

**THE BILDUNGSROMAN AS MONOMYTHIC FICTIONAL
DISCOURSE: IDENTITY FORMATION AND ASSERTION IN *GREAT
EXPECTATIONS*¹**

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Abstract

The aim of the present study is to show what makes the protagonist of a Bildungsroman to be at the same time the hero of the monomyth. In order to achieve this purpose, after having defined and shown the essence of the Bildungsroman and the monomyth, we disclose the fictional pattern of the novel of formation with its thematic and structural elements interrelated to form a literary system, as well as the three-dimensional structure of the monomyth encompassing the aspects of separation – initiation – return. Finally, in matters of exemplification and practical argumentation, and relying on a comparative approach, we would reveal similarities and differences between the Bildungsroman and monomyth through textual reference to a particular novel, namely *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens.

Keywords: Bildungsroman, monomyth, identity, Victorian Age, Charles Dickens

**MONOMİTİK KURMACA SÖYLEM OLARAK OLUŞUM ROMANI: *BÜYÜK
UMUTLAR'DA* KİMLİK OLUŞUMU VE ÖNE SÜRÜMÜ**

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, bir oluşum romanının başkahramanını aynı zamanda monomitin kahramanı da yapanın ne olduğunu göstermektir. Bu amaçla, oluşum romanının ve monomitin özünü tanımladıktan ve gösterdikten sonra, oluşum romanının kurgusal modelini, edebi bir sistemin oluşması için birbiriyle ilişkili tematik ve yapısal unsurları ile açıklıyoruz. Bunun yanında monomitin ayrılma - kabul edilme - geri dönüşü kapsayan üç boyutlu yapısı ele alınacaktır. Son olarak, örnekleme ve pratik

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argümantasyon konularında ve karşılaştırmalı bir yaklaşıma dayanarak, oluşum romanı ve monomit arasındaki benzerlik ve farklılıkları, Charles Dickens'in *Büyük Umutlar* romanına metin referansı yoluyla ortaya koyacağız.

Anahtar Sözcükler: oluşum romanı, monomit, kimlik, Viktorya Dönemi, Charles Dickens

Introduction: Defining the Bildungsroman and Monomyth

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, who, in their concern with the relationship between the individual and society, thematized identity development as a process with biographical implications and discussed issues such as the relationship between personal development and social demands, individual autonomy and social integration. The development of the protagonist as identity formation requires this process to end in social fulfilment which would assist and sustain the spiritual accomplishment.

The formation of personality in relation to the background remains the main thematic line in most of the realist Bildungsromane, in which, as in realism in general, the author emphasises the realistic principle of fidelity to actuality in its representation, of being true to life, the social concern and the issue of determinism, the moral and didactic values of literature, while attempting to avoid what is subjective and fantastic in literary expression. Nevertheless, there are cases in which a writer like Charles Dickens or Charlotte Brontë could not avoid the heavy reliance on the sentimental, emotional, subjective, in particular in rendering child characters, and on mysterious element, by which revealing still strong connections to romantic or even earlier literary traditions; also, Charlotte Brontë, in *Jane Eyre*, nuances the newly founded fictional tradition by promoting a self-assertive woman as main character.

The protagonist of the realist novel of formation is required to achieve social success, for which the necessary condition is the character's spiritual change. Actually, the inner change is more than necessary: it is inevitable as well as reified by action or external stimuli which determine the inner perspectives of existence. In order to achieve formation, the character must reach a proper correlation of inner, spiritual, romantic perspectives in the process of formation (intelligence, moral strength, emotional and imaginative capacity) with exterior, practical, realistic perspectives of formation (social integration, professional and financial success). This aspect of the Victorian novel of formation is best expressed in *David*

Copperfield, for example, or in *Jane Eyre*. In other words, the hero in development must avoid any unilateral, one-sided consideration of the formative process, for, though successful as distinct parts, the inner and outer perspectives once divided cause the failure of psychic completeness and individual formation. This is the main reason why in *Great Expectations* and *The Mill on the Floss* the success of formation is a mere failure.

We would define the Bildungsroman in short as the *novel of identity formation*. With certain caveats, of course; namely, that the formation of identity is textualised as a *process*, diachronic and large-scale, from birth or early childhood through adolescence and youth to entering upon adulthood; this process is rendered in a biographical or autobiographical manner as *development* – spiritual, psychological and moral, rather than physical – leading to the *formation of personality*.

Formation as the end of the maturation process necessarily implies *change* (inner rather than external); thus, the Bildungsroman portrays the protagonists, usually *round* not flat, as getting rid of their static and ready-made features and becoming necessarily *dynamic*. With regard to the other variables – having to do with country, period, and movement to which the Bildungsroman authors belong – formation may convey a multi-sided personality, or mean self-cultivation, or signify social and professional success, or be reified as the balance between inner aspirations and social demands. Formation would promise completion and happiness, but it may also end in failure, or in a combination of both success and failure as conditioned by authorial message and thematic perspectives.

Formation as the culmination of the developmental process is *identity* acquired, which is an experience that includes the realization of the self, and, along with it, of various other aspects such as a sense of who one is, gender distinction, family and professional perspectives, social and inter-human status and role, modes of thinking, communication and behaviour, personal discernment and assimilation of views, beliefs and values, and an acceptance of life as continuity and sameness.

Concerning the Victorian age, and with regard to its realist type, we would define the Bildungsroman as a type of biographical/autobiographical fiction (or a biographical/autobiographical type of fiction, or pseudo-autobiographical) which renders the process of growth, maturation, upbringing, and eventual formation of a character in his/her both biological and intellectual development usually from childhood to early maturity based on individual aptitudes and motivations as well as on inter-human determinism and social relationship. The transition from romanticism to Victorianism is the transition from free will

and self-imposed, personal choice as a sign of individuality, to the ways of living, values and norms imposed by society. Such a thematic perspective will be preserved in the twentieth-century realist Bildungsromane in which we will find the determined construction of personality (by society, culture, language) in relation with the social construction of reality, where those that threaten it, or do not fit, or attempt romantically to create an alternative reality are scapegoated and their formative experience is rendered a failure.

Among the many approaches to the Bildungsroman, the one which has not been pursued yet is that which would be offered by placing the Bildungsroman in the context of the monomyth of the hero and the quest, since such a hero's journey is a powerful and recurring archetype deeply ingrained in human psyche and therefore representative of and fundamental to human existence. Campbell explains that the monomyth refers to a hero's and less often a heroine's journey that could be found in all communities; the hero of various societies passes through various phases of a journey of self-empowerment and self-recognition that should transform both the hero and the citadel forever. Campbell associates the hero's journey to the rites of passage from childhood to adulthood in which young people take responsibilities in their community, claiming that "the standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation – initiation – return*: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth" (p. 30). These three elements represent "essential stages [that] define the monomythic life: the departure from the native environment, the adventure in the unfamiliar world, and the return with a new awareness of the world. This tripartite heroic experience is framed by a proper beginning and ending" (Golban, 2014, p. 34). As regards the Bildungsroman, "this hero's journey corresponds to a process of individual development from a disjointed sense of identity to a consolidated identity, when the individual acquires a clear sense of aspiration in life"; in other words, "the monomyth reveals human experience, in particular the process of maturation of an individual, the reaching and acknowledgment of the adult self" (Golban, 2014, p. 34), that is, what we refer to, with regard to the Bildungsroman, as *identity formation*.

The Bildungsroman as a Literary System: The Main Thematic and Structural Elements of Its Fictional Pattern

The common main thematic elements, or categories, shared by the plot pattern of all Bildungsromane, 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. Among the structural features, the most common ones are the following:

- (1) the split focalization between the narrator and the hero;
- (2) the narrator is usually autodiegetic;
- (3) the complex chronotope and two temporal dimensions, one is the time of the story/narrative of identity formation and the other is the time of telling/narration;
- (4) the mode of narration is mainly linear and retrospective;
- (5) the tone of the narrative is usually ironic and often interrelated with the use of foreshadowing;

(6) the point of view is mostly omniscient, revealing at full the main character's interior existence and social experience;

(7) the text is "readerly", the reader perceives the textual material through the eyes of the protagonist-narrator, and both the narrator and the reader understand and know more than the protagonist who changes by the end of the novel; this should be so since the novel depicts the process of an immature, inexperienced, often naïve character reaching identity formation.

The narrative scheme, with some, if controversial, exceptions such as *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Jacob's Room*, is built as the diachronic order of a traditional, linear, retrospective perspective that "prompts hero and reader to look back, towards the past" (Moretti, 2000, p. 68). As such, the "*Bildung* is concluded under the sign of memory, of *memoire volontaire*, of the rationalization of the accomplished journey" (Moretti, 2000, p. 68).

Among these structural features, the reader-oriented narrative mode stands as the most prominent one, and indeed it should be so since in the Bildungsroman, human life becomes literature and the reader attempts to identify himself or herself with the protagonist.

Unlike the thematic elements, which are less susceptible to change and replacement, the structural elements (that is, narrative features and techniques) would often be subject to modification. The authors search for and assume new perspectives and new methods, techniques, and means of artistic expression as championed by the period, or movement, or trend to which they belong.

Notwithstanding narrative characteristics, ten thematic elements 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).

They 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 necessary 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 realists added and emphasised the social, professional, moral and family fulfilment more than the concern with individual subject. In the Victorian Bildungsroman, as

in realist fiction in general, the character receives a complex thematic representation. The shift from romanticism to realism is the shift from the individual to the general human, from the subjective to the social, from the human being as master of his or her destiny to a multitude of character types as social units, from the narrow circle of personal existence to the wide social panorama containing many social sectors and character types presented in social interaction. Realism tends to present its characters as being defined by social and economic factors. The key-terms are “determinism”, “environment”, “heredity”, in other words, “la race, le milieu et le moment”, as well as “moral didacticism”.

In *David Copperfield*, Dickens maintains alive a romantic perspective in which human personality is highly emphasised and the character is master of his destiny, independent and able to fulfil personally in spite of all social interaction and determinism. The determinism of the milieu is strong but not successful; there is no real social influence or effect on the development of personality, and the outcome is the success of character formation.

In *Great Expectations*, however, the character is highly individualised but reveals strong bonds with the background: the character is a subjected subject, dependent on his milieu; he is subject to social determinism and as such subject to inner and outer change. Social determinism is strong and successful; society influences and affects the development of personality negatively, hence the failure of character formation.

Monomyth and Its Three-Dimensional Structure

Within the suggested literary system of the Victorian Bildungsromane, the protagonist is determined to fulfil a type of human experience by completing a pre-established pattern, to become, in Campbell's terms, the hero of a monomyth narrating, in the case of the Bildungsroman, the process of development of a distinct human personality and of formation of an individual identity.

Campbell explains that the monomyth refers to a hero's and less often a heroine's journey that could be found in all communities. He observes that the hero of various societies passes through different phases of a journey of self-empowerment and self-recognition that should transform forever both the hero and the citadel.

Campbell associates the hero's journey to the rituals of passage from childhood to adulthood in which young people take responsibilities in their community. He claims that “the standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation – initiation – return*: which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth” (Campbell, 1968, p. 30).

These essential stages define the monomythic life: the departure from the native environment, the adventure in the unfamiliar world, and the return with a new awareness of the world. This tripartite heroic experience is framed by a proper beginning and ending.

The protagonist of the Bildungsroman can, therefore, be regarded as embarking on a formative experience which is a process of life as well as a journey, which represents a powerful and recurring archetype that is deeply enrooted in human psyche and therefore fundamental to human existence. This hero's journey corresponds to "a process of individual development from a disjointed sense of identity to a consolidated identity, when the individual acquires a clear sense of aspiration in life" (Golban, 2014, p. 34), which is almost a definition of the Bildungsroman; moreover, "the monomyth reveals human experience, in particular the process of maturation of an individual, the reaching and acknowledgment of the adult self (Golban, 2014, p. 34).

The first phase in Campbell's heroic pattern is separation, which Campbell names as "call to adventure". This stage corresponds to the hero's dissatisfaction with the predominant values of his community. The hero's separation from his home and familiar environment is both physical and psychic when he decides to discover a superior value system by which he is determined to live.

Campbell explains the role of this first stage as "a radical transfer of emphasis from the external to the internal world, macro- to microcosms, a retreat from the desperation of the waste land to the peace of the everlasting realm that is within" (Campbell, 1968, p. 17). In this process of the hero's fundamental retreat into an inner world, he discovers his unknown and latent potential of becoming an individual of great importance.

Erich Neumann, one of the most creative Jungians, depicts this segment in the human development as "the history of [the] self-emancipation of the ego struggling to free itself from the powers of unconscious to hold its own against overwhelming odds" (Neumann cited in Noel, 1991, p. 206).

Joseph Henderson, another disciple of Jung, explains that this heroic stage corresponds to "the development of the individual's ego-consciousness", a moment when the human being apprehends his own potency and weakness in "a manner that will equip him for the arduous tasks with which life confronts him (...). The image of the hero evolves in a manner that reflects each stage of the evolution of the human personality" (Henderson, 1964, p 112).

From a psychological perspective, this stepping out of a familiar world provides the possibility for the young man to cross the threshold of the adventure of adulthood, which

signifies the formation of a complete personality and the acquiring of a satisfying life (Golban, 2014, p 35).

The second stage, which is that of initiation and testing, is marked by some dreadful challenges that the hero must undergo to confirm his worth. The hero's journey denotes various archetypal patterns, and among the most important ones is that of the quest. According to Campbell, "there are two types of deed. One is physical deed, in which the hero performs a courageous act in battle or saves a life. The other kind is the spiritual deed, in which the hero learns to experience the supernormal range of human spiritual life and then comes back with a message" (Campbell, 1968, p. 152).

As with the protagonist of the Bildungsroman, the initiation is a significant part of the hero's quest, since the hero-to-become is still a novice in a hostile foreign environment, and his being guided and assisted by an older or wiser person as a parental figure is fundamental for his success. From a psychological perspective,

this episode from the hero's adventure corresponds to the young adult's initial stages of journey into adulthood when both the physical and spiritual deeds are necessary to accomplish his quest. The physical deed could represent the completion of physiological ripeness of an individual, since this maturation phase includes also the acknowledgment and practice of sexuality. (Golban, 2014, p. 36)

However, the maturation process could not be completed without psychic and spiritual maturity. The young man must overcome a disjointed sense of identity that nurtures self-doubt and should determine the purpose of his life. It is now that the young man needs the support of tutors, friends, and assistants who would lead him wisely in his journey. This stage represents the essential part of the hero's journey, since, during the adventures, in addition to this segment, the hero discovers his identity.

The process of self-discovery is greatly stimulated by the difficult trials that the hero must undergo throughout his quest, where the hero's trials represent the testing of his body, spirit, and mind. In Jungian terms, the episode of trials represents the challenge of complexes of the personal unconscious, which impede the growth and self-realization of the individual. The Jungian notion of the shadow becomes significant in this context, as it represents, in archetypal terms, the totality of all impediments met by the personal unconscious in the process of self-discovery. The shadow, considered mostly as the negative or dark aspect of the unconscious, should be confronted by the ego in order to achieve the self-knowledge of the

individual. By recognizing and then by confronting his negative characteristics, the individual prevents their projection onto others.

The trials assisting the internal transformation during the various stages of his quest include dragon slaying – which in the Bildungsroman might correspond to the professional career – as well as the encounter with the goddess, a phase which is important for the elevation and the self-confidence of the hero, and which in the Bildungsroman would correspond to his love experience and sentimental career.

Following the encounter with the goddess, the hero should experience the atonement with the father. Various myths and mystical situations imply the centrality of the Father archetype in the psychological growth of a man. These myths and mystical experiences reveal a contrasting position to the one presented by Sigmund Freud in the example of the Oedipus complex, where the relationship between father and son is based on rivalry and competitiveness. On the contrary, many of these stories narrate a rather cooperative and satisfying relationship between father and son or daughter. Definitely, in this relation, a certain examination is implied, since the father “[admits] to his house only those who have been thoroughly tested” (Campbell, 1968, p. 133). The father is not necessarily the biological father, he could be a wise man, a paternal figure, or an “initiating priest through whom the young being passes on into the larger world” (Campbell, 1968, p. 136).

The encounter with the father is identified by Campbell as “atonement”. The word “atonement” is not to be necessarily understood in the contemporary meaning of redemption or repentance, although in a Bildungsroman such as *Great Expectations*, the relationship between Pip (son) and Magwitch (parental figure) may lead to such a hypothesis.

Whatever, the meaning would be, the encounter with the father brings up the encounter with one’s self, when an individual surpasses his personal desires and struggles to restore a lost kingdom – a self-actualized life (Campbell, 1968, p. 246).

In Jungian terms, the individual should traverse the transpersonal and transcultural reality in order to find himself. In his quest for self-identity, the individual should not simply explore, confront, and, at times, fight personal or cultural demon guardians of the gate, but is supposed to discover and bring into consciousness the Self, which is confined or deprived by those guardians. According to Golban,

The concept of the Self evolves from the Hindu Upanishads and refers to the inner expression of Brahman, which is the absolute infinite existence. In the tradition of the Upanishads, the ultimate experience (Nirvana) is to understand and achieve the sameness between the

individual's immortal perfect spirit (Atman) and the absolute infinite existence (Brahman). The Brahman and Atman being One, the same is one as well. The acknowledgement of one's existence as a quintessence of the transpersonal world, as one's true Self, is the true heroic goal which goes beyond satisfaction or conquest. (p. 39)

The Self in the Bildungsroman can be equalled to identity and both can be considered as an archetype of wholeness, which organizes and unifies the unconscious and the consciousness. It is the embodiment of individuality and a means by which one reunites with the great circle of life. The atonement with the father refers to the stage of re-joining the great circle of life, which means the discovery of one's place in the universe.

The dragon slaying, the sacred marriage, and the atonement with the father "correspond to the archetypal encounters with the shadow, anima and self which are crucial for the union of the conscious and the unconscious of the individual psyche, and, as a consequence, for personal accomplishment and for understanding the meaning in life" (Golban, 2014, p. 39). These three archetypal meetings are fundamental in the process of self-discovery. The one who fails in these encounters remains a victim of the self-blocking factors, as neurosis or obsessions, which are formed in the course of one's life and which lead to the formation of a fragmented identity of the self.

When all the encounters are completed and the triumph over all the impediments is accomplished, the hero is prepared to receive his reward, but, in order to complete his journey, the hero must return home and share the achieved gifts with his community, the return being the third stage of the hero's journey according to Campbell.

In the Bildungsroman, the return in the case of David, Pip, or Jane is less a physical homecoming than the revival of lost values, or their re-evaluation or re-assertion. However, like the protagonist of the Bildungsroman, the monomythic hero is frequently reluctant to return to his world. The "refusal of return" refers to the dilemma of the hero who is not sure about homecoming. Since the return implies the sharing or teaching of wisdom, compassion and of the ultimate truth to an ignorant and critical society, the hero frequently reflects on the option of remaining enthralled in a nirvanic experience. Jung explains the refusal of return as the unwillingness to abandon the superior state of consciousness, which has been achieved in the course of the journey of self-discovery, and to re-join the ordinary waking consciousness.

In the "crossing the return threshold", the hero accepts eventually the necessity of his return, considering it an appealing opportunity to reform the moral vision of his world. The hero assumes the role of a moral guide, a progressive leader or a visionary prophet who

transforms his world. The essential element in the hero's homecoming is that he has reached a synthesis of moral wisdom and worldly supremacy that will suffice in changing his community forever. According to Campbell, the return of the hero is compulsory. He explains that

when the hero-quest has been accomplished through penetration to the source, or through the grace of some male or female, human or animal, personification, the adventurer still must return with his life-transmitting trophy. The full round, the norm of the monomyth, requires the hero should now begin the labour of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess, back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community. (Campbell, 1968, p. 193)

And although the hero's journey might seem a linear process, Carol Pearson insists upon a cyclical fashion for the hero's experience:

I will illustrate the typical hero's progression as a cone of three-dimensional spiral, in which it is possible to move forward while frequently circling back. Each stage has its own lesson to teach us, and we reencounter situations that throw us back into prior stages so that we may learn and relearn the lessons as new lessons at new levels of intellectual and emotional complexity and subtlety. (Pearson, 1991, p. 13)

But the cyclic process implies death. Thus, on their return home, some heroes must die or descend into the place of death, like scapegoats for the errors of the others: "There are numberless examples of the hero's descent into the underworld which are followed by the image of return from the realm of death, as to mention just Orpheus, Hercules, Odysseus, and Aeneas; death, in a distinct manner, may be defeated as in the example of Jesus' resurrection" (Golban, 2014, p. 40).

The psychological dimension corresponding to the self-discovery process seems obvious: the "hero's journey to the underworld not only resembles both ancient, widespread initiation rites and a natural, probably almost universal human psychic experience, it satisfies a human need" (Lowry, 1982, p. 121). The hero emerges greatly transformed after this experience, learning the ultimate knowledge for the humans, which is that of death and rebirth. This supreme knowledge provides the psychic wholeness that the hero has sought during his long and demanding quest.

In the case of the Bildungsroman, however, the cyclic process of identity formation does not imply death but suggests the end of a particular phase in the life experience, which begins with childhood and a home, continues with separation and the experience of a larger

society with its quest, trials and initiations, and ends with acquiring and asserting a self or identity upon entering the stage of maturity.

A Text-Based Comparative Assessment of the Bildungsroman and Monomyth: *Great Expectations* as a Novel of Identity Formation and the Literarization of the Monomyth

Great Expectations is a novel which tells the story of maturation of Pip starting from his childhood and ending in his early maturity. When we apply the above mentioned common main thematic elements of the Bildungsroman to *Great Expectations*, it is obvious that it has many of the elements of the Bildungsroman. Firstly, the protagonist of the novel, Pip, is an orphan and he lives in a small village with his elder sister and her husband in a seemingly static life experience. Her sister and Pip do not get on well. She continually makes him feel guilty for not showing enough gratitude for her looking after him; hence there is an example of a conflict with a parental figure. The feeling of guilt and inadequacy that his sister instills in him has important effects on Pip throughout the entire narrative. After he meets the escaped convict, Magwitch, in the marshes, Pip's life changes drastically. Pip leaves home to enter a larger society, London, with the help of an unknown benefactor, who is actually Abel Magwitch, the convict whom Pip helped in the marshes. Magwitch leaves him a large amount of money as a result of which he will attain the manners of a gentleman and will not be required to work.

Pip leaves his home and enters a larger society as a result of both external and inner stimuli. The external stimuli are the result of his sister's and Estella's behavior. The inner stimulus is the result of the feeling of inferiority and inadequacy that Pip feels towards Estella with whom he is in love. Pip thinks that when he becomes a gentleman, he would be her equal and they would be able to marry. Estella is brought up by Miss Havisham and sports elegant and refined manners, and she continually scolds Pip for crude and unrefined behavior. On his first meeting with the members of the higher society, Pip gains an understanding about how upper class society regards the poor and the working classes and he feels ashamed about his own upbringing. He realizes that he has to change his status in society. As a result of this, Pip, whom Miss Havisham has called to be a playing partner for Estella, thinks that his secret benefactor is Miss Havisham and that she is trying to make him a gentleman and a proper partner for Estella.

At the next stage, once he is in the city, Pip learns gentlemanly manners through the guidance of some helpers; hence he undergoes a kind of education that changes his uncivilized ways of living. The problem with this change is that he changes into a rather

boorish, snobbish personality the result of which is that he offends Joe Gargery, his friendly brother-in-law, by overcorrecting Joe's relatively vulgar manners and feeling ashamed in his presence. In a self-deceptive manner, he thinks himself to be socially superior to the townspeople. We can say that he fails in this change of his emerging personal identity. The negative effects of social determinism on Pip's development are quite apparent. He can learn to look like and act like a gentleman, but it is only a superficial change not supported by his past. He also seeks for social relationship with other people in the city during his education to learn gentlemanly manners. However, he also fails in being a part of this society. He spends his money very carelessly and extravagantly, and is left almost with no money in the end. Pip's relationship with Estella is not successful as well, since Estella is brought up by Miss Havisham as a cold, heartless person in order to exact revenge on all men; hence Pip fails in his trial by love as well.

We can say that Pip is a failure on many levels. When we look at the causes of his failure, one of the causes is social determinism and the other is interpersonal determinism. Social determinism is the result of the fact that his family is a lower class family and he cannot change his station very easily and when he superficially changes it, its effects are not positive: he becomes a snob. Interpersonal determinism is the result of the fact that Magwitch, a convict, who is on the margins of society, far from being a real gentleman, helps him become a gentleman.

Magwitch, who cannot be a part of this high society, tries to have Pip, whom he sees as his son, be a part of it. Pip's realization that his benefactor is not Miss Havisham, a member of the higher classes, but a convict frustrates him at the beginning and he loses all hope about his future. Pip eventually accepts that he is not content with his situation:

[My expectations'] influence on my own character, I disguised from my recognition as much as possible, but I knew very well that it was not all good. I lived in a state of chronic uneasiness respecting my behavior to Joe. (...) I used to think, with a weariness on my spirits, that I should have been happier and better if I had never seen Miss Havisham's face (...). (Dickens, 2008, p. 248)

This demonstrates that Pip is morally developing and has a glimmer of hope after his failures. This is an example of the moments of spiritual suffering and pain that the Bildungsroman protagonists undergo when they are moving towards moral and psychic maturation. Another point to note about Pip's maturation is that he reconciles with Magwitch, whom he detested at first, understands what he has done for him and tries to help him until

Magwitch dies; he also reconciles with Joe. Therefore, we can describe his situation at the end of the novel as a partially successful maturation.

What is interesting about *Great Expectations* is that Pip is not rich and successful, and he is not married to Estella at the end of the novel, revealing that there is no reconciliation with society. His character formation ends prematurely following his epiphanies about the negative influences of society on his personality and he returns home not with a precious new knowledge about life or a working philosophy of living, but with a wish to go back to his past self and life. On his return home, he reconciles with Joe about his snobbish behavior, and when he sees that Joe and Biddy are married now, he comes to accept that it is impossible to go back to the past. Even his return home is a failure.

The cyclical form of the Bildungsroman narration and its stages closely correspond to the three stages of the monomyth, namely separation, initiation and return. We can in a way note the same fictional elements in the narration with different names when studying the text as an example of monomyth. In other words, we ought to examine *Great Expectations* as the literarization of the monomyth as a Bildungsroman.

First of all, the monomythic hero is a special person, but in the novel, the hero, Pip is an unhappy orphan, which is a disadvantageous position in society and he does not show any hints at being a special person all throughout the novel. Hence, there is a subversion of the monomythic structure from the beginning.

When we take into consideration the first stage of the monomyth, “call to adventure”, the protagonist, Pip, is dissatisfied with the society he is living in. He feels himself inadequate and inferior in his own familiar world, as in his sister’s and Estella’s view, and the possibility of leaving that place in order to become a gentleman through the help of a benefactor seems like a chance to free his ego from these feelings and become an individual.

There is no “refusal of the call” because Pip is already eager to change, but he somehow feels some kind of discontent for leaving his good friend Joe and Biddy behind. “Meeting the mentor” stage has an important subversion, for the benefactor’s identity is kept a secret from Pip for a very long time, and he mistakenly thinks that the benefactor is Miss Havisham. In addition, the mentor does not help Pip realize his own identity but rather uses him for his own agenda.

The *raison d’être* for Pip is just to be an instrument to realize Magwitch’s wish to enter high society, just as Estella is an instrument for Miss Havisham’s wish to exact revenge on men. Therefore, for both these characters, these seemingly formative experiences with

negative effects are actually roles dictated by their benefactors for different purposes, which points out the interpersonal determinism.

The next phase is the “initiation” stage in which the hero undergoes some tests to complete his moral, psychological and physical development into a stable human being. The city of London is a big unknown for Pip and his first test is to learn gentlemanly manners through Matthew Pocket’s and Herbert Pocket’s help. However, he generates an unfounded sense of pride in himself as a result of learning to act like a gentleman. The negative effects of the city society on him become apparent.

If we equate “dragon slaying” to the professional career, it is obvious that Pip cannot overcome this obstacle, because he cannot control his money carefully enough. In addition, when we equate “meeting with the goddess” to Pip’s love life, Pip cannot overcome this obstacle as well, since it seems improbable for Estella and Pip to be together, which makes Pip suffer.

At the “atonement with the father stage”, Pip learns that Magwitch has the ultimate power in his life and loathes it since Magwitch is a convict. However, on understanding the sacrifices that Magwitch has done for him, Pip experiences a kind of epiphany and becomes compassionate towards him; hence, out of these three archetypal meetings, only one being a success. As a result, we can talk about a partial success in character formation.

Pip falling ill towards the end of the novel suggests the end of his initiation stage and Joe helps him recover, return and “cross the threshold” of the known world. At the end of the novel, Pip revives his old values and by returning home tries to reconcile with his Joe and Biddy, which is yet partially successful because he cannot stay with them. He sets off on another journey which is a micro scale monomyth. He works with Herbert Pocket and becomes financially safe and returns home again to find Estella and the narration ends with a possibility of reconciliation not with society, but between these two characters that are at this point free from the effects of social and interpersonal determinism.

Conclusion

In English literature, the Bildungsroman – vouched by a number of predecessors and based on a long developmental process from antiquity through romanticism to establish itself as a fictional subgenre with Goethe in Germany – flourished as a self-contained literary system due to the aesthetic efforts of various Victorians writers facing the co-existence of tradition, as realism and, to a certain extent, post-romanticism, and of innovation, as symbolism, aestheticism, and other forms of avant-garde. The novel of identity formation

became popular in particular among the realists, and significantly, a great number of realist novels are Bildungsromane dealing with the development and becoming of a protagonist.

The Bildungsroman can be considered a monomythic fictional discourse because the textualization of the main thematic elements of its literary system represent a cyclic process of identity formation, which resemble the experience of the hero of the monomyth likewise rendered as a process by various aspects involved in it.

The Bildungsroman begins with childhood and ends with early maturity, which is the end of a particular stage in the life of the protagonist, the stage which would provide his identity formation and assertion. During this phase, the protagonist is first a child with a home, which involves separation and entering a larger society; in his youth, the experience of the protagonist involves initiation presuming education, professional career, sentimental experience, various ordeals and trials, and especially understanding, change and epiphany; finally, upon entering maturity, the protagonist comes to the end of his formative process, which involves a return to his beginnings, or to his Self, or the acquiring of a congenial philosophy of living and of a new Self, or other forms of an coming to its end developmental experience that would reveal the acquiring and asserting an individual self, a personal identity.

1. Childhood – *separation*



3. (Early) Maturity – *return*

The writers of the Bildungsroman would convert, subvert, or reconstruct the conventions of the monomyth, in particular the one which refers to the return of the hero to the homeland after the completion of his mission. The place may not represent his initial position, but it may become a home through the acquired identity which relies on true values, understanding, change, accomplishments, awareness of his own self, and deep consideration for the others.

Following this line of argumentation, Pip's formative experience would correspond, among others alike in Victorian Bildungsromane, to the monomythic framework – in case one considers, as we do, the Bildungsroman as monomythic fictional discourse – in that he passes

all three stages of experience – separation, initiation, return – where return is not a homecoming or a creation of a new home, but a return from a dangerous, illusionary world to a reality that must be accepted and dwelt with.

The journey of the Bildungsroman protagonist is spiral or cyclic, or ever-open-ended, which suggests a perpetual return and reveals optimistic implications, since in many Bildungsromane, in which the formation is a success, the journey is a paradigm for individual's psychic and spiritual growth being also a complete success: this is the protagonist's "*arête*, his excellence and for this he is to be admired" (Golban, 2014, p. 78).

In the Victorian Bildungsroman, in particular, the protagonist is successful in forming and asserting a personal identity because he never fails to live according to his well-established system of values. In a way, the Victorian author of the Bildungsroman, as some of the later modernist, late modern and postmodern writers would do, seems to suggest that the victory of the human being can be achieved only when the individual does not deviate from the system of values and morality, because these elements represent the only organizing principle in otherwise chaotic and random postmodern universe.

The characters of the romantic literature act according to spiritual arrangements of passion and rebelliousness; those of the modern, twentieth-century fiction display an experience founded on complexes and neuroses. Instead, the protagonists of Victorian Bildungsromane reveal recognized, predictable combinations of inner and outer attributes that eventually reify conventional types (conventions of character) of the literary system of the Bildungsroman sub-genre.

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