

Initiation Novel VS Bildungsroman: Common and Distinct Features

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Abstract: *The article is devoted to the literary theoretical problem of defining of initiation novel through the genre specifics of Bildungsroman. The definition and analysis of different models of initiation prose are studied in it. Different typological analogies of the initiation novel to the tradition of the Bildungsroman are drawn, taking into consideration the characteristics of the plot, composition structure, the image of the protagonist, pragmatic orientation of these literary texts.*

Key words: *initiation novel, Bildungsroman, protagonist, initiation rite.*

INTRODUCTION

There haven't been single literary critical investigations in the history of Ukrainian science dedicated to the problem of initiation novel, whose genre and style peculiarities go back to the tradition of Bildungsroman. There are still some articles that represent attempts of scientific reconstruction or analysis of artistic transformations of initiation rite and related to it motifs of travel, searching life truths, mythologemes of road, house, archetypes of Mother, Father, Wisdom etc. Thus this article will aim at defining typological common and distinct features between initiation novel and Bildungsroman.

THE TERM "INITIATION NOVEL"

Term "initiation novel" appeared in Polish literary expression at the end of the 1990s thanks to Przemyslaw Czaplinski, who defines it as "narration about maturation, process of growing-up, about loss of innocence and entering the stage of sin and experience" [1]. The scholar points out that the use of initiation plot was a kind of fashion in the literature of that time. The Polish investigator's thinks that we can easily find the basis of initiation novel in the history of European literature, in German in particular (novels by J.W. von Goethe, Th. Mann, G. Grass).

Irina Adelheim in the articles on young Polish literature of the late 20th century-beginning of the 21st uses another term for this type of literature – "initiation prose". She defines it as "narration about "initiation" into adulthood, realization by a person of his/her adjustment or maladjustment to it, "ritual" of transition from childhood to adolescence and maturity, having ... "first experiences" [2, p. 441], connected with physiological growth and first sexual experience, self-awareness and life purpose, understanding the borders between childhood and adult existence, between present-self and ex-self, realization of such categories as life and death, good and evil, discovering "the whole complexity and ambiguity of the world" [2, p. 441]. To my mind, this definition rather sufficiently characterizes the literary phenomenon as initiation rites have been throughout history the way that leads people into culture and serve as a mechanism for actualization and transmission of cultural experience. At the present stage of development young people, who are experiencing the crisis of adolescence, feel need in stable moral system of values that would provide them with support for organic entry into the adult world. Conceptualization of the general picture of the world and one's purpose in it requires from youth creating its own concept of life, acquisition of which in the past was provided by the initiation rites. Since in the course of social development there is obvious lack of prepared by cultural tradition of such rites, young people acquire the necessary life-outlook system of value orientations with the help of different types of oral, written and electronic communication. Modern fiction appeals more to the adolescent readership than the classic works of the world literature.

P. Czaplinski (2009) states that the model of initiation plot of contemporary Polish literature may be divided into two types:

1) the first type is rich with autobiographical moments from life and applies to the tradition of educational prose to present the dramatic (often because of political

considerations) process of maturation ("Wilhem Meister's Apprenticeship" by V.W. von Goethe);

2) the second type uses the schemes of thriller, sensation novel, adventure and criminal novels describing the stage before the initiation and after it ("The Catcher in the Rye" by J. D. Salinger) [1].

A characteristic feature of the novels of initiation, according to P. Czaplinski, is the fact that authors use in their texts plot schemes of thriller and horror novel. These prose works dwell upon metaphysical phenomena, and their characters are those borrowed from the mythologies of various peoples (demons, monsters, werewolves, etc.). The picture of something incomprehensible and terrible feeling of fear as a reaction to real or imaginary threat to their lives arouse in readers' minds. Therefore, creating the atmosphere of emotional stress is a defining feature of modern initiation novels in Ukrainian, Polish and American literatures.

Within the prose that actively uses the motif of initiation in Polish literature of the 1990s, I. Adelheim singles out, like P. Czaplinski, two major psychological and stylistic models. The first is an autobiographical novel about the adult narrator, who by means of memories from childhood experiences tries "to achieve holism of the sense of one's biography" [2, p. 444]. Awareness of often childhood trauma and its embodiment in the literary work "gives the illusion of the sense of power over one's own biography" [2, p. 444]. Therefore, it is constantly emphasized on the time distance between adult narrator and the story about his childhood in the texts that represent this model. Another important feature of this prose is that, understanding the relationship of childhood and adulthood, the narrator is constantly in doubt and puts a lot of questions to him-past and -present. Such details as a different items, names, etc. are of great importance in the autobiographical initiation prose. Hero's well-being before the initiation and after it cannot be clearly traced because of the blur between these two states.

Within autobiographical model the researcher separately distinguishes the so-called "portrait of the artist in his youth", which combines features of the first and the second models, i.e. elements of autobiography combined with dynamic plot of adventure or detective novel. In addition, the author claims that "a portrait of the artist in his youth" is close to the traditional Bildungsroman with the hero, who stands out from the masses, his love feelings, physiological maturation, his inclination to provide events and subjects with certain symbolism, etc. [, p. 447]. In such a novel, the hero-artist's existence is a bleak and gray reality from which he is escaping. He perceives the reality through art and constant comparisons. The image of family or a parent is not interpreted as a negative factor in the formation of the hero's personality, on the contrary, the biographies of loved people are closely related to the personal life of the hero.

The second model of initiation prose represents action-novels of "antieducation" about a child who does not want to grow up, or an adult person who believes that his childhood is an escape from responsibility for his own actions. Attractive for readers plot is complemented with the story in the third person, from a man, a traveler, not tied to a specific geographical area. An important feature of the second model of initiation novel is the unity of a person's biography - before and after the initiation - and often these two stages of life are opposed: "innocence phase is decisively glorified against the stage of maturity, irreversible loss of child and adolescent world outlook as sufficient value is emphasized" [2, p. 448]. Because of this the hero's permanent state of abeyance, which often leads to a tragic end, madness or death is observed. The image of the family and adults who have a huge impact on the life of the hero, here acquire exclusive negativity and gloom: usually evil mother who terrorizes her children with excessive care or, vice versa, leaves them, cruel father who shows aggression and indifference towards his descendants. Child injury that is the result of unsympathetic attitude of parents serves as an excuse to hero's actions in his adulthood. Thus, the hero, having once natural, age initiation, feels that it is incomplete, not clear, devoid of existential importance, and he

wants to be successfully initiated into the true meaning of existence again. That first initiation summed characters to the understanding of adult life as boredom and monotony of existence, and therefore the characters consciously organize new experience of initiation into new knowledge to prove that life does have meaning.

It should be mentioned that the return to childhood and living this period again in the first model of initiation novel allows the hero to be included into adulthood in order to organize it, while the second model interprets this turn as an escape from maturity. If the first prose model prevails in plurality of initiations, erasing a clear distinction between childhood and adult existence, then in the second model heroes' biographies are clearly marked out by the stages before and after initiation, and initiation itself is a dramatic turning point in the lives of the characters. Moreover, unlike the second version of the initiation novel, the first "gives the illusion of power over the time of one's life by understanding it - as a complete biography" [2, p. 453].

In this perspective typological resemblance of the initiation prose to the traditional Bildungsroman seems obvious. Similarities and differences are revealed on the structural, semantic and pragmatic levels. Let's trace the differences and similarities of Bildungsroman and the initiation novel on the basis of the classification of dominants of German Bildungsroman by V. Pashyoryev.

The researcher identifies Bildungsroman as a type of novelistic form of personality and consciousness of the hero in their complexity and versatility. Initiation novel is also dedicated to the problem of forming of outlook orientations of a young hero in certain social and cultural conditions. As a rite of passage served not only to prepare young people for life in society, but more importantly, was a kind of spiritual development of personality, which ultimately led to self-knowledge and awareness of one's place in the world, thus initiation novel illustrates such a process in the course of development of the personality of the hero.

V.Pashyoryev, defining the principle of composition of the German Bildungsroman, speaks about its stepping structure [5, p. 14]. The process of growing up, forming of the main character of the Bildungsroman and the initiation novel is gradual, the formation of his personality has a smooth character, the evolution of outlook position of the character takes place.

According to the type of plot as a key element of any prosaic form Bildungsroman is a novel of one hero who is formed and nurtured under the influence of various factors (education, home, loved ones who surround him). Other characters perform constructive or destructive functions in the process of his formation, helping by good guidance, understanding or arranging obstacles to the hero, thus becoming his foes or even enemies, forcing him to move forward, look for other ways out from difficult situations of physical and spiritual order. I can not say that in the initiation novel, as in the Bildungsroman, only the line of the protagonist is clearly seen. Despite the history of initiation to new knowledge of the main character, there are other stories of initiation rites of minor characters, which, as in the Bildungsroman, represent assistants or enemies in the course of personality development of the protagonist.

E. Demchenkova, investigating the poetics and peculiarities of Bildungsroman based on works by F.Dostoevsky, emphasizes that this form of narrative inherent to such plot situations and turning points in the development of character, that exhibit his transition into "a different quality": the situation of choice, testings of character; coincidences that are symbolic; "fateful" plot meeting scenes, the motif of way-road, the image of house, etc. [3, p. 7]. All the plot situations about which the researcher speaks can be traced in the initiation novel. It should be noted that the initiation novel has got the plot compositional structure of fairy tales, the poetics of which was thoroughly investigated by V.Propp in the works "Historical roots of fairy tales" [7]. Relationship between initiation novel and fairy tale is based on the use by these literary forms the structure of initiation rite as plot outline to demonstrate the process of becoming the hero's personality, his maturation process.

Typological analogies of Bildungsroman and initiation novel are traced distinguishing such their characteristic features as biographism and autobiographism that become apparent on the plot, fable, social or psychological level of literary text. Usually Bildungsroman is a story of a mature person who evaluates his past in terms of conscious cause-effect relationships of his own behavior. Therefore, as noted by S. Prytolyuk, such "distant understanding of one's own history in terms of life experience is due to the shift of time layers" [6, p. 13] that focuses more attention on the point of becoming hero's character and his upbringing. Initiation novel in most cases is the prose of not formed young authors who themselves are in search of their own system of values and who by means of artistic creativity assert themselves in modern society.

Narrator of Bildungsroman is a mature man who has already found his place in life. Thus, the image formation process and identity formation on the pages of a literary text appears as a memory of one's own experience. The narrator evaluates his growing-up from current point of view and considers it from with the time distance. In contrast, narrator of the initiation novel is as young as the heroes of literary texts. Young people not feeling age difference with the narrator prefer such a literature.

In the process of the protagonist's outlook program forming the confrontation of his views and the ideas that are cultivated and prevail in this society becomes vivid. Such collisions are quite understandable and natural as with the change of social and cultural conditions a change of generations takes place that leads to certain intellectual debate, reflections on that score. Initiation novel and Bildungsroman are full of characters' reflections on issues of existential nature, which ultimately form their "self-concept", self-attitude and attitude to other people as well as understanding of the world in general.

The main idea of Bildungsroman, as noted in classification by V.Pashyoryev, is the birth and development of a dynamic personality [5]. The dynamism of the protagonist of initiation novel and Bildungsroman is in constant search and desire to self-actualize in fast life conditions. Hero's character is not a static category, it is constantly changing under the influence of psychological, socio-cultural and political factors.

Of special attention in the analysis of the typological coincidences and differences of Bildungsroman and initiation novel is the type of protagonist, because texts are devoted to the process of his maturation, formation of character and outlook. Taking into account the concept of personality in the era of humanism, V. Pashyoryev (2005) distinguishes the following types of protagonist, typical for German Bildungsroman:

- 1) ruler-humanist and democrat (K.Viland's Agathon, Th.Mann's Joseph, H.Hesse's Knecht);
- 2) truth-seeker, which is evolving in the direction of active, productive existence and socially useful activity (J.W. von Goethe's Wilhelm Meister, G.Keller's Heinrich Lee, E.Stritmatter's Stanislaus Budner, H.Kant's Mark Niebur);
- 3) artist who overcomes conflict of spirit and life on the way of harmonious existence (G.Keller's Heinrich Lee) [5, p. 132-133].

The typology of the hero of Enlightenment in Ukrainian and Russian prose of 60-80s of the 19th century, developed V. Zarva is of great importance. The researcher distinguishes five main options for models of the protagonist:

- 1) model of a revolutionary hero;
- 2) model of a righteous hero;
- 3) model of a hero-educated businessman;
- 4) model of a hero liberal reformer, culturist;
- 5) model of an emancipated female personality [4, p. 149-193].

The heroes of initiation novels are young people, usually teenagers or adolescents who are at the stage of outlook searching, defining priorities for the normal functioning in the society. In this case, a protagonist appears as a rebel against family, school, teachers, peers.

The role of mentor of the young hero who teaches him, directs his activity to the right, in his opinion, direction is important in Bildungsroman. Such a person is often a teacher of the school where the hero gets education or an elderly person whose world outlook appeals to the hero at this stage of life. A. Sidorenko notes that in Bildungsroman "the figure of mentor, whose functions are more firmly undertaken by the author, almost disappears" [8, p. 10]. There are almost no mentors of the immature young characters in initiation novels, the characters try to find their own answers of the existential nature. Therefore, initiation novels should be considered a postmodern version of Bildungsroman, because of the lack of higher instance of initiation rite, i.e. mentor, teacher, life situation of the initiated performs this function of instance.

Thus, although the first steps in the research of literature for young people have been made, the problem of this section of literary process in modern literary criticism remains insufficiently developed. However, great theoretical material gives reasons to outline the origins of the initiation novel from Bildungsroman tradition, to define pragmatics of the literature for youth taking into account psychological peculiarities of this age, to distinguish typological features and poetics of the literature intended for teenagers and adolescents, considering the structure of a literary text, its plot, content, system of characters, ideas and motives and pragmatic aspect.

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