

The Spectre on the Stair: Intertextual Chains in *Great Expectations* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

In an 1891 interview, Mark Twain characteristically declared:

Nine out of ten of the qualities required for the writing of a good novel are summed up in the one thing – a knowledge of men and life, not books or university education. it makes me impatient to see that requirement constantly made by the critics that a novelist shall have book culture.¹

Twain was prone to making such statements, often associating his humble origins with an honesty that could apparently only come from a lack of book culture: “I don’t know anything about anything, and never did. My brother used to try to get me to read Dickens long ago. I couldn’t do it.”² Evidence suggests that this claim by a man frequently termed the ‘American Dickens’ is blatantly untrue: Twain was an avid early reader of Dickens, his letters are replete with references to Dickens novels, and his account of hearing Dickens speak reveals both an admiration for the novelist and an appreciation of his style.³ Known amongst his friends as much for his communal reading-circles as for his pronouncements against various writers, Twain was clearly a novelist with considerable “book culture” of his own.⁴

¹ Mark Twain, interview with Raymond Blathwait. Scharnhorst 135.

² Qtd in Paine, 1500-1501.

³ Camfield argues that Twain in fact “shaped his style in imitation and defiance of Dickens’s,” and that Dickens was “one of the most important literary influences on Clemens as a young man” (167, 30). Baetzhold goes further to assert that Twain borrowed, “consciously or unconsciously, important elements” from Dickens for “a number of his own works.” This is perhaps only natural, given the similarities “in their attitudes and lives.” He also offers a convincing case for Twain’s qualified (if variable) admiration of Dickens. (“Mark Twain and Dickens” 189, 195). This case is indebted to some extent to the earlier investigations of Gardner, who researches the letters and writings of Twain to identify what exactly he may have read – and to dispel some misunderstandings of Twain’s apparent denunciation of Dickens. Gair continues in this vein, noting that Twain’s famously satirical description of a Dickens reading is itself “doubly Dickensian,” and that Twain’s admiration for Dickens is obvious, “not least because scenes and characters from Dickens’s novels are echoed in Twain’s” (142, 143). Krauth offers a brief if useful survey of some critical explanations of Twain’s relationship to the work of Dickens.

⁴ In *Mark Twain and John Bull*, Baetzhold provides one of the more thorough explorations of Twain’s allusions to nineteenth-century poetry and fiction.

Twain's comments can be attributed to his overt suspicion of pretentiousness in his fellow Americans, which he tended to associate with a dangerous idealization of European high culture. He could not, for example, "gird the English love for titles while our own love for titles was more open to sarcasm."⁵ As Camfield has observed, as much as Twain "found poetry in American dialects and beauty in American landscapes, he always articulated that value against implicitly or explicitly stated European standards."⁶ In *Life on the Mississippi*, Twain identifies the "power of a single book for good or harm": "As far as our South is concerned, the good work done by Cervantes is pretty much a dead letter, so effectually has Scott's pernicious [*Ivanhoe*] undermined it."⁷ In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Twain takes implicit revenge, offering an extended description of the sinking of the *Walter Scott* and its criminal crew. All that survives from the boat are the books that Huck has stolen, stories "about kings, and dukes, and earls, and such, and how gaudy they dressed, and how much style they put on, and called each other your majesty."⁸ These stories, confused by Huck into a meaningless assortment of misunderstood facts, are deconstructed both by the implied narrator and by Jim. They are also essentially re-enacted in all their improbability by the king, the duke, and Tom Sawyer -- causing very real harm and violence to their vulnerable, credulous audience.

Despite his emphatic rejection of any valuation of "book culture," Twain was not unknown to translate his own reading into his novels. Defying Twain's various (and often contradictory) declarations of ambivalence, enthusiasm, and ignorance, some have identified clear allusions to Dickens in his writings.⁹ Others have chosen to focus on sufficient parallels in the style, cultural status, and biography of each novelist to justify close thematic readings.

⁵ Interview with Richard Whiteing, "Mark Twain Interviewed." Scharnhorst 19.

⁶ Camfield 205-6.

⁷ 330.

⁸ 86. Further references appear in the text. The text hereafter will refer to *Huckleberry Finn*.

⁹ Baetzhold identifies the considerable influence of *A Tale of Two Cities* on *Huckleberry Finn* ("Mark Twain and Dickens" 201-03), while Gair isolates a "very different relationship... between community and landscape in *Martin Chuzzlewit* and *Huckleberry Finn*" (151). Meckier reads *Life on the Mississippi* as a parodic rewriting of *Great Expectations*.

One particularly popular focus of such comparison has been the relationship between *Great Expectations* and *Huckleberry Finn*. This comparison is invited by clear, if superficial, parallels between both novels. Both offer a first-person bildungsroman about the adventures of a young boy. Both are dominated by images and themes of imprisonment, indebtedness, and foiled escape. Both construct a tension between the sense of social transgression and moral consciousness of their child protagonists. Where *Great Expectations* exposes and interrogates the violence and hypocrisy of the law and Newgate, *Huckleberry Finn* offers a seminal interrogation of slavery and vigilante justice.

Taking apparent inspiration from Twain's own admission that he might well be "the worst literary thief in the world, without knowing it,"¹⁰ most critical comparisons suggest or assume an unconscious influence.¹¹ This assumption is to some extent encouraged by the relative lack of information as to what precisely Twain had read of Dickens – or, indeed, how exactly he evaluated his works.¹² Nonetheless, a closer reading of both novels suggests that Twain identified in *Great Expectations* a similar preoccupation with the informing influence of literary sensibility. While many have had occasion to note key literary and theatrical allusions throughout *Great Expectations*, none have yet considered the possibility that intertextuality is itself a dominant theme of that novel. In its apparent allusions to *Great Expectations*, *Huckleberry Finn* both acknowledges and expands this focus, querying the larger implications of literary influence as a defining presence in American society and culture.

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¹⁰ *Mark Twain-Howells Letters* 112.

¹¹ Ridland offers the first extended comparison of the two novels; focussing on two key parallels in plot and language, he concludes that the relationship is defined by Twain's indebtedness to Dickens -- and by his relative inferiority as a novelist. Gillman, Patten, and Allingham offer broader thematic comparisons, preferring to skirt questions of influence, indebtedness, or deliberate engagement.

¹² Gardner lists *Great Expectations* as one of the works Twain "probably read" (91).

In a prominent early passage, Pip underlines one of the defining images and preoccupations of *Great Expectations*:

Pause you who read this, and think for a moment of the long chain of iron or gold, of thorns or flowers, that would never have bound you, but for the formation of the first link on one memorable day.¹³

Throughout the novel, the reader is encouraged to recognize the extent to which seminal associations are defined by both iron *and* gold: the gold and fortune of Pip's expectations originate from the transgression of the iron-fettered convict. They also come to represent Pip's own sense of shame and criminality at having abandoned Joe for a life characterized by profligacy, debt, and false pride. That life is overseen by Jaggers -- whose gold watch-chain underscores both his success and the extent to which his position depends upon the iron-shackled prisoners at Newgate. That chain also hints at the connection between Jaggers and Estella, the convict's daughter, herself associated both with an impossibly idealized love and with the rank weeds and thorns that characterize Miss Havisham's garden.

Great Expectations reinforces this emphasis in a narrative in which characters and events are consistently bound to each other by confining ties. As Julia Sun-Joo Lee has argued, much of the novel's language suggests the influence of American slave narratives. Ordering Estella to unlock the doors and let Pip "out" of her self-imposed prison and into his life as an apprentice, Miss Havisham effectively sells him into a bound existence: "Gargery is your master now" (93). Ashamed to think that Estella might find him at the forge, "with a black face and hands" (98), Pip feels "the novelty" of "emancipation" (133) when his indentures are burned. Any such emancipation is short-lived, however; the comic irony of Pip's finding himself "in bondage and slavery" (200) to his servant is soon offset by his awareness of a much greater, inescapable, and confining reality. In London, Pip discovers

¹³ 66. Further references appear in the text.

himself unable to “detach himself” from Estella despite “not being bound to her” (229, 228). Furthermore, when Magwitch returns, he recognizes what he is “chained to, and how heavily” (303). Addressing Pip repeatedly as “Master,” Magwitch returns to England where he remains a convict “from head to foot” (309). Nonetheless, he also assumes a mastery over Pip himself. He defies the authority and privilege of the “colonists”: “All on you owns stock and land; which on you owns a brought-up London gentleman?” (293). In helping Magwitch to flee England, Pip hopes both to liberate his patron and “extricate” himself from this position (315).

Throughout the novel, these attempts at freedom are thwarted, revealing greater bindings and proliferating chains. After the death of Magwitch, Pip recognizes a continuing debt to Joe that is both emotional and financial:

I shall never rest until I have worked for the money with which you have kept me out of prison don't think ... that if I could repay it a thousand times over, I suppose I could cancel a farthing of the debt I owe you, or that I would do so if I could! (437)

As Estella herself observes to Pip, “we are not free to follow our own devices, you and I” (242). In refusing to follow her guardian’s plans, Estella only frees herself into a new state of enslavement, “fling[ing] herself away upon” the abusive Drummle (333). Mrs Joe asks her husband why “he hadn’t married a Negress Slave at once” (90); she later submits herself in subservience to Orlick. Herbert’s beloved Clara is a “captive fairy” to her alcoholic father (344); Compeyson got Magwitch “into such nets as made [him] his black slave” (320), and the two are as much prisoners of each other as they are of the law. Unknown to Estella, of course, her own mother exists in a slave-like relationship with Jaggers, looking “at her master,” not understanding if “she [is] free to go” (357). Wemmick escapes into the qualified freedom of Walworth, a pastoral cottage with a drawbridge that allows him to “cut off the

communication” with Newgate and Jaggers (189). This idyll, however, is presented throughout the novel as a ridiculous ideal under siege, an impossible foil to the harshness of a society defined and bound by shared realities. At the end of the novel, therefore, when Pip asks Biddy to “give” young Pip to him “one of these days; or lend him, at all events” (439), the reader is encouraged to recognize the dangers of such language of possession and bondage, no matter how benignly expressed.

Dickens enforces this thematic preoccupation in a narrative and language characterized by fateful repetitions and echoes. The first encounter with Magwitch forms part of Pip’s “first most vivid and broad impression of the identity of things” (3). These impressions – and the language in which they are described -- return and develop repeatedly throughout the novel. The encounter is characterized by guilt, vacillation, and torn allegiances. These sensations become inextricable from Pip’s repeated impressions of the mists, the damp, the cold weather, the darkness. They also become inextricable from his fixation on objects associated with imprisonment and entrapment: files, leg-chains, cannons, spiders, and webs. These images and impressions return throughout the novel, often in a language of haunting and ghostly apparition. Pip recognizes an immediate affinity with the man who stirs and tastes his rum “not with a spoon that was brought to him, but *with a file*” (70). On the night of the attack on Pip’s sister (with a leg-iron), the mist is “heavy,” “wet,” and “thick”; “the turnpike lamp was a blur”; and in the distance can be heard “the well-remembered boom” rolling away after recent fugitives (107). All of these images invoke the first scenes of the novel¹⁴ – and Pip is consequently inclined to believe that he “must have had some hand in the attack” upon his sister (109). Later, when Joe first visits Pip in London, the weather is “drizzly,” and the statue of Barnard sheds “sooty tears outside the window, like

¹⁴ “I saw the damp lying ... like a coarse sort of spiders’ webs ... On every rail and gate, wet lay clammy; and the marsh-mist was so thick, that the wooden fingers on the post directing people to our village ... was invisible to me until I was quite close under it. Then, as I looked up at it, while it dripped, it seemed to my oppressed conscience like a phantom devoting me to the Hulks” (15).

some weak giant of a Sweep” (200). This language again resonates with that at the start of the novel, when the damp lay “as if some goblin had been crying there all night, and using the window for a pocket-handkerchief” (15).¹⁵ Such echoes expand beyond Pip’s life at the forge; the “reluctant smoke” in Miss Havisham’s dark room hangs in the room “like our own marsh mist” (76). When Pip confronts Miss Havisham after he learns the truth about his benefactor, the day comes “creeping on, halting and whimpering and shivering, and wrapped in patches of cloud and rags of mist” (324) in a manner uncannily similar to that which characterizes the initial shivering encounters between Pip, Magwitch, and Compeyson.¹⁶

These repeated images and associations enforce proliferating connections between characters, language, and events – an ever-growing “chain” of “iron or gold.” At the end of the novel, many of these ties are dissolved and Pip has paid off his various debts. Nonetheless, the novel qualifies any suggestion that narrative resolution entails a liberation from the chains of earlier experience. That Joe and Biddy should name their child ‘Pip,’ for example, suggests an instinct to return and rewrite. Walking through the ruins of Satis House, Pip notes an ivy that that has “struck root anew,” “growing green on low quiet mounds of ruin” (440). Although Pip and Estella resolve to remain separate, they join hands: “as the morning mists had risen long ago,” so the evening mists “were rising now” and Pip sees “no shadow of no parting from her” (442). This ending suggests regeneration and repetition, resolution and return. Satis House is destroyed, but Pip and Estella are reunited in the shadow both of its ruin and the inevitable regrowth of its garden. When he alludes to the “morning mists” of his youth,¹⁷ Pip alludes to a moment of *false* confidence, when he was in fact “still

¹⁵ This image of the handkerchief recurs throughout the novel, from the handkerchiefs bound around the ankles of the convicts, to the ostentatious use of pocket-handkerchiefs at the funeral of Mrs Joe, to the scented handkerchiefs of Jaggers that eventually lead Pip to make associations between the hands he sees at Jaggers’s dinner party to those of Estella that wave at him from a passing carriage.

¹⁶ “the small bundle of shivers ... and beginning to cry, was Pip” (4); Compeyson “ran into the mist, stumbling twice” (16); Magwitch was “hugging himself and limping to and fro ... he was awfully cold to be sure” (16).

¹⁷ “And the mists had all solemnly risen now, and the world lay spread before me” (146).

in the dark of self-delusion as well as of an ignorance imposed by others.”¹⁸ Although liberated from his financial debts and relatively at peace with his conscience, Pip continues to exist within the same language, structures, and environment that defined and qualified his earlier expectations.

Throughout the novel, Dickens aligns this emphasis on chains and confinement with the literary self-consciousness of his narrator. When Pip speculates about chains of iron or gold, he also speaks directly to his reader, underlining the significance of that relationship. Mediating between his youthful experience and the expectations of narrative, Pip is careful to describe his own evolution from the earnest child “scholar” (40) who learned to transcribe his alphabet to the compassionate inscriber of Miss Havisham’s writing-tablets. Thus, when Miss Havisham exhorts: “If you can ever write under my name, ‘I forgive her ... pray do it!’” Pip simultaneously declares his moral and literary education: “O Miss Havisham ... I can do it now” (364). This education implicitly validates his authority as a narrator. He carefully signals his awareness of structure: before he can narrate “a great event in [his] life,” he “must give one chapter to Estella” (273). Advertising the momentousness of the narrative to come, he alludes to *The Tales of the Genii*: a “heavy slab that was to fall on the bed of state” was slowly brought out, all “made ready with much labour” before the ceiling finally fell (285). This allusion both emphasizes the significance of the impending chapter and the thoughtful planning and labour of the narrator himself -- “all the work, near and afar, that tended to the end, had been accomplished” (285).¹⁹

This emphasis on craftsmanship and structure reflects the narrator’s investment in narrative and inscription as a means to decipher and articulate personal identity. It also, however, hints at his willing conformity to an established tradition of narrative expression and structure. The novel begins by emphasizing a relationship between inscription, reading,

¹⁸ Allingham, “Shadows” 55.

¹⁹ As Stolte has argued, Pip’s “authorship of *Great Expectations* has received little critical attention, but it has important implications for our understanding of his development and maturation” (179).

and Pip's own sense of 'beginning' – both as an individual and as the subject of his narrative.

He can give Pirrip as his father's family name "on the authority" of his father's tombstone

(3).²⁰ It is in staring at the writing on the tombstones that Pip acquires his most vivid

"impression of the identity of things" – and his most clear sense of provenance:

I found out for certain ... that Philip Pirrip, late of this parish, and also

Georgiana wife of the above, were dead and buried ... and that the ... small

bundle of shivers growing afraid of it all and beginning to cry, was Pip. (3-

4)

Nonetheless, although Pip identifies his origins "for certain" in this initial inscription, he remains uncertain of his relationship with others throughout the novel -- disconcerted by the paternal assumptions of Pumblechook, traduced by the manipulations of Miss Havisham, blind to the fatherly role of Joe, and ignorant of the paternalist influence of Magwitch as his benefactor. Ultimately, *Great Expectations* dramatizes the vulnerability of a protagonist so susceptible to the informing 'authority' of pre-existing narratives.

Throughout the novel, Pip attempts both to define and inscribe his experience in relation to a literary and theatrical tradition. It is after the performance of *The London Merchant* that he is at first inclined to feel himself guilty of the attack upon his sister.²¹ When Joe visits him in London, awkwardly playing with his new hat, Pip associates this 'performance' with that of Wopsle as Hamlet – and aligns his own guilt towards Joe with Hamlet's guilt towards his father. Unconscious of the parallel, Joe notes that Wopsle's hat had been "made so small as that the weight of the black feathers brings it off" (202). He also observes: "if the ghost of a man's own father cannot be allowed to claim his attention, what can, Sir?" (201-2). Such accusations mount in the consciousness of the young Pip and the adult narrator: the later appearance of Magwitch as a ghost-like "voice from the darkness"

²⁰ This authority is implicitly greater than that of his living sister, to whom Pip can only refer as "Mrs Joe."

²¹ Gager also notes "strong Hamlet-Claudius-Ophelia" parallels in this scene (274).

(287) claiming to be Pip's second father only expands upon this identification with the themes and events of *Hamlet*.²²

Many of these associations inform the structure and allusions of the narrative as a whole, suggesting the continuing susceptibility of the adult Pip to Twain's "book culture." Where *Hamlet* forms the dominant reference throughout the novel, the plot of *The London Merchant* also resonates with many themes and events.²³ Like *Great Expectations*, Lillo's play is set in the world of apprentices and an urban middle and working class; it is characterized by a guilt-ridden, procrastinating hero spurred to murder and rob his uncle by a manipulative woman of a higher social class -- and it concludes with a final scene of repentance in a jail. The novel contains many other allusions -- *Paradise Lost*, *Frankenstein*, and Tennyson's own "little *Hamlet*," *Maud*, feature prominently.²⁴ These allusions do not exist in isolation, nor do they exist independently of a narrative preoccupied with images of imprisonment and binding.²⁵ Instead, they jostle for attention and clarity both in the consciousness of the young Pip and in the voice of the adult narrator. In *Great Expectations*, Dickens calls overt attention to these informing literary sensibilities, associating his protagonist's early enthusiasm for theatrical entertainment and his "taste for reading" (285) with the forging of yet another link in a continuous, binding chain that is both "iron" and "gold."

²² Wilson offers an effective summation of some key similarities between *Hamlet* and the circumstances of this second visitation: "both fathers are doomed to walk the night," "Magwitch swears young men to secret complicity in a revenge plot," in both works "impotent fathers bind their sons to will-less instrumentality," and in each, "the son sees the return of the father as a confirmation of his presentiments of crime, guilt, and unworthiness" (159).

²³ Axton provides a useful examination of the intertextual references to *The London Merchant*.

²⁴ So far as I am aware, no-one has yet identified or explored possible allusions to *Maud* in *Great Expectations*. Fischler comes close in his analysis for the different use of the garden in three texts, but his discussion shies away from direct comparison.

²⁵ Wilson and John argue that the novel deliberately deflates its allusions to *Hamlet*: for Wilson, Dickens is dramatizing the aesthetic impossibility of tragedy in middle-class experience (166-74). John sees the novel as interrogating Hamlet's "model of intellectual and aristocratic disengagement from the public sphere" (46). To some extent, however, the novel's very conflation of the themes and narrative of *Hamlet* with those of *The London Merchant* enables a translation or adaptation of this "traditional tragedy" into one such middle-class narrative.

Great Expectations alludes most overtly to the ghostly apparitions, prevarications, and filial guilt in *Hamlet*. At the start of the novel, as Pip is wracked by a conflicting sense of duty towards Mrs Joe and fear and empathy for the convict, Wopsle says grace “like a religious cross of the Ghost in Hamlet with Richard the Third” (23). The London visits of Joe and Magwitch reinforce the significance of this allusion. Later in the novel, Pip and Herbert “[issue] forth in quest of Mr Wopsle and Denmark” (231), and the novel offers a protracted description of a performance of *Hamlet*. Although that description is comic, the performance informs Pip’s subconscious, reinforcing the significance of the play to the novel as a whole:

Miserably I went to bed after all, and miserably thought of Estella, and miserably dreamed that my expectations were all cancelled, and that I had to give my hand in marriage to Herbert’s Clara, or play Hamlet to Miss Havisham’s Ghost, before twenty thousand people, without knowing twenty words of it. (236)

When Pip attends a later performance by Wopsle in a Christmas pantomime, he finds himself implicitly re-enacting the Shakespeare play. Reversing the roles of actor and audience-member, Wopsle stares at Pip throughout the performance. He later explains that he could “swear” to having seen Compeyson “sitting behind” Pip, “like a ghost” throughout the play (352). In the context of a novel that aligns the guilt and impressionability of its narrator with that of Shakespeare’s protagonist, the exchange does not just invoke the ‘ghost’ of the initial Christmas encounter with the convicts. Instead, it expands the association of that encounter into the themes and narrative of *Hamlet*, with both Pip and Compeyson appearing implicitly as “guilty creatures” at a play.

Just as Wopsle’s staged performance of *Hamlet* is characterized by actors confusedly playing different parts, the novel similarly applies the themes and narrative associations of Shakespeare’s play to multiple contexts and characters. The novel draws implicit attention to

the creativity of a narrator simultaneously bound to the original text and inclined to expand upon its narrative, language, and themes. Thus, although Pip tends to be aligned most consistently with the sentiments and apparent inaction of the guilt-ridden Hamlet, in the pantomime scene he identifies implicitly with Claudius. Similarly, “if Miss Havisham is the Ghost in Hamlet, both ‘spectral’ and ‘ghastly,’” her aborted wedding “also makes her Ophelia.”²⁶ Magwitch and Joe both embody aspects of Hamlet’s father – Magwitch in his ghostly appearances, demands, and paternalistic assumptions -- and Joe in his humble performance of that paternal role. The history of Miss Havisham’s abandonment aligns Compeyson with Hamlet, but his conflict with Abel Magwitch also aligns him with Claudius and with Shakespeare’s own association of that conflict with the story of Cain and Abel. Both Wopsle and Pumblechook assume differing aspects of Polonius: Pumblechook’s ignorance, social standing, and paternalist assumptions resonate with Shakespeare’s character.²⁷ In contrast, Wopsle’s relatively benign paternalism and enthusiasm for the stage reflect the more innocent and empathetic aspects of Ophelia’s father; he also “plays Hamlet as though he were Polonius: pompous, sycophantic, hollow.”²⁸ Even the name of Orlick suggests a curious blending of Yorick and Osric.

To some extent, this proliferation of roles reflects the play’s similar emphasis on shifting and apparently contradictory relationships: Hamlet is both “cousin” and “son”; Gertrude is both mother and stepmother, “sometime sister now our queen”; Claudius is “little more than kin and less than kind”; and Rosencrantz and Guildenstern seem interchangeable. By translating these allusions into various characters and situations, the narrator implicitly underlines his recognition of the complexity of Shakespeare’s original play, and the extensive applicability of that narrative to the diversity of his own experience.

²⁶ Poole and Scott 78.

²⁷ Poole and Scott note the similar ways in which Pumblechook and Polonius are described in terms of dead fish (193). As Welsh notes, Dickens also allows “Pip to fight back – displace some of the blame on Pumblechook – much the way Hamlet went after Polonius” (139).

²⁸ Poole and Scott 77.

At the same time, however, these allusions are often qualified by a narrative that suggests a very different and moral emphasis, one that both invokes and challenges the preoccupations of the original play. As Welsh notes, Pip differs from Shakespeare's protagonist in that he "survives the ending and profits from his experience."²⁹ This profit derives implicitly from Pip's recognition that great expectations must exist in relation to communal and moral responsibility. It also derives from his refusal to engage with the play's dominant theme of revenge.³⁰ Where Hamlet procrastinates from enacting the vengeance demanded by his father's ghost, Pip identifies a very different filial responsibility, one defined primarily in terms of forgiveness and repentance.³¹

Thus, when Magwitch returns to 'haunt' Pip at the seminal midpoint of the novel, he does so to reveal his identity as benefactor rather than to incite revenge. Pip's subsequent guilt focusses on honouring this new, unwelcome relationship and on recognizing transgressions against Joe. Indeed, it is not Pip but Magwitch, Compeyson, and Miss Havisham who act upon vengeful instincts. Presented in language that suggests their spectral power and mystery, these older, parental characters resemble the Ghost in *Hamlet* more than they do Hamlet himself. Vengeance remains contained primarily within this older generation, its justifiability questioned throughout the narrative. In his forgiveness of Miss Havisham, Pip actively dissociates himself from any such instinct. As his effective double, Orlick suggests the violent avenger that Pip could have become. The novel dramatizes the force of Orlick's violence and transgression: revenge can now only exist outside of the boundaries of the community. By simultaneously invoking Hamlet's filial responsibility and redefining that responsibility in terms of repentance, social resolution and the making of amends, the

²⁹ Welsh 128.

³⁰ "Dickens violently and humorously wrenches the characteristic form of Elizabethan revenge tragedy ... and attempts to reshape it into a Victorian comedy of forgiveness" (Wilson 157).

³¹ Stolte offers a solitary counter to this dominant assumption, contending that Pip uses his narrative "as a means of exacting his vengeance" (180). In publishing Estella's parentage, for example, Pip ensures that the "world now knows" of her "shameful" lineage (201).

narrative hints at an instinct to both rewrite and qualify the dominant theme of the Shakespeare play.

This instinct is also suggested in the comic figure of Pip's servant, The Avenger. Identified as an "avenging phantom" immediately before Joe describes Wopsle's performance in *Hamlet* (200), the character seems to exist primarily as a device through which the narrator can both invoke and satirize any broad, simplistic parallels between his own narrative and that of the Shakespeare play. This qualification is similarly suggested in the comic description of the play's performance, which affords Dickens an opportunity for topical (and typical) satire. It also, however, allows the narrator to establish an overt contrast between contemporary presentations of *Hamlet* and his own considerably more complex and *novelistic* rewriting of that play within the context of a self-consciously literary narrative.

The novel underlines this self-consciousness by enforcing connections between the various literary works to which it alludes. When Pip describes his servant as an "avenging phantom," for example, he also describes him as a "monster" of his own making to whom he now exists in "bondage and slavery" (200). Pip later compares himself to "the imaginary student pursued by the misshapen creature he had impiously made" (310).³² As Iain Crawford has revealed, the novel's rewriting of *Frankenstein* is not dissimilar to its translation of *Hamlet*: it "denies the original's emphasis upon the sufficiency of the individual will," stressing instead "the values of human community."³³ Furthermore, that allusion itself invites comparison with *Paradise Lost*, a dominant text in both *Frankenstein* and *Great Expectations*. *Frankenstein*, of course, ends with the death of the creature's creator – and with the despairing decision of that creature to "ascend [his] funeral pile triumphantly, and exult in the agony of the torturing flames."³⁴ The first volume of *Great Expectations* similarly

³² Just as various characters embody different characters from *Hamlet*, as Wilson notes, Pip "at once plays the monster to Magwitch's Frankenstein and vice versa" (165).

³³ Crawford 627.

³⁴ 317.

engages with the ending of *Paradise Lost*. Milton's cherubim descend and glide "as evening mist / risen from a river o'er the marish" to guide Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden,³⁵ Pip leaves the marshes to pursue his great expectations in London: "and the mists had all risen now, and the world lay spread before me" (146). This allusion is reinforced at the end of the novel. Where the fallen, wiser Adam and Eve walk from the Garden of Eden hand-in-hand, Estella and Pip similarly watch the evening mists rise and, hand-in-hand, leave behind the ruins of their 'innocent' childhood.

This conclusion both alludes to and diverges from the ideal of a "peace within" (9.331) promised in *Paradise Lost* and overtly challenged at the end of *Frankenstein*. When he echoes Milton's conclusion half-way through the novel, Dickens translates the ideal of hope and redemption in *Paradise Lost* into the very secular and misguided aspirations of his young protagonist. By re-invoking this moment at the end of the novel, he implicitly qualifies the full Christian (and literary) implications of the resolution he invokes. Furthermore, the garden of Satis House may have seemed removed from Pip's social reality, but it was far from Edenic. This reality – and the fact that Pip has already been exposed to corruption both within and outside the borders of Satis House – lessens any momentousness to that final departure. In Milton, that final departure is necessitated by God, who banishes the repentant Adam and Eve. In Dickens, however, that departure is instigated by the problematic parental figures of Magwitch and Miss Havisham. These figures are far from divine: Miss Havisham begs for forgiveness, and it is for the soul of Magwitch rather than himself that Pip prays at the end of the novel. By simultaneously alluding to and adapting the resolution promised by Milton, this conclusion aligns itself to an extent with the much darker rewriting offered in *Frankenstein*.³⁶ At the same time, its final descriptions also echo the language of moral and

³⁵ *Paradise Lost* 12.629-30.

³⁶ Crawford maintains that, unlike *Frankenstein*, *Great Expectations* embraces "the supremacy of divine authority" (627). This reading, however, is somewhat problematized by the novel's secularized rewriting of the conclusion to *Paradise Lost*.

social corruption at the opening of *Hamlet*, with its “unweeded garden/that grows to seed” (1.2.135-6).

Such references enforce the novel’s thematic preoccupation with literary intertextuality itself.³⁷ These multiple allusions create associations between various works, suggesting their apparent inextricability from each other within the dominant narrative of *Great Expectations*.³⁸ That this narrative both invokes and qualifies these many references also suggests an attempt on the part of the narrator simultaneously to place himself within an established literary tradition and to distinguish his individual creativity and the relative singularity of his experience. The self-consciousness of this project is emphasized by the very intertextuality and self-reflexiveness of the works to which the narrator alludes. *Frankenstein* does not just engage with Milton’s rewriting of Christian mythology in *Paradise Lost*; it is subtitled “The Modern Prometheus,” and it filters its tale through two framing narrative voices. *Hamlet* dramatizes the effectiveness of intertextual allusion itself: the play’s sophisticated introduction and performance of the ‘mousetrap scene,’ with its dumbshow and spoken theatre, works both to trap the conscience of Claudius and to underline Shakespeare’s own reworking of his various sources.

This theme of intertextuality is also suggested by the novel’s allusions to *Maud*, a monodrama that Tennyson identified as his own “little *Hamlet*.”³⁹ Like *Hamlet*, the poem’s speaker was once promised implicitly to Maud, the Ophelia-like heroine of the work – but the two are separated after the social humiliation and death of the speaker’s father, and later by Maud’s ambitious brother, whose malignant social vanity expands upon that of Shakespeare’s Polonius. Driven to madness and exile after a violent confrontation with Maud’s Laertes-like

³⁷ In discussing the Miss Havisham plot, Wilson argues that “as twisted self-sacrifice becomes self-destruction, *Hamlet* shades into *Lear* and darkens into *Frankenstein*” (162). Such allusions, however, are rarely so clear-cut and absolute.

³⁸ It is fitting, therefore, that the earlier allusion to the Avenger makes reference to *Hamlet* and *Frankenstein* simultaneously.

³⁹ Hallam Tennyson, *Alfred Lord Tennyson: A Memoir by His Son*, 212.

brother, the speaker finds some ultimate consolation in war as a means of escape from individual torment and the hypocrisies of a nation in peace-time. Offering a disaffected, embittered protagonist isolated variously by grief, inaction, madness, and the violence of society, Tennyson creates parallels with Romantic conceptions of Shakespeare's hero – and thus allows Dickens simultaneously to invoke the original play and engage with a contemporary reworking.

In both form and content, *Maud* offers a mediating presence between the original play and the later novel.⁴⁰ The melancholy, bitterness, and isolation of Tennyson's speaker render him much more similar to Hamlet than to Pip.⁴¹ Nonetheless, his eventual absorption into a social role – albeit within a romanticized vision of wartime heroism – mirrors a similar emphasis in *Great Expectations*.⁴² Furthermore, Tennyson rewrites the hero of *Hamlet* into a first-person narrative, translating Shakespeare's theatre into an overtly literary and subjective voice. The works also contain linguistic and thematic parallels. *Maud* begins by emphasizing its speaker's horror at the “long since” and mysterious death of his father, both echoing the immediate grief of Hamlet and anticipating the more meditative confusions of Pip about his own origins. The poem also emphasizes a nebulous sense of guilt: “villainy somewhere! Whose? One says, we are villains all” (1.17); as Welsh notes, Pip differs from Hamlet in that he is “haunted by guilt from the very first scene without his having done anything wrong or been asked to do something he did not perform” (129). The speaker's impressions are

⁴⁰ Very little critical attention has been paid to *Maud* as an adaptation of *Hamlet* – and most discussions tend to be dismissive. Harrison, Jr. finds analogies in “the hero's mental habits, his morbid reactions to the world around him,” but also a much stronger indebtedness to *Romeo and Juliet* and *King Lear* (80). More recently, Douglas-Fairhurst has claimed that Tennyson's claim about the poem is “carefully nonchalant”: asking “how are we to read that ‘little’,” he offers an implicit reply by moving on to a discussion of *In Memoriam* (124). Poole argues that *Romeo and Juliet* “takes over from *Hamlet*” in providing the main plot structure of *Maud* (*Shakespeare and the Victorians* 185). Hargrave attempts a more thorough engagement, but limits his focus to some key soliloquies and linguistic parallels.

⁴¹ “I am sick of the Hall and the hill, I am sick of the moor and the main”; “at war with myself and a wretched race, / Sick, sick to the heart of life, am I” (1.61; 1.364-5). Invoking “the spirit of Cain” in the modern world, Tennyson's speaker also translates these preoccupations into a contemporary social context: the greed and hatred “when only the ledger lives” and “the spirit of murder works in the very means of life” (1.23, 1.35, 1.40).

⁴² Throughout *Great Expectations*, Pip constantly recognizes the army as a potential route for escape. That he never acts upon this instinct hints at Dickens's much stronger ambivalence towards the profession and ‘cause’ apparently embraced at the end of *Maud*.

intensified by recurring images of a heath that is “blood-red”; its “red-ribb’d ledges” echoing the sound of death (1.1-5). Later, he muses on the image of a “great city sounding wide,” choked in “yellow vapours,” “wrapt in drifts of lurid smoke / on the misty river-tide” (2.204-7) in language that anticipates the setting and imagery of *Great Expectations*. This use of imagery and pathetic fallacy, evocation of horror and haunting, and dramatization of lingering filial guilt resonates and evolves throughout all three works.

Most significant to *Great Expectations*, perhaps, is Tennyson’s treatment of Maud. *Great Expectations* expands upon Tennyson’s rewriting of Ophelia in its characterization of Miss Havisham and Estella. Where Ophelia is grief-stricken by the death of her father at the hands of her lover, Maud and Miss Havisham are thwarted by the domineering manipulations of their brother. Unlike Shakespeare and Tennyson, however, Dickens does not identify a violent lover: instead of dramatizing grief and madness as effected by the violence of the Hamlet figure, he focuses instead on the implications of abandonment itself. Both Tennyson’s poem and his speaker essentially abandon Maud after the garden confrontation, her presence lingering only in the speaker’s final embrace of a “chivalrous battle-song” akin to that which she had earlier “warbled alone in her joy” (1.383-4). Dickens, however, creates a narrative around this abandoned bride, bereft of lover and brother and – unlike Ophelia – lingering in her madness to adapt and act upon the vengeful instincts that characterize the vacillating heroes of the earlier texts.⁴³

Great Expectations expands upon the potential of this figure not only in the character of Miss Havisham, but also in Estella, a ‘creation’ whose metaphorical fashioning by Miss Havisham from the forgotten bodies of her convict parents again resonates with the narrative of *Frankenstein*. The novel’s descriptions of Estella echo the speaker’s characterization and description of Maud. Determined not to fall for the woman now living at the Satis-like Hall,

⁴³ Miss Havisham takes on some of the characteristics of Tennyson’s speaker, who similarly hides himself away from the world after the confrontation in the garden.

Tennyson's speaker concludes that she has "a cold and clear-cut face": "faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null" (1.82). Dwelling upon this imagery, the narrator muses upon the "passionless" nature of his beloved, "star-sweet on a gloom profound" (1.91). Maud is also often associated with stars, a characterization implicitly acknowledged in the very name of Dickens's heroine.⁴⁴ Unlike Maud, of course, Estella never melts into desire; instead, she enacts the unfulfilled anxieties of the poem's speaker: she "weave[s]" a "snare / of some coquettish deceit" (1.214-5). Most significantly, perhaps, Maud is often presented as ephemeral; she tends to pass swiftly by, allowing the speaker only brief glimpses that afford an incomplete impression. At times, this impression resembles Pip's descriptions of Miss Havisham: she is "gemlike, ghostlike, deathlike" (1.94). She is also described in terms of uncanny, ghostly shadows – a dominant image throughout *Great Expectations*:

What was it? A lying trick of the brain?

Yet I thought I saw her stand,

A shadow there at my feet,

High over the shadowy land. (2.37-40)

In the flush of his love, the speaker is particularly fixated with the brief glimpses he has of Maud's hands: he watches "the treasured splendour, her hand, / Come sliding out of her sacred glove" (1.273-4). The promise of this hand teases him; watching her "rapidly riding far away," he notes that "she waved to me with her hand ... something flash'd in the sun" (1.320-2). Later, he kisses "her slender hand," crying out in pride at having won his beloved (1.424).

These images and associations resonate with the novel's representation of the mystery of Estella's identity. Confessing that she has no heart, Estella points to the gallery from which she first watched young Pip: as his eyes "[follow] her white hand," Pip is "crossed" by a "dim

⁴⁴ Spying her "up in the high Hall-garden," the speaker sees Maud pass "like a light: But sorrow seize me if ever that light be my leading star!" (1.112-3). Later, he is "haunted by the starry head / Of her whose gentle will has changed my fate" (1.620-1).

suggestion that [he] could not possibly grasp” (218). Haunted by this sensation, Pip asks himself, “what *was* it?” (218). Later, when he sees “her face at the coach window and her hand waving,” he again wonders: “what *was* the nameless shadow which again in that one instant had passed?” (241). The mystery of these uncanny associations is resolved towards the end of the novel. Estella sits knitting at Miss Havisham’s feet: “I fancied that I read in the action of her fingers, as plainly as if she had told me in the dumb alphabet, that she perceived I had discovered my real benefactor” (328). Soon afterwards, Pip “reads” even more into this physical association. Invited by Jaggers to toast the new Mrs Bentley Drummle, he notes the “action” of Molly; it “was like the action of knitting” (357). Pip immediately associates this action with that of Estella and recognizes the identity of her mother:

I looked again at those hands and eyes of the housekeeper... I thought how one link of association had helped that identification in the theatre, and how such a link, wanting before, had been riveted for me now, when I had passed by a chance, swift from Estella’s name to the fingers with their knitting action ... And I felt absolutely certain that this woman was Estella’s mother. (357)

In this seminal passage, the narrator reiterates the novel’s dominant theme of links and chains – and implicitly aligns that theme with the flashing hands, tragic passions, and theatre dramatized in Tennyson’s rewriting of *Hamlet*. In so doing, he also hints that the uncanny ‘remembrance’ and knowledge suggested by the flash of Estella’s hands are informed by his own literary subconscious and the ghost of pre-existing narratives. Furthermore, in this final revelation, Dickens further expands the implications of the novel’s intertextual associations. Only a year before the publication of *Great Expectations*, Dickens had published *A Tale of Two Cities*, famous for its villainous tricoteuse, Madame Defarge. This seminal echo in *Great*

Expectations both reinforces a central theme of the novel and encourages a recognition of Dickens's own contribution to yet another link in an evolving literary chain.

All of these various allusions advertise the narrator's indebtedness to literary influence, reflecting his self-consciousness as a narrator -- and his potential uncertainty as to whether literary chains and connections are defined by "thorns or flowers," "iron or gold." Oddly enough, this concern is addressed almost directly in the final conflict between Pip and his dark double, Orlick. Throughout this scene, Orlick reminds Pip of his greater powers of deception; he has "new companions and masters" who write "fifty hands": "they're not like sneaking you, as writes but one" (391). For Orlick, an ability to assume different identities in writing enables a greater understanding and agency:

Old Orlick knowed you was burnt, Old Orlick knowed you
was a smuggling your uncle Provis away, Old Orlick's a match
for you and knowed you'd come to-night! There's them that
can't and that won't have Magwitch -- yes, *I* know the name!
alive P'raps it's them that writes fifty hands, and that's not
like sneaking you as writes but one. (391)

Orlick's certainty is borne out by the scene's events: he nearly succeeds in killing the single-voiced, single-'handed' Pip.⁴⁵

This encounter is subsequently represented by a narrator whose extensive and developed allusions implicitly contradict the accusations of Orlick. While Pip in this scene is apparently limited by his tendency to read and write within a single voice, his narrative account adopts and manipulates the voices of other "companions and masters." This exchange implicitly validates the narrator's instinct towards intertextuality: Orlick knows and understands more because of his access to multiple 'hands', and Pip's narrative reveals and

⁴⁵ Pip is only rescued as a result of Herbert's accidental discovery of another letter whose "tone made him uneasy, and the more so because of the inconsistency between it and the hasty letter [Pip] had left for him (394). Rather than being the agent of his own rescue, Pip is the ironic beneficiary of another text that qualifies his own.

articulates more through its absorption of various allusions and literary voices. At the same time, however, the passage also draws attention to a continuing language of confinement and restriction: if Orlick remains chained to new companions and masters, Pip's narrative is similarly in thrall to pre-existing expressions.

This awareness informs the implied voice of Dickens himself. In the original ending to *Great Expectations*, Pip and Estella have learned and suffered from their experience, and Pip can only take some consolation that Estella's heart might now understand what his "used to be" (444). The conclusion is brief and succinct, and it avoids any invocation of its earlier intertextual material. To some extent, the narrative has already 'concluded' these references: where *The London Merchant* ends with the death of Barnwell, the narrative dramatizes the repentance of Magwitch in prison. Where the ghostly demands of revenge and guilt destroy the society at the end of *Hamlet*, the avenging characters destroy themselves in *Great Expectations*. Where *Maud's* speaker embraces war, Pip repents and makes amends, reintegrating himself within the greater expectations of his community. Where Victor Frankenstein dies, leaving his narrative in the hands (and control) of another, Pip remains to define the conclusion of his own tale. These allusions are intertwined throughout the novel, and none invites simplistic parallels. Nonetheless, this first conclusion is notable for its apparently deliberate avoidance of any of the language, themes, or references that so characterize the rest of the text. As such, it can be read as an implicit (if cursory) dramatization of the narrator's attempt to loosen himself from the bonds of the pre-existing narratives of which his own experience is now a part.

The final conclusion is very different, not only suggesting the potential for a conventional romantic resolution, but also returning to the language of rising mists, gardens, and expectations that so characterizes the narrative as a whole. Articulating this final moment in an extended if qualified allusion to *Paradise Lost*, the novel also reinforces its position

within a larger and consistently-unravelling chain of literary allusions. Just as Pip sees “the shadow of no parting” from Estella, so too does the narrative suggest its own inextricability from the literary shadows that continue to haunt and inform its construction. For Robert Douglas-Fairhurst, the effect of this conclusion, with its “mixture of self-expression and self-restraint,” is to “defer knowledge of what the future holds beyond the final full-stop.”⁴⁶ Speculating that it is “for this reason that *Great Expectations* has so often been rewritten and extended,” he contends that “like that final image of Pip and Estella leaving the ruined garden, our expectations remain on the move.”⁴⁷ Ironically, of course, that very encouragement of expectation lies in the novel’s final dramatization of its own imprisonment within the expanding literary tradition it so enthusiastically invokes.

*

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn offers an apparent link in this expanding chain of literary associations. The nature of this engagement does much to counter Ridland’s assertion that Twain’s indebtedness was such that he was “unaware of the magnificent truth he had touched upon.”⁴⁸ Throughout the novel, Twain variously echoes, satirizes, and borrows from *Great Expectations*. In so doing, he engages implicitly with the earlier novel’s preoccupation with literary influence – and expands upon its association of that theme with bondage and captivity.

Ridland identifies two key parallels between the novels. At the start of *Great Expectations*, Pip wrestles with the decision not to tell Joe about his encounters with the convict: “I was too cowardly to do what I knew to be right, as I had been too cowardly to avoid doing what I knew to be wrong” (38). Like Dickens, Twain dramatizes Huck’s misplaced guilt by exposing the hypocrisy of conventional social definitions of right and wrong. When he first writes the letter to betray Jim, Huck feels “good and all washed clean of

⁴⁶ “Introduction,” xxxvii.

⁴⁷ xxxvi-xxxvii.

⁴⁸ Ridland 290.

sin” (222). He soon recognizes, however, that that instinct towards “good” conflicts with his stronger sense of companionship. Where Pip resolves to be cowardly and “wrong,” Huck tears up the letter, similarly declaring, “All right, then, I’ll *go* to hell”: “I would take up wickedness again, which was in my line, being brunt up to it, and the other warn’t” (223).⁴⁹ The other dominant parallel between the two works, according to Ridland, exists in the language that describes the climactic accident on the river. Noting a convincing resemblance between the description of this scene and that in which Magwitch is recaptured, Ridland suggests that just as Twain’s novel concluded (temporarily) with this accident, the event in *Great Expectations* “put a conclusion to the plot which Pip’s initial, cowardly, ‘wrong’ actions had begun.”⁵⁰

For Ridland, *Huckleberry Finn* borrows from *Great Expectations* in order to give weight to what remains an essentially flawed narrative. This assessment offers one of many condemnations of Twain’s ‘problematic’ ending: the novel is simultaneously episodic and focussed on the moral development of its hero. By concluding with a return to the initial characters and story of Tom Sawyer and his relatives, it suggests a structural balance and return, what Trilling identified as “a certain formal aptness.” Rather than returning to this ‘order’ with the maturity and sensibility that his experiences would suggest, however, Huck allows himself yet again to be drawn into the elaborately cruel deceptions of Tom Sawyer. That the novel itself gives so much space to those deceptions – and to the consequent humiliation of Jim – has ensured a critical reception that tends to echo Bernard DeVoto’s assessment: “in the whole reach of the English novel there is no more abrupt or more chilling

⁴⁹ For Ridland, “Huck’s decision to go to hell fails to provide the vehicle for dramatic unity which a decision of such magnitude would seem to deserve” (287).

⁵⁰ Ridland 289.

descent.”⁵¹ This structure suggests to many that Twain is indulging “his own evident enthusiasm for all the nonsense of the [Tom Sawyer] adventures.”⁵²

Such valuations, however, seem to disregard the possibility that Twain is deliberately invoking a formal structure in order to challenge conventional expectations. These extended concluding scenes arguably *exaggerate* a formal return. This tone of narrative challenge is foregrounded from the very beginning of the novel. A “notice” by “order of the author” declares:

Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted;
persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting
to find a plot in it will be shot. (4)

Breaking from his loose structure to enforce an uncomfortable but formal resolution, Twain suggests a conflict between conventional expectations of form and the self-consciously independent values pronounced at the beginning of the novel. He also disrupts his own narrative conceit, implicitly reminding the reader of the formal authorial control of ‘Twain’ over the blithely episodic inclinations of his child narrator.⁵³ That conceit is enforced by the concluding lines of the novel, in which Huck reasserts his authorship and acknowledges “what a trouble it [is] to make a book” (295). By emphasizing this tension, Twain calls attention to the thematic importance of narrative construction and authorship itself.

Twain aligns this theme with his emphasis on freedom and independence, associating the limited emancipation of Huck and Jim at the end of the novel with his own qualified liberation from traditional expectations of “narrative,” “moral,” and “plot.”⁵⁴ Huck decides to escape ‘sivilization’ and to forge into unknown territory on his own: “I reckon I got to light

⁵¹ *Mark Twain at Work* 92.

⁵² Coveney, “Introduction” 48.

⁵³ As Sawicki observes, “whereas the opening of the novel, with its ‘bad grammar’ and colloquial tone strongly generates an aura of realism, the end presents us with an effect of literariness, of a book or novel, created by a narrator who, we like to assume, has no truck with such things” (692).

⁵⁴ Victor Doyno notes that “the flexibility of Twain’s earlier plotting was a form of freedom,” but falling short of acknowledging the extent to which the “superb sense of order restored” at the end of the novel is in fact deeply ironized and contested by Twain himself. (400).

out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me and I can't stand it. I been there before" (296). Just as Huck rejects what he has experienced "before," Twain advocates the rejection of the conventional narrative bonds and ties that inform the expectations of his reader. In light of this reading, the apparent inconsistencies within the narrative voice and the disruptions in structure and theme become part of an aesthetic project. Huck recognizes his own limitations as a narrator: "you know what I mean – I don't know the words to put it in" (46). At times, he also abstains from offering a full account: "I don't walk to talk much about that day. I reckon I'll cut it pretty sort"; "it would make me sick again if I was to do that" (132, 134). Calling attention to the limitations of his narrative, Twain implies that it is the very singular, unstructured, and idiomatic nature of this narrative voice that renders it more 'natural,' at a distance from a tradition too willing to contain the truth of experience within accepted conventions.

Twain emphasizes this theme by offering a consistent dramatization of the harmful consequences of adhering to an ideal of literary tradition. Throughout the novel, Twain condemns society's indoctrination of children into the hypocrisy of civilization. That indoctrination is associated most consistently with proscribed reading, and particularly with being forced to learn Bible stories. Just as the American South remains slavishly in thrall to Walter Scott (and, in *Huck Finn*, European royalty and Shakespeare), it also educates its children into receiving literary text as 'truth.' The full implications of this dependency are dramatized in Tom's 'slavish' adherence to the apparent "regulations" of historical adventure stories.⁵⁵ Twain makes the focus of his satire clear when he has Tom declare to his companions: "Don't you reckon that the people that made the books knows what's the correct thing to do? Do you reckon *you* can learn 'em anything? Not by a good deal" (22).

⁵⁵ As Huck concedes, "if it's in the regulations" that Jim has to have a rope-ladder, "let him have it; because I don't wish to go back on no regulations" (248).

Huck is never entirely comfortable with Tom's stories, suspecting that they are just as ridiculous as Bible stories; indeed, he dismisses one story as having "all the marks of a Sunday school" (26).⁵⁶ In his various encounters with conmen, feuding families, and lynch mobs, Huck arguably experiences as many 'adventures' as those artificially enacted by Tom Sawyer. Nonetheless, it is left to Twain's reader to differentiate between the fictional conventions of these stories and the harsh realities of such adventures when lived. Huck willingly submits to the increasingly more elaborate (and cruel) enactment of these stories, apparently in thrall to their authority.

Despite this susceptibility, Huck never describes his own adventures within conventional terms; he remains innocent of any instinct to reduce or confine his experience within an implicitly artificial (and harmful) narrative tradition. This relative independence is ensured by Huck's very limitations as a reader and by his reliance on Tom Sawyer for the "regulations" of conventional adventure stories. It is also to some extent ensured by his conscious distancing of himself from a pre-existing adventure story. Huck's account opens by dramatizing literary escape. He declares, "you don't know about me, without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*" (13). Unlike the adult Pip, who contextualizes his impressions consistently within a "chain" of textual origins, Huck distinguishes himself immediately from that earlier narrative. "Mr Mark Twain" may have "told the truth, mainly," but his account contained some "stretchers" (13); more importantly, his voice is not that of the self-consciously unread child protagonist. The novel concludes with an emphatic reinforcement of Huck's independent authorship. It also underlines his ignorance of narrative convention and his indifference to "book culture": "there ain't nothing more to write about, and I am rotten glad of it," "if I'd a knowed what a trouble it was to make a book I wouldn't a tackled it and ain't agoing to no more" (295-6)."

⁵⁶ Huck dismisses the story of Moses not for its lack of interest, but for its apparent irrelevance: "I don't take no stock in dead people" (15).

At the end of the novel, recognizing he has “been there before” (296), Huck implicitly rejects the narratives that define the social behaviour and practices of ‘sivilization’. More than Miss Watson or Aunt Sally, it is Tom Sawyer and his ‘adventures’ that dominate the final scenes and impressions of the novel. When Huck declares his final decision to leave, therefore, he is liberating himself from the society that enables the artificial, contrived, and harmful antics of Tom Sawyer. At the same time, he is also escaping from the very narrative conventions that defined Twain’s own earlier novel. Re-asserting this independence and proclaiming his individual authorship, Huck concludes the novel by declaring: “THE END. YOURS TRULY, HUCK FINN” (296). With this conclusion, Twain distances himself from his own earlier adventure story. In so doing, he underscores the extent of his preoccupation with breaking free from the corrupting “chains” of established literary expectations.

Despite Twain’s condemnation of a society that has chained itself to an inevitable repetition of corrupt and corrupting narratives, *Huckleberry Finn* contains a number of passages whose language and themes resonate with those of *Great Expectations*. Where Ridland identifies a flawed indebtedness, Twain’s novel counters any such assumption of a simplistic borrowing. Instead, Twain seems *deliberately* to engage with *Great Expectations* in order to enforce his own very different literary aesthetic – and to challenge any suggestion of a binding chain of literary associations.

Various brief passages and allusions in *Huckleberry Finn* hint at this engagement. Mrs Judith Loftus sees through Huck’s disguise, but assumes that he is “a runaway ‘prentice” (72). Orlick escapes “from a struggle of men, as if it were tumbling water” (392); the crowd in *Huckleberry Finn* swarm into the graveyard and “[wash] over it like an overflow” (213). When he arrives in a town with the king and the duke, Huck’s language echoes Dickens’s exaggerated descriptions of “mud, mud, mud, deep in all the streets” (286):⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Later in the novel, Pip describes a barge that “lay low in the mud; and a little squat shoal-lighthouse on open piles, stood crippled in the mud ... and slimy stakes stuck out of the mud, and slimy stones stuck out of the mud,

All the streets and lanes was just mud, they warn't nothing else *but* mud – mud as black as tar, and nigh about a foot deep in some places; and two or three inches deep in *all* the places. (156)

Early in the novel, the firing of the cannon to make Huck's carcass rise echoes the firing of the cannon after escaped convicts in *Great Expectations*. Where these moments haunt the sensibility of the adult Pip, Huck notes that he “was having a good enough time seeing them hunt for my remainders” (49).

These brief allusions accumulate throughout the novel, characterized by Twain's instinct to qualify the associations he establishes. Pip's seminal adventures with Magwitch begin and end in extended scenes involving thick fog; Huck waxes similarly descriptive about a “thick fog”: “a raft went by so close we could hear them talking and cussing and laughing ... but we couldn't see no sign of them.” The effect was to make “you feel crawly, it was like spirits” (136). Simultaneously invoking and deflating this association with the ghostly apparitions and dread in *Great Expectations*, Twain has Huck remark, “Jim said he believed it was spirits; but I says: ‘No, spirits wouldn't say, ‘dern the dern fog’” (136).

More significantly, perhaps, the first chapter of *Huckleberry Finn* resonates with the seminal conclusion to Dickens's second volume. In that scene, Pip is “dispirited and anxious,” feeling a “dull sense of being alone” as he listens to the howling storm (285). Huck is similarly “tiresome and lonesome” and susceptible to the ominous sounds of nature outside his window: the leaves rustle “ever so mournful,” he hears “a dog crying about somebody that was going to die,” and the wind is “trying to whisper something to me and I couldn't make out what it was, and so it made the cold shivers run over me” (16). This language of vague premonition runs throughout *Great Expectations*: Pip starts with a “nervous folly,” connecting a footstep with that of his dead sister – and in so doing underlining the novel's

and red landmarks and tidemarks stuck out of the mud...and an old roofless building slipped into the mud, and all about us was stagnation and mud” (401).

associations with *Hamlet*, ghosts, and guilt. Huck similarly hears “that kind of a sound that ghost makes when it wants to tell about something that’s on its mind and can’t make itself understood, and so can’t rest easy in its grave and has to go about that way every night grieving” (16). Furthermore, just as Pip hears the clocks strike eleven in a sound “curiously flawed by the wind” (286), Huck hears the clock “away off in the town go bom – boom – boom ... and all still again – stiller than ever” (16).

This scene in *Great Expectations* brings together much of the language and imagery of the narrative, suggesting the importance of its climactic revelation. In *Huckleberry Finn*, however, the mood is swiftly dissipated: soon after he hears the clock, Huck hears the call of Tom Sawyer and crawls out eagerly for fresh adventures. Nonetheless, soon afterwards, Huck notes “curious” tracks in the snow: “a cross in the left boot-heel made with big nails, to keep off the devil” (28). Although the identity of the tracks remains a mystery to the reader, Huck immediately recognizes their importance. In a potential parody of the dramatization of the uncanny in *Great Expectations*, Huck consults Jim’s ‘prophetic hairball’ to decipher the significance of what he knows to be his father’s impending reappearance. The hairball reveals only clichés, however, and when Huck lights his candle and goes up to his room that night, “there sat pap, his own self!” (30).

In its simultaneous invocation and deflation of much of the language and structure of this seminal scene in *Great Expectations*, *Huckleberry Finn* suggests a gently parodic engagement. The reappearance of Huck’s father, presumed dead, is never a mystery to Huck, nor does it acquire the ghostly connotations of Magwitch’s appearance. Where Magwitch reveals himself as benefactor, Huck’s father arrives to claim money from his son. Although his father is violent and threatening, that violence is accepted by Huck as a matter of course rather than as a source of terror, haunting, and fright. Despite these differences, Twain’s language constantly reminds the reader of its allusion to the broadly equivalent scene in

Great Expectations. Magwitch asks repeated questions of Pip in order to reveal his own identity: “may I make so bold... as to ask you how you have done well,” “Might a mere warmint ask what property,” “might a mere warmint ask whose property” (290-1). Huck’s father similarly asks repeated questions – but he does so in order to demean his son’s new fortunes: “starchy clothes ... you think you’re a good deal of a big bug, *don’t* you,” “you’re educated, too, they say,” “you think you’re better’n your father, now, *don’t* you” (31).

Later in the novel, soon after Huck and Jim encounter the ship containing the body of Huck’s father, Huck describes a violent storm. In the context of a novel that has already created associations with the ghostly premonitions, haunting father-figures, and pathetic fallacy of *Great Expectations*, it is notable that that violent storm should be described by Huck in very cheerful terms. In the Dickens novel, the “furious gusts” tear up trees, “violent blasts of rain” accompany “these rages of wind,” and the wind rushes up “like discharges of cannon” (286). In *Huckleberry Finn*, the trees look “dim and spider-webby” and a blast of wind “would bend the trees down and turn up the pale underside of the leaves” and the thunder would “let go with an awful crash and then go rumbling, grumbling, tumbling down the sky towards the under side of the world” (60). Where Pip shudders in fear and dread, Huck remarks to Jim, “this is nice. ... I wouldn’t want to be nowhere else but here” (60). Later in the novel, they experience another storm: “my souls, how the wind did scream along,” “the trees trashing around in the wind,” “the thunder would go rumbling and grumbling away” (144). In repeating this storm imagery, Twain suggests that he is not just deflating the portentous imagery and themes of the earlier novel -- but that he also recognizes and refuses to replicate Dickens’s careful use of repetition to build thematic associations.

Like Dickens, Twain also offers an extended parody of amateur theatrics, most notably in his transcription of Hamlet’s soliloquy as performed by the king. Dickens establishes a contrast between Wopsle’s performance and his narrator’s literary

internalization and rewriting of central Shakespearean references. In contrast, Twain maintains the pretence of an unlearned child narrator, emphasizing the parody rather than the novelistic translation:

To be, or not to be; that is the bare bodkin
 That makes calamity of so long life;
 For who would fardels bear, till Birnam Wood do come to Dunsinane,
 But that the fear of something after death
 Murders the innocent sleep.... (152)

In its assemblage of various Shakespearean references, the speech resembles Huck's conflated history of the monarchy. Aside from enabling Twain's instincts towards parody, these scenes render Shakespeare and European history essentially nonsensical and irrelevant both to the society in which they are performed and the narratives in which they are repeated.

Thus, where Dickens develops numerous allusions to dramatize the literary sensibilities of his narrator, Twain invokes *Great Expectations* in order to dramatize his own very different literary aesthetic. Twain attacks the society of *Huckleberry Finn* for its slavish celebration of an ideal of European culture manifest in an awe of royalty, an ignorant enthusiasm for empty theatrical declamation, and a misplaced affection for the outdated novels of Walter Scott. He extends this critique to condemn a society that enforces Christian narratives against a natural conscience, and whose definition of childhood tolerates an ignorant acceptance and re-enactment of historical adventure stories. He does not, however, seem to condemn Charles Dickens. Instead, Twain alludes to *Great Expectations* in implicit acknowledgment of that novel's own engagement with the question of literary chains, imprisonment, and escape.

One seminal, oft-quoted passage in *Huckleberry Finn* seems to take unqualified inspiration from *Great Expectations*. Huck describes an idyllic evening on the raft with Jim:

...we let her alone, and let her float wherever the current wanted her to; then we lit the pipes, and dangled our legs in the water and talked about all kinds of things – we was always naked, day and night, whenever the mosquitoes would let us. ... Sometimes we'd have that whole river all to ourselves for the longest time. ... We had the sky, up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look at them... (136)

This account echoes a conversation between Magwitch and Pip on the river, where Magwitch confesses:

'If you knowed, dear boy ... what it is to sit here alonger my dear boy and have my smoke, arter having been day by day betwixt four walls, you'd envy me. But you know what it is.'

'I think I know the delights of freedom,' I answered.

'Ah,' said he, shaking his head gravely. 'But you don't know it equal to me. You must have been under lock and key, dear boy, to know it equal to me... (399)

Magwitch dips his hand in the water, musing: "I was a thinking through my smoke just then, that we can no more see to the bottom of the next few hours, than we can see to the bottom of this river what I catches hold of" (400).

In their dramatization of an idyllic moment of escape on the river, wreathed in smoke and sky, both of these passages reiterate a central preoccupation with the theme of freedom and companionship. For Dickens, that moment is necessarily ephemeral, bound by the inevitability of Magwitch's eventual recapture. It also, however, introduces a theme that Pip himself tends to resist. Throughout the novel, Pip controls his narrative, indicating its careful

constructedness according to pre-existing narratives and patterns. In this passage, however, Pip allows a prominence to Magwitch and his peaceful recognition of the inevitability of uncertainty. In placing this conversation so close to the end of the novel, Dickens offers a hint of the more ambiguous (and thus more independent) conclusion to which he may have initially aspired.

In contrast, Twain's very construction of the raft as an idyll of escape for Huck and Jim might well derive from this passage, with its celebration of the freedom of companionship and liberation from an imprisoning society. At the start of *Huckleberry Finn*, the protagonist attributes his melancholy to a desire to move forwards: "all I wanted was to go somewheres; all I wanted was a change" (15). To some extent, Twain embodies his own desire for change and progress in the very narrative of the novel itself. Ironically, however, in revealing this possible influence, Twain does not so much challenge as call attention to his own position within a continuous and apparently inevitable literary chain. By translating (or succumbing to) the imagery and language of his predecessor in this key passage, Twain implicitly thwarts his own careful resistance to "book culture" -- and further enables his lasting critical position as an 'American Dickens.'⁵⁸

⁵⁸ "One calls to mind most, perhaps, that fine actuality of Dickens. Confronted with this sort of thing, one doesn't find it difficult to justify the feeling that here is one of the very great writers in the English language" (Coveney 41).

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