman an aesthetic expression of the Enlightenment concept of *Bildung* and stresses that the Bildungsroman presents a regulated development of the hero or heroine who has to reach fulfilment and harmony by passing through various conflicts of life and succeeding and interrelated stages of growth and maturation, yet each with an intrinsic value. Martin Swales, however, does not consider the acquiring of success or a happy ending necessary in a novel in order that it be regarded as Bildungsroman, although the process of development targets the whole of an individual that has to be revealed organically in all his or her complexity. Some critics emphasize individuality and individual change of the self in the

process of formation, whereas others look more at milieu, regarding the condition of the protagonist actively involved in the social world as essential. The latter critics would claim that the *Bildung* is “the earlier bourgeois, humanistic concept of the shaping of the individual from its innate potentialities through acculturation and social experience to the threshold of maturity” (Sammons, 1991, p. 42). Some see this type of novel as indulging into wishful thinking, others as a construct of various, including aesthetic, forms of ideology.

These other voices, representatives of more recent criticism, regard the Bildungsroman also as a self-reflexive or self-reflective novel, where it is neither the experience – either emphasizing individuality or involving society – of the protagonist, nor the personal organic growth or the self-realization of the hero or heroine that counts, but the narrative process itself, which renders the “narrator’s discursive self-understanding”. Here *Bildung* or formation is an “epistemological concept” and the Bildungsroman is a “discursive essay in the aesthetic mode” (Swales, 1978, p. 4). Psychoanalytical, feminist, post-feminist, Marxist, post-Marxist, structuralist, post-structuralist, postmodern, thematological, narratological, post-colonial, minority, cultural and other studies only further broaden the definition and approach. Also, since the Bildungsroman claims its origins in *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*, a lot of critical attention comes from German scholarship, but, as the genre flourished and became popular among Victorian and later writers in England, there are many Anglo-American and other critics that approach it too.

To us, the Bildungsroman is essentially a novel of identity formation we would insist on the principle of *formation (Bildung)* to be the central distinguishable feature and the essential element in the Bildungsroman literary system. *Formation* imparts specificity and uniqueness to this particular type of novel. In this, we are supported by Bakhtin’s description, which we subscribe to, of the three novelistic kinds (the “travel novel”, the “novel of ordeal”, and the “biographical novel”) culminating in a fourth one, which is the Bildungsroman. We also agree to his argument that the “*ready-made*” character identified in the first three types of the novel is replaced in the Bildungsroman by a hero that is in the process of *stanovlennia* (becoming). Bakhtin, in his “The Bildungsroman and Its Significance in the History of Realism”, promotes Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (1795-6) as the canonical Bildungsroman and defines this novelistic subgenre with respect to the issue of time-space and discusses the deep “chronotopic nature” of Goethe’s foundation of the novel of formation or, as he calls it, the “novel of emergence”. Bakhtin focuses on the image of man in the novel, where the emphasis lies on “the assimilation of real historical time and the assimilation of historical man that takes place in that time”; since the problem is too broad, it can be

delimited and narrowed towards what can be taken as the defining thematic essence of the Bildungsroman, which is “the image of *man in the process of becoming* in the novel” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 19).

Thus, the Bildungsroman reveals its essential *hybridity* since it would form its literary system by preserving and modifying, for its own thematic and narrative purposes, many of the elements of the previous three types of novel, as well as others derived from other kinds of fiction, even other different genres, or from other literary periods and movements, in which some of these elements receive a dominant, defining status.

The thematic elements, which are dominant and defining for the Bildungsroman fictional tradition, are the following:

- (1) a child (sometimes orphaned or fatherless) lives in a village or provincial town;
- (2) the child is in conflict with his actual parents, especially father, or any parental figures (the trial by older generation);
- (3) the child leaves home to enter a larger society (usually city), and the departure is determined either by (2) or other external stimuli, or by an inner stimulus (usually the desire for an experience that the incomplete, static atmosphere of home does not offer);
- (4) the child, or the adolescent, passes through institutionalized education and/or self-education;
- (5) a young person now, the character seeks for social relationship with other humans;
- (6) his/her experience of life is a search for vocation and social accomplishment, as well as, or rather above all, a working philosophy of existence;
- (7) he/she has to undergo the ordeal by society and occupational requirements (professional career);
- (8) he/she has to resist the trial by love (sentimental career);
- (9) the character passes through moments of spiritual suffering and pain;
- (10) now in his/her early manhood/womanhood, after having passed through physical change, the character experiences epiphanies that lead to (or should determine) his/her final spiritual (psychological, moral) change in the sense of initiation and by this achieve formation as the concluding stage of the process of development; formation is complete or relativistic, or not existing at all, that is to say, the final stage of the formative process upon entering maturity implies the dichotomy success/failure, or a third possibility of partial success/partial failure.

These thematic elements represent the literary system of the Bildungsroman and co-exist on the structural level with narrative ones to form a particular archetypal plot, helping critics and readers to identify a Bildungsroman.

The Experience of Childhood and Its Thematization

To the Victorian writers of the Bildungsroman, the experience of childhood is clearly of first importance in the formation of personality, having been granted “an emblematic and lasting prominence” (Moretti, 2000, p. 182). In *Great Expectations*, Pip’s both parents are deceased, and he is being raised by his sister Mrs Joe in the marshes of Kent. In *Jane Eyre*, the child protagonist is an orphan in the household of her aunt. In *Marius the Epicurean*, the child Marius is also an orphan, residing in the rural Etruria of Italy. Unlike in these novels in which childhood receives an extended narrative movement, the stories of both Roderick Hudson and Isabel Archer start in *medias res* and the protagonists’ childhoods are only implied in the process of narration. In *Roderick Hudson*, the protagonist’s father is dead, and he lives with his mother in Northampton, Massachusetts. Roderick is invited to Europe by Rowland Mallet, who wants to give him an opportunity to emerge in the art of sculpture. In *The Portrait of a Lady*, another American resident, Isabel Archer, is an orphan who, a year after her father’s death, is invited by her aunt Mrs Touchett to live at Gardencourt Country Manor in England. The non-existing actual parents are often replaced by parental figures, either obstructing, as Jane’s aunt is, or congenial, as Joe is for Pip. The death of parents, apparently a tragic event, may suggest that the process leading to formation would be free from any paternal domination, as for Marius:

The devotion of the father then had handed on loyally – and that is all many not unimportant persons ever find to do – a certain tradition of life, which came to mean much for the young Marius. The feeling with which he thought of his dead father was almost exclusively that of awe; though crossed at times by a not unpleasant sense of liberty, as he could but confess to himself, pondering, in the actual absence of so weighty and continual a restraint, upon the arbitrary power which Roman religion and Roman law gave to the parent over the son. (Pater, 2005, p. 13)

In this fragment, Marius admits deep inside that the loss of his father is a blessing of liberation, which breaks the chains of parental determinism. He comments on his mother’s death in a similar manner:

It would hardly have been possible to feel more seriously than did Marius in those grave years of his early life. But the death of his mother turned seriousness of feeling into a matter of the intelligence: it made him a questioner; and, by bringing into full evidence to him the force of his affections and the probable importance of their place in his future, developed in him generally the more human and earthly elements of character. (Pater, 2005, p. 35)

In the case of Marius, the death of the paternal figure is a symbol of independence over destiny which is covering outer aspects of the character, whereas the death of the

maternal figure means independence over mentality covering inner matters such as conscience and philosophy.

In the Victorian Bildungsroman, in general, if the actual parents were alive, the protagonists would become in various ways subjected subjects and eventually rebel in the course of formation, but a rebellious attitude towards parental authority would contradict the Victorian moral values. Rebelliousness leading to the conflict and eventual separation from home might be accepted towards parental figures when they obstruct the spiritual endeavours of the hero or heroine. The experience of childhood is not far removed from the expression of its vulnerability to frustration of adult rationality (parents, older generation), in particular, and to social victimisation, in general. Child characters “now throng into the novel, becoming a means for the authors to confront the personal past and also a focus for their indignation and protests on behalf of new generations of children” (Banerjee, 1996, p. xxi).

With regard to the conflict with the parents or parental figures, Pip has serious issues with his sister, Mrs Joe; in the case of Jane Eyre, she is subjected to discrimination and ill-treatment by her uncle’s family; Roderick is dominated by his mother and condemned to work in an occupation that he never desired to be a part of. Mrs Hudson, as she once admitted, has “a holy horror of a profession which consists exclusively, as she supposes, in making figures of people without their clothes on”. Roderick’s mother has a bad opinion about the art of sculpture: she thinks that it is “an insidious form of immorality”, and “for a young man of a passionate disposition”, such as Roderick, “she considers the law a much safer investment”. As her father and brothers practiced law, she desires the family tradition to be perpetuated by Roderick. Unlike these characters, Isabel Archer and Marius are not placed in any conflict with the older generation.

The Larger Society and the Experience of Urban Life

In a Bildungsroman, next comes the stage in which the protagonist departs from home to embark on the quest of self-discovery and enters a larger society, usually located in urban setting, where, through education and professional and sentimental careers, the protagonist would achieve a “metropolitan success” with moral implications. The departure may occur due to an inner impulse and compass guiding the protagonist or due to an outer influence determining his or her destiny. In Pip’s case, his sister Mrs Joe is fatally wounded as a result of a suspicious attack (later we find out that it was committed by Orlick), and he finds himself blessed with an opportunity to become a part of city life. Pip’s journey is plotted against his free-will by the external influence of Mr Magwitch and Miss Havisham. Jane Eyre is sent to boarding school by her deceased uncle’s wife Mrs Reed in an attempt to get rid of her. In

Roderick's case, Rowland Mallet is the outer stimulus for the departure; like with Pip – who is an instrument of becoming a gentleman for Magwitch, by which losing his identity – he considers Roderick as a medium for fulfilling his life and accomplishing himself:

It seemed to him that the glow of happiness must be found either in action, of some immensely solid kind, on behalf of an idea, or in producing a masterpiece in one of the arts. Oftenest, perhaps, he wished he were a vigorous young man of genius, without a penny. As it was, he could only buy pictures, and not paint them. (James, 1986, p. 58)

Mallet desires to see his dreams come true in Roderick since he himself lacks talent in fine arts. He takes his protégé to Europe to provide him with the possibility of exerting his full potential, and Roderick himself, dissatisfied with his “benighted” hometown, takes the opportunity. In *The Portrait of a Lady*, in a manner similar to that of Roderick Hudson, Isabel Archer is invited to Europe by her aunt, who seems to be a person of good will. Marius's departure stems from his inner dynamics which urges him to discover new philosophical horizons and religious practices.

With regard to the thematic element where the subject of formation passes through institutionalized education or self-education, Pip is tutored by Bidly and then by Mr Pocket, and finally dedicates himself to an education which would lead him to becoming a gentleman. Jane Eyre receives institutionalized education at a boarding school. At the beginning of James's novel, Roderick is a law-school student who terminates this education for another one, more suitable for his inner needs, meaning that he abandons institutionalized education for the sake of apprenticeship. Another protagonist, Isabel Archer, is ascribed with a tragic biographical detail of being expelled from the school, but she, nevertheless, improves herself with self-education by means of an enormous family library. In Pater's novel, Marius also attends a boarding school. These examples designate a pattern in which apart from the protagonists going through the experience of studying at various schools, more often travelling, interpersonal relations, and the influence of the acquaintances and role models demonstrate a stronger influential capacity on the educational career of the protagonists.

The fifth thematic element in the Bildungsroman literary system encompasses the need for friendship and social relationship, which is an important aspect in terms of one's establishing himself or herself as a part of desired social circle. The protagonists become both individuals with or without an identity and “children of the century”, “social creatures”, in Moretti's terms, where each of them is “a transparent image that receives all its colour from forces much greater than itself” (p. 134). In *Great Expectations*, Pip struggles for a venerable place in the milieu, his great expectations being to become a gentleman as well as Estella's

admiration and hand in marriage. Supporting him in these endeavours is Herbert Pocket, his best friend, who does not judge Pip openly and always inflicts a positive effect on him. Herbert, Pip's "intimate companion and friend", is also a contrasting character who acts based on his moral compass since he is not driven by ambitions or monetary matters. Like Herbert for Pip, for Jane Eyre, Helen Burns, an orphan at Lowood School, stands for a character that is in possession of contrasting features to the protagonist Jane. Helen plays an important part in Jane's development by enriching her identity in formation with moral qualities.

In the case of Roderick Hudson, Rowland Mallet is his companion and moral compass who is in constant struggle for designating his actions in the righteous way of living. Mallet's friendship functions in an educational manner, but Roderick is driven by his ambitions and ego instead of responding to Rowland's sincere and selfless attempts to build a moral being for his friend.

Isabel Archer thinks that "one should try to be one's own best friend and to give one's self", yet develops a sincere friendship with her cousin Ralph – "She coloured and then observed, quickly, that she must leave him. They stood together a moment; both her hands were in both of his. 'You've been my best friend,' she said. 'It was for you that I wanted – that I wanted to live. But I'm of no use to you.'" (James, 2011, p. 530) – whose interest in Isabel turns into a hopeless love, but he would always care for her and respect her limits. In *Marius the Epicurean*, the protagonist becomes acquainted with Flavian and falls under the influence of the young hedonist: "And, dating from the time of his first coming to school, a great friendship had grown up for him, in that life of so few attachments – the pure and disinterested friendship of schoolmates" (Pater, 2005, p. 40).

Most of the characters who are friends of the protagonists act as contrasting figures and/or moral guides. In the non-realist novel by Pater, instead of moral values, the hero is permeable to any new philosophy in which he can put his faith. Flavian awakens the love of literature in him and educates him with the principles of hedonism. Like with the educational quest, the social relationship cannot be limited to the influence of a friend, and the individual in the process of formation gathers experience also from various social circles and faces the dangers of manipulation and corruption. The need for social relationships is inevitable since identity is formed in order to be demonstrated publicly and social learning cannot be achieved in isolation.

Concerning the stage in which the protagonist is in search of professional career, social accomplishment and a meaningful philosophy of existence, Pip is concentrated on the social aspect of self-accomplishment as he aims at impressing Estella and proving himself to

be a gentleman. Jane Eyre is focused on vocational and marital aspects. The plot of *Roderick Hudson's* reveals certain differences due to the particular nature of the Künstlerroman, since the protagonist is less in pursuit of social achievement than of the highest aesthetic standards in art. Isabel Archer seeks no professional career as she persistently neglects financial matters for the sake of being herself:

Pray, would you wish me to make a mercenary marriage – what they call a marriage of ambition? I've only one ambition – to be free to follow out a good feeling. I had others once, but they've passed away. Do you complain of Mr. Osmond because he's not rich? That's just what I like him for. (James, 2011, p. 365)

Her sense of social accomplishment is a vehement and sometimes irrational marginalization of the self through a blindfolded rebellion against social mind-sets, in particular, the ones assuming men to be born superior to women, and that beautiful women have to pursue conventional marriage with rich men. Unlike in the realist Bildungsroman, in *Marius the Epicurean*, the protagonist is in search of a meaningful existence, a working philosophy, and discloses, like Roderick, to possess little ambition of social accomplishment:

He lived much in the realm of the imagination (...) something of an idealist, constructing the world for himself in great measure from within, by the exercise of meditative power. A vein of subjective philosophy, with the individual for its standard of all things, there would be always in his intellectual scheme of the world and of conduct, with a certain incapacity wholly to accept other men's valuations. (Pater, 2005, p. 13)

In a Bildungsroman, the seventh thematic element considers the issue of protagonist's ordeal by society and embarking on a professional career. Pip's trial is built on "great expectations"; he is provided with social and financial opportunities, but the process of ordeal defamiliarizes his former self, corrupts his essence, and, tragically, he submits himself to be abused by social determinism. Jane, Roderick and Isabel are characters of non-conformist spirit as they challenge community's expectations. In *Jane Eyre*, after two years of teaching at Lowood School, the heroine starts her new job as governess, but her professional career is interrupted by sentimental career as she falls in love with Rochester and accepts his marriage proposal. After the cancellation of marriage because of the surfacing truth about Rochester already having a wife, Jane does not compromise her dignity and stands for her own ideals of living. She faces poverty and loneliness in the most dignified way as to eventually emerge successful.

Fuelled by feminine pride, Isabel Archer goes through social trial as she faces the conflict about her marriage. Conventional social expectations require her to marry a rich man

of noble lineage; she resists convention and forces herself to choose the opposite type of person since she believes that she has nothing but her own ideas to follow. Madame Merle manipulates her, abusing her feminine pride, and arranges her marriage with her old lover Gilbert Osmond. Ironically, while avoiding a mercenary marriage, since Mr. Touchett has left some of his fortune to Isabel on Ralph's demand, Osmond becomes the one who has a mercenary marriage. Ralph's intervention in Isabel's life can be regarded as a trial as well, when he discusses the risk with his father at the first place:

Mr. Touchett (...) began again 'Tell me this first. Doesn't it occur to you that a young lady with sixty thousand pounds may fall a victim to the fortune-hunters?' 'She'll hardly fall a victim to more than one.' 'Well, one's too many.' 'Decidedly. That's a risk, and it has entered into my calculation. I think it's appreciable, but I think it's small, and I'm prepared to take it. (James, 2011, p. 194)

Ralph is aware of all possible outcomes, yet he acts on his faith for Isabel. Isabel, eventually, fails in the social ordeal, as she chooses poorly and betrays Ralph's faith in her. Given the author's interest in psychology, Roderick Hudson does not go through any explicit social trials or tribulations as much as he goes through inner conflicts. On a side note, another character in *Roderick Hudson*, Christina Light, seems to be exposed to maternal dominion and social trial by male-dominated society's expectations from a lady of iconic beauty.

In the case of Marius, his spiritual journey as a search for a working system of philosophy can be categorized as his professional career. His direct experience with society is when he works as an amanuensis, where he faces brutality, and the lack of conscience in stoicism and his observations make him question the values of the system of philosophy. As Marius encounters with new beliefs and philosophies, he goes through a spiritual trial, in which he should decide whether the new system is actually working.

With regard to the sentimental career, involving the individual's trial by love, Pip's relationship with Estella corresponds to the central element in Pip's excessive ambition to become a valuable part of society as a gentleman. The ordeal by love, as a necessary stage in character development process, usually implies a twofold perspective, a kind of love triangle, and the protagonist must come to the right decision to achieve success in his or her sentimental career. Pip neglects Bidy since he is blinded by his love for Estella. Jane almost accepts St. John's proposal but reunites with Rochester. Roderick Hudson betrays his fiancé Miss Garland and indulges into wishful thinking as he chases Christina Light's companion. When discussing his attitude towards his mother and Miss Garland, Roderick says that "they mean no more" to him "than a Bible text to an atheist". In return, Rowland questions if

Roderick has broken their engagement with Miss Garland, and Roderick summarizes his commitment to the young woman as follows:

Roderick shrugged his shoulders and let his hands drop at his sides. 'She adores me! That's my relation.' And he smiled strangely. 'Have you broken your engagement?' 'Broken it? You can't break a ray of moonshine.' 'Have you absolutely no affection for her?' Roderick placed his hand on his heart and held it there a moment. 'Dead—dead – dead!' he said at last.' (James, 1986, p. 278)

Contrary Roderick's devious and selfish attitude towards his fiancé, Isabel's naïveté and restless ambition drive her to choose poorly and blind her from Osmond's many obvious flaws; consequently, she fails to notice that she is being used as a pawn by Madame Merle and her fiancé. Isabel Archer, a source of admiration from the point of view of most men, rejects Ralph, who admires her for who she really is. Ralph's intimate feelings for her backfire as Isabel ardently defends Osmond against him. Ralph never wants to change her free spirit or disrespect her attitude towards life, yet Isabel is extremely confident that she is making the right decision about Osmond, an expatriate American who, unlike Ralph, does not value her freedom of choice. Isabel's free will remains somewhat illusory. Unlike other protagonists of the Bildungsroman, Marius is not involved in a particular love affair in which he can undergo a trial. His sentimental career may be discussed in relation to his comradeship with Cornelius, or his impressions of Cornelius's and Cecilia's love affair.

Formation as Success or Failure

Both the preparation for a professional career and the sentimental journey, as determinant parts of the whole process of character development and formation, are also dominant elements of the central conflict in every Bildungsroman, which is personal in origin. In most of the cases, the conflict demands the protagonist to reappraise his/her values, escape his/her selfish drives, and change his/her consciousness, judgments and ways of behaviour. The responsibility of change is assumed as a result of the protagonist's understanding of true values of moral behaviour towards himself/herself and others. Change is a value indispensable from identity, as freedom and happiness are, as well as security and metamorphosis, which, according to Moretti, "are all equally important for modern Western mentality" and are present in a Bildungsroman (p. 9).

Change demanding the protagonist to struggle with spiritual suffering and pain receives different forms of textualization. In a realist Bildungsroman, the suffering usually reveals a cause and effect relationship: Pip finds out about the origin of his great expectations, and, inevitably and tragically, his world collapses when he learns that a convict is the source

of his money and he realises the vanity of his dreams about Estella, which completely destroys his dreams and brings him back to reality from an illusionary world. Jane Eyre faces the truth about Rochester's wife and goes into a self-imposed exile, through which she suffers poverty and loneliness. Roderick's social and sentimental trials regard the moral choice that he is expected to make on the basis of his love affair and engagement. Importance of individual competence overshadows the social competence as Roderick Hudson is mostly driven by his ego and an extremely narcissistic personality. There is a strong asymmetric influence relationship between inner and outer stimuli in Roderick Hudson's formative experience. He does not seem capable of processing criticism, as he flies into a tantrum or rage when his decisions and actions are questioned. Rowland Mallet describes the crisis that they are going through with Roderick Hudson as follows:

The poor fellow is incomplete, and it is really not his own fault; Nature has given him the faculty out of hand and bidden him be hanged with it. I never knew a man harder to advise or assist, if he is not in the mood for listening. I suppose there is some key or other to his character, but I try in vain to find it; and yet I can't believe that Providence is so cruel as to have turned the lock and thrown the key away. (James, 1986, p. 237)

Roderick, who usually rejects outer stimulus especially when he is enraged, undergoes a spiritual trial and consequently the experience of spiritual suffering. In *The Portrait of a Lady*, Isabel Archer goes through a phase of suffering when she finds out that Pansy is the illegitimate daughter of Madame Merle and Osmond, and she is nothing but a prey for fortune hunters. She questions Madame Merle's and Osmond's motivation: "Why then did she want him to marry me?' 'Ah my dear, that's her superiority! Because you had money; and because she believed you would be good to Pansy.' (...) 'Why did Osmond never marry her?' she finally asked. 'Because she had no money'" (James, 2011, p. 573).

Isabel cannot handle the truth, especially considering the fact that she has been warned by Ralph, whom she earlier treated in the most unfair way: "I've done wrong to speak – I've made you ill!" the Countess cried. 'Ah, I must see Ralph!' Isabel wailed; not in resentment, not in the quick passion her companion had looked for; but in a tone of far-reaching, infinite sadness" (James, 2011, p. 577).

Isabel's suffering stems from her both social and sentimental ordeals. In Marius's case, the epicurean sacrifices himself to save his friend's life, by which performing the highest, the most respectable and noble deed. When he is captured along with Cornelius, and they are kept prisoners for the trial, a rumour arises that one of the captives is not a Christian. Marius, for the love of his friends Cornelius and Cecilia, puts himself in serious danger and

bribes the soldiers. Marius, not a Christian, convinces them to set Cornelius free (instead of him), because he is not a Christian, and then marches to his end with the satisfaction of knowing that Cornelius is safe.

In a Bildungsroman, the inner change is the basis for formation or *Bildung* of identity, and the main cause for change is understanding, epiphanic realization. This tenth and last thematic element corresponds to entering upon maturity regarding the protagonist suffering to lead him or her to the final stage of formation where he or she would experience epiphanies which determine the outcome of social, sentimental, and psychological experiences, and, consequently, the success or failure of formation. The success of formation is weighed in direct proportion to individual, professional, sentimental, and social competences that the protagonist possesses. The formation of identity can be success, failure or partial success. In *Great Expectations*, Pip understands that Joe was the one who has “so abundantly given of the wealth of his great nature”, and soon finds himself strangling in whispers of an uneasy conscience:

I soon began to understand that the cause of it was in me, and that the fault of it was all mine. Ah! Had I given Joe no reason to doubt my constancy, and to think that in prosperity I should grow cold to him and cast him off? Had I given Joe’s innocent heart no cause to feel instinctively that as I got stronger, his hold upon me would be weaker, and that he had better loosen it in time and let me go, before I plucked myself away? (Dickens, 1881, p. 508)

Pip, the repentant protagonist, loses everything and everyone including his dignity and self-esteem at the first place; his epiphany cannot compensate for his mistakes as the damage is done. He fails from both individual and social aspects of character formation. Jane Eyre, on the other hand, reaches the individual fulfilment as she finds happiness and peace with her real love for Rochester, yet she gives up on her professional career. She maintains her non-conformist character and her feminine pride is not subdued or does not get injured as Rochester leans on her care and love. She experiences her epiphany in a dream where Rochester desperately calls her name, and it seems that the epiphany decides for her between St. John and Rochester.

Roderick apparently does not experience any revelation or realization as his life ends during the ninth thematic stage. Roderick has already been self-destructed by the end of his spiritual suffering. Despite the formation seems incomplete, it is not difficult to conclude the outcome of Roderick’s development as an artist and individual. The novel is not concerned with Roderick’s social accomplishment as its primary focus; as a consequence of his quest in the aesthetic frame, Roderick fails in both individual and professional competences. Henry

James himself identifies Christina Light as the primary obstructing determinant in Roderick's formation; however, he also suggests that she is guilty without guilt:

It has all begun too soon, as I say, and too simply, and the determinant function attributed to Christina Light, the character of well-nigh sole agent of his catastrophe that this unfortunate young woman has forced upon her, fails to commend itself to our sense of truth and proportion. (James, 1986, p. 13)

Roderick Hudson is driven by his impulses; Christina Light is subjected to social determinism. In Isabel Archer's case, her suffering leads her to a tragic epiphany when she comes to realize that she treated Ralph unjustly and that she ruined her opportunity to be an independent woman as she always desired. When Isabel visits Ralph at Gardencourt, standing next to his deathbed, she wants to confess her realizations to the beloved cousin in a hurry as if she is afraid that he might pass away before she could do so. She seeks relief for her consciousness in the aftermath of epiphany. Isabel is aware that she has been warned by Ralph long ago and for this, he is a central figure in her realization of events and she calls his name at that very moment in "a tone of far-reaching, infinite sadness" (James, 2011, p. 577). Isabel Archer's formation fails on the individual level of existence since she cannot fulfil her ambition of avoiding a conventional marriage and she remains a victim of the fortune hunters who seek mercenary marriage. Her union with Osmond is not actually out of love, at least from Osmond's perspective, but he is driven more by materialistic reasoning than love. By the same token, she cannot be seen socially accomplished, because she does not possess her partner's respect for her independence and feminine pride. At the end of the novel, despite her knowing that her marriage is built upon a lie, Isabel goes to Rome to reunite with her family.

Marius experiences epiphanies first at the moment of perfect tranquillity in Sabine Hills and then at the instance of some Christian rituals that he witnesses. Marius's formation is interrupted by his death and Walter Pater leaves us with an ambiguity about whether Marius is converted to Christianity. More importantly, his sacrifice for the happiness of his beloved ones represents a noble act, more significant than any philosophical pilgrimage which might bring meaning to life. This may lead one to conclude that Marius might have found a meaningful existence in this noble deed, by which achieving formation on individual level. Christian or pagan, Marius was honoured and glorified as a martyr to the Christian faith.

Concluding Reflections

Henry James, as a craftsman of fiction, was aware of the truthful or untruthful, beautiful and ordinary, profound or superficial, by which life is represented by the verbal art, the art of fiction. Henry James's literary practice, both as an author and a critic, promotes

artistic freedom and imaginative aspect of novel writing over prescriptive tendencies, and removes the invisible shackles from the author's chamber of consciousness. As emphasised before, artistic freedom is the key element in James's philosophy concerned with the art of novel writing, and there is no debate, no critical discourse or differing viewpoints that can change it. In this sense, as a critic, Henry James advocates and encourages the novice novelists; he stands against harsh and discouraging criticism and derogatory treatment of an artist's work. As a writer who is famous for experimenting with narrative aspects, James does not set the rules, but rather avoids limiting the narrative possibilities. James's critical discourse overlaps with the spirit of the newly institutionalizing literary criticism in Victorian Period. According to James, fiction is one of the fine arts, which shares the same cognitive and aesthetic field of operation as her sister arts. Furthermore, fiction is capable of representing reality as a verbal art and is able to capture the moment through descriptive techniques such as impressionist writing, word-painting or ekphrasis.

Henry James's remarkable authorial skills along with his propensity for perpetual experimentation make it virtually impossible to accurately assign his fiction to specific literary categories. Despite this, it is obvious that at least two of his novels – *Roderick Hudson* and *The Portrait of a Lady* – are Bildungsromane and therefore parts of a Victorian fictional mainstream. Their thematic level is constructed according to the pattern and includes all the ten main elements.

The ten thematic elements of the Bildungsroman literary pattern are *defining* but on the whole *not compulsory* features or aspects of thematic construction; they are rather common or typical, or *representative*. The necessary and *obligatory defining* characteristic or element is *formation* (of a personal identity). The ten thematic elements are *similarities* for and in novels viewed as Bildungsromane, in which they combine and interrelate in various ways around the element of *Bildung*; in this, they are “family resemblances” rather than simultaneously mandatory aspects to be ordered strictly chronologically. In other words, many, but not all of these elements, are shared by the texts – which in this way resemble each other. Yet, these elements are more common and typical for the Bildungsroman than, say, various movements, trends and styles are for modernism.

The Victorian Bildungsroman, heavily influenced by realism, assumes as its main concern the relationship between the individual and society, as in *Great Expectations* and *Jane Eyre*, and, to a certain extent, in *The Portrait of a Lady*. *Marius the Epicurean* and *Roderick Hudson* display a low-mimetic expression focusing instead on the inner, spiritual and psychological perspectives of existence.

At the beginning of their formative process, Pip, Jane, Roderick, Isabel and Marius depart from the provincial, rural area as determined by external or internal stimuli; they move to the city to experience the life of the milieu, of the larger society. All the protagonists go through spiritual suffering as a consequence of their professional, social and sentimental ordeals (except for Roderick Hudson, who prematurely dies) and, depending on their attitude – reluctance or, on the contrary, rejection – towards determinant factors and considering their loyalty to their roots and inner motives, their identity formation reveals certain varying degrees of success or failure. Meanwhile, ordeals by society and love, in particular, lead the protagonist into a state of spiritual suffering, which should result in epiphany. In Pip's case, as he seeks social connection with others, he also desires occupational and social accomplishment to be worthy of the admiration of higher social circles. Pip is subjected socially and sentimentally as he has to face the truth that everything he longed for is no more. Roderick Hudson is driven by his ego, where his ego-centrism prevails over self-control; in the following extract, Rowland comments on the instability of his actions: "I think he hasn't a grain of conscience, and sometimes I think that, in a way, he has an excess. He takes things at once too easily and too hard; he is both too lax and too tense, too reckless and too ambitious, too cold and too passionate" (James, 1986, p. 237).

Rowland Mallet attempts to analyse his personality beyond his artistic identity as to find that "he hasn't what I call a heart. (...) I think it is established that, in the long run, egotism makes a failure in conduct" (James, 1986, p. 238). In a similar manner, while answering to Mr Mallet about the progress he has made, Roderick expresses that he has dramatically changed since he left Northampton: "Verily! Don't I look so? Surely, I haven't the same face. Haven't I a different eye, a different expression, a different voice?" (James, 1986, p. 104). It seems that Henry James designed Rowland Mallet to be the "central consciousness" of the events in *Roderick Hudson*, just as, praising them to Miss Garland, Mrs Hudson comments on Rowland to be a critic and Roderick an artist: "I am sure no young lady ever had such advantages. You come straight to the highest authorities. Roderick, I suppose, will show you the practice of art, and Mr Mallet, perhaps, if he will be so good, will show you the theory" (James, 1986, p. 259).

For this reason, the Bildungsroman thematic components are textualized through Rowland's own ideas and impressions, whereas Roderick resembles the hero of a guest in his own story. The novel is certainly a Bildungsroman as well as a Künstlerroman, in which the protagonist undergoes the process of formation of an artistic sensibility along with a sentimental career. In a Künstlerroman, the hero or heroine often emerges as an artist: a prose

writer like David Copperfield, an artisan and aspiring intellectual like Hardy's Jude, a poet like Stephen Dedalus, a painter like Lawrence's Paul Morel or Maugham's Philip Carey. In such novels-studies of the inner life of the artist in his or her progress from early childhood through adolescence, and given the fact that they are highly autobiographical, the artist "is often not far removed from the novelist, or at least from the novelist as he remembers himself to have been in his formative youth" (Buckley 1974, p. 14).

Another character in the novel, Christina Light, undergoes a process of identity formation completely in accordance with social determinism which is imposed on her by the circumstances. By linking two different developmental experiences in *Roderick Hudson*, James creates a Bildungsroman with a perfectly balanced combination of romantic and realist thematic components.

Roderick Hudson resembles Marius, who likewise searches for a working philosophy of life, unlike Pip, Jane Eyre, and Isabel Archer, who are subjected to and mostly determined by social influence. The formative experiences of Roderick and Marius reveal their authors' similar concern with individual experience, but the protagonists, as individuals, are quite different in that Roderick is selfish and a rigid egoist, whereas Marius is a selfless and modest person.

What differentiates James's Bildungsromane from the others is the motif of departure of the protagonists from America to the Europe and subsequently James's focus on the trial of American innocence in the European society. This recurrent thematic component overlaps with the rest of the Bildungsromane in which the protagonists' departure from rural area to metropolitan background is presented as the initial factor in their identity formation.

Roderick Hudson and *The Portrait of a Lady* are representative texts of the Victorian Bildungsroman tradition, and although they both lack the thematic representation of the childhood experience, they comply in general with the thematic requirements of the Bildungsroman literary system. *The Portrait of a Lady*, in particular, resembles *Jane Eyre* with regard to the well-balanced treatment of the social concern and the concern with individual experience. Also, both *Jane Eyre* and *The Portrait of a Lady*, regardless their feminist subtext, serve the moral didacticism in favour of Victorian ethics, but for Henry James, the moral didacticism in novel is the natural outcome of representing reality rather than a purpose. *The Portrait of a Lady* and *Jane Eyre* deal with similar ethic issues, which question a woman's place in the social hierarchy and her accomplishment as a self-sufficient social being. Jane Eyre rejects to become a mistress and follows her moral compass just as Isabel chooses to stay with her husband despite knowing that she was deceived. Also, Jane's

and Isabel's non-conformist characters and their conformist counterparts Helen Burns and Henrietta Stackpole, respectively, strengthen the intertextual relationship. Some themes in *Jane Eyre*, such as the conflict with parental figures, the institutionalized education and the professional career, do not exist in *The Portrait of a Lady*, but this does not threaten the consideration of James's novel to be a constituent part of the Victorian Bildungsroman.

Roderick Hudson and *The Portrait of a Lady* are Bildungsromane textualizing the individual personality as an experience of identity formation, which is a process encompassing various thematic elements, such as the experience of childhood, formal and self-education, the larger society and the experience of urban life, pursuit of a profession, ordeal by love, artistic maturation and individualization, and so on. In these and other Bildungsromane, the logic of rendering the process of formation reveals its great length, of hundreds of pages, in exploring the main character's growth and development as a remembered personal history of at least 25-30 years covering the three biological stages of childhood, youth, and early maturity. Youth must come to an end and be subordinated to maturity, as Moretti declares, in order for the formation of identity to occur, and, like the narrative, youth "has meaning only in so far as it leads to a stable and 'final' identity", where "happiness" is "the highest value, but only to the detriment and eventual annulment of 'freedom'" (Moretti, 2000, p. 8).

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