

Kunstlerroman Exertion in Kamala Marakandaya's Possession and Pleasure City

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Abstract: Kunstlerroman, which arose concurrently with industrialized capitalism, are characterized by the integration of the social process with the development of an individual, but the English variety is distinguished from the French and German by its overriding ethical concern. The English Kunstlerroman can be further sub divided into novels of accountability and novels of empowerment. This dissertation presents the novels Possession and Pleasure city by Indian novelist Kamala Markandaya, as Kunstlerroman, a class of novels that deal with the formative years of an individual up to his development as an adult.

The novels describe how Kamala Markandaya uses the spiritual ideals of asceticism to explore the lives of people. The novels discuss the significance of the name of the protagonist and also cite how the novelist tackled the Hindu ethos.

Keywords: Kunstlerroman, Possession and Pleasure city, Kamala Markandaya.

Kunstlerroman is the name affixed to those novels that concentrate on the development or education of a central character. German in origin, "kunste" means formation, and "roman" means novel. Although The History of Agathon, written by Christoph Martin Wieland in 1766-1767, may be the first known example, it was Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship, written in 1795, that took the form from philosophical to personal development and gave celebrity to the genre. More than any other type of novel, the Kunstlerroman intends to lead the reader to greater personal enrichment as the protagonist journeys from youth to psychological or emotional maturity. Traditionally, this growth occurs according to a pattern: the sensitive, intelligent protagonist leaves home, undergoes stages of conflict and growth, is tested by crises and loves affairs, then finally finds the best place to use his/her unique talents. Sometimes the protagonist returns home to show how well things turned out. Some Kunstlerroman end with the death of the hero, leaving the promise of his life unfulfilled. Traditionally, English novelists complicate the protagonist's battle to establish an individual identity with conflicts from outside the self. German novelists typically concentrate on the internal struggle of the hero. The protagonist's adventures can be seen as quest for the meaning of life or as a vehicle for the author's social and moral opinions as demonstrated through the protagonist.

The Kunstlerroman was especially popular until 1860. However, anti-German sentiment during the world wars contributed to the demise of its influence, along with the emergence of a multitude of modern experiments in novel writing. Nonetheless, James Joyce wrote his Kunstlerroman, A Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man, in 1916, and the genre has continued to be adopted, with distinguishing variations, by writers of many nationalities.

Goethe's Kunstlerroman appropriately uses the word "apprenticeship" in its title because one distinguishing factor of the genre is the learning process that brings the protagonist from childhood into adulthood. As a coming-of-age novel, the Kunstlerroman focuses on the main character's apprenticeship. These experiences place the character near older practitioners whose roles as models the character either emulates or rejects.

The *Kunstlerroman* is a novel of formation or development. These terms imply that the *Kunstlerroman* is also a novel about education, yet not necessarily in the narrow sense of the *Erziehungsroman* (novel of educational development). Life is an education, and the process of growing up as chronicled in the *Kunstlerroman* is a series of experiences that teach lessons. The protagonist's education may be academic; it may also be in other areas, such as learning social graces, conducting business affairs, and gaining integrity in relationships.

The protagonist of the *Kunstlerroman* has a unique talent. Part of the maturation process requires discovering this talent and figuring out how to use it. The journey and experiences of the hero are intended to provide an opportunity to examine the inner self and clarify important goals and how to pursue them. As part of the self-discovery, the hero gets a new perspective on his/her relationship with other people. In other words, facing the complexities of the adult world causes the protagonist to learn others and about himself. Thus, the *Kunstlerroman* is a psychological novel in which the main character evolves toward mature self-awareness.

In *Kunstlerroman* the hero leaves home on a journey or quest. Usually, the protagonist leaves a rural setting to travel into the wider world of the city. In this way, the character encounters a larger society that tests his or her mettle. The physical journey initiates change, and changes bring growth.

Finding the right love is a component of the quest as it is enacted in the *Kunstlerroman*. The movement into adulthood begins with separation and often resolves in maturity with adult connection. In some cases the character must negotiate among potential partners in order to discover the appropriate one. The formalization of that relationship may constitute the final event in the novel.

The *Kunstlerroman* doesn't just tell a story. It involves the reader in the same process of education and development as the main character. The aim is to affect the reader's personal growth as well. However, at some point in the narrative, the reader may be in disagreement with the protagonist. Realizing that the hero has made a mistake in judgement, the reader, in effect, learns from the situation before the protagonist or otherwise compares his/her own morality against the moral of the story that the hero eventually learns.

Growing up and finding one's purpose in life is difficult. There are many pitfalls, mistakes, and forces beyond one's control along the way. These conflicts between the protagonist and fate, or nature, or others, or self are part of the process of maturation that the *Kunstlerroman* chronicles. Each crisis the hero endures helps to deepen his self-knowledge and strengthen or challenges his moral fortitude. Multiple conflicts are essential to the credibility of the *Kunstlerroman* as a reflection of the real life experience.

Dialogue is the conversational interaction among the characters of a story. Since the *Kunstlerroman* is focused on the main character, plot and narrative are secondary to dialogue. Using dialogue to carry the story makes the reader feel more of a witness to an actual scene. The reader knows little more than the hero has learned from talking with others and thus makes the same discoveries as the protagonist as even happen.

M.H.Abrams defines *Kunstlerroman* and *Erziehungsroman* are German terms signifying "novels of formation" or "novel of education". The subject of all these novels is the development of the protagonist's mind and character as he passes from childhood through varied experiences-and usually through a spiritual crisis-into maturity and the recognition of his identity and role in the world. . . . (112-13)

In A Dictionary of Literary terms, J.A.Cuddons defines the *Kunstlerroman* *Kunstlerroman* (G 'formation novel')

This is a term (more or less synonymous with *Erziehungsroman*- literally an 'upbringing' or 'education novel'). Widely used by German critics, it describes a novel which is an account of the youthful development of the hero or heroine. . . (67)

P.S.Chauhan says that the careers of many of Kamala Markandaya's heroes "follow the pattern of a mythical hero's life," and, in a footnote, he quotes Joseph Campbell's definition of "the common pattern of a mythical hero's life, 'which mentioned' the formula represented in the rites of passage: separation, initiation, return."

In order to elucidate the *Kunstlerroman* strain that can be traced, particularly in the later novels of kamala Markandaya, it becomes necessary to outline the progress of the protagonists of the novels from their earliest stage of growth to their

maturity. So the novels that are projected as having the *Kunstlerroman* strain are going to be dealt with giving importance to the growth motif of the protagonists. The dreams of the protagonists of these novels are realized to a certain extent and they inevitably lead to their attainment of maturity and enlightenment as keeping with the concept of the growth motif.

Critics have looked upon Markandaya's *Possession* from several angles but they have not paid proper attention to it to perceive that it has the characteristic of a *Kunstlerroman*. However some critics have fortuitously commented on certain aspects of the novel which are characteristics of the *Kunstlerroman*; they are Valmiki's original status of a savage or a dunce, his early grooming at the hands of the Swamy, his going forth into the unknown world of Caroline, his grooming and formation under the watchful eyes of Caroline, the psychological process involved in his development, the corrosion of his soul, his various errors, the awakening of his conscience in a crisis, his return to his roots, his rejection of the commonplace life and his resignation to his role in the world.

The trait that is followed in the development of the character is that of the mythical hero. Valmiki who is regarded as a simpleton by his family and the village actually resembles the folklore dunce. His going forth into their world, to unknown foreign lands is an adventure. He learns wisdom the hard way, through trials and sufferings. Then he returns to his native soil. His grand dreams of success as an international artist are over. His errors of passion are also over. His sufferings and sense of guilt are past. He is now at peace, engaged in serving god through his paintings.

The development motif of the novel is explicit throughout the novel. The slow process by which Caroline trains him is described. Valmiki's gradual growth into an acknowledged artist is also traced. Valmiki's training disciplining at the hands of his original mentor is also recalled. As a result of his success in material progress, there is a corresponding decay in the spiritual values ingrained into him by the Swamy. This leads to his countless errors and callousness. Eventually the revelation of Ellie's suicide jolts his conscience and opened his eyes. Thus comes the moment of his spiritual crisis.

Deeply hurt by his guilt, he manages successfully to come out his materialistic bog. He even goes back to using his native tongue. Once for all, he returns to his native land and to his spiritual mentor the Swamy and his cave in the wilderness.

Possession tells the story of the development of an artist. Valmiki's inherent but crude artistic genius is shown to develop and blossom under the patronage of Caroline until he earns a name as a talented and an internationally acknowledged artist. The triumph makes him erroneous but it is followed by the awakening of his conscience. He throws away the ostentatious world of Caroline and goes back to the Swamy's cave to seek satisfaction in the service of god. This haughty rejection of the common place life is the typical *Kunstlerroman* ending. The Swamy's revelation that a life of usefulness lies ahead of Valmiki becomes true, as Valmiki has now recognized his identity and his role in the world, like the typical protagonist of a *Kunstlerroman*.

Ramesh K. Srivastava observes that Valmiki is a stereotype of "the noble Indian savage" (41).

Ramesh Chada observes:

His [Valmiki's] is the odyssey of an innocent and unexposed boy led astray by temptations but returning to a life of serenity and tranquillity after a chastening cycle of experience. . . Valmiki leaves the Swamy, indulges in carnal pleasures, and returns to the Swamy eager to pursue his spiritual life with a steady mind, dedicating his talent in painting to the divine spirit of the Universe. . . (126)

Possession presents Valmiki's development as a whole. Usha Bande warns that any judgement of Valmiki must take into account "psychological changes wrought in him by the conditions he is thrown into" and she also points out that, as a result of his defeat at the hands of Caroline, he passes through "a psychological crisis" 78.

Parameswaran, says, "She [Caroline] moulds him into a man, an artist and a lover after the image she has in mind, and in the process ruins him, depleting of independence and spiritual strength, though in her opinion he gains more than he loses" (99). Williams says that Valmiki becomes the artist Lady Bell intends but at the expense of nearly destroying his soul" (860).

The process of Valmiki's development reaches a point of absolute disillusionment. It is followed by his awakening, realization, regeneration and the return to his native roots. K.S. Narayan Rao remarks, "A Final repudiation of the life of

passion is possible only after Valmiki goes through the mud and mire of life" (74). Joseph states, "Finally, he is made aware of his deterioration and in his moment of humanity, begins the regeneration of his character" (122). C.V.Venugopal asserts that it is ultimately with his Indian mentor that Valmiki attains satisfaction "and is at peace with himself and the world" (152).

From the textual analysis and the critical comments presented above, it is traced that Kamala Markandaya's *Possession* is a *Kunstlerroman*. The novel portrays the development of the mind and character of the protagonist, Valmiki, the understand village boy of fourteen, commonly regarded as a simpleton but patronized by the Swamy. He is discovered as an artist by lady Caroline Bell, who later takes him to England, grooms and develops him into an internationally renowned artist. Accordingly, Valmiki confirms to the role of the dunce who goes out into the world in search of adventure, undergoes varied experiences, has grandiose dreams, commits foolish mistakes, suffers painful disappointments, learns wisdom the hard way, acquires maturity and responsibility and rejecting the commonplace life, resigns himself to a life in the service of God. Accordingly *Possession* fulfils the definition of the *Kunstlerroman* and qualifies as a *Kunstlerroman*.

Thus the dreams of Valmiki to become a success in the materialistic world have been destroyed by the strong current of the courses of life. The realities of life that have shattered his dreams have encountered him in many forms; the death of Ellie and his unborn child and later on the abrupt ending of his affairs with Annabel. His love for Caroline and his trust in her also has been devastated by Caroline's acts of forging a letter from the Swamy and in sending Ellie mercilessly out of her house and also her cunning act of serving the relationship between Annabel and Valmiki.

Caroline's dream of making Valmiki a great artist and to make him her *Possession* has been fulfilled to a considerable extent but her grooming of him after the model of a westerner has proved to be utterly destructive in respect of developing his character and as well as his soul. Furthermore, her chief goal of possessing Valmiki has been upset by the incorruptible values that the Swamy had inculcated in him during his formative years. In order to have a life-long *Possession* of Valmiki she takes the ordeal of coming to India to persuade Valmiki to go with her. She even goes to the extent of challenging the Swamy proclaiming that definitely one day or other Valmiki will come to her for the comfort and the pleasure she has shown him. Thus Caroline, who is well-off, powerful and who also has all the resources at hand to carry out her plans and fulfil her dreams cannot stand against the strong current of reality.

Rikki has similarities with Valmiki of *Possession*. Kamala Markandaya's central characters are generally grown-ups. Rikki like Valmiki is also a character that is leaving his boyhood behind. Valmiki transforms from a herd boy to an artist of international fame. Rikki's artistic skill develops and flourishes once he comes into contact with Tully.

Pleasure City portrays the growth and development of Rikki, the fisher boy, from his childhood to the time he reaches maturity. During this developmental stage he undergoes varied experiences. His brave rescue of the foolhardy Mrs. Tully against the fisherman's instinct and at the risk of his own life is the crisis that physically and psychologically propels him into a man's state. The grievous injury to his legs has left him not sufficiently seaworthy to go back for fishing. So Rikki realistically and pragmatically resigns himself to a useful citizen's role in some job in Shalimar. The language and the personality that the Bridies and the Tullies had inculcated in him could be put to the best use. So *Pleasure City* is a *Kunstlerroman*.

As the result of his moulding by the Bridies, Rikki is honest and blunt. He has a fine sense of what is right and what is wrong and he never has any difficulty in choosing between the two. The Tullies take over Rikki's development where the Bridies left off with their death. The text points out to this continuity of tutelage. Rikki's association with Tully extends and intensifies his moulding at the hands of the Bridies. Rikki's varied experiences under Tully's patronage impinge on his consciousness and refine his mind and character. The vista of opportunity opened up by Shalimar, now flourishing and his injured physical condition make him opt for a useful life as an employee of Shalimar. With the mind and character he has displayed, Rikki can be expected to make his life a success at Shalimar.

Pleasure City has the characteristics of the *Kunstlerroman*, like shaping, influencing, educating, learning, initiation, maturation, and experience. Based on the textual analysis and the critical opinions offered above, it can be concluded that Kamala Markandaya's *Pleasure City* is a *Kunstlerroman* and that it can be taken as a good example of the genre in Indian English Fiction.

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