

**Materializing the Specter:  
The Scapegoat and the Victorian Bildungsroman**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis will explore and scrutinize the literary genre of the formation novel or novel of education, formally known as the Bildungsroman, in order to develop a solid yet encompassing comprehension of this somewhat blurry and convoluted genre. It will be argued that social assimilation, contrary to popular belief, is not a necessary step within the Bildungsroman formula, but rather, it is a motif used to fulfill the novel's true purpose: to highlight discordant ideologies of growth and maturation via the protagonist's choice to either comply with social norms, or transgress these norms in order to comply with their thoughts and desires. Furthermore, it will be pointed out that a series of scapegoatings, removals, and exclusions throughout Bildungsromans serve to facilitate the protagonist's choice of whether or not to transgress the social and moral parameters established within a community. Ultimately, this thesis demonstrates that the scapegoating mechanism is not only important, but crucial, for the development and thorough understanding of the social, moral, psychological, and literary forces present within the Bildungsroman genre. The study of a small selection of novels written during the Victorian period, which was the pinnacle of the Bildungsroman genre, will be used to facilitate this discussion.

## RESUMEN

Esta tesis explorará y analizará el género literario de la novela de formación o novela de educación, conocida formalmente como un Bildungsroman, con el fin de elaborar una comprensión tanto sólida como abarcadora de este género tan borroso y complicado. Se argumentará que la asimilación social, contrariamente a la creencia popular, no es un paso necesario dentro de la fórmula del Bildungsroman, sino más bien, es un motivo utilizado para cumplir el verdadero propósito de la novela: enfatizar las ideologías discordantes de crecimiento y maduración a través de la elección del protagonista ya sea para cumplir con las normas sociales, o transgredir estas normas con el fin de cumplir con sus propios pensamientos y deseos. Además, se señalará que una serie de “chivos expiatorios,” sacrificios y exclusiones a lo largo del Bildungsroman sirven para facilitar la elección del protagonista de transgredir o no los parámetros sociales y morales establecidos dentro de una comunidad. En última instancia, esta tesis tiene la intención de señalar que el mecanismo de “chivos expiatorios” no es sólo importante, sino crucial, para el desarrollo y comprensión de las fuerzas sociales, morales, psicológicas y literarios presentes en el género literario del Bildungsroman. El estudio de una selección de novelas escritas durante el periodo Victoriano, la cual fue el punto culminante del desarrollo del Bildungsroman, facilitará la discusión que se llevará a cabo.

## **DEDICATION**

To those people who in one way or another have contributed content and meaning to the first chapters of the metaphorical Bildungsroman known as my life, and to those who helped me transgress the limits imposed by society.

Thank you for making these chapters unforgettable and powerful; I dedicate this to you all.

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# CHAPTER I

## (RE)CONFIGURING THE VICTORIAN BILDUNGSROMAN

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Any text or communicative medium which depicts an individual's transition from a child to an adult mentality can be considered a coming-of-age narrative. Although a popular theme within countless films, short stories, and even songs, it is often claimed that the coming-of-age process is best represented within a novel, for it provides a lengthy platform that facilitates both the space and the depth required to represent the gradual and arduous process of personal maturation. Within academia, the coming of age novel is often dubbed a Bildungsroman<sup>1</sup>, which is a German word that directly translates into "novel of education or formation." It is widely assumed that the coming-of-age novel usually must comply with a strict paradigm in order to be classified as a Bildungsroman. Not only must the protagonist of the novel go through a mental or moral transition from child to adult, but this transition must be triggered by dissatisfaction or distress.

The novel that is considered to be the prototype of the Bildungsroman genre is Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*). Rather than focusing on a maturation process per se, the novel centers on Wilhelm's struggles to achieve a sense of recognition and self-fulfillment. As the novel progresses, the reader is able to trace Wilhelm's efforts to break away from the sense of dissatisfaction caused by his daily life as a businessman. In due course, Wilhelm undergoes a formation process in which he completely

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<sup>1</sup> A quick glance at the literature concerning the discussion of Bildungsromans will show that there are many variations in terms of the spelling and formatting of the word. For purposes of consistency, the word will be spelt using a capital letter and without italics throughout this discussion. The only exceptions will occur only in the case of direct quotes from books and articles in which the author employed a different spelling variation.



severs the connection he had with his bourgeois past by changing the outlook he had on life itself. What is important to note here is that although the Bildungsroman translates into “novel of formation/education,” such an education does not need to take place in the traditional sense of the word (such as in a school or via the assistance of a tutor or governess), but rather, this education is fostered by one’s life experiences. This variation was pointed out by Edward Dowden in his interpretation of the protagonist’s formative process within *Wilhelm Meisters*

*Lehrjahre*:

... a foolish dreamer is to be formed into a true man; the vague and void of indefinite idealism is to be filled hereafter by a life of well-chosen, well-defined activity. He is to be educated not in the schools—it is now unhappily too late for that—but by the harder discipline of life; he is to be delivered from the splendid prison painted with idle visions into the liberty of modest well-doing.

In light of the above, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* was unique in the sense that it presented the protagonist as an individual who initially lacks both assertion and ambition in life. However, this protagonist soon undertakes a journey of self-discovery that is enriched by the experiences he faces while trying to establish a sense of self. Therefore, Wilhelm became the prototype of a character who steps out of idleness and into action, transforming abstract ideals into tangible achievements by exploring the world around him, thus hinting at the formation process that is so crucial within the Bildungsroman.

Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* was simply the beginning of a literary tradition that would focus on the notions of formation, transformation, and maturity within literature. But as with any literary genre, the Bildungsroman’s development led to an incorporation of particular rules and formulas that had to be followed in order for a novel to be classified as such.

According to Suzanne Hader in her definition of the Bildungsroman distilled from Marianne Hirsch’s views on the genre, the coming of age process within the Bildungsroman is “long,

arduous, and gradual, consisting of repeated clashes between the protagonist's needs and desires and the views and judgments enforced by an unbending social order" (The Victorian Web).

In addition to portraying the protagonist's negotiation between desire and social order, the Bildungsroman is characterized by its portrayal of middle-class characters. This notion was pointed out by Franco Moretti who, in his book *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture*, argues that the Bildungsroman is "situated on the border between two social classes, and at the transition point between them: between bourgeoisie and aristocracy," and that this merger of two extremes can be found in most traditional Bildungsromans, including the works of Eliot, Dickens, and Brontë (viii). Furthermore, Moretti goes on to discuss the possibility of this "social merger" being the result of the attempt to mend the social split that paved the way towards the French Revolution, and to create a metaphorical bridge between the old and new regime; thus, this bridging of the gap gave the bourgeois individual a chance to ennoble himself and achieve his ambitions (viii). What can be observed up to this point is that the Bildungsroman can be considered a genre that conflates the seemingly opposing ideas of desire and social demand, and that the notion of transcending social and psychological barriers is a prominent motif within the genre. Nonetheless, this transcendence is not easy for the protagonist because he/she must face constant dissatisfaction as compromises are being made to perform a social or mental leap within a particular environment. Thus, the social rules that are enforced in the protagonist's social setting go on to fuel this dissatisfaction, and they will eventually foster an internal clash between the protagonist's wants and the expectations of his/her social environment. The protagonist eventually deals with this dissatisfaction directly, initiating a negotiation to achieve some sort of compromise between his/her wants and societal demands, and achieving the middle ground that Moretti describes.

Hader goes on to note that this negotiation leads “the spirit and values of the social order [to] become manifest in the protagonist, who is then accommodated into society” (The Victorian Web). It is precisely this notion of social assimilation that is considered to be the cornerstone of the Bildungsroman genre: the completion of the character’s education or formation is based on the premise that he/she is able to accommodate himself/herself to the social norms that predominate in his/her setting. In other words, the supposed pedagogical purpose of the Bildungsroman is to uphold the status quo of the social values that were important in the novel’s fictionalized atmosphere via the integration of these values within the protagonist, thus ending his/her cycle of dissatisfaction. However, I maintain that Bildungsromans do not have the sole purpose of portraying the protagonist’s negotiation of bourgeois values, but they also push the reader to redefine or reconfigure their views of the middle class itself. It would not be far-fetched to deduce that the Bildungsroman’s heavy reliance on social norms and the struggles of the bourgeois to achieve social and mental transcendence allow the Bildungsroman to share qualities with other novelistic genres, particularly the social-problem novels that were also prominent during the Victorian era. These novels not only focused on the issues of the Victorian middle-class, but they also pushed readers to reconfigure their prejudices and views of this class as well:

...insofar as the social-problem novels can be treated as a group, they display conflict about the nature and diversity of a newly empowered and newly fragmented middle class as they attempt to re-imagine the roles that it should play in the maintenance of social order. (Bodenheimer 5)

The social-problem novel intertwines with the Bildungsroman, not only because both have a major focus on society, but also because of their focus on middle class characters that are doing everything in their power to achieve some degree of social mobilization and to define their roles in society. The difference would be that while the social-problem novel has a macro-social focus,

the Bildungsroman has a micro- or individualistic focus that reveals many of the same concerns that the social-problem novel does, via the portrayal of the protagonist's struggles and negotiations in such a societal setting.

Given that Bildungsromans have such a vast societal focus, it comes as no surprise that novels that follow the traditional formula for the Bildungsroman were quite prominent during the Victorian era. As a matter of fact, Petru Golban argues that even though traces of the Bildungsroman genre as a literary tradition have been present since the development of fictional prose, it was ultimately consolidated and reached its pinnacle as a literary genre during the Victorian period (1). Outstanding examples of such novels are Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield*, and Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, which strictly comply with all of the stipulations mentioned above in terms of social assimilation and mental/moral maturity. Understandably, the Bildungsroman was outstanding in this era due to the reconfiguration of the middle class mentioned above; however, there were many other factors that could have possibly contributed to the genre's prominence during this time. As pointed out by Laura C. Berry in her book titled *The Child, the State, and the Victorian Novel*, the Victorian era signaled an increased interest in the welfare and social position of children in general:

The private and privately governed domain of the home was now permeable territory, increasingly subject to such diverse and evolving authority as the educational and legal systems [...] and the apparatus of social welfare [...] their development was supported by the fact that *childhood* and *the child* had become unquestioned and unquestionably public categories. Publicly and politically imagined, the child was frequently and often sensationally represented as an innocent imperiled by cruelties as likely to be administered at the hand of a relative as by an administrative arm of the state. (2)

In light of the above, it is possible to deduce that this sudden interest in children, and their position in society, led to a boom within the Bildungsroman genre because it is primarily concerned with the development of a child into a pliable and mature citizen within a specific

societal setting. Furthermore, it is strangely revealing to note that many of the Bildungsromans written during this period portrayed the stories of children who were initially victimized either by family members or political agencies: Jane Eyre was emotionally and physically abused by her aunt Sarah Reed; Pip, the protagonist of *Great Expectations*, was similarly abused by his sister Mrs. Joe; even Maggie Tulliver, the protagonist of *The Mill on the Floss*, encountered various levels of emotional distress due to the questionable and submissive relationship she shared with her brother Tom. With this in mind, the traditional Victorian Bildungsroman seems to portray the struggles that these characters face as they try to deviate from the social and psychological consequences of a harsh and abusive childhood. This deviation will be explored in more depth later on in this discussion.

The novels mentioned above are many times considered to be the *ne plus ultra* of the Victorian Bildungsroman genre. However, one encounters many other novels that deal with the mental and moral growth of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood, but, towards the end of these novels, one notices that these protagonists are unable to achieve any degree of social assimilation due to unfortunate circumstances present within their lives. Examples of such novels include George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss* and Thomas Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. Throughout these novels, the reader first encounters the protagonist as a child, and is able to track the moral and mental growth of these characters as the novel progresses; nonetheless, they are usually social outcasts who never become reconciled with the ideals and spirit of the societies they reside in, no matter how hard they try. Unlike traditional Bildungsromans, these latter examples of Victorian novels end in a tragic fashion, and the final step of social assimilation is blocked or simply impossible to achieve. Traditionally, these novels

would be classified as domestic novels rather than Bildungsromans, usually because they focus on the sentimental aspects of family life within the home.

Nevertheless, just because the protagonists in domestic fiction do not comply with the traditional stipulation of social assimilation within the Bildungsroman established by Hirsch, would it be wise to avoid classifying them as such? In a response to David Miles' interpretations of the Bildungsroman genre, Hirsch argues that the Bildungsroman's defining characteristic is that it "maintains a peculiar balance between the social and the personal and explores their interaction," and goes on to contest Miles' "loose and conflating" perspective of the Bildungsroman with other literary genres such as the picaresque novel (122).

David H. Miles claims that the problem with Hirsch's views is that she perceives the Bildungsroman to be a stable and unchanging form, and that this view, in due course, demonstrates her "general unwillingness to concede historical shifts in the development of the Bildungsroman [...] and its relation to other branches of fiction" (123). Interestingly, the claim that caused so much debate is present in Miles's discussion titled *The Picaro's Journey to the Confessional: The Changing Image of the Hero in the German Bildungsroman*, which focuses on three different German novels to demonstrate that the *Bildung* (education/formation process) was no longer taking place as a formal or exterior educational process in an actual society, but rather, within the protagonist's mind. Miles goes on to point out that this historical shift in the Bildungsroman was inevitable due to the fact that novelists were trying to remain consistent with the trends, insights, and values that were prominent during the creation of their literary works:

...the novelist, in order to remain mimetically true to such an increasingly inner order of reality, had to create heroes with corresponding energies of sensibility, self-consciousness, and inwardness; to borrow Stendhal's metaphor, the novelist no longer wandered down life's road with his magic mirror, but returned to his cell, where he hung

it directly above the writing desk, to catch every distortion of the world as mirrored first in his own consciousness. (989)

What Miles demonstrates is that unlike many other genres of literature, the Bildungsroman seems to exhibit a salient degree of plasticity, which is sensitive to historical changes and to the motifs that are favored by readers as well. Additionally, the classification of a novel as a Bildungsroman can be quite difficult simply because the coming-of-age process can vary according to the ideologies of the author, and those of the reader or literary critic as well.

As exemplified in Hirsh's and Miles' arguments, the flexibility that exists in the established parameters for the Bildungsroman genre eventually leads to disagreements about what should and should not be classified as a formation novel. Many scholars argue that there are countless novels that are categorized within this genre even though they do not comply with the formula or the stipulations that are deemed necessary for its typological<sup>2</sup> classification. As a matter of fact, even the novel that is usually designated as the prototypical Bildungsroman deviates from these stipulations, as pointed out by Elizabeth Krimmer in her discussion of paternity and formation in Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre*. She suggests that even though the text under discussion is considered to be the foundational text of the Bildungsroman genre, many scholars have argued that Wilhelm Meister shows no indications of maturity towards the novel's conclusion (258). In other words, successful assimilation was not the goal of Goethe's novel, but rather, it was the representation of the tragic outcome of a dreamer who collides with a harsh reality. *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* lacks one of the central characteristics that Hirsch deems important in the formation novel's basic typology. With this in mind, perhaps it would be interesting to explore whether certain Victorian domestic novels can be classified as

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<sup>2</sup> The definition of typology used in this thesis will henceforth be "the analysis of literature based on types/categories."

Bildungsromans even when they present no degree of assimilation taking place towards the conclusion.

At this point, one encounters an issue that merits careful scrutiny. If the Bildungsroman genre is defined in an extremely flexible and encompassing way, one might run the risk of categorizing any novel featuring young people as a coming-of-age narrative. If one views the Bildungsroman as an umbrella term for various genres and sub-genres, what is the point of defining the formation novel as a genre to begin with? After all, it is difficult to imagine a novel that does not portray the psychological and moral growth of a character to some extent. These notions have led scholars to deduce that the Bildungsroman genre is redundant, and in extreme cases, a non-existent genre that only thrives due to the popularity of this term in academia. Marc Redfield discusses this view in *Phantom Formations: Aesthetic Ideologies and the Bildungsroman*, in which he treats the difficulties of viewing the Bildungsroman as a separate genre:

In a modest but ineluctable fashion, the specter of the Bildungsroman haunts literary criticism. The genre does not properly exist, and in a sense can be proved not to exist: one can take canonical definitions of *Bildung* (itself no simple term), go to the novels frequently called *Bildungsromane*, and with greater or lesser difficulty show that they exceed, or fall short of, or call into question the process of *Bildung* which they purportedly show [...] Yet despite, or because of, its referential complexity, the notion of the Bildungsroman is one of academic criticism's most overwhelmingly successful inventions. (vii)

What Redfield brings into question is the notion that the Bildungsroman is not a discrete literary genre precisely because the concepts of formation and education that are so integral to the coming-of-age process can vary according to a character's idiosyncrasies and surroundings. Thus, a novel's classification as a Bildungsroman depends on how the *Bildung* process is viewed, defined, and approached by the reader or literary critic. When adding historical



developments of the genre into the mix, it becomes clear that establishing parameters for the Bildungsroman genre not only seems improbable, but perhaps impractical to some degree. There are some discrepancies and incongruities when it comes to defining the Bildungsroman as a genre, but should this stop one from trying to establish parameters that can distinguish formation novels as a distinct genre, breaking away from the convoluted disorder that the traditional definition leads to?

But what is a genre and why bother to classify literary works at all? Tzvetan Todorov, in his book titled *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, argues that unlike other areas of study such as the hard sciences and mathematics, the notion of literary genres must take into account a notion of duality to be considered practical:

First, we must be aware that [a text] manifests properties that it shares with all literary texts, or with texts belonging to one of the sub-groups of literature (which we call, precisely, genres). It is inconceivable, nowadays, to defend the thesis that everything in the work is individual, a brand-new product of personal inspiration, a creation with no relation to works of the past. Second, we must understand that a text is not only the product of a pre-existing combinatorial system (constituted by all that is literature *in posse*); it is also a transformation of that system. (7)

According to Todorov's approach towards literary genres, which neatly combines Aristotle with T. S. Eliot, it is apparent that genre allows the reader and the literary critic to analyze the ideas of genre that might have shaped the text during its creation, for it is obvious that a literary text must share some connection to texts that were created before. However, he also states that besides being influenced by previous texts, a work also has the power to influence and alter of the literary system. Thus, a literary piece is influenced and ultimately influences the perception of texts, thus shaping and altering their configuration as a literary genre.

Returning to Redfield's classification of the Bildungsroman as a specter genre, perhaps it would be feasible to assume that the formation novel is not an ideological figment that is kept

alive only by scholars interested in this area. True, the Bildungsroman can indeed seem quite fuzzy to some, but I will maintain that it is possible to produce a workable typology of the Bildungsroman genre. Furthermore, the Bildungsroman is far from being the only literary genre that has been contested due to its so-called spectral nature. As Susan Fraiman, in her evaluation of *The Mill on the Floss* as a Bildungsroman, puts it: “If genres are simply pragmatic constructs, then they are all phantoms, defined in the service of one explanation (and ideology) or another...” (146). When taking the practical and systematic nature of genre into consideration, all genres can be classified as phantoms because their parameters are not only flexible, but dependent on how the diverse ideological views of the genre clash or mingle with one another. However we qualify or contextualize it, the Bildungsroman does seem more focused on the ideological issues of maturation in comparison to many other literary genres.

Setting ideological factors aside, perhaps it is reasonable at this point to ask oneself what exactly is the salient or defining trait around within the various novels described as Bildungsromans can be said to cohere. The depiction of an education and the portrayal of a protagonist’s maturation process are definitely not the defining factors of the Bildungsroman, not only because depictions of maturation vary across the genre, but also because as mentioned previously, almost all novels portray these two notions to some extent. Going back to the traditional definitions provided for the Bildungsroman genre, John Bender et al., in the *The Columbia History of the British Novel*, present one of the most succinct and direct definitions of the genre: “the Bildungsroman [is the genre], in which a young person--usually male--learns first to roam beyond the limits of his society and then to come to terms with its demands, accommodating his identity to what is possible for adult life lived on society’s terms” (435). Though this definition is quite similar to the ones presented at the beginning of this discussion,

there are subtle yet significant differences. This definition indicates that the protagonist of a Bildungsroman must venture beyond the predetermined limits of social setting in order to develop an awareness of what demands he/she must comply with in order to achieve some degree of assimilation. This indicates that the notion of transgression becomes quite important in the novel of formation, for the protagonist must actively interact with society (and the people living in it) in order to develop an awareness of its so-called rules. Eventually, the protagonist develops a sense of society's unwritten rules not necessarily because they were taught to him/her, but because of this active negotiation between transgression and compliance.

Similar to other definitions of the Bildungsroman provided throughout this discussion, Bender et al. place significant attention on the fact that a protagonist must achieve some degree of assimilation with societal demands towards the end of the novel. Nevertheless, it has already been argued that many novels classified as Bildungsromans show no traces of any maturation process or assimilation taking place, and there are others that completely omit a definite educational/formation process. Alex Moffett, in his discussion of memory and self-begetting in *Jude the Obscure*, makes use of some very tantalizing rhetoric as he tries to defend the novel's categorization as a Bildungsroman, even though the protagonist is unable to achieve any degree of social assimilation towards the end of the novel. He argues that one "can conceptualize *Jude the Obscure* as a Bildungsroman either by conceiving the genre as encompassing all possible developmental vectors, not necessarily just onward and upward, or by problematizing the actual existence of such social trajectories in the first place" (86).

Moffett makes two very interesting propositions that would allow for the classification of Hardy's *Jude the Obscure* as a Bildungsroman. His first proposition is based on widening the scope of the concept of development/formation to account for both the positive and negative

aspects of growth: in other words, that formation or development does not have to take place in accordance with social parameters in order for this transition to be considered growth. The second proposition, the one that Moffett himself favors, is that the social course that a protagonist is supposed to take is in itself problematic, due mostly to the fact that the Bildungsroman focuses more on putting characters within their “rightful place upon the upper rungs” rather than portraying a linear development towards social acceptance and self-fulfillment (86). This is quite interesting in the case of the eponymous protagonist of *Jude the Obscure*, for one can observe that even though he possesses the desire to climb the social ladder and to become a prominent scholar, the circumstances he faces and even his social position obliterate his ability to achieve any degree of social assimilation.

Although Moffett tends to favor his second proposition, it would be worthwhile to explore whether or not both of those assumptions must be taken into consideration in order to achieve a distinct typology for Bildungsromans, particularly those written during the Victorian period. In other words, the reader and literary critic might expand the scope for classifying formation and development, and in addition be attuned to the issues that these developments and formations present. It is precisely this expansion of the scope that allows novels such as Eliot’s *The Mill on the Floss* to be classified as Bildungsromans to begin with. The novel is now approached as a Bildungsroman, which traditionally was aimed at depicting the maturation process of a male protagonist; however, not only is the protagonist of Eliot’s novel female, but culture and education, which are central aims that the protagonist should achieve, are, as Francis O’Gorman argues in his discussion of the Victorian novel, “the very thing most bitterly denied to the novel’s heroine” (139). Furthermore, autonomy and self-definition were not deemed to be appropriate values for women in the Victorian era, which brings into question whether *The Mill on the Floss*

can even be considered a Bildungsroman to begin with. In due course, although the Bildungsroman traditionally focused on the individual as the driving force of the novel's plot, Eliot's work exemplified a focal shift in the novel of development which showed "through the device of compared and contrasted brother and sister, how powerfully forces and expectations not generated within the individual character determine [their] growth" (O'Gorman 139). In other words, it can be shown how once again, the Bildungsroman shifted its attention to the way in which social forces could either aid or hinder the *Bildung* process within the protagonist, which hints at the notion that the genre is aimed at depicting the social construction of subjectivity. Under this somewhat fatalistic perspective, characters, in a certain sense, are predestined either to achieve (or to fail to achieve) some degree of social assimilation, and in turn, the social mobility is completely undermined.

From social foci to individualistic foci, from a journey in space to a journey within the mind, from a maturation into an adulthood to a complete lack of a formative process, it is quite apparent that the task of operationalizing the Bildungsroman genre seems virtually impossible, because it is constantly undergoing a stylistic and formulaic metamorphosis due to the genre's social, ideological, and historical nature. It has been mentioned already that the Bildungsroman seems to demonstrate an immense degree of plasticity and flexibility as a genre, but when carefully considered, it is apparent that virtually every novel can be classified as a novel of formation if the typology to approach these novels is tweaked in a particular fashion. It is quite certain that the novel of formation must portray a protagonist's struggle to develop an adult mentality, and it is also certain that the protagonist's social setting plays an immense role in terms of how this mental development takes place (or does not). No matter how vast societal influence may be in a novel of formation, and no matter how dissonant and divergent novels

classified as Bildungsromans may be, the essential rudiment of the genre would undoubtedly have to be the mental development of the protagonist.

The protagonist of the Bildungsroman embodies just how ideological maturation and formation can be. There is no formula for maturation, and despite attempts to establish the so-called steps and stipulations needed to classify a novel as a Bildungsroman, it is plausible to assume that there will most likely be various depictions of maturation that stray beyond from the parameters that literary scholars have tried to impose. In order to come up with a fully functional typology of the Bildungsroman genre, perhaps a narrowing of focus is not what is needed, but rather, a widening of the scope that is currently used to classify it. The Bildungsroman is a novel whose purpose is to portray just how ideological, idiosyncratic, and contradictory notions of mental maturation are: “the novel of development should be thought of less as the apprenticeship of its central figure than as a drama of dissonant ideas about just what formation is or should be” (Fraiman 146). In other words, the heart of the Bildungsroman is not its portrayal of an education, an acculturation, or the assimilation of the protagonist, but rather, it is a subjective and in-depth debate about what constitutes maturation according to the protagonist and the author. The protagonist’s struggles to achieve social assimilation, the character’s testing and transgression of societal boundaries, and even the education portrayed in the novel are nothing more than motifs used to stage to this debate within the novel. In light of the above, perhaps the following reconfiguration of the Bildungsroman’s definition will suffice to account for all novels that in one way or another fall within the category of formation novels: *A Bildungsroman is a novel in which a protagonist gradually negotiates the advantages of complying with the moral, psychological, and cultural parameters of a particular society, and the consequences of transgressing these limits, via a formal or informal education. In turn, this negotiation goes on to*

*highlight discordant ideologies of formation and maturity by portraying the protagonist's struggles, choices, and inevitable outcomes as he or she deals with this conciliation from childhood to adulthood.*

This reconfigured definition is encompassing enough to include all novels that in one way or another can or have been classified as Bildungsromans, but, on the other hand, it also paves the way towards a definition that will serve to differentiate formation novels from other literary genres. When taking the Victorian novel into consideration, this reconfigured definition of the Bildungsroman becomes more inclusive, allowing one to classify novels such as Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, and Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* as Bildungsromans. This definition still possesses value as a term, for other novels which depict a protagonist from childhood to adulthood, such as Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, would be excluded by this reconfigured definition. In due course, this resistance proves to be quite illuminating simply because it maintains the integrity of the Bildungsroman as a genre, preventing it from becoming so broad as to be utterly meaningless.

This thesis will be targeted at analyzing a selection of Victorian Bildungsromans using a selection of critical and social theories in order to analyze the role and importance of exclusion and sacrifices in these novels of formation. Close attention will be given to how these elements of removal give a sense of leeway to the protagonist, allowing him or her the possibility of experiencing the *Bildung* process, and more importantly, of negotiating the pros and cons of either complying with the parameters established by society, or of transgressing these limits. In order to facilitate the understanding of these transgressions, the notion of scapegoating within literature and society will be discussed with greater scrutiny. But before this discussion takes place, it is important to highlight why the Bildungsroman as a genre faces issues of typology, and

how understanding the role of scapegoating in these novels becomes key for understanding the issues that give shape to the Victorian Bildungsroman (and all Bildungsromans for that matter) as a genre. What follows is a discussion of the typological issues of the Bildungsroman, followed by a detailed illustration of scapegoating. These notions will then be applied towards the analysis of three Victorian formation novels: Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.



## CHAPTER II

### THE BILDUNGSROMAN: AN ISSUE OF TYPOLOGY

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It is safe to assume that undergoing the mental shift from childhood to adulthood is perhaps one of the most important changes in the lives of most human beings, and this so-called rite of passage has been an eminent theme not only in the Victorian Bildungsroman, but also in literature more generally. Interestingly, even before the study of vernacular literary texts became an academic concern focused on the analysis and criticism of written works, the importance of personal formation and mental maturity was a familiar motif in storytelling, and “the antecedents of such a fictional discourse [can] be found diachronically throughout the entire process of prose development from antiquity” (Golban 1). These antecedents are not only present in prose, but they can even be traced in poetry such as the Hittite epic *Gilgamesh* and the *Telemachia* in Books One to Four of Homer’s *The Odyssey*. Nonetheless, it is generally well known that the coming-of-age process is not only variable according to the traditions and customs of a generation, but it is also dependent on a person’s social setting and personal experiences. This factor makes it particularly difficult to operationalize literature that deals with the issues of maturation and social assimilation, precisely because it is difficult to pinpoint what does or does not constitute a complete formation process due to the Bildungsroman’s ideological nature.

In the previous chapter, it was argued that the Bildungsroman, rather than solely being focused on a protagonist’s coming-of-age process, was also targeted towards highlighting moral, psychological, and social negotiations and transgressions. Additionally, this negotiation eventually brings into light different viewpoints of social formation and maturity by portraying the mental and moral development of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood. Although this

enhanced view of the Bildungsroman indeed does help to tighten up the specifications used to classify the novels as such, the issue that now begins to surface is: what exactly prompts the protagonist to undergo these social and moral negotiations, and even more so, what, or who, influences the character either to comply or transgress the social, cultural, and moral limits imposed within a particular community? In order for this question to be addressed, one must resort to re-interpreting the traditional typology used to classify novels as Bildungsromans by arguing that social assimilation is not a necessary rudiment in the coming-of-age novel, but rather, it is simply a convention or motif within the genre that facilitates a subjective and in-depth debate over what constitutes maturation. It will be argued that this debate is ultimately manifested via multiple representations of scapegoating.

Generally speaking, the Bildungsroman aims to portray a character from childhood to adulthood, and the reader is able to grasp that this character has achieved some degree of social assimilation towards the novel's conclusion. However, if one were to adopt the definition of the Bildungsroman discussed in the previous chapter, a novel can be classified as such as long as it focuses on the deliberate psychological and moral growth of a character that is facilitated via a formal educational or formative process, and as long as it portrays the protagonist's intentions of assimilating into his/her society – even if such an assimilation is unsuccessful due to the character's death or incompatibility with social norms. Despite the presence of unsuccessful attempts at assimilation, it is still clear that a Bildungsroman still possesses the ability to inform the reader about contrasting views and ideologies of maturation, but even more so, it informs the reader about the consequences of complying with or transgressing societal boundaries. With this in mind, one can deduce that the characters present within a Bildungsroman can be viewed as embodiments of the Bildungsroman's purpose, for they go on to personify the consequences that

societal transgression induces, stressing the importance of complying with the status quo. Thus, whenever a character is removed, withdrawn, or metaphorically sacrificed within the course of the plot, it can be deemed that such a withdrawal represents a lesson that is being taught to the protagonist and the reader as well, and the gravity of this lesson seems to intensify when it is the protagonist who must face the removal. In other words, despite the supposed irrelevance that these withdrawals may present within a novel's plot, they usually pave the way towards major and necessary solutions for the crises that the protagonist faces, even though such a solution may not be apparent to either the protagonist or the reader.

Usually, a novel's resolution is achieved once the antagonist or villain is removed from the equation. Nonetheless, throughout the Bildungsroman, one can detect a series of characters who are not necessarily antagonists or villains, yet they represent or pose an obstacle in the protagonist's coming of age process. These characters usually take the form of a double or mirror figure, a mentor, a bad influence, or even a character that would in some way or another affect the way in which the protagonist is perceived by society. These characters push the protagonist to question and even challenge the social limits that are being imposed upon him or her due to the fact that their removal from the scene is a literal embodiment of the dangers of transgressing society's limits.

In due course, it will be argued that the goal of the Bildungsroman is not necessarily to portray assimilation, but rather, to explore the dynamic and the negotiations that occur between transgression and assimilation. In other words, it will be argued that the removal of characters within Victorian Bildungsromans becomes the impetus that pushes the protagonist to the realm of psychological and moral maturity, which in turn works to augment desires for social assimilation because he or she is aware of the cost of crossing the lines. Thus, the Bildungsroman

goes on to stress the ideological view of maturation that exists amongst a particular community at a particular point in time.

In order to study the effects of scapegoating within the Victorian Bildungsroman various cultural and psychoanalytic theories based on exclusion, removal, and sacrifice will be used to better comprehend the social and cultural intricacies that are at play. These theories are expected to create a stable platform which would facilitate an in-depth analysis of character withdrawals and removals in a selection of Bildungsromans; this platform will include notions such as René Girard's theory of mimetic rivalry and the scapegoating process, Giorgio Agamben's *Homo Sacer*, and Julia Kristeva's psychology of abjection, among others. However, this framework will make significant use of an array of theories of the scapegoat, which in essence is an individual or group of people that suffer unwarranted blame, when in reality they are not responsible for the problem. The individual(s) must be sacrificed or exiled in order for the tensions of the root problem to be seemingly evened out or balanced, although this sacrifice is only a temporary solution to the supposed problem at hand.

In his discussion of scapegoating, Girard focuses most of his attention on revealing how the scapegoat mechanism is an integral component of human culture. He argues that scapegoating is a temporary solution to the tensions that arise between individuals in society, and that these tensions are rooted in what he calls "mimetic desire." In essence, mimetic desire is a driving force that influences humans to desire what another individual has, which leads Girard to actively defend the notion that humans "are mimetic, or acquisitively imitational, creatures" (viii). The scapegoat goes on to 'absorb' all of the tension caused by mimetic desire, leading society to sacrifice the scapegoat as a way of eliminating this tension; yet, by sacrificing the

scapegoat, it is assumed that the tension is dispersed once again through society, thus initiating a perpetual cycle of discomfort, blame, and sacrifice.

Although the protagonist in a Bildungsroman traditionally has the goal of achieving some degree of social assimilation, the narratives will reveal that certain individuals or even ideas must be removed, excluded or sacrificed in order for any degree of social integration to be achieved. At times, even the protagonist of the novel will face scapegoating in order to assure that the reader has a firm grasp over the maturational ideologies that are being projected by the novel's literary community. Therefore, scapegoats represent the qualities of the protagonist's community that must be removed in order for assimilation to be possible, but not necessarily take place. Before delving into the analysis of scapegoats within the Victorian Bildungsroman, it is of the utmost importance to understand the cultural and social machinery that drives this phenomenon to begin with, and more importantly, it is essential to understand how the scapegoat process functions and the goals that it intends to achieve.

## CHAPTER III

### VESSELS OF VIOLENCE: UNDERSTANDING SCAPEGOATING

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Regardless of culture, religious background, moral/ethical upbringing, and ethnicity, it can be argued that all social communities, in one way or another, have beliefs, rituals, and practices that are designed to purify a social venue and prevent it from being tainted or corrupted with negative manifestations (e.g. evil, sin, immorality, etc.). For instance, in Native American cultures such as the Ojibwe, they believe in the crafting and use of the now popularized artifact known as a dreamcatcher, which is a wooden hoop with a web-like design woven around the hoop, and decorated with beads and feathers. Ojibwe cultures used this artifact to filter the dreams that they had during the night, allowing pleasant and good dreams to enter into the mind of the sleeper, while ensnaring negative dreams within the web. However, there are more serious cases of purification that directly involve human subjects and living creatures. Perhaps the most well known of these purification rituals would be an exorcism, a ceremony which is believed and practiced in many antique and contemporary cultures, in which an evil presence, most commonly designated as a demon, is driven away from the vessel it is inhabiting (whether it be a living creature or an inanimate object). What can be seen up to this point is the fact that manifestations of negativity or culpability simply do not disappear into thin air, but rather, they must be driven away from the source they inhabit, which is the basic premise of scapegoating.

As mentioned previously, a scapegoat is an individual or group of people who represent factors or elements within a society that are shunned or viewed negatively. In other words, they go on to absorb or represent an “evil” within a community, which is why the scapegoat must be

excluded or sacrificed in order for society to return to its previous “unblemished” state. It can be said that the scapegoat represents a foreign body that interrupts the smooth functioning of the social machine, a disruption that must be disposed of in order for societal gears to spin and continue the execution of their predetermined functions. Interestingly, the action of scapegoating can take many shapes, forms, and degrees, to the point that its denotation can become quite convoluted when taking many perspectives of this notion into account. The following discussion intends to point out the cultural impact that scapegoating has, the function that it has in literature and society, and to develop a sense of the different political and idiosyncratic shades it can possess. This in turn will allow the creation of a stable theoretical platform that will pave the way towards a more comprehensive analysis of scapegoating in the selection of Victorian novels mentioned beforehand.

Culturally and socially speaking, as mentioned above, there has always been a desire to exclude that which disrupts the unblemished state, or inherent goodness, of a community. When such a disruption is sensed, individuals go to great lengths to assure that this interference is eliminated in order for a community to maintain (or preserve) the ‘social identity’ that has been constructed by its denizens throughout the ages. This sense of removal exists not only from a social/cultural perspective, but it also exists from a psychoanalytic one as well. Philosopher, psychoanalyst, and literary critic Julia Kristeva was one of the pioneers of the notion of “abjection,” the state of being “removed or cast off.” The abject is that object or individual that is removed from a symbolic order, meaning that it is something that no longer belongs within the parameters or boundaries from which it was produced, essentially making the abject a byproduct of the “Othering” process. This process of abjections begins in separations of the self from things that formerly were not distinguished from it, including the mother and one’s own waste

products. Kristeva argues that once an individual is abjected from a symbolic order, he/she will face certain dilemmas while trying to assume an identity and while growing accustomed to the idea of being outside of something it was once a part of (Noëlle 48). In other words, abjected individuals are caught within an existential inner struggle in which they long for the union they once shared with the host, yet at the same time they recognize the need to give up this union in order to become a full-fledged subject. Essentially, scapegoats are abjections from the symbolic order of a particular society and community, for they are marginalized because they are thought to contain or represent something that does not belong or that is not desired by others. Thus, the scapegoat paradoxically becomes something that is both needed and rejected in order for a society to thrive: the community needs the scapegoat to absorb a negative societal aspect, yet it must also be disposed of in order for social fractures and weaknesses to be ameliorated.

Although the scapegoat is, technically a theoretical manifestation that allows one to understand concepts such as social formation and ostracism, there are many practices and beliefs that embody the steps and purposes necessary for an individual to be dubbed a scapegoat in the first place. Scottish anthropologist Sir James George Frazer, in his book titled *The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion*, conducted an inclusive and encompassing comparison of myths and religions across cultures using a comparative mythology approach. One of the topics that Frazer discussed at length was the belief and the practice of the expulsion of evils within many cultures and societies, in which he argued that many actual communities and societies practiced both a direct and indirect ritual to get rid of the evil spirits that caused disruptions and discord within a community. Frazer points out that the indirect method of eliminating evil within various cultures was to embody evil influences in a visible and tangible form, or as he put it, to load the evil influences into a “material medium,” which goes on to become a vehicle that drives



away the evil from a community (572). He goes on to discuss how this vehicle could be anything from a boat to a living creature, but living creatures tended to be a more effective manner of ridding society of its evils, ultimately making them coveted “vessels” for carrying evils away.

When the being becomes a vessel for carrying away the evils of society, such a creature is abjected from society, making it lose its identity as a subject and gaining a new identification as nothing more than an object for ridding that which is feared and despised in a community. Thus, the vessel is no longer seen as something that can contribute or participate in society, but rather, it is something akin to a corpse, excrement, or discharged bodily fluids: although it contains qualities of a living, organic being, it is no longer considered to be useful or natural, prompting its urgent exclusion or removal. These vessels are quintessential representations of scapegoats in society, and Frazer goes on to argue that when a man or creature becomes a scapegoat, the victim is not only objectified, but degraded as well:

...the divine character of the [creature] is forgotten, and he comes to be regarded merely as an ordinary victim. This is especially likely to be the case when it is a divine man who is killed. For when a nation becomes civilized, if it does not drop human sacrifices altogether, it at least selects as victims only such wretches as would be put to death at any rate. Thus the killing of a god may sometimes come to be confounded with the execution of a criminal. (586)

What is apparent to this point is that when human beings become scapegoats, they seem to lose any sense of divinity or sacredness within the social order that they were expelled from, thus decreasing any sense of loss or lamentation that might have originally been incited with their death. However, one must keep in mind that even after exile or death, scapegoats retain the power of “Otherness.” As a matter of fact, murdering or sacrificing a scapegoat was many times viewed as something that was not only encouraged, but necessary, due to the fact that others were aware of the so-called evil residing within the vessel.

The notions discussed above resonate greatly with many of the arguments presented by Italian political philosopher Giorgio Agamben, in his discussion titled *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. It is here that he goes on to reanalyze and apply an ancient Roman law which was responsible for the branding of individuals as *Homo Sacer*, which in a nutshell, are persons who committed a certain crime or action that goes against the established laws in the *polis*. These persons were stripped of their rights as citizens within the city and they were also banned/exiled from that particular society. Consequently, these individuals became glorified (in a negative fashion), thus, they were not allowed to be sacrificed or to be part of any religious rite; nonetheless, since they were no longer a meaningful constituent within that particular society, they may be killed by anybody, and the murderer would be exempt from criminal persecution (71-72). What is important to note here is that the law excludes the *Homo Sacer*, but when it comes down to it, the *Homo Sacer* is still bound and defined by the very same ideals that reject it. Thus, it can be argued that the *Homo Sacer* is a specific and somewhat political ramification of the concept of the scapegoat, for similar to the arguments presented by Frazer, the *Homo Sacer* also loses the sense of divinity that is tied to being human, allowing him/her to be murdered or sacrificed without having to face any moral or social repercussions. In addition, by committing a crime against the *polis*, the *Homo Sacer*, similarly to the scapegoat, goes on to be branded with the ‘evil’ and negativity present within their society, thus encouraging their removal from the system in order to assure its continuity and traditions, while at the same time warning other individuals of the repercussions of going against the system.

Although the basic function of the scapegoat has been highlighted, there is little doubt that theories of the scapegoat can best be applied towards a greater understanding of human experience and culture. French philosopher and literary critic René Girard perhaps has been one

of the greatest contributors to the study of scapegoating in the realms of literature, myth, and biblical studies. His views of scapegoating are rooted in his own theories of mimetic desire, which refers to that force that influences an individual to want and desire what another individual (or group of individuals) possesses. This desire goes on to create an escalating sense of tension between the model (the individual who possesses the object) and the subject (the person who desires what the model possesses). In turn, this escalating tension is expressed through violence, and the scapegoat becomes the temporary solution to this violence by becoming a vessel that absorbs this tension; in due course, the person who is appointed as this vessel must be sacrificed in order for a community to feel as if the problem has been eliminated. Thus, the scapegoat can be viewed more or less as a placebo for societal disruption, creating an illusion that is perceived as a remedy.

As a result, it can be argued that the assignment of a scapegoat is achieved via a mimesis that is no different from the spread of a virus, for a person who is against an individual will most definitely influence and “recruit” other people, who via replication end up donning the same dislike and hatred towards a specific object. As pointed out by Girard in an interview conducted by *Diacritics*:

Once two or more antagonists have joined against any given one, the mimetic attraction of their common target must increase with the number of individuals thus polarized. When the snowball effect of this antagonistic mimesis has reached every individual, a *de facto* reconciliation is achieved, at the expense of the single scapegoat. (33)

What Girard is arguing here is that when social tension reaches a boiling point, a person is designated as the scapegoat. The person declared as the vessel of negativity disrupts tension because they serve as a unifying force for those who exert the blame on the subject. Thus, the elimination of one individual leads to the unification of the entire community.

Initially, sacrificing the scapegoat seems to be the ideal solution for societal tension, for essentially, it consists of eliminating the so-called problem that is causing it to begin with. However, the tension is not eliminated from a community, but rather, the sacrifice causes the tension to lower to nearly undetectable levels, giving individuals the sense that the problem has dissipated; however, the tension is still existent and has the ability to increase to unstable levels once again. With this in mind, the appointment of a scapegoat is nothing but an “adhesive bandage” solution to the problem: although by using the bandage, one gets the sense that it is aiding the healing process of a cut, the bandage is in no way responsible for the healing to begin with. Richard F. Hardin, in his discussion of rituals in contemporary criticism, argues that “The scapegoat process gives birth to a vast array of myths and rituals, all of which serve merely to conceal the ugly facts of the surrogate victim sacrificed to [...] mimetic, desire-caused violence,” which in due course leads him to deduce that rituals are nothing but a manifestation of violence that prevents “the spread of retribution or revenge and similar kinds of hostility throughout the community” (856). In other words, sacrificing a scapegoat in no way solves or relieves any tension present within a society, but rather, it serves to conceal the flaws and blemishes present within the system in the first place. The scapegoat ritual is nothing but a habitual custom designed to keep individuals docile and complacent within a community that is inherently designed to be corrupted, exploited, and abused. This notion directly reflects what Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek dubs as “systemic violence,” which essentially refers to the price that is paid to assure the smooth functioning of an economic, social, and political system<sup>3</sup>:

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<sup>3</sup> According to Žižek, subjective violence refers to violence that is clearly visible and that is performed by an identifiable agent (i.e. murder, an altercation between two or more people, rape, battery, assault, etc.). Objective violence, on the other hand, refers to ‘violent’ acts that are not directly perceivable and that are inherently part of the social system we are part of (i.e. the implementation of capitalism and social classes, laws and fines, middle-class struggles, among others).

Subjective and objective violence cannot be perceived from the same standpoint: subjective violence is experienced as such against the background of a non-violent zero level. It is seen as a perturbation of the “normal,” peaceful state of things. However, objective violence is invisible since it sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent. Systemic violence is thus something like the notorious “dark matter” of physics, the counterpart to an all-too-visible subjective violence. It may be invisible, but it has to be taken into account if one is to make sense of what otherwise seem to be “irrational” explosions of subjective violence. (2)

When Žižek’s views on violence are applied to the scapegoat mechanism, it becomes apparent that subjective violence on the scapegoat is nothing but a ritual to ensure that the objective violence inherent within the system continues to take place in order for political, social, and cultural functions to continue undisturbed. Though at first the sacrifice of a scapegoat may seem to be a manifestation of irrational subjective violence to many, careful scrutiny reveals that such sacrifices are inherently a part of a social or communal blueprint; they routinely take place to assure that the systemic violence remains not only intact, but invisible as well. Therefore, this implies that the scapegoat is not only a vessel of that which society does not want to tolerate, but, it is also a vessel for the traces of systemic violence that begin to erupt from under the surface.

In light of the above, the scapegoat becomes a fixture that is essential for society to continue functioning the way it always has, becoming, in a sense, a safety valve that inhibits pressures that would cause abrupt societal changes. The scapegoat thusly becomes a manifestation that pins down the social and cultural ideologies of a community and keeps them stable. In her discussion of liminality in the Victorian novel, Sarah Gilead points out that tragedy and suffering can be morally and socially justified as a non-arbitrary “conserving force” that in due course becomes an indispensable manner of mending social structures and of preventing their “too-rapid revision.” In addition, she echoes the notion of the scapegoat as a policing agent that assures the permanence and prominence of the values, beliefs, and traditions that are upheld

in a community: “The scapegoat as well as the martyr symbolizes the social necessity of preserving at all costs the values and the conceptual modes that the community has deemed essential” (185). With this in mind, it can be deduced that the scapegoat can also come to symbolize that which must be eliminated in order for a sense of normalcy and stability to be perceived by individuals in a community. Eventually, the scapegoat not only promotes preservation by removing unwanted traits from a society’s inherent structure, but it also promotes it via didactic means: if one follows the same path that the scapegoat followed in life, one will be removed or excluded as well.

Up until now, I have shown how the scapegoat mechanism plays a role in factors such as social equilibrium, the formation of communities, the preservation of cultural and societal values, and even a ritual designed to rid a location of its evils. However, wherein lies the value of studying the role of the scapegoat in literary texts? As mentioned in the previous discussion focused on reconfiguring the Bildungsroman genre, literature is most definitely sensible to the trends, values, insights, and traditions that were prominent during the moment of its creation, thus leading to historical and content-based shifts within literary genres. This is precisely because literature, whether directly or indirectly, echoes not only the ideologies of the author, but also, the ideologies of an entire community. This is particularly true for literature classified under the Bildungsroman genre, which is designed to be a novel of education that upholds the status quo, highlights the cultural parameters of a community, and exposes the dangers of transgressing societal limits. Since literature many times reflects the values, desires, and ideologies of a particular community, it is inevitable that the texts themselves become communities of their very own, which are subject to the same structures and parameters that exist within the source from which they are produced. This view has been discussed at length by Michiel Heyns in his book

*Expulsion and the Nineteenth-Century Novel: The Scapegoat in English Realist Fiction*. It is here where Heyns argues that when it comes to the act of scapegoating, art truly does imitate life:

...to talk of the scapegoat in the novel is to posit some form of transference of societal attitudes to the narrative dynamic, and to take some liberties with the scale on which these attitudes manifest themselves. If we define the scapegoat as that figure that has to bear the burden of guilt of a particular community, usually by being sacrificed or expelled, then, in my model, the narrative itself constitutes a community, generating pressures that eventually expel those characters that disturb the equilibrium which it is the aim of the narrative closure to restore. (4)

Once again, one can observe that the scapegoat's function in a literary text is to provide a sense of closure and of balance to the narrative, ridding it of the tension that fuels its plot and main issues. This comes as no surprise, due to the fact that readers generally tend to desire a sense of finality and resolution when reading a text, and for things to return to the degree of normalcy that is expected not only in the narrative, but in the reader's own community as well. If the reader must approach the novel as a projection of its own community and ideologies, then it is expected that various degrees of scapegoating must be an expected feature in a narrative, particularly if such a narrative is aimed at fostering a sense of preservation and balance via the acceptance of the moral, social, and cultural status quo.

What makes the Bildungsroman such a unique case in terms of scapegoating is that although it complies with the literary purpose of entertaining the reader, it also has a clear didactic purpose as well. The Bildungsroman goes on to become, in essence, an instruction manual; it becomes a text that transmits the consequences of transgressing social limits, it highlights contrasting ideologies that exist in terms of the formation process, and it portrays the moral, psychological, and cultural outcomes that may be experienced when transitioning from a childhood to adulthood in a particular community. As a result, the scapegoat's cultural value as a social cleansing agent is also expressed within literary texts, making his or her sacrifice an

imperative element if any degree of closure is desired within the narrative. As Heyns proceeds to argue, the scapegoat becomes the only solution to a dead-end problem; it provides the impetus of order where chaos naturally surfaces:

It is not surprising, then, that archetypal plot does tend towards resolution, towards a satisfactory arrangement of those aspects of experience which by their very nature defy arrangement. Narrative, from this point of view, derives not from our need to be entertained as much as our need to be reassured. And in this respect, those theorists who accuse narrative of conspiring with the most conservative tendencies of the imagination must be right. (270)

Indeed, a novel may provide some entertainment for readers, but Heyns contends that this is not necessarily the main reason that so many enjoy reading literary texts. He argues that readers turn to literature to feel at ease; it is designed so the reader can sense that every problem has a solution, and that even the most chaotic of occurrences can be not only arranged, but fixed. However, something that is indeed troubling, and worthy of careful scrutiny, can be sensed when Heyns argues that the scapegoat goes on (either directly or indirectly) to work against the imagination itself via the establishment of conservative inclinations and parameters. In other words, the fact that narratives reflect and enforce the same social constraints and limits that an actual society possesses puts into question whether or not the imagination is actually capable of creating fiction that is in no way based on fact. Even more so, it goes on to contest the view of literature as an agent capable of opening minds, and highlights the possibility of literature as an agent of preservation and normalcy.

The scapegoat, rather than being perceived as a solution, should be viewed as a weakness or flaw present within a community's inherent social structure. The presence of scapegoats within society and narratives sheds light on the objective violence that so desperately tries to remain invisible to the inhabitants of actual and narrative communities. The scapegoat goes on to



represent everything that is supposedly wrong, immoral, or questionable within a society; however, the perplexing question is that if the scapegoat goes on to represent the negative or ‘evil’ aspects of a culture, why is this evil not eliminated via the scapegoat’s sacrifice? It all comes down to feeling a sense of resolution and of weakening any tensions that are being felt regardless of the price that is being paid. This is precisely why Gilead goes on to argue that the scapegoat:

...in his passivity, victimization, and suffering, acts in a double drama: first he demonstrates the failure of his culture’s Liminal rituals and of the belief structure, social order, and mores behind those rituals; but ultimately, against all odds, he performs a successful ritual of transition to a higher social or spiritual state. (187)

Although the scapegoat highlights the flaws and disruptions that exist within a social and belief structure, it also possesses the ability to push others to question the logic and the validity of the sacrifices being made. In due course, the scapegoat represents a “higher social or spiritual state” because it embodies the characteristics and the values that transcend and transgress beyond the social and cultural limits that were being imposed and enforced in a particular community.

As Heyns very convincingly pointed out, in order for a sense of resolution to be found within a narrative text, it seems that the narrative community needs someone or something to embody all of the blame and the evils that haunt the literary arena. The community needs to be purged of the poisons that threaten to destroy it, and this purging can only be achieved via sacrifice (273). The remainder of this discussion will be focused on portraying and analyzing the narrative communities depicted in various Victorian Bildungsromans and the scapegoats that are sacrificed in order to ensure that such communities remain intact. Due to the fact that the Bildungsroman places so much emphasis and importance on the relationship between its protagonist and the community in which he/she resides, it is perhaps imperative to carefully

scrutinize the way in which the various degrees of scapegoating present within these novels go on to affect this relationship. Furthermore, I will determine whether or not scapegoats play a more crucial and fundamental role within the Victorian Bildungsroman, especially considering the fact that these novels tend to rely on the influence of social structures to a greater degree in comparison to other types of formation novels.

## CHAPTER IV

### *GREAT EXPECTATIONS, AND EVEN GREATER EXPULSIONS*

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Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations*, originally published in a serialized format between the years of 1860 and 1861, can perhaps be classified as the epitome of the Victorian Bildungsroman genre, not only because of its popularity, but also because it complies with all the traditional traits that a Bildungsroman should have. The novel is a unique depiction of the long and arduous maturation process that Phillip Pirrip, commonly known as Pip, went through as he transitioned from being a humble orphaned child to a snobbish and pretentious gentleman thanks in part to the financial aid he received from a mysterious benefactor. The reader first encounters Pip as a child, where he is described as an innocent and naïve orphan who is currently under the care of his sister, Mrs. Joe, a harsh and cold woman who obviously shows a degree of resentment towards the child. While playing in a cemetery, Pip encounters a convict who threatens him and forces him to bring back food and a file. One can notice that the sense of innocence that originally characterizes Pip as a child is highlighted during this particular scene, for he ultimately gives in and helps the convict, although more out of fear rather than goodwill. However, this highlighting was necessary to create a contrast between Pip as a child and the radically different adult he would grow up to become.

Part of what characterizes the novel is the intricate web of connections that Dickens wove between the characters encountered within the narration and the actions that they commit, giving a sense that everything and everyone is somehow linked in the grand scheme of the plot. This sense of connectedness can be traced from the first pages of the novel, in which the convict who

Pip helps out in the first chapters ends up being Magwitch, the benefactor who provided Pip with the means to become socially and economically mobile. This web becomes even more convoluted as Pip tries to win the affection of Miss Havisham, a peculiar dowager that has trained her adopted daughter, Estella, to be used as a tool to carry out her vengeance against men. We soon find out that Miss Havisham was left at the altar on her wedding day, thus inducing her odd peculiarities and behavior, and her hatred towards men. As can be expected, this web ultimately becomes so tangled that it leads to the social, and in some cases, literal downfall of many characters within the narrative. Nonetheless, it is extremely important to bear in mind that the characters in *Great Expectations* represent a complex system in which all the members caught within the web are dependent on each other, and that all are under the mercy of the forces that created that web in the first place.

The narrator of Pip's *Bildung* process is soon revealed to be an older version of Pip himself, and the reader soon comes to realize that Dickens seems to incorporate a novelty in which Pip's growth is portrayed by mixing the character's thoughts and ideologies at the time the events occur, in conjunction with the adult Pip's thoughts, judgments, and perceptions of these ideals and actions. In due course, this creates a distance between the young, naïve, and innocent Pip and the narrator, which Robert B. Partlow, in his discussion of the point of view in *Great Expectations*, describes as "a mature man, sober, industrious, saddened, aware of his own limitations, and possessed of a certain calm wisdom—the wisdom of a Cinderella who learned the shoe did not fit and the fairy godmother was psychotic and criminal" (123). As the novel progresses, the mature and aware narrator not only proceeds to inform the reader of the text's events, but he also provides the reader with various cues that indicate how young Pip's perceptions are changing, and how he ultimately is growing as a character.

What makes *Great Expectations* unique is that the novel accurately represents the trials and tribulations that children face as they try to define their position and role in society, but this journey towards wisdom and maturation is enhanced by the experience and input of an adult Pip. Not only does the reader notice Pip's transformation from beginning to end, but the commentary and narration offered from the adult perspective makes this transformation both explicit and meaningful. This, in turn, allows the reader to notice Pip's transition from a child to an adult mentality and the subtle differences that highlight his evolving perceptions of the community. According to Ann Dobie in her study on consciousness in *Great Expectations*, this should come as no surprise because even "Before Freud, Jung, and the surrealists made their contributions to the tide of knowledge concerning the human psyche, Charles Dickens had developed techniques for conveying some of the drama which takes place in an individual's consciousness" (416).

The intertwining of a child and an adult perspective really adds a different dimension to the overarching goals and purposes of the Bildungsroman, not only because the reader has a greater sense of how the protagonist is approaching and understanding the world, but also because there is a great emphasis put towards rationalizing the emotions felt as a child, and even more so, trying to understand the people that surrounded the character during different points of his life. As the novel progresses, the narrator not only proceeds to inform the reader of the text's events, but he also provides the reader with various cues that indicate how young Pip's perceptions are changing, and how he is growing as a character. These cues are usually delivered by pointing out Pip's views and perceptions as an adult, and contrasting them with the perspectives that he had at a younger age. This notion is illustrated soon after the death of his sister, Mrs. Joe:

It was fine summer weather again, and, as I walked along, the times when I was a little helpless creature, and my sister did not spare me, vividly returned. But they returned with a gentle tone upon them that softened even the edge of Tickler. (Dickens 495)

In this passage, the narrator directly and explicitly makes reference to an instance of growth and perceptual change in his life, for that which used to cause his distress and hardship is now perceived as nothing but a 'gentle' memory.

In addition, the fact that *Great Expectations* is projected mostly from the protagonist's consciousness eventually paves a way to a more honest, open, and somewhat uncensored view of the people that surrounded Pip. In no way does he try to hide when a character scares or intimidates him, nor is he afraid to express the emotions and notions that are stirred in his head as he encounters different characters. This sense of openness, in a way, allows the reader to be completely in tune with how he is being transformed by the people he encounters, highlighting the psychological and social development that is so crucial within the Bildungsroman. Dobie stresses this aspect when she points out that Pip's character is being altered by the people he encounters:

In this drama of an individual conscience and its enlightenment, the main character moves from innocence through mock-sophistication to wisdom. Pip is not a static but a developing character who is molded and remolded by the people and experiences he meets. Because the effects of those meetings are seen from inside the protagonist, the entire psychological being is developed. (409)

One can deduce from the above that every person that Pip encounters throughout the novel, in one way or another, and either directly or indirectly shapes the way that he perceives the world and the way that he learns to adapt in a community that makes certain societal and cultural demands. Staying true to the notion of a novel of education, the people in Pip's life become his teachers, and it is through them that he not only becomes a pliable and good-natured citizen, but he also learns about what he should avoid in order to comply with the expectations of the

community he is part of. Thus, Pip becomes an embodiment of Girard's notion of mimetic rivalry, in which people become models of the behaviors that they decide to imitate and don. For example, from an early age, Pip is aware that he is in no way qualified to join the social ranks of Estella and Miss Havisham due to his own low societal rank. This in turn not only pushes him to desire that which the models (in this case Miss Havisham and Estella) possess, but it also influences him to reject and dislike anything that diverges from the models' ideals. In due course, this is precisely why Pip eventually develops a disdain for the clothes he wears, the dialect in which he speaks, and even the people to whom he is close. Incidentally, Girard's mimetic rivalry also explains why they treat him so cruelly.

With this in mind, it can be deduced that there are two types of models within the novel: there are those that push Pip to desire, and there are those that illustrate the negative effects that surface when doing something that is deemed "wrong" within a particular community. On one hand, we have those characters that influence Pip to desire that which he does not have, but on the other hand, we have those who indirectly teach him what not to desire as well. What is interesting is that initially, Pip does not possess the mental capacity or maturity to tell the difference between these two types of models, which in turn creates a series of conflicts within his mind, all based on the classic struggle between personal wants and societal demands. As Pip matures, he slowly develops the ability to distinguish between the two models, but it is the act of scapegoating that serves to reveal those qualities and traits that must be eliminated in order to thrive in society. This is precisely why John Hagan, in his discussion of social injustice in *Great Expectations*, points out that the novel is much more than a study of personal development; it is a projection of the struggles that Pip faces as he tries to cope and survive in a society that perpetuates and fosters his personal and social guilt (174).

Besides depicting Pip's maturation process, the novel goes on to highlight the social and cultural boundaries that exist within the various communities he encounters. It is through education and experience that the protagonist goes on to understand the social turmoil and injustice that exists in a particular social setting, as well as the consequences of transgressing the limits that are imposed upon individuals within a community. Although at first Pip may sense that certain individuals are models worthy of imitation, it is through scapegoating that he understands that these models may lead to his own downfall. His experiences go on to stress not only social flaws, but also the objective violence that has dictated his entire life. One can observe that Pip begins as a good-hearted and slightly naïve individual, but the models that surround him, particularly those who represent a level of the social hierarchy that Pip has yet to climb, go on not only to corrupt his good nature, but to push him to question and scrutinize his ideological view of the world. This notion was discussed at length by John Lindberg in his discussion of social injustice in *Great Expectations*:

The whole novel is calculated to illustrate social decay by the allegory of individual conscience. If conscience develops from spontaneous emotional response to experience, and if the emotions are basically good, then any suffering caused by the individual conscience must indicate evil in the social matrices that cast the susceptible moral nature into the forms of experience. That evil comes from the ignorance and complacency of all who compose the ranks among whom the individual wishes to rise. It becomes the duty of all men to examine their presuppositions. (122)

The scapegoat becomes crucial in this process of illustrating social decay, because as mentioned previously, the sacrifice or exclusion of an individual goes on to draw attention to the flaws and ideological disruptions that exist in a community while at the same time pushing individuals to question the logic and the purpose of the sacrifice being made. If the purpose of *Great Expectations* is to depict social decay and cultural flaws, what would be better to depict these



flaws than the scapegoat, especially considering that it embodies the values and notions that transgress the social parameters of a community?

One of the best characters to illustrate this notion within *Great Expectations* would be Miss Havisham, the eccentric woman who instills most of the drives and desires that Pip goes on to develop throughout the novel. A careful look at Miss Havisham quickly goes on to reveal that she possesses most of the traits and characteristics that Pip desires: she is of a higher social class, she has a close relationship with the object of his infatuation, and she also happens to be more educated than Pip is. Pip desperately tries to join the social ranks that Miss Havisham and Estella belong to, but he is unable to do so because he does not possess the financial or personal means to ascend the social ladder. Once Pip obtains the means to be considered an equal via the money he received from an anonymous benefactor (who turns out to be Magwitch), he thus is able to complete the mimetic process, becoming a model himself. Pip not only ascends to the social ranks of a gentleman, but he also develops many of the traits that defined Miss Havisham in the process: he becomes a full-fledged snob who clearly thinks that his higher social position makes those of the lower classes inferior to him, he becomes cold and unsympathetic to those he once cared for, and he ends up focusing most of his attention on those who can help him ascend the social ladder. As Eiichi Hara goes on to argue in his discussion of subplots within *Great Expectations*, Pip's desires drive him not only to become an entirely different person, but they also lead him to lose the most important things in his life:

Pip discards the simple life of apprenticeship because of his infatuation with a foolish dream and, becoming morally degenerate as a result, finally loses everything. Bewitched by a worthless woman, he throws away his true friend Joe and his sweetheart Biddy, and incurs just punishment. (605)

Pip's decision to emulate Miss Havisham indeed allowed him to climb out of the societal quicksand he was trapped in, but in turn, he went on to embrace the darkest and most foul aspects of her nature. Towards the latter part of the novel, the reader perceives a Pip that is trying his hardest to complete his *Bildung* process, and part of this maturation involved confronting and forgiving those that wronged him or affected him negatively in one way or another. During his confrontation with Miss Havisham, Pip forces her to face her demons, and to admit the fact that she hindered Pip's development as an adult by using Estella as a tool to carry out her vengeance against men. It is after this confrontation that, for the first time, one encounters Miss Havisham as a sensitive human being, repentant and remorseful for her evil ways. It is in this moment that one may realize that in order for Pip to become the responsible and caring person that he once was, he had to purge himself of the negativity and the culpability that Miss Havisham, either directly or indirectly, instilled in him.

Nonetheless, in true scapegoat fashion, in order for culpability to be truly purged, it is not enough to repent, but rather, a sacrifice must be made in order for the purging ritual to come full circle. After his encounter with Miss Havisham, and after receiving apology after apology for the misery that she purposely placed within his life, Pip goes on to feel an air of melancholy.

Although he feels that in one way or another, he would never return to the Satis House that he has known for most of his life, one can also detect a transition point in his life as well; in a rather poetic fashion, Pip admits that it was time for a change, and more importantly, that it was time to move on:

Twilight was closing in when I went down stairs into the natural air. I called to the woman who had opened the gate when I entered, that I would not trouble her just yet, but would walk round the place before leaving. For, I had a presentiment that I should never be there again, and I felt that the dying light was suited to my last view of it. (Dickens 714)

And indeed, Pip never was able to return to that Satis House, not only because it was destroyed, but also because its owner, Miss Havisham, was consumed by the house itself. It is ironic that after her encounter with Pip, her wedding dress was engulfed in flames as she situated herself by the fireplace. Not only is this reminiscent of scapegoats who were accused of witchcraft and burned at the stake, but it transforms Miss Havisham into a vessel of all the evils she brought into Pip's life. It simply was not enough for her to beg for forgiveness and for Pip to pardon her; in order for the novel to achieve a sense of resolution, and in order to alleviate the tensions that Miss Havisham created throughout the entire novel, a vessel was needed; what better vessel than the original source of the tension? One can see that an act of subjective violence (whether intentional or not) eventually creates the illusion that the foul characteristics that Miss Havisham possessed were destroyed with her death, and even more so, they obliged these characteristics slowly and surely to fade away from the protagonist's life as well. It is important to note at this point that Girard typically makes a distinction between the scapegoat *of* the text—a sacrificial character who is guilty, thus differentiating him/her from traditional denotations of scapegoating—and the scapegoat *in* the text, a character who is truly innocent. Arguably, Miss Havisham belongs to the former category.

It is after her death that we begin to see Pip fully embracing the good side of his nature. He begins to leave aside his snobbish characteristics, and the coldness that he once felt in his heart begins to thaw, leading him to become the sympathetic and compassionate character he was at the beginning of the novel. This in no way implies that Miss Havisham's death caused this transition in Pip's life; however, it is perhaps inevitable to make a symbolic connection between the two. Miss Havisham represented moral transgressions that were frowned upon in the

community that Pip was part of: selfishness, snobbery, greed, and vengeance. Although Pip began to emulate these transgressions, it can be deduced that Miss Havisham went on to illustrate the effects that transgressions bestow upon the life of a person. Therefore, it can be argued that, at least at the unconscious level, Miss Havisham, by “carrying away” all of the negative qualities that she embodied, pushed Pip to partially complete his transition into the psychological and moral realm of adulthood, making him move a step further in the *Bildung* process.

The other character worthy of scrutiny is Abel Magwitch, the convict who is later revealed to be Pip’s benefactor, who seems to be an interesting case when it comes to the issue of scapegoating within the novel. He is first sentenced to fourteen years of imprisonment due to the fact that he was found guilty of putting stolen bank notes into circulation along with his accomplice, Compeyson. After escaping from his incarceration aboard a prison ship, he encounters Pip for the first time and projects himself as a bullying entity, going as far as to threaten the young boy with cannibalism:

‘You young dog,’ said the man, licking his lips, ‘what fat cheeks you ha’ got.’ I believe they were fat, though I was at the time undersized for my years, and not strong. ‘Darn me if I couldn’t eat em,’ said the man, with a threatening shake of his head, ‘and if I han’t half a mind to’t!’ (Dickens 5)

Magwitch, feeling grateful for the assistance that Pip provided at the time, goes on to establish multiple businesses in Australia, and he proceeds to provide Pip with the financial means necessary to become a gentleman and help him achieve the life that he had never been able to have. Now, although it can be argued that Magwitch does not possess any truly negative quality that can also be seen in Pip, one might notice that Magwitch’s actions create a shift within Pip’s personality. Thus, Magwitch is not only the impetus for Pip’s journey into mental and moral

maturity, but he also is the source that allows the young boy's character to be corrupted in the first place. The fear that Magwitch initially instills in Pip prompts him to steal and lie, and the money that he later on receives from Magwitch gives him the means to become not only a gentleman, but to fully don those characteristics that other social models, such as Estella and Miss Havisham, provided. Magwitch's death towards the conclusion of the novel is definitely an illustration of the scapegoat phenomenon as well, because it is through his demise that the 'evils' within Pip are fully released and dispersed: Pip was finally able to discover his good nature and to look beyond his status as a gentleman, to the point that he was able to care and even admire Magwitch. Furthermore, Magwitch's arrest also led to a confiscation of all of his money and property, meaning that Pip no longer possessed access to the seed that cultivated his great expectations to begin with. Thus, Magwitch symbolically becomes that final vessel that carries away both the negativity and the sources of evil from Pip's life.

The discussion above shows that scapegoats in *Great Expectations* go on to highlight the consequences of transgressing the moral, psychological, and cultural parameters of the community that Pip was part of, and it goes on to demonstrate that these expulsions, in one way or another, became integral parts of the informal education that he had to go through in order to grow. Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that when it comes down to it, Pip transgressed these boundaries multiple times within the novel. Now, if the scapegoat goes on to stress the conservative viewpoint of complying with the social boundaries of a certain community, then it is expected that Pip, in one way or another, must also be scapegoated if any sense of resolution is desired by the end of the novel. Scapegoating does not need to involve death or literal sacrifice in order to be considered as such, and thus, it comes as no surprise that the greatest scapegoat in the novel happens to be the protagonist himself. Hagan argues that Pip

becomes a pawn for both Miss Havisham and Magwitch's revenge on society, and thus, he becomes the character that must be "blamed" for all the evils that manifest in his community, making him as much as a vessel as Magwitch and Miss Havisham were:

It is [Pip] who must pay the price for original outrages against justice, who must suffer for the wider injustices of the whole society of which he is but a humble part. The result is that he takes on society's vices, its selfishness, ingratitude, extravagance and pride. [... and thus,] the worst qualities of society seem inevitably to propagate themselves in a kind of vicious cycle. (171-172)

Indeed, it is Pip who goes on to suffer most throughout the entire novel. Orphaned at a young age, he was constantly facing fear and dissatisfaction in the world that he lived in. In due course, he does find the means to escape and to live a life that was radically different from the one he was accustomed to, and yet, he soon discovers that he was nothing but a tool of revenge, and a vessel for others to propagate the negativity and ugly qualities that haunt their very own lives. Thus, instead of keeping all of this negativity within the community he is part of, Pip knows very well that he must become a scapegoat by essentially sacrificing the life that he had grown used to for so many years: not only does he lose the people that he holds dear in life, such as Biddy and Magwitch, but he no longer can be a gentleman because he no longer possesses the financial means to be part of the upper rungs of society. The Pip that we encounter towards the end is in no way similar to the Pip that we knew during the bulk of the novel.

Therefore, it is through self-scapegoating that Pip becomes a moral and mature adult, capable of understanding the ways of the world, and more specifically, the ways of the community he was part of. Scapegoating becomes the push needed to cross the threshold towards the realm of adulthood, and once this threshold is crossed, there is no turning back. Taking this in to consideration, it can be said that *Great Expectations* views the maturation and formation process as an education in itself, where the subject must learn the consequences for transgressing

societal limits, that some concepts, ideas, and even people have to be sacrificed in order to live the humble and decent life that is expected from every individual in that particular community. There is no room for excess, snobbery, smugness, vice, addiction, lies, or deceit in this particular community within the novel, which is why those who fully embraced these qualities, such as Magwitch and Miss Havisham, had to be eliminated from the equation. Even more so, these particular characters had to be eliminated in order for the reader to recognize the traits that Pip inherited from them, and to realize how they led to Pip's undoing as well. Metaphorically speaking, Pip is most definitely eliminated from this equation as well. This view is shared by Goldie Morgentaler in her Darwinian reading of *Great Expectations*:

Pip can never go home again. [...] Unlike David Copperfield, Pip does not get a second chance at life; he cannot make good on earlier mistakes. [...] He cannot return to the time before he came into his expectations. He can never reestablish the easy camaraderie and affection that marked his earlier relationship with Joe. He cannot marry Biddy. He cannot even expect to find her waiting for him as Agnes did for David. The past as it is presented in *Great Expectations* is past and must remain so. (719-720)

Not being able to go back to the past or learn the error of his ways is what pushes Pip into the psychological and moral realm of adulthood, and furthermore, it highlights the gravity of the educational process depicted in the novel. At least according to Morgentaler's perspective, what happens in the past remains in the past, and one can only build from that. The formation process in the novel is both direct and explicit, and it focuses carefully on the notion of complying with societal and moral boundaries simply because there are no second chances for any mistakes that are done. In this view, scapegoating becomes a fatalistic notion, whereas the sacrifices made are simply designed with the purpose of informing the characters to move on, and to not dwell within the past.

Although to some extent Morgentaler is right in terms of her interpretation of *Great Expectations*, one must keep in mind that Girard and Heyns point out that the scapegoating mechanism within literature is ultimately a cleansing agent that helps a community (and perhaps even the protagonist) get rid of the cultural and moral poisons that threaten to corrupt its normal state. The Bildungsroman is a teleological genre in the sense that everything that occurs has a purpose, and all of the events in the novel, either directly or indirectly, serve to educate the protagonist, and to inform the reader of the discordant ideological perspectives that exist in terms of mental maturity and formation. The past within the Bildungsroman cannot be treated so lightly, and even more so, it cannot be ignored or disregarded by the protagonist and the reader because these past experiences are crucial in determining the protagonist's ideological view of the world towards the end of the novel, and because they inform the reader of just how arduous the *Bildung* process really is. Although Pip cannot necessarily make good on his past mistakes, this in no way implies that he does not have a second chance in life. I tend to favor Karl Wentersdorf's view of Pip's self-scapegoating, because realistically speaking, although Pip becomes a vessel of blame and negativity, he is able to use that as an advantage. Pip's self-sacrifice is more along the lines of a manifestation of objective violence rather than subjective violence, which means that he still has a chance to learn from the past and become the person that he was meant to be all along:

It is for [Estella] and for the dreams of wealth and status which he associates with her that Pip is willing to sell his soul; but he redeems it through his suffering and through the growth of loving concern for others; and when he dies symbolically, in the illness that follows Magwitch's death, he is reborn, "like a child," to lead a life of untiring industry, modest usefulness, and responsibility. (224)

Pip's symbolic death represents the final expulsion in the novel, and the final sacrifice that had to be made in order for the negativity in Pip's life to be eliminated. His symbolic scapegoating



gives him a second chance in life, and in a phoenix-like fashion, Pip not only combusts into ashes of excess, snobbery, and vice, but he is able to rise from these ashes as a man who has learned from his wrongdoings and who will no longer transgress the societal limits that society has imposed upon him. Due to the fact that the novel pays such great attention to the consciousness and Pip's inner thoughts, he poetically lets the reader become aware of this notion of renewal and change, and that he is optimistic when it comes to the things life has in store for him. Even more so, he makes reference to the fact that he indeed feels like he is returning home:

I thought all that country-side more beautiful and peaceful by far than I had ever known it to be yet. Many pleasant pictures of the life that I would lead there, and of the change for the better that would come over my character when I had a guiding spirit at my side whose simple faith and clear home-wisdom I had proved, beguiled my way. They awakened a tender emotion in me; for, my heart was softened by my return, and such a change had come to pass, that I felt like one who was toiling home barefoot from distant travel, and whose wanderings had lasted many years. (Dickens 852-853)

It can be argued that it is at this particular instance when Pip completes his formative and educational journey towards becoming a mature and responsible adult, and even more so, that he is fully aware of the negotiations and compromises that he must make in order to assure that he will remain happy in the community that has provided room for his assimilation. Furthermore, one can also observe that Magwitch's scapegoating was not done in vain, for his death led him to become the symbolic *point de capiton* that keeps Pip's self-image and self-representation in place, not only ensuring that the *Bildung* process has been culminated, but that the person that Pip is at the end of the novel will remain anchored and unaltered in his community. Note too that for Lacan—and perhaps for all the other characters that resemble Pip—such points are only *momentarily* stable, providing an illusion of stability where none really exists.

Eventually, Pip's formation process, and even more so, the various scapegoating processes in the novel, serve to enforce the compliance with social and cultural limits that

surrounded him at all times. Despite the novel's literary and emotional value, and its uncanny ability to create a vast rapport with its readers, it must be said that this text was designed, either consciously or unconsciously, as a conservative effort to preserve the moral and social conditions of a community, and to inform the reader of what does and does not constitute a proper formation process. Realistically speaking, Pip did not perform any deed that was overly drastic or grotesque, but he was constantly trying to transgress all of the limits that were imposed upon him. As Jack P. Rawlins argues in his discussion of the betrayal of the child in *Great Expectations*, Pip was simply a person who desired more than he had, and tried to do his best to satisfy these desires:

In short, the older Pip, by thinking in terms of goodness, misses his own greatness. And what finally is his crime? To love grandly, despite the failure of women to deserve it; to aspire, despite society's failure to provide anything worth aspiring to; to dream, despite society's insistence that all dreams be in terms of money or social status. (681)

In sum, scapegoating, at least within this novel, perpetuates the fossilization of the status quo, preventing it from ever shifting or changing. Pip simply felt the need to transgress societal boundaries because he was dissatisfied with the life he was forced to live, and even more so, because he was aware of the objective violence that was being imposed upon him on a daily basis. This dissatisfaction was greatly fueled by the models that he had in his life, which were those people who were not only higher on the social ladder, but who ridiculed Pip for his supposedly lower status. *Great Expectations* is wholly didactic in the sense that it teaches, through the protagonist's experiences, that all contraventions of social and cultural laws will not go unpunished, and that these rules exist with a purpose in mind. Thus, scapegoating becomes the most poignant and tangible way to reaffirm these rules in a tangible and concrete way, which in turn reaffirms the community's ideological perspectives.

CHAPTER V  
THE SOCIETAL GEARS OF *THE MILL ON THE FLOSS*

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Although compliance with social conventions is a prominent theme in Dickens' *Great Expectations*, it can be argued that this fulfillment plays an even more pivotal role in George Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*. Although now considered a masterpiece of the Victorian Bildungsroman, this claim has been contested throughout the decades not only because the novel veers away from the traditional formula of the Bildungsroman, but to some extent, goes on to contest it. Not only is the protagonist, Maggie Tulliver, a female, but her *Bildung* process is contrasted with that of her brother Tom Tulliver, making the novel, in essence, a dual-Bildungsroman in which two distinct maturation processes are depicted (although it is important to note that more emphasis is placed on Maggie's transition towards adulthood). In addition, as mentioned above, Maggie is denied the traditional education and ascendance of the social ladder that is so prominent in other Bildungsromans, even those with female protagonists, such as Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Yet, when taking the definition of the Bildungsroman devised for this thesis into account, it becomes quite clear that Maggie is a protagonist that definitely negotiates and questions compliance with societal boundaries via an informal education from childhood to adulthood, and furthermore, her struggle between social demands and personal desires goes on to emphasize her community's perspectives of what maturation is and should be.

*The Mill on the Floss* was first published in 1860 under the name of George Eliot, the pseudonym that Mary Ann Evans decided to adopt in order to facilitate the reception of her novels in a society and profession that was male dominated. The narration, as mentioned previously, is focused on the female character known as Maggie Tulliver, who originally is

depicted as a dark, vivid, and fiery child who dons a liberal but slightly naïve view of the world she lives in. Maggie's free spirit and lust for passion and creativity greatly contrast with the personality of her brother Tom, a character driven by the rules of practicality, logic, and common-sense. The novel soon becomes an exploration of the maturation of both Maggie and Tom as they deal through hardships such as education, finding their place within society, love, and learning how to deal with their diverging, and at times clashing, personalities. Even more so, through the relationship of Maggie and Tom, the reader is shown just how difficult it is to leap into the realm of mental and moral maturity, especially when one is surrounded by forces and people who aim to directly or indirectly prevent this leap from happening. Despite the presence of what many would dub as two Bildungsromans intertwined within one story, one must keep in mind that Maggie Tulliver is the vehicle that drives the narration of the novel, and it is her story that provides the harshest and most illuminating criticism of what maturation is, and how it is approached in that particular community.

Although it was argued that all the characters and events that Pip encountered in *Great Expectations* shaped him as a character, and "predicted" the outcomes that took place in the novel, it can also be argued that *The Mill on the Floss* is structured in a deterministic fashion that is much harsher than the one depicted in Dickens' novel. Despite Maggie's intentions, and despite her desire to be educated and fully incorporated into society, such an integration was impossible due to the social circumstances in which she was placed. This community can be compared to a system of gears, in which the movement of one gear inevitably affects the movement of another, and where the system already has a predetermined function. George Levine, in his discussion of the deceptive role of intelligence in *The Mill on the Floss*, highlights

the deterministic nature of the novel, arguing that it is structured in such a way that the incidents in the novel were not only co-dependent, but to an extent foreseeable:

It is a commonplace that the novel develops as Tom and Maggie grow: it sets them within the framework of a family and society, which extensively determine what they become, shows the inevitable development of their characters according to the pressures of heredity and irrevocable events, and traces their destinies chronologically from love, to division, to unity in death. (403)

The deterministic nature of this novel should come as no surprise when taking into account the social nature it has. Although it focuses on the growth of Maggie and Tom, and the influence of people that surround them, society and community are represented as forces that go beyond the characters' desires, making them victims of both objective violence and the power that is exerted by those who belong to the upper rungs of the community. Thus, it can be argued that *The Mill on the Floss* is a novel that focuses on societal issues via illustrations of the *Bildung* process.

In light of the above, although it can be argued that *The Mill on the Floss* is indeed a Bildungsroman, there is still a need to explore what exactly keeps the deterministic nature of the novel intact, and even more so, there is a need to pinpoint what keeps the societal gears in the novel turning. As pointed out in the previous chapter, the logical answer to this question seems to be none other than the scapegoat, the vessel of violence that helps to maintain the status quo within a particular literary community. Scapegoats in the novel happen to be the protagonists themselves, due to the fact that all of the tensions that were binding the plot seem to be nullified by the sudden and unexpected death of the characters. However, the representation of these scapegoatings seem to have diverse purposes when compared to other novels, particularly those that are traditionally and undisputedly classified as Bildungsromans. Scapegoats in Dickens' novel represented qualities that the protagonist had to eliminate from his own life in order to fully reintegrate himself in the literary community represented in the novel. Furthermore, the

protagonist had to undergo a symbolic scapegoating of his own in order to atone for the ‘sins’ of his community, and in order to provide a sense of finality and resolution to the plots. However, Maggie and Tom Tulliver are not symbolically excluded, or better said, sacrificed in the novel; rather, they are victimized through an overt expression of subjective violence: a capsized boat in a raging flood. Perhaps Maggie, and to some extent, her brother Tom, represented a microscopic flaw within the societal system, and this flaw needed to be eliminated in order for the status quo to resume its reign, but how does this inform the reader of the discordant ideologies of maturity that exist in this particular community?

The community depicted in *The Mill on the Floss* represents a structured, tame, and controlling environment that is dictated by a medley of social and moral ideologies, such as the social and academic prominence of men, the need for women to be submissive and pliable subjects, the importance and loyalty of family, and the notion that every bad deed done against society, or those who reside within it, will not go unpunished. However, early on in the novel, the reader gets a sense that Maggie, and all the desires that she expresses, directly contradicts these ideologies, as she is initially described as an untamable force, driven by her intellectual and emotional desires, which eventually lead to her downfall simply because the societal gears are turning against her. In other words, she feels an emotional connection to Philip Wakem yet is unable to pursue a relationship with him because of the tensions that exist between their families; she loves to read and desires to be educated, yet Mr. Tulliver prioritizes Tom’s education rather than hers; later on she chooses to live a life of suppression according to the lessons presented within Kempis’ *The Imitation of Christ*, and even this desire is futile because Philip introduces her to the wonders of complying with one’s emotions and overall humanity. As John Hagan convincingly argues in his reinterpretation of *The Mill on the Floss*, “Maggie is *trying* to live by

her choice, and this attempt does have immense moral value, but there is no guarantee that she actually *can*” (56).

Unfortunately, Maggie is not only at odds with the parameters and values present within her community, but she is also at odds with the micro-communities present within her life, particularly her family. Hagan proceeds to depict Maggie as a vibrant and passionate woman who “has intense desires for a full and rich life,” yet those to whom she is closest and aspires to please the most—Tom and Mr. Tulliver—are unable to understand or sympathize with these desires, mostly because they strictly comply with societal parameters themselves. Both Mr. Tulliver and Tom are characterized as being practical and for having the mindset of a businessman; in addition, both characters seem to have an unforgiving and unbending moral code that dominates and rules their sense of justice, and of what is right and what is wrong. However, Hagan points out that Maggie is “bound to them by a noble love which makes her renunciation of those desires morally necessary. From this situation spring directly or indirectly all the decisive frustrations of her life and hence the tragedy which is at the center of the novel” (57). With this in mind, not only does Maggie represent a symbolic disruption at the community or macro level, but she also represents those qualities that are rejected or misunderstood at the family or micro level as well, thus hinting that she needs to be scapegoated in order for tensions to alleviate not only within her family, but also within her community. Yet, what makes Maggie’s dilemma so complex is the fact that she is not really concerned when it comes to her social reputation and her position within her community simply because she prioritizes her love for her family above everything else. This complexity becomes even more convoluted as the reader notices that Tom serves as a direct foil for all the desires that Maggie possesses:

Ready as usual to point exceptions to the social judgment in favor of someone she loves, Maggie does not stay to think of how the family will continue in society if they deny its conventions. But for Tom few exceptions to social practice are valid, and fewer yet if proposed on impulse. (Moldstad 527)

Interestingly, Tom's affinity towards social practice, and even the discord and resentment he had towards the Wakems, were partially induced by Mr. Tulliver's death. However, Mr. Tulliver cannot be considered a scapegoat because rather than serving as a vessel that carries away negativity or those qualities that are not desired within his community, he serves as the impetus for Tom's ambitions and his desire to avenge the family name by not only recuperating the family business, but by also perpetuating the hatred he had towards the Wakem family. In other words, Mr. Tulliver's negative attributes, rather than being eliminated with his death, were actually inherited by Tom, which explains in part why Tom, towards the end of the novel, had to be eliminated from the social equation in order for the tensions within the novel to dissipate.

The core problem within the Bildungsroman, and the ultimate cause of the scapegoatings that occur in the novel's conclusion are directly intertwined with the choices and decisions that Maggie makes as she tries to develop and mature. She quickly goes on to realize that she is caught within the classic struggle that is prominent in all formation novels: either to pursue her individual desires, or to comply with the social parameters present within her community. As mentioned previously, this is no easy task for Maggie simply because she is extremely sensitive to the people who surround her, and she prioritizes the feelings and concerns of others before her own. Bernard Paris discusses not only this view at length in his reevaluation of *The Mill on the Floss*, but he also argues that she finally reconciles her desires and social parameters:

Maggie has two alternatives: she must adapt to her environment, which will involve a radical change in her nature and values, or she must abide the consequences, both spiritual and physical, of being in disharmony with the world in which she lives. Maggie does both: she ultimately, after many failures, discovers a philosophy of life that



reconciles her to her environment, thus resolving her inner struggle, but, as a result of her failures [...] she must pay the penalty for violating the mores of her society. (20)

Similar to Pip in *Great Expectations*, Maggie learned the values of her society and she tried her best to integrate herself within the community depicted in the novel, but this in no way changes the fact that she transgressed societal limits repeatedly, and therefore, in one way or another, she would have to atone for these contraventions. Yet, the difference is that while Pip was able to learn from these transgressions and essentially change who he was as a person, Maggie's adaption to her surroundings involved changing the core of who she was as a person. Towards the beginning of *Great Expectations*, Pip is first depicted as a caring, responsible, and loyal person, and though he deviates from these characteristics later on as an adolescent, his personality ultimately comes full circle as he reverts to those traits that not only defined him as a child, but that were desired in his environment. Maggie, on the other hand, always expressed characteristics that were not only frowned upon by certain people, but that were also shunned within her community, making her an individual that was difficult to understand or countenance (her voodoo dolls and desire to become one with the gypsies increased the intensity of this difficulty).

In light of the above, it is reasonable to question whether or not Maggie can truly suppress who she is as an individual, and even more so, it would be reasonable to question whether it is possible for anyone to completely assimilate within a particular society. At least in the case of Maggie, the occurrences within the novel seem to suggest that it indeed is impossible, and despite her efforts, she remains a caring, passionate, and spontaneous individual until the very end. Since she was unable to change who she was as a person, since she constantly represented a disruption with the symbolic order of her community, and since she refused to

become a victim of the objective violence that was being imposed upon her, it comes as no surprise that she had to be scapegoated via the most dramatic form possible in order to ensure that her society remained intact and unaltered: death. The sacrifice of Maggie Tulliver was the only way to purify her society of the contagion that threatened it; the only way to eliminate the foreign body that was jamming the customary function of the societal gears. This view is shared by Bernard Paris:

Reconciliation with St. Ogg's comes though death, that final calm, which nullifies Maggie's errors and restores her, in memory, to a position in the community. The community has worked its retribution on Maggie for breaking its laws, for we must remember that it is a huge mass of wooden business machinery [...] that sends Tom and Maggie to the bottom of the Floss. (31)

Thus, not only does Maggie's death provide a resolution for the novel, but as Heyns argued in the passage quoted above, her death goes on to provide order to those things that defied order by their very own nature. In other words, death was the only way to extinguish the fires that threatened to destroy the sense of normalcy that her community possessed; it became, just like every other scapegoating, an action directed towards the preservation and conservation of the prominent ideologies that existed during the time. In order for the novel to achieve complete resolution, it was not enough to simply marginalize or demonize Maggie, for she was viewed as not only the vessel of negativity, but as the source of negativity as well. In other words, not only did she carry the burden of society's guilt, but she was doomed to carry the guilt that she perpetually generated on her own.

As mentioned above, Tom Tulliver eventually became a vessel of guilt and negativity, carrying on the hatred and thirst for vengeance that his father initially produced. Nonetheless, it has also been pointed out that in comparison to Maggie, Tom always seemed to comply with the parameters and limits imposed by his community, and he even seemed to be angered whenever

these limits were transgressed. So the question is, why did he have to die towards the end of the novel, and even more importantly, was he a scapegoat? It is well known that the ending of *The Mill on the Floss* was indeed controversial, not only because the main characters in the text were killed in a horrible flood, but also because there is much debate as to whether the flood was an employment of the *Deus ex Machina* convention to provide a quick and easy resolution to the novel's conflict, or whether the flood was anticipated or foreshadowed within the plot.<sup>4</sup> Regardless, there is no doubt that the death of both Maggie and Tom in the flood is worthy of further scrutiny.

Besides Maggie's struggle between her desires and the demands of society, the other struggle that was prominent throughout the entire novel was the relationship between Maggie and Tom. Despite having completely opposing natures, ideologies, and views of their environment, they seemed to share a bond that transcended the physical and the emotional. However it can be argued that this bond was meant to be severed, due to the tensions that arose from their tumultuous relationship. It would not be farfetched to assume that Tom was indeed a model for Maggie, for he possessed many of the opportunities and choices that she desired, but never had access to: not only did Tom receive the formal education that Maggie was completely denied, but it can also be deduced that Tom was more than comfortable with embracing societal rules while she could never find a way to do so wholeheartedly. To make matters even more twisted and convoluted, despite the tensions that constantly arose between the two, Maggie always had an intense desire to please Tom, even though it was virtually impossible to do so (consider, for example, the infamous pastry incident that takes place in chapter VI). Thus, the differences between the characters in combination with their somewhat paradoxical linkage to

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<sup>4</sup> For a discussion on this controversy, please see Larry Rubin's article titled "River Imagery as a Means of Foreshadowing in *The Mill on the Floss*." The citation is available in the "Works Cited and Consulted" chapter.

one another seemed to be the very cause of their undoing. Susan Fraiman suggests that their deaths not only highlight the differences between their formation processes, but that it was also an inevitable result of the clash between two contrasting forces:

Eliot's controversial ending provides a final image of the relation between Tom's conventional narrative of formation and Maggie's counternarrative. The moment when brother and sister are pulled beneath the waves in a dying embrace has been variously interpreted as androgynous reunion, incestuous orgasm, and the climax of a long suicide or perhaps of a soricide and also as authorial revenge. Wishing neither to redeem Maggie's fate nor to discount Tom's, I suggest that their simultaneous deaths mark a moment when the narratives [...] collide for the last time, and now Tom's upward-bound *Bildungsroman* is fatally assimilated to Maggie's downward spiral. (147)

Fraiman seems to imply in this instance that the destructive, downward, feminine comes to dominate, overwhelming the masculine upward-boundness. At this point, it becomes imperative to recall Moffet's proposition to widen the scope of the *Bildungsroman* discussed in chapter I of this thesis, in which he argues that all developmental vectors should be taken into consideration when approaching the *Bildungsroman*, and that formation does not necessarily go upwards, but it can go downwards as well. On one hand, it can be implied that both Tom and Maggie needed to be scapegoated in order for the tensions within the plot to be completely resolved. However, keeping in mind that the novel focused more on Maggie's development in comparison to the development of other characters within the novel, perhaps it would be safer to assume that Tom had to be scapegoated to alleviate the tensions he was causing in Maggie's life, and to eliminate the "poisons" with which he was infecting his community (such as avenging his father at all cost, maintaining the rivalry towards the Wakems until the very end of the plot, and denying his sister's chance at acceptance and happiness). In due course, Maggie also had to embody the role of the scapegoat in order for the novel to achieve a sense of resolution simply because her intrinsic nature would always clash with the ideals present within her community. Therefore, in

order for society to go on with its ways, Maggie had to assume the role of the vessel that would drown all the venom affecting the community along with her.

These drastic and dramatic removals within the novel highlight the novel's harsh and uncompromising moral center and more importantly, its perspective of the ideologies of maturation and formation. Eliot's text depicts society as a force to be reckoned with, and perhaps, a force that simply cannot be messed with. In essence, the individual is depicted as a moveable object, whereas society is illustrated as an irresistible force, and there is only one way things can possibly end when the individual resists movement while craving the enticing allure of society. The discourse in the novel suggests that when it comes to maturation and integration within a community, people, according to their nature and inherent behaviors, are destined either to achieve social integration or completely fail in the process. Furthermore, if the Bildungsroman is supposed to be viewed as a negotiation between protagonists and their communities, *The Mill on the Floss* undeniably presents this conciliation as a monopoly rather than a fair and just trade. This notion seems to contrast directly with Dickens' *Great Expectations*, which depicts the protagonist as an agent capable of learning from past mistakes, and of going against the odds to find a place within society. Perhaps Pip was lucky enough to witness the presence of other scapegoats that served partially to drive away the evils that otherwise would have consumed him completely; unfortunately, Maggie did not count on other scapegoats to assist her during her formation process, leading her not only to carry most of the blame on her shoulders, but to take her brother down with her in the process.

Despite the fact that Maggie was not able to undergo a traditional and successful integration into the spirit of her own society, it would be ludicrous to suggest that she did not undergo an education or a formation process. Her journey from childhood to adulthood allowed

her to mature and come of age in such a way that she was able to understand just how unfair and unjust her community was, and even more so, the importance of prioritizing her feelings and emotions over a system that was designed to destroy her from the very beginning. It can be said that Maggie, even more than Pip, understood the implications of the objective violence she was forced to face her entire life, giving her both wisdom beyond her years and the ability to embrace what she actually wanted rather than what she was taught to want. Thus, the very “individuality” that Maggie refuses to part with becomes the element which signals her as a sacrificial victim. In a sense, this makes her a character worthy of admiration and compassion, because as Claude T. Bissell points out in his social analysis of George Eliot’s novels, “...she turns back to face the uncomprehending wrath of society at the call of a moral principle—a society, moreover, that is blind to spiritual subtleties and would have acquiesced in the earlier solution of her problem” (234). Even more so, Maggie deserves praise because her removal from the social equation draws attention to the very problems that symbolically led to her death in the first place, pushing the reader to question the logic and validity of the sacrifice that she was forced to make. Perhaps in one way or another, the novel goes on to reinforce traditional views of maturation, and perhaps it reinforces the social status quo; however, her scapegoating leads the reader to elevate her to a higher or spiritual state because she had the determination and the courage to embody the characteristics that transgressed the social values of her community; she was simply faithful to her desires, wishes, and needs rather than to the parameters of an unforgiving social order.

**CHAPTER VI**  
**THE PURIFICATION OF *TESS OF THE D'UBERVILLES***

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As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the core novels that were chosen for this discussion represent different facets of the Bildungsroman genre. The first novel that was discussed, Dickens' *Great Expectations*, represents a text that is indisputably and traditionally classified as a formation novel due to its strict adherence to the traditional formula of the Bildungsroman and its portrayal of a middle-class Victorian male trying to find his place in society. The second novel discussed, Eliot's *The Mill on the Floss*, represents a slight deviation from the traditional Bildungsroman formula due to its female protagonist, and due to the fact that this protagonist is never able to successfully negotiate between her desires and societal demands. My choice for the third and final novel to be discussed in this thesis is Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*,<sup>5</sup> a text that many would not traditionally classify as a Bildungsroman due to its deviation from the traditional formula used towards the criticism and analysis of formation novels. Nonetheless, when approaching the novel using the reconfigured definition of the Bildungsroman discussed in Part VI of this thesis, there is no doubt that this novel not only offers surprising insights in terms of the ideologies of maturation that existed during the time the novel was written, but it also offers a lucid contrast to the notion of coming of age offered by the other novels discussed in this thesis.

Hardy's penultimate novel, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, narrates the account of Tess Durbeyfield from her late childhood until her death as an adult, and all of the heartache and

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<sup>5</sup> The full original title of this novel is *Tess of the D'Urbervilles: A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented*. However, for purposes of brevity, the title within the discussion will simply be referenced as *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

sorrow that she encountered as she tried to mesh with an unforgiving society that was seemingly designed to clash with her every thought and action. From blaming herself for the death of her family's horse, Prince, who was the family's primary source of income, to her out-of-wedlock pregnancy and the premature death of her child, to being abandoned by her husband Angel Clare due to his unwillingness to deal with Tess' past "indiscretions," it is quite obvious that the protagonist encountered a series of obstacles that prevented her from achieving any degree of happiness or personal growth. At first glance, it is noticeable that *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* portrays an intensified notion of determinism. Byron Caminero-Santangelo, in his discussion of ethics and moral dilemmas in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, argues that Tess' surroundings were not only deterministic in nature, but that the changes and shifts of character that she undergoes are external and controlled by her environment:

she is equated with unthinking vegetable life, 'the sapling,' and she has no control over the effect of her 'surroundings' on her. Although this image portrays Tess 'in accord' with a benevolent nature, it also denies her any autonomy from the power of the biological, natural world. Understood by the narrator as malleable and passive, she becomes only an empty form to be molded by her environment. (2)

Although I agree with Caminero-Santangelo when he points out the deterministic nature of the narrative and the protagonist's fate in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, I would like to contest the severity of this sense of determinism and the extent to which Tess controls her environment. Firstly, it can be argued that Tess is not only aware of her disadvantages against the norms of society, but she is consciously trying to counteract these disadvantages, and to some extent, directly challenge them. An illustration of this notion can be seen in the instance in which her child is not allowed to have a Christian burial because he was not baptized, and yet, Tess still manages to find a way to give Sorrow a proper and dignified farewell.



When compared to *The Mill on the Floss*, the sense of determinism in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* is focused more on society's failure to control human instinct rather than on the natural inevitabilities that humans face within a particular community. It would be unfair to view Tess simply as an "empty form" when it is her inner desires and her passions that create the main conflict with her society to begin with. Although her desires may seem weak and pointless in the grand scheme of her society's order and power, this does not mean that Tess is merely a lump of clay that is subjected to the hands of social order. James Hazen points out, in his comparison of Tess and Antigone, that this notion of determinism is employed by Hardy to highlight the ideology that instinct and desire will always defeat any restrictions or laws designed by human societies:

Tess's defense of herself is essentially a plea from society back to nature. [... It] dramatizes the profound and continuing antagonism between the laws of nature and the laws of men. [...] Hardy is able to remind us [...] of the subjugation of man's life to the great universal instinctual laws of growth and reproduction. In this way he enables us to see and feel the fragility and hopelessness of those human laws and customs which seek to legislate the instincts away. (209)

As mentioned previously, Bildungsromans typically represent the classic struggle of the individual versus society, in which some type of conciliation between the demands of society and the desires of the individual must be achieved. Nonetheless, although Tess' struggles go on to exemplify her own difficulties as she tries to assimilate within her community, they also represent, in the grand scheme of things, how societal and moral demands are both artificial and pointless when compared to human instinct or desire. It is my belief that this representation, in due course, is what makes it so difficult when it comes to classifying the novel as a Bildungsroman, simply because its main focus is slightly ambiguous: it is tricky to pinpoint

whether the novel is focused more on the protagonist, or on the issues and ideologies present within the protagonist's community.

It is curious to observe how Hardy always seems to employ ambiguous notions when it comes to the development of this novel, and especially when concerning the presentation of the unfortunate events that befall the protagonist. For example, the death of her horse occurred mostly because Tess fell asleep while holding the reins. She feels guilty, which is why she agrees to work at Alec D'Urberville's estate. While it may be easy to place all the blame on Tess, the reason she was in charge of the reins in the first place was because her father was too drunk to drive during the night. Another ambivalent instance occurs during the "seduction of Tess" fiasco, in which it is not made absolutely clear whether Alec took advantage of Tess, sexually speaking, or whether Tess actually consented to Alec's desires. This sense of ambivalence should come as no surprise when taking into account that the full title of the novel includes the subtitled *A Pure Woman Faithfully Presented*, in which it can be seen that Hardy was intent on portraying Tess as a victim of circumstance rather than as a woman who is deliberately responsible for the pain in her life.

Ambivalence and ambiguity are also present when it comes to the novel's classification as a literary genre. At first glance, the novel simply seems to be a tragedy with realistic tones, and it also has some traces of the Victorian domestic novel imbued within its content and ideals. In addition, the novel also presents some traces from the traditional Bildungsroman genre, not only because we are able to trace Tess' growth from childhood into adulthood, but also because we encounter the struggle between the protagonist and the social laws that he/she must abide by. However, the novel does not fit the traditional perspective of the Bildungsroman genre not only because the protagonist does not become part of the social order imposed on her, but also

because Tess is offered few opportunities to grow from a mental or psychological standpoint.

Furthermore, Norbert Lennartz, in his discussion titled “The Intrusion of Old Times: Ghosts and Resurrections in Hardy, Joyce, and Beyond,” argues that the protagonist’s relationship with the past is what ultimately prevents *Tess of the D’Urbervilles* from being classified as a Bildungsroman:

In contrast to the popular genre of the *bildungsroman* which frequently shows protagonists disengaging themselves from the burden of the past, Hardy’s novel persistently emphasizes the fact that Tess is not only hampered by the moral depravity of her ancestors, but also constantly exposed to intruders from her more recent past. (16)

In other words, part of the traditional goals of the Bildungsroman is for the protagonist to sever the strings to his/her past in order to develop a sense of identity, and in order to have access to the threshold of adulthood. In order to become a mature and pliable citizen, the protagonist has to escape the past, leave behind the child within, and adapt to a new way of viewing and approaching the world. In *Great Expectations*, we can see this when Pip leaves behind his childhood home in order to climb the social ladder, thanks mostly to the money that he received from Magwitch. Even in *The Mill on the Floss*, which deviates slightly from the traditional Bildungsroman formula, Maggie tries to distance herself from the past by adopting a new approach towards the world she lives in, influenced by Kempis’ *The Imitation of Christ*. What is important to note here is that the Bildungsroman often presents an instance in which the protagonist is able to separate himself/herself from the past ideologies and viewpoints that once defined him/her. However, as pointed out by Lennartz, Tess is rarely ever offered this opportunity of temporal disconnection; thus, she is forced to embrace the past as if it were a brand on her forehead, or a scarlet letter on her chest (marks that are characteristic of

scapegoats): not only is it visible for the entire community to see, not only does it create a sense of stigma and taboo, but Tess is forced to face it on a daily basis.

Despite these deviations from the traditional perspective of the Bildungsroman, perhaps it is worth determining whether or not the novel can be classified as a formation novel using the reconfigured definition of the Bildungsroman genre discussed in Part VI of this thesis. First and foremost, the novel does focus on one protagonist, and how she negotiates the advantages and disadvantages of complying with the moral and cultural parameters of her community, and to some degree, how she contests them. This negotiation is highlighted in Tess' life mostly via an informal education, or in other words, what she learns and acquires during the experiences and mishaps that occur during her transition from childhood to adulthood. The fact that Tess is constantly shunned by her community and her peers leads her to question not only the rules of the society she resides in, but it also pushes her to question whether or not she wants to be part of that society in the first place. Furthermore, the novel does go on to exemplify the requirements for proper development and maturity according to the ideologies present within Tess' community via the protagonist's struggles and inevitable outcomes. What makes Tess' maturation so difficult to detect and discuss is the fact that the novel refuses the conventions of maturation narratives. The protagonist is far from being an example of an ideal, perfect, and pure human being. W. Eugene Davis suggests that Tess' flaws give the character a sense of humanity that not only makes her depiction ambiguous, but also gives her story a uniqueness that deviates immensely from what a reader expects from the narrative:

We choose to remember Tess as an active being, capable of willing and doing. We therefore reject Hardy's view, which suggests weakness, passivity. And, as I have tried to show, Tess was by any sensible definition of the term "impure," but Hardy's view of her stresses her purity. Is it not, then, the strong, passionate, impure Tess we understand and love? The novel lives because the heroine lives—not as some sort of ethereally pure

creature but as an intensely human woman, even though, I suspect, her creator could not be quite candid about the character he had fashioned. (400)

With this in mind, Tess' maturation process is difficult to pinpoint, not only because her character resists complying with the deterministic cage that tries to keep her in her place, but also because her maturation process deviates from the ideologies and expectations that we have as readers. One would expect her to become a pliable and obedient citizen, but understandably, her past experiences have influenced and guided her in such a way that she is unable to do so. Perhaps Tess is never fully able to free herself from the ghosts of her past, but despite this constant haunting, one can observe that Tess does try to accommodate with her society, and she matures enough to follow her own desires rather than the rules of society. This latter notion can be seen when Tess murders Alec in the final chapters in the novel, for although she is fully aware of the repercussions of her actions, she finally is able to kill the past that has been preventing her growth, and she is also able to realize, for once, that her desires are more important than abstract laws. Last but not least, Jeffrey Sommers, in his defense of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* as a Bildungsroman, goes on to argue that the novel can be classified as a formation novel because it does not speak of the experience of women and society in general, but rather, it focuses on the story of one particular woman, her intent to accommodate within a society, and her disillusionments in doing so:

Certainly, by examining the experience of the pure Tess, Hardy is able to reflect upon the changing agricultural scene, the nature of justice, and the sexual hypocrisy of society, but he never wavers in his pursuit of the story of Tess's growth to maturity [..., in which] the story of the protagonist's growth is the vehicle of Hardy's larger concerns. (166)

What I find so tantalizing in Sommer's claims is that he focuses on the novel as it was designed to be focused on: it is the story of Tess, the pure woman, and the experiences that went on to define her. Indeed, the reader is offered a plethora of social issues and concerns that

predominated in the late-Victorian period, and he/she is also offered an account of the extent to which humans are able to escape the confines of social law and order, but the core of the text is the protagonist. Whether for better or worse, the reader is able to observe the negotiations Tess had to endure in order to achieve some degree of maturation—keeping in mind that development can be approached from either a progressive or regressive perspective. In addition, the novel also allows the reader to explore the dynamics between the individual and the society he/she resides in, thus providing a platform that can be used to compare this relationship with other novels that also explore this dynamic. This, in due course, allows the reader to determine why some acts of social assimilation are more successful than others.

As in the other novels discussed in this thesis, scapegoating seems to be the agent that fuels the negotiations that Tess must undergo throughout the novel. Similar to Dickens' novel *Great Expectations*, scapegoats within *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* represent qualities or ideals that the protagonist needed to eradicate in order to achieve assimilation within her society. However, one must also realize that Tess, similarly to Maggie Tulliver, went on to embody and embrace qualities and ideals that were shunned by her community. Chen Zhen, in his discussion of social prejudice and male dominance in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, points out that the protagonist's inherent traits, such as her behavior and ideologies, directly clashed with the social parameters present within her community:

As the sacrifice of ethical prejudice, Tess is victimized by Victorian society, whose law she is driven to break and from whose moral codes she is alienated. Tess's behavior deviates from conventional Victorian norms, which regard her as an intruder into the society and offender against the socially accepted moral standards and conduct norms. (1221)

Despite the presence of other scapegoats in Tess' life, they alone were not enough to carry away the microscopic disorders present within her community. Because Tess is viewed as both an

offender and an intruder within her society, it can be deduced that a symbolic scapegoating, similar to Pip's in *Great Expectations*, would not suffice to atone for the guilt and blame placed upon her. Interestingly, the scapegoat is characterized for being the bearer of unwarranted guilt or blame, but in the case of Tess, as pointed out by Zhen, she undoubtedly feels guilt for all of the tragedy and misfortune that her family faced as an indirect consequence of her actions:

Due to her 'decadent' deeds, her family is despised and condemned in the village, which is intensified by her return to Marlott, for which her mother is scolded and the family loses the last hope of staying in the village. Her return is the strongest reason that the family is expelled from Marlott. Tess realizes her bad influence on her family, which strengthens her sense of guilt and responsibility. (1217)

Tess feels this guilt and responsibility during the earlier stages of the novel, and they become the characteristic forces that drive most of Tess' decisions and actions. Thus, throughout the entire narrative, one can observe that Tess endures her exclusion from society because she believes that is the price to be paid for her actions, and furthermore, one can observe how Tess struggles to eradicate the ghosts of the pasts and amend her supposed wrongdoings.

But it is precisely Tess' major wrongdoing which becomes the major focus of the novel: the fact that she—willingly or not—engaged in a sexual act with Alec before marriage, an act she was unable to keep under wraps because she became pregnant as a consequence. Similar to most of the event in Tess' life, it can be observed that she is not only affected and defined by her past, but she is also branded by it as well. No matter how much she tries to eliminate this branding from her own life, the scars of these supposed wrongdoings remain with Tess throughout her entire life. Jeffrey Sommers points out that Tess' fate and ultimate demise were not only predestined, but also inevitable precisely because her life represented a disruption of the ideological glue that kept her community intact:

Thus, engirdled by the past, Tess is hounded by society because she has violated one of its cherished beliefs: that women should be chaste in a way not necessarily required of men. [...] Pursued by the man who seduced her, scorned by the husband who traduced her, there remains no place in society for Tess, and she is finally left with but one option: flight. [...] Although such a flight is futile, it remains a determined one. (162)

In other words, Tess was doomed to become the major scapegoat within the novel simply because those that surrounded her gave her no other option. We have characters, such as Angel and Alec, who embodied characteristics and behaviors that would certainly make them scapegoats under contemporary ideological and moral standards. But their actions and behavior were quite predictable in Victorian times, where women were nothing more than a blank canvas that was subjugated to the stains imposed by men. Tess was a disruption within a system of predetermined social laws, which is why she had to be put to flight to begin with. And even more so, anybody else who embodied this disruption had to be put to flight as well. The best illustration of this notion would be Tess' child, Sorrow, who died soon after birth. Although to some extent it can be argued that Sorrow was merely a sacrificial lamb within the novel's plot, a minor death used simply to move the plot forward, we must pay attention to the fact that the child was a product of those actions that violated societal standards. From this point of view, Sorrow had to die in order to provide balance to the symbolic and semiotic disruption that his birth and life represented. The child was merely the result of an action that society was not able to tolerate or understand, making him an incarnation of "wickedness" that had to be expelled in order for society to continue on with its unbending rules and order.

It is precisely through scapegoating that Tess begins to understand the parameters with her community, and the behavior she must don in order to fit within these parameters. And although many may argue that Tess neither developed nor matured within the course of the novel, the climactic murder of Alec towards the novel's conclusion demonstrates otherwise.



Although this murder was undoubtedly prompted by passion, one can posit that Tess was fully aware of the social repercussions that this action would have due to her familiarity with the social boundaries that defined and controlled her life. Her heartbreak, her loneliness, her desire for social assimilation, and even her constant attempts for redemption became her informal education. This education, in turn, allowed her to realize that she had little chance of assimilating within her community, and that society would offer her no opportunities to negotiate her own wants and desires with the demands that it imposes. With this in mind, Tess decided to transgress societal limits by murdering Alec, cementing the notion that she has matured enough to realize that it is pointless to comply with social stipulations when she was destined to be purged from this system her entire life. Robert D. Tarleck, in his discussion titled “Existential Failing in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*” claims that Alec’s death represents the moment in which Tess was able to liberate herself from the chains with which society has bound her for her entire life:

The most obvious point made by Tess’s behavior following her murder of Alec is that she has been passive in the most destructive way possible; her act of rebellion is clearly intended to free her not only from a repressive dimension of her life but also from life itself, and, more precisely, from her existential commitment to a universe in which an individual must exercise the freedom of choice available to him. (257)

This was precisely the moment at which Tess realizes that despite the expectations that people and society have, she is free to decide whether to comply with these expectations, ignore them, or contest them. In due course, this murder is the instant in which Tess passes into a different stage in her life, in which she is able to look beyond the objective violence and distorted realities imposed upon her, and force Alec to pay the ultimate price for all the misery that he bestowed upon her. Yet, by giving in completely to her desires, she committed the final transgression needed to ensure her sacrifice. Jeanette Shumaker, in her discussion of *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*

and the confession novel, goes on to suggest why this action assured that Tess would face death towards the end of the novel:

The execution of Tess dramatizes the novel's critique of the justice system. Her right to primal justice—an eye for an eye—with a member of the upper class doesn't exist in the supposedly civilized nineteenth century. Thus the upper class need not fear that large numbers of kept women will murder the aristocrats who seduced them. (457)

In other words, although many would point out that Alec deserved to die due to all the misery he caused Tess, it does not change the fact that she has once again clashed directly with the unwritten laws of social order. It is quite ironic to observe that Tess became the vessel of blame by eliminating the primary source which caused her social exclusion in the first place. This sense of irony is only intensified once we realize that Tess eliminated one source of her frustrations in order to ensure that she would be able to share her life with Angel, a man who undoubtedly aggravated these frustrations during the course of the novel.

In due course, the novel seems to thrive on the notion of scapegoating in order to provide a sense of resolution to the plot. Whenever a character performed a deed that deviated from the norms and expectations of society, or was a product of such a deed, he or she was doomed to pay a price. However, this is not always the case, for although Alec ultimately paid the price for all of the misery that he caused in Tess' life, Angel seems to have the only relatively "happy" ending amongst the main characters of the novel. Shumaker depicts this latter notion, suggesting that although Angel did not escape from the clutches of fate scot-free, his punishment was relatively feeble in comparison to Tess' and Alec's:

Whereas Tess pays and pays for her rape, affair, and murder, Angel gets off relatively lightly for creating the conditions which led Tess to kill Alec. Angel's doom is merely to end up with a diminished version of Tess, her spiritualized younger sister, Liza-Lu. The novel suggests that since Angel is a conventional Victorian though he believes himself to be a rebel, Liza-Lu may be all he can handle; she is the meek angel in the house which Tess was not. (458)

In order to understand the reasons why Angel's "doom" was so minuscule, we must keep in mind that the ideologies and social laws that dictate Tess' community are vastly different from those of the contemporary readers of the novel. Tess was expected to be a docile, compliant, chaste, and pure woman, whereas this was not expected in any way from a man. However, Tess, both willingly and unwillingly, deviated from these expectations, making her a microscopic disorder within the societal system that she was part of, and thus assuring her need to be eliminated from the social equation in order to promote the conservation of an unbending order. Despite the reader's desire for Angel to pay for all of the misery he caused Tess by abandoning her and refusing to forgive her for her past misjudgments, realistically speaking, he was simply complying with the ideologies and demands present within his environment, and he acted according to how these perspectives expected him to act.

It can be argued that Hardy was aiming at exposing the hypocrisy that existed not only between how men and women were viewed, but also within the laws and ideologies that we impose on ourselves in order to mesh within certain social parameters. In this case, Tess was a scapegoat in many ways, for although she needed to die in order for society to be balanced once again, she also became the vessel that served to carry away the ideological lenses through which we view and interpret society, and expose the tarnished core that resides under the shiny exterior that we view and interact with on a daily basis. As Nina Auerbach points out in her discussion of the fallen woman:

Conventionally, the fallen woman must die at the end of her story, perhaps because death rather than marriage is the one implacable human change, the only honorable symbol of her fall's transforming power. Death does not simply punish or obliterate the fallen woman: its ritual appearance alone does her justice. (35)

Indeed, the scapegoat provides a sense of resolution to the novel, and in turn, goes on to promote a conservative agenda and put it into practice. However, particularly in the case of Tess, the scapegoat goes on to present the need for change and transformation. The fact that Tess was shunned by her society, and eliminated from it, demonstrates that there was a vast amount of objective violence used to design the social blueprint which dictates the ideologies and actions of her community's residents. Furthermore, her death demonstrates that despite the overwhelming influence of this blueprint, she has the ability to choose whether or not to comply with the boundaries that try to control her actions. As mentioned in previous chapters, the scapegoat does not eliminate the problem, but rather, it gives us a rare glimpse of the flaws inherent in the ways of the world. It is through Tess' life experiences and her scapegoating that we are able to become cognizant of these flaws, and to develop an awareness of the ideologies of maturation that exist within her community to begin with. Thus, there is no reason why *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* should not be considered a Bildungsroman.

**CHAPTER VII**  
**MATERIALIZING THE SPECTER**

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What is personal growth? To many, growth is becoming a mature and pliable citizen within a particular place or community of people. To others, growth entails the development of the ability to suppress desires and urges in order to comply with the ideologies, laws, and behaviors that are expected within a particular societal setting. As seen via the novels discussed in this thesis, every author, every character, and every person has their own vision of what maturation and growth entails, and what is needed to achieve it. Charles Dickens, through his work *Great Expectations*, seems to imply that maturation is achieved once a person is able to look beyond himself or herself in order to think and care about others, and once a person is able to rediscover the virtues that we lost touch of while venturing into adulthood. Dickens also affirms that people grow not only according to their own experiences, but according to the thoughts and actions of those who surround them. Furthermore, there is the possibility that “growth” is approached and defined differently by each generation and culture; thus, our own era interprets growth differently from the way Victorians did. Via the creation of *The Mill on the Floss*, George Eliot goes on to point out that sometimes growth entails being able to tell when one should comply with the demands of society, and when it is more important to give in to one’s desires. Furthermore, Eliot, through Maggie, shares the viewpoint which argues that true maturation involves an understanding of the mechanisms that control society, and being able to decide whether or not these mechanisms deserve to be fully embraced. Last, but certainly not least, Thomas Hardy, via the experiences and heartaches that Tess encounters during her life, demonstrates that many times, maturity is actually a social expectation that is ideologically

devised to go against us, and despite one's efforts to comply with these expectations, they are unfortunately impossible to achieve. Moreover, he illustrates that in many cases, growth involves understanding that the ways of the world are not always fair and just, and that many times great losses are necessary in order to achieve any degree of change.

When it comes down to it, it is virtually impossible to establish the exact steps that one should take in order for a child to transcend into the psychological and moral realm of adulthood, and this is precisely what makes the Bildungsroman so difficult to classify and study, particularly when advancing towards novels with a strict set of traditional parameters that resist the historical shifts and discrepancies that may exist between particular accounts of maturation. In the most basic sense, coming-of-age is concerned not with depicting how and what humans should do in order to mature, but rather, it is concerned with depicting an idiosyncratic journey from childhood to adulthood, and the trials and tribulations that characters must go through in order to determine a community's requirements for completing this journey successfully. In due course, all of these journeys, whether successful or not, allow readers to develop their own sense of what growth and maturation entail, and furthermore, they allow readers to compare and contrast these journeys with one another, and with their very own. Ultimately, this journey always seems to highlight an extremely important choice that everyone is forced to make in life: does one comply with the wants and demands of outer forces, or should one transgress these demands and follow one's intrinsic desires?

Novels typically classified as Bildungsromans tend to have a distinct layer of depth and complexity that many other novels do not possess, because there are three major forces at play while reading and interpreting a formation novel. First and foremost there is the protagonist, the character that is trying to venture into the realm of adulthood; secondly, there is the protagonist's

community, the major counteracting force that intends to manipulate or mold the protagonist into a unit that can appropriately be assimilated into society; lastly, there is the reader's community, a community that not only affects the interpretation of the novel, but a community that is also informed by the novel as well. These three forces tend to create a lot of tension, and it is precisely when this tension surfaces that the notion of choice becomes crucial. With this in mind, the scapegoat becomes not only the solution to this existing tension, but he or she also becomes the resounding influence that pushes the protagonist and the reader to view maturation from a particular perspective.

It can be argued that scapegoating exists to some degree in every literary text. I must admit that I am personally partial to the coming-of-age genre, and it has been a favored genre of mine since I was immersed into young adult fiction as a teen. However, when I first learned about the concept of the scapegoat, and as I looked back on all the novels and short stories that I have cherished throughout the years, I found it extremely uncanny that most, if not all coming-of-age novels, presented the exclusion or sacrifice of a major character in order to provide some sense of resolution to the plot, and in order to highlight the hardships that are faced when transitioning into adulthood. However, these exclusions and scapegoatings seemed to be looming within Victorian coming-of-age novels, which comes as no surprise due to the fact that the *Bildungsroman* reached its pinnacle during this period. What is so interesting and tantalizing about scapegoats in Victorian formation novels is that the removal of the character from the narration's equation clearly has a didactic purpose. Both the protagonists and the readers are exposed to the consequences that are faced when one transgresses society's limits. Miss Havisham, Magwitch, Pip, Tom, Maggie, Mr. Tulliver, Tess, and Sorrow, in one way or another, went against the limits that were imposed by society, and some even went on to embrace societal

factors that could not be stomached in their respective communities. Thus, either indirectly or directly, they had to confront some type of scapegoating in order to emphasize the consequences of societal transgression.

If the protagonist were to be considered the vehicle that moves the narration of a coming-of-age text forward, it can be argued that scapegoats are the fuel that keeps this vehicle running. The presence of a scapegoats push protagonists and readers to realize what is necessary in order to achieve any degree of growth in a given setting. Furthermore, they also help to provide a sense of closure to the narration. If the protagonist is unable to achieve growth despite his or her best intentions, or if the protagonist is unable to find a worthwhile conciliation between his/her desires and his/her community, the logical solution would be to scapegoat the protagonist as a final solution. As noted in previous chapters, readers typically turn to Bildungsromans to feel at ease, and to gather a sense that all problems have some possible solution. But, as Michiel Heyns pointed out, the scapegoat goes on to create conservative parameters in terms of what should or should not be done by a person within a community. Though this indeed may be true in terms of Dickens' *Great Expectations*, I believe that the scapegoats within *The Mill on the Floss*, and particularly those within *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, go on to contest this notion. In other words, while the depiction of a maturation process can go on to be an agent of preservation, it can also be used to address and challenge the ideologies of maturity and morality present within a community.

Protagonists within Bildungsromans, particularly those pertaining to novels written during the Victorian period, indeed face rather insurmountable odds: they are trying to mature and find a sense of identity within a space that strives for uniformity and conformity. Although scapegoats are supposed to be the solution to the many problems present within a community, it



is clear that they are a manifestation of a society's weaknesses and flaws. Scapegoats go on to demonstrate to both the protagonist and the reader the blemishes and cracks that are existent within the walls of their social environment; these cracks further push the reader to question and debate just exactly what growth and maturity are, and just how unstable and ideological the process can truly be. Thus, while scapegoats are not the main focus of the Bildungsroman, they are undoubtedly necessary for a coming-of-age journey to take place, regardless of whether or not the protagonist is able to reach the destination of this journey.

This thesis, in essence, initially called for a typological reconfiguration of the Bildungsroman genre, but even at this point, creating a distinct typology is slightly questionable due not only to the Bildungsroman's ideological nature, but also because, as demonstrated above, it is difficult to fit formation novels within a specific type or kind. Although several coming-of-age novels have many characteristics and motifs in common, such as a protagonist who undergoes a formal or informal education, and who negotiates his or her desires with the demands of society, I would ultimately have to deem that a Bildungsroman's true purpose is the facilitation of the discussion of different ideologies and viewpoints of what maturation should or should not be. Keeping this in mind, I wish to go so far as to say that what we now know as a Bildungsroman is not exactly a type, but rather, it is a distinct approach used further to comprehend and analyze novels dealing with the classic conflict of man versus society over an extended lapse of time, fueled by a series of losses and sacrifices. In essence, the Bildungsroman becomes what I like to call a text of assessment, which pushes the reader to analyze a particular depiction of growth and maturity in order to gain insights and revelations of our own ideologies pertaining to the coming-of-age process. As Heyns states in the conclusion of his discussion of the scapegoat in English realist fiction:

...the imagination, and more particularly its fictional deployment, has also other tendencies and capabilities. The novel is capable of developing awareness of its own processes and of the origins of those processes; thus it can teach us not only about experience, but about our own ways of dealing with that experience. (270)

The scapegoating mechanism becomes a prominent process within the Bildungsroman that teaches a lesson not only to the protagonist, but ultimately, to the reader. It is through removals and sacrifices that both the protagonist and the reader develop an awareness of the cultural and social parameters that dictate the courses we take in life and the actions required either to transgress or to comply with these restrictions. The Bildungsroman projects an education that in turn becomes an edifying process for the reader, pushing us to realize that maturation and development manifest in different forms and ideologies, and point towards different directions according to both the agent that undergoes the process and the environment in which this process takes place.

The so-called specter known as the Bildungsroman will only continue to haunt literary criticism if we continue to view it as a genre rather than a depiction and assessment of maturation. If the literary critic is able to view beyond the formulas and constraints that are imposed when approaching a formation novel, it will not matter whether the text complies with uncompromising, unyielding, and suffocating views of what the *Bildung* process is. What does matter is that the Bildungsroman's literary and cultural intention is, in my humble opinion, to highlight, question, or contest these views in the first place; to materialize the limits and choices that haunt each and every one of us as we transition from a child to an adult outlook of the world.

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