# 4

# Mark Twain
# *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

IN 1897, MARK TWAIN asserted that 'We Americans are English in blood, English in speech, English in religion, English in the essentials of our governmental system, English in the essentials of our civilization.'[1] This thesis is an attempt to show that Twain's assertion was in essence true, and to this purpose I wish to argue that *Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), and its sequel of sorts, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Tom Sawyer's Comrade)* (December 1884 in the United Kingdom and February 1885 in the United States), demonstrate that Twain was a writer in the finest tradition of the Anglosphere. These novels are also an exploration of whiteness, for in a literary context ethnicity and culture are, at root, inseparable.[2] I shall bring into question, or significantly reinterpret, Ernest Hemingway's bold assertion in *The Green Hills of Africa* (1935) that 'all American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*'.[3] This will enable us to read *Huckleberry Finn* not only as an Anglospheric novel, but as a white novel.

[1] Twain, *Following the Equator: A Journey Around the World* (1897) (Oxford: John Beaufoy, 2010), p. 110. Twain's assertion was not simply bombast, for the Naturalization Act of 1790 limited American citizenship to white persons of good character, thereby excluding blacks, both free and enslaved. However, the Naturalization of 1870 extended citizenship to 'aliens of African nativity and to persons of African descent'. Correlatively, until the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, also known as the Snyder Act, the legal status of the untaxed Native American was that of stateless person. See Ian Haney López, 'Racial Restrictions in the Law of Citizenship', in *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), pp. 27-34.
[2] Rhett S. Jones, 'Nigger and Knowledge: White Double-Consciousness in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*', *Mark Twain Journal*, 22 (1984), pp. 28-37.
[3] Ernest Hemingway, *The Green Hills of Africa* (New York: Scribner, 1996), p. 22. However, Arnold Rampersad asks whether Hemingway's bold assertion also applies to the output of African-American writers,

In 1887, Twain responded to a request from a Methodist Minister, Charles D. Crane, to advise him of the most suitable reading for adults *and* children. He listed nine writers only, but placed Shakespeare at the top of his list. He named but one American author, Francis Parkman, who was placed fifth. The others named were Plutarch's *Lives*, Robert Browning, Thomas Carlyle's *The French Revolution*, Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, *Arabian Nights*, James Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, and Benjamin Jowett's *The Dialogues of Plato*.[4] This eclectic choice of reading material perhaps better reflects Twain's sense of humour than his literary preferences. To be sure, there are some worthy tomes listed, but they doubtless found a limited readership. As we will see, the real sources of Twain's fiction for boys — apart from Shakespeare, *Le Morte d'Arthur*, and *Arabian Nights* — were quite different.

Tom and Huck are hypocrites reversed; rough diamonds both. *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* are studies of bad boys who are essentially good. Indeed, their boyish badness is a *façade* behind which lies a fundamental decency. On reading these works boys may discover the signal difference between immature behaviour and inveterate roguery. They also learn that adults do not always know better, which is a heartening lesson for any juvenile reader. However, older readers of these novels may also learn the lesson of thinking for oneself, and questioning received opinion. Tom and Huck undergo a transformation during the course of their adventures. Indeed, Twain's stories are goal-directed conversations with his readers in the service of personal transformation of one kind or another. Tom and Huck also interact with subject peoples in a manner that does not patronise them. They learn much from their dealings with the violent criminal, Injun Joe, and the runaway slave, Jim,[5] though not all of what they

believing this to be a seminal line of inquiry that may assist in the comprehension of their works, in addition to casting some light on *Huckleberry Finn*. See '*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Afro-American Literature', *Mark Twain Journal*, 22 (1984), pp. 47-52.

[4] John Lauber, *The Inventions of Mark Twain* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990), p. 120.

[5] Twain perhaps chose the forename 'Jim' as an allusion to Jim Crow, which was a stage persona that lent its name to a negative and stereotypical view of African-Americans. See C. Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), *passim*.

learn is efficacious. Twain's humorous reflections on the nature of ethnic stereotypes are wrapped in the blithe banter of badly behaved boys.[6]

Twain's most self-consciously Anglospheric novel, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), a work that met with great hostility in Great Britain on initial publication, is a fecund cross-fertilisation of the American and British literary traditions.[7] Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur* (1485) was Twain's main inspiration for *A Connecticut Yankee*. Twain's first contact with the Arthurian legend was through an edition of Malory's prose romance abridged by Sidney Lanier, which was entitled *The Boy's King Arthur* (1880).[8] He subsequently read an unabridged edition of Malory's work, and was so taken by it that he began to write, and to speak, in imitation of Malory's archaisms. (Twain had a love of mimicry that is reflected throughout his published works.)[9] Hank Morgan, the protagonist of *A Connecticut Yankee*, is an Anglo-American, but one who is keen to show the Old Country's mediaeval nobles and commons the benefits to be derived from political liberty, technological

[6] In a later novel, *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894), Twain undertook a highly subjective exploration of how nature and nurture interact, particularly in relation to ethnicity. See Christopher Gair, '"Whitewashed Exteriors": Mark Twain's imitation whites', *Journal of American Studies*, 39 (2005), pp. 187-205. Similarly, Nella Larsen explored the theme of racial fluidity in her second novel, *Passing* (1929), which James Weldon Johnson had earlier portrayed from a male perspective in *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912). Sinclair Lewis examined such racial gradations from a white viewpoint in *Kingsblood Royal* (1947), thereby describing *two* Americas; one black, one white. See Robert E. Fleming, '*Kingsblood Royal* and the Black "Passing" Novel', in *Critical Essays on Sinclair Lewis*, ed. by Martin Bucco (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1986), pp. 213-221. However, African-Americans also employed stereotypes that operated within a racialist dialogue. See Mia Bay, *The White Image in the Black Mind: African-American Ideas about White People, 1830-1925* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), *passim*. Indeed, African-Americans still employ stereotypes that operate within a racialist dialogue. See Marvin McAllister, *Whiting Up: Whiteface Minstrels and Stage Europeans in African-American Performance* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), *passim*.

[7] Dennis Welland, *Mark Twain in England* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1978), p. 145. See also Kim Moreland, 'Mark Twain: An Ambivalent Yankee at King Arthur's Court', in *The Medievalist Impulse in American Literature: Twain, Adams, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996), pp. 28-76.

[8] Sidney Lanier, *The Boy's King Arthur* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1880). Lanier was a faculty member of Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. He specialised in Shakespeare, Chaucer, the metaphysical poets, and Anglo-Saxon literature.

[9] Howard G. Baetzhold, *Mark Twain and John Bull: The British Connection*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970), p. 102. See also Louis J. Budd, 'Mark Twain's Reputation', in *The Oxford Companion to Mark Twain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 497-590 (pp. 574-579).

innovation, and the American way.[10] The influence of Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe* (1820) can also be discerned, and Twain lampoons both the Age of Chivalry described therein and its wordy chronicler. Twain's novels have often been read as a sustained critique of Scott's influence on the mores of the *antebellum* American South, particularly by those blind to Twain's love of hokum.[11]

Prior to the publication of Tom Sawyer, American children found considerably more of interest in the fanciful tales of British authors such as George MacDonald, Lewis Carroll, John Ruskin, and Charles Kingsley than anything produced at home.[12] *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, the two most significant components of a *roman-fleuve* that also encompasses *Tom Sawyer Abroad* (1894), *Tom Sawyer, Detective* (1896), and five minor unfinished works that were published posthumously, are artful concoctions of Americana.[13] Yet, as we shall see, they are by no means insular in outlook, for Twain's auto-ethnographic reflections are leavened by an indispensable Britishness, notwithstanding that the eponymous protagonist of *Huckleberry Finn* bears an Irish surname, which I wish to argue is a signal point of reference. Fionn mac Cumhaill, transcribed in English as Finn MacCool, is a benevolent hunter-warrior who features heavily in Irish mythology. Perhaps tellingly, the Gaelic word *fionn* means 'white' or 'fair'. Twain's choice of Huck's surname cannot be mere chance.[14]

---

[10] *A Connecticut Yankee* is a foundational work in the time-travel subgenre of science fiction Twain could have been influenced by H. G. Wells' short story, 'The Chronic Argonauts' (1888), which was itself a precursor to Wells' *The Time Machine* (1895).

[11] Sidney Krause, 'Twain and Scott: Experience versus Adventures', *Modern Philology*, 62 (1983), pp. 227-236.

[12] Anne Scott MacLeod, *American Childhood: Essays on Children's Literature of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1995), p. 10.

[13] Twain's publisher, Charles L. Webster, requested that he emend the text of *Huckleberry Finn* to make it uniform in length with *Tom Sawyer*, which would appear to be a stratagem to reinforce the connectedness of these two stories. See Walter Blair, *Mark Twain and Huck Finn* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), p. 357.

[14] Noel Ignatiev discusses the mutability of 'white' in an ethnic sense, and correspondingly examines the association of nineteenth-century Irish-Americans with both black and white cultures. See *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 2009), *passim*. The many Irishmen who served in Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia would doubtless have been surprised to learn that they were not regarded as 'white'. See Kelly J. O'Grady, *Clear the Confederate Way! The Irish in the Army of Northern Virginia* (Mason, Iowa: Savas, 2000), *passim*. In nineteenth-century America, however, all 'Americans' were white, though some were more white than others.

Huck Finn, and his father, fit the nineteenth-century stereotypical view of the Irish-American character.[15] Of course, Huck is not really Irish, and yet he would appear to contain some measure of stereotypical Irishness within him.

In 1845, following his publication of his *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, Douglass sojourned in Ireland on the eve of the Great Famine, during which time he drew comparisons between impoverished Irish peasants on Anglo-Irish estates and African-American slaves on plantations in the Deep South:

> [Irish peasants] lacked only black skin and woolly hair, to complete their likeness to the plantation Negro. The open, uneducated mouth — the long, gaunt arm — the badly-formed foot and ankle — the shuffling gait — the retreating forehead and vague expression — and their petty quarrels and fights — all reminded me of the plantation.[16]

However, Douglass' comparison between Irish peasants and African slaves was hardly a unique insight, for such a transatlantic parallel was already well established in Anglospheric caricature.[17] In addition, the very concept of the plantation, with its forced labour, and ethnically alien landlord, evidenced a disquieting similarity on both sides of the Atlantic.[18] Huck stems from a subjugated, and enslaved, people. The exercise of *Pax Caucasica* provided no guarantee of peace to *all* who lived under its writ.

---

[15] Christopher Dowd, 'Afterword: Huck Finn's People', in *The Construction of Irish Identity in American Literature* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 191-194. See also Hugh J. Dawson, 'The Ethnicity of Huck Finn — and the Difference It Makes', *American Literary Realism*, 30 (1998), pp. 1-16. Dawson suggests that Huck's Irish surname has negative connotations. Huck and his pap are the only characters in the entire novel without a recognisably Anglo-Saxon surname, though brief mention is made of Sowberry Hagan, who is another Irish-American reprobate. For a representation of the Irish character as a Stage Irishman, which is to say a belligerent oaf who is the worse for drink, see Declan Kiberd, 'The Fall of the Stage Irishman', *Genre*, 12 (1979), pp. 451-472.

[16] Frederick Douglass, 'The Claims of the Negro, Ethnologically Considered' (1845), in *The Portable Frederick Douglass*, ed. by John Stauffer and Henry Louis Gates (New York: Penguin, 2016), pp. 223-247 (p. 243).

[17] Ellen Crowell, 'Sham Grandeurs, Sham Chivalries: Architectures of Aristocracy in Ireland and the American South', in *The Dandy in Irish and American Southern Fiction: Aristocratic Drag* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 1-27 (p. 2).

[18] The word 'plantation' has its origin in the simultaneous settlement of Ireland and North America by English colonists. The Oxford English Dictionary identifies the word 'chiefly with reference to the colonies founded in North America, and on the forfeited lands in Ireland, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.'

A wide-ranging use of intertextuality in Twain's work has the effect of locating it in relation to the tradition to which it alludes. As T. S. Eliot observed, the individual talent cannot exist independent of the tradition.[19] However, as David Goldie has noted, the validity of this assertion is contingent upon how one defines tradition.[20] Originality, in a literary sense, is simply a form of development. Twain *develops* concepts inherent in the works to which he alludes in order to comment, albeit obliquely, on writing for children. He borrows motifs, characters, and settings to construct a modern tale to which his Anglospheric readers, sophisticated and naïve, can easily relate. He wrote *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* in the knowledge that these boy's own stories would fall foul of those possessed of a certain turn of mind, which is to say those who harbour an innate suspicion of anything that has the *appearance* of novelty. Twain perforce treads a narrow path between tradition and innovation. He can be seen to marry reality and farcicality with practised care. The reader is invited to follow Twain down a literary rabbit hole into an American Wonderland.

## *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

As we will see, while *Tom Sawyer* is very much a boy's book, it is not *simply* a boy's book, for it can be seen to contain some recondite allusions. For example, Tom, the wide-eyed white boy, learns the joys of musicality from a black man who teaches him how to whistle. This is a hymn to boyhood, for he believes that he has acquired a valuable skill, and presumably one that sets him apart from girlhood:

> Diligence and attention soon gave him the knack of it, and he strode down the street with his mouth full of harmony and his soul full of gratitude…He felt much as an astronomer feels who has discovered a new planet. No doubt, as far as strong, deep,

[19] T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', in *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (1920) (London: Faber & Faber, 1997), pp. 39-49.
[20] David Goldie, *A Critical Difference: T. S. Eliot and John Middleton Murry in English Literary Criticism, 1919-1928* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p. 45.

> unalloyed pleasure is concerned, the advantage was with the boy, not the astronomer.[21]

Twain's reference to an astronomer here may be an allusion to John Keats' 'On First Looking into Chapman's *Homer*' (1816). Keats was certainly familiar with Alexander Pope's mannered translation of Homer, but on reading Chapman's more robust translation 'He felt like some watcher of the skies/When a new planet swims into his ken'.[22] Keats' reading of this translation recounts an epiphany, while Tom Sawyer's mastery of the art of whistling is simply a celebration of boyhood. Nevertheless, both revel in the shock of the new. Twain would appear to be signalling to the more well-read section of his readership.

Twain puts to rout, or perhaps merely into abeyance, the assumption that the juvenile reader invariably prefers fantasy to reality, even though Twain's story is not a transcription of life, but rather a fantastical interpretation of it.[23] Tom and Huck, with their adventurous and troublesome ways, are far from inhabiting an Edenic riparian realm, but their stories can nevertheless be seen to possess some attributes of a fairy tale.[24] Twain postulates the reality of unreality. Indeed, herein can be seen the core of every fairy tale, which is the triumph of Good over Evil. Tom Sawyer gets the better of Injun Joe, saves a damsel in distress, and assumes possession of a treasure trove. Huck Finn behaves in a laughably delinquent fashion, but he betrays an innate nobility when he places principle before personal advantage. While the *dénouement* of *Huckleberry Finn* could be read as a Juvenalian satirical flourish, akin perhaps to Jonathan Swift's 'A Modest Proposal' (1729), it is perhaps much more a burlesque, albeit one that creates some measure of disquiet. A fairy tale's power lies in its ability to express

[21] Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, (London: Penguin, 2006), p. 5.
[22] John Keats, *The Major Works*, ed. by Elizabeth Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 32.
[23] Frank Baldanza, 'Boy Literature', in *Mark Twain: An Introduction and Interpretation* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1961), pp. 103-123 (p. 103).
[24] Franco Moretti has noted that fairy-tale-like structures are signal for the creation of frontier literature in America. See *The Way of the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (London: Verso, 1987), p. 251.

authentic fears, and to address those fears with courage and wisdom.[25] Tom and Huck meet with extreme danger, and behave in an exemplary fashion in the face of it. Twain's simulacrum of a fairy tale presents life experience in a vividly symbolic form, and introduces the child reader to the vagaries of the human condition.

Tom Sawyer, in the manner of his creator, Mark Twain, is a bibliophile with a highly retentive memory. (Jo March, protagonist of the novel sequence that began with *Little Women* (1868), also shared this proclivity with *her* creator, Louisa May Alcott.) Huck's bookish playmate is intellectually precocious, but is nonetheless given to acting out his literary fantasies, whereas Huck's opinions and actions are founded upon his own, albeit limited, personal experience. Huck is the perfect foil to Tom, and they could be seen as a comedy duo, a formula which was becoming popular in the British music halls of the late nineteenth century.[26]

John Seelye suggests that Injun Joe largely comes from 'the Leatherstocking Tales of James Fenimore Cooper, most particularly *The Last of the Mohicans*', and that 'behind Joe's lingering death lie a number of equally horrible and ironically fitting fates in the novels of Scott and Fenimore Cooper'[27] Tom and Huck both have unexpected encounters in isolated places with adult males, but with very different outcomes. In *Tom Sawyer*, Twain utilises an atavistic fear of so-called Red Indians to enhance a sense of threat. Injun Joe is a cardboard villain who is prepared to use deadly force. However, the white boy predictably triumphs over the red man, for such was Twain's readers' preferred outcome. Twain wrote of the Native American that he was 'a good, fair, desirable subject for extermination if ever there was one.'[28] He was by no

[25] Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (1976) (London: Penguin Books, 1991), pp. 8-10. However, Alan Dundes has demonstrated that many passages in this book were plagiarised, sometimes verbatim, from Julius Heuscher's *A Psychiatric Study of Fairy Tales: Their Origin, Meaning, and Usefulness* (1963). See 'Bruno Bettelheim's *Uses of Enchantment* and Abuses of Scholarship', *Journal of American Folklore*, 104 (1991), pp. 74-83.
[26] John Major, *My Old Man: A Personal History of Music Hall* (London: William Collins, 2012), p. 209.
[27] John Seelye, 'Introduction', in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. xix-xxii.
[28] Twain, 'The Noble Red Man', in *Collected Tales, Sketches, Speeches, and Essays, 1852-1890* (New York: Library of America, 1992), pp. 561-564 (p. 564).

means alone in his views. In *Roughing It* (1872), he referred to the Native Americans he met in the West as dirty, sneaky, and degraded.[29] It was a dismissive attitude that he readily transferred to his presentation of the half-breed outlaw, Injun Joe.[30] Twain was doubtless aware that his overwhelmingly white readership would not demur at such disparagement.

Tennyson's poem, *Enoch Arden* (1864), may have inspired Twain to create one of the more notable episodes in *Tom Sawyer*, which is Tom's nocturnal visit to the home of his grief-stricken family after he has been mistakenly thought drowned. Tom's actions parallel, and perhaps implicitly ridicule, those of Tennyson's protagonist. *Enoch Arden* is a celebration of the sanctity of the home and of the family, but Twain subjects it to burlesque, if not indeed satire.

Enoch returns to his familial home after an enforced twelve-year absence. He covertly gazes through a window to view his wife, who has unwittingly contracted a bigamous marriage in the erroneous belief that her husband has been lost at sea, and his almost grown children. Tom, on return from his place of concealment on Jackson Island, peers through a window at his supposedly bereaved family, and then slips into the house unobserved and hides under a bed. Tennyson's 'dead man come to life'[31] bewails the hand that life has dealt him, while Tom 'welters' in tears, 'more in pity of himself than anybody else'.[32] Enoch stifles a 'shrill and terrible cry'[33] that would alarm those therein. Similarly, Tom longs to reveal himself and bring relief to his mourning family. However, both feel compelled to restrain themselves. Enoch prays for the moral courage 'never to let her know',[34] at least until he is deceased. Tom, standing over his sleeping Aunt Polly's bed, feels remorse for his chicanery and thinks to leave

[29] Twain, *Roughing It* (London: Penguin, 2010), p. 50.
[30] Theda Perdue, '"Designing Half-Breeds": The Politics of Race', in *"Mixed-Blood Indians": Racial Construction in the Early South* (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2003), pp. 70-104 (p. 71).
[31] Alfred Tennyson, *The Major Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 360.
[32] Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, op. cit.,* p. 103.
[33] Tennyson, *op. cit.,* p. 361
[34] *Ibid.,* p. 362.

a written message informing her that he and the others have not drowned, but then decides on a solution to ameliorate his unhappy situation, which is to leave quietly.[35]

Tom's characteristically inventive solution is for the boys who have been believed drowned to appear at their own funeral service. Ironically, whereas Enoch is meant to be considered noble for not extinguishing his wife's happiness by making his presence known, the boys become heroes despite their deception. The funeral ceremonies, perhaps incongruously elaborate for such a small town, which Tom, Huck, and Joe Rodgers view from the church gallery, may tacitly satirise the final lines of Tennyson's poem: 'And when they buried him, the little port / Had seldom seen a costlier funeral.'[36] Twain may have transmuted Enoch's maudlin self-sacrifice into Tom's mischievous, and unkind, deception of his family. Enoch had a belated, and sorrowful, return from the island upon which he was shipwrecked, but Tom has a triumphal return from his escapade on Jackson's Island. The unfortunate Enoch's funeral was a grand affair, but that of the boys perhaps more so, for they lived to witness it: 'They had been hid in the unused gallery listening to their own funeral sermon!'[37] Hence, it may be that *Enoch Arden* was influential in stimulating, if not actually engendering, Twain's fascination with the idea of bringing a character back to his home after a prolonged absence. However, there are manifold versions of a similar type of voyage and return plot at almost every stage along the history of storytelling, such as Virgil's *The Aeneid* (*circa* 29-19 BC), Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726, amended 1735), or L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900).[38]

Tom Sawyer, consummate master of juvenile histrionics that he is, exudes a theatrical vitality unrivalled perhaps in the works of any of Twain's contemporaries bar Dickens. Indeed,

[35] On the role of realism in sentimentalism see Gregg Camfield, *Sentimental Twain: Samuel L. Clemens in the Maze of Moral Philosophy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).
[36] *Ibid.*, p. 374.
[37] Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, op. cit.*, p. 116.
[38] Christopher Booker, 'Voyage and Return' in *The Seven Basic Plots: Why We Tell Stories* (London: Continuum, 2004), pp. 87-106.

in the manner of his English mentor, Twain's literary art is very much founded on the knockabout showboating of the popular stage. The comically melodramatic nature of *Tom Sawyer* is made apparent from the opening pages, wherein Aunt Polly delivers a sophistic Augustinian soliloquy, albeit delivered in the manner of a manic barker for a circus sideshow, which sets the tone for an entire novel of Dickensian rhetorical exuberance in Midwest American voice.

In 1909, Twain informed his publisher, Albert Bigelow Paine, that save for *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) he had never been able to read any of Dickens' books. Twain's love of deadpan humour was obviously not confined to his literary efforts. In fact, he had read most of them, in not indeed all, and often incorporated allusions, notions, and even particular incidents into his own writings.[39] For example, Twain took the graveyard episode from *A Tale of Two Cities* and sewed it seamlessly into *Tom Sawyer*. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, a boy lies awake until the early hours, and then steals out of his home and walks to the graveyard, whereupon he witnesses three men robbing a grave.[40] This sequence is followed closely in *Tom Sawyer*, and is perhaps Twain's literary genuflection toward Dickens.[41]

Twain's skills as a comedic writer were doubtless refined while reading Dickens. Indeed, his all-American 'artful Dodger', the harum-scarum Huck Finn, is a streetwise ragamuffin whose antecedents can be perceived in *Oliver Twist* (1837-1839).[42] As we will now see, *Huckleberry Finn* evinces a quite similar Dickensian influence.

[39] Walter Blair, *Mark Twain and Huck Finn*, *op. cit.*, p. 61.
[40] Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 168-170.
[41] Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-74.
[42] W. H. Auden, 'Huck and Oliver', *The Listener*, 50 (1953), pp. 540-541.

## Adventurousness of Huckleberry Finn

Twain's fictive force of nature, Huck Finn, is a likeable scapegrace, a good-for-nothing gamin whose playfulness has a catch-me-if-you-can aspect. Huck, a divided self who is half-naïf and half-cynic, is an unnatural, albeit gleeful, fusion of innocence and experience. He is noisy, unkempt, unruly, assertive, opinionated, and comically indignant, but he is also chivalrous, imaginative, daring, and magnanimous, with a highly developed sense of natural justice and a much flaunted disdain of formal education. There is something of the play-actor about him, and he patently revels in the role of cynosure. He views the presentation of Self in everyday life as naked artifice; something akin to street theatre. Huck regards truth, however defined, as a flexible concept that can be moulded to suit the exigencies of any given situation. He lampoons authority, but never undermines it. He possesses the ability to cause consternation among the easily frightened solely by the exercise of his innate ebullience, while practising a curious dominance-as-subservience mode of behaviour that gulls those who accept him at face value. In short, Huck is a caricatured version of the all-American Everyboy. Huck, countrified and incorrigible, personifies the distilled essence of childhood escapade. His adventures are an episodic account of a quasi-itinerant rebel without a cause, and Huck's relationships, pronouncements, and ingenious role-playing incorporate a satirical, perhaps impishly idiosyncratic, view of the community in which he lives. Huck exemplifies bad boyhood.[43] Conversely, Horatio Alger's *Ragged Dick* (1868) exemplifies good boyhood.[44] Thomas Bailey Aldrich's *The Story of a Bad Boy* (1869) may have laid the literary foundation of the lovable scamp upon which Twain would later construct his own version of bad boyhood.[45] However,

[43] Richmal Crompton's irrepressible delinquent, William Brown, is an Anglicised, and slightly sanitised, version of Huck Finn. Twain's influence is omnipresent in *Just William* (1922). William's bookish friend, Henry, is certainly redolent of Tom Sawyer. The profoundest tribute to Twain is that which other writers have paid him by imitation and emulation.

[44] Edwin Palmer Hoyt, *Horatio's Boys: The Life and Works of Horatio Alger* (Radnor, Pennsylvania: Chilton, 1974), *passim*.

[45] Gillian Avery, *Behold the Child: American Children and their Books, 1621-1922* (London: Bodley Head, 1994), p. 202.

Twain did publish 'The Story of the Bad Little Boy' (1865), which would seem to presage the character of Huck Finn. In comparison, Tom Sawyer's bad behaviour is more a case of misdirected vivacity and febrile inventiveness, which is a tradition that would seem to spring from Benjamin Franklin's reminiscence of youthful tomfoolery in his posthumously published autobiography, *The Private Life of the Late Benjamin Franklin* (1793).[46]

*Huckleberry Finn* takes its place in the literary tradition as a picaresque novel in the mould of Tobias Smollett's *The Adventures of Roderick Random* (1748), Henry Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749), and William Makepeace Thackeray's *The Luck of Barry Lyndon* (1844). The peripatetic anti-hero of this genre satirises the dominant mores of society. Huck's manifold escapades on the Mississippi River provide Twain with an opportunity to cock a Voltairean snook at the received opinion of his day.[47] Huck is an archetype of sorts, for on the whole a picaroon resists acting in accordance with the dictates of conventional morality, observing how such moral dictates are more commonly preached than practised.[48] The artful picaroon is part of a literary tradition of able persons of humble origin, sharp-witted and perforce amoral, who advance themselves in life by means of an intuitive grasp of the charade that is social convention. Huck's anomie mirrors, albeit nebulously, the duplicitous moral standards of the society in which he lives. He is a mutable being of a type who evades domestication and religiosity. Yet, Huck does seem to assume a fund of basic decency, albeit to some extent tempered by adverse circumstance, in most of those whom he

[46] It should be noted, however, that Mark Twain's essay, 'The Late Benjamin Franklin' (1870), mocks his subject's alleged rectitude with a characteristically contrary claim that 'the subject of this memoir was of a vicious disposition, and early prostituted his talents to the invention of maxims and aphorisms calculated to inflict suffering upon the rising generations of all ages'. *Essays and Sketches of Mark Twain* (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1995), pp. 58-60 (p. 58).

[47] Lionel Trilling described Huck as 'the servant of the river-god', while adding that 'his very intense moral life may be said to derive almost wholly from his love of the river.' See 'Huckleberry Finn', in *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (1950) (New York: New York Review of Books, 2008), pp. 104-117 (p. 107).

[48] Twain's view of morality was greatly influenced by his reading of the Anglo-Irish historian W. E. H. Lecky's *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne* (1869). See Walter Blair, *Mark Twain and Huck Finn, op. cit.*, p. 135.

encounters in the course of his adventures. Now, *Huckleberry Finn* is not a 'baggy monster' in the manner of Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1850), or Anthony Trollope's *The Way We Live Now* (1875), or George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* (1876) with their intertwining plots and lengthy lists of characters. Instead, Twain chose an older and simpler mode of exposition, the picaresque journey, albeit one leavened by a Dickensian theatricality. The Mississippi is a thoroughfare in motion that functions as an acceptable substitute for the highway that is customarily tramped by the picaresque protagonist. However, though the Mississippi functions as an undertone of picaresque freedom, it can also be seen as a metonym for *antebellum* America as a whole.[49] Moreover, a nineteenth-century bookish child could not help but recollect Christian's journey in John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1648) when reading of the trials and tribulations of Huck Finn on his waterborne flight.[50]

Beverley Lyon Clark has concluded that the greatness of *Huckleberry Finn* 'has had to be constructed — and was constructed at the expense of *Tom Sawyer* and, I would argue, at the expense of a fundamental respect for childhood and children's literature.'[51] Indeed, there are doubtless some who would regard *Tom Sawyer* as too elementary in exposition to warrant serious critical attention, though it is clearly the foundation upon which *Huckleberry Finn* has been constructed. *Huckleberry Finn* is a sterling example of a crossover novel. Lionel Trilling believed that 'One can read it at ten and then annually ever after, and each year find that it is as fresh as the year before, that it has changed only in becoming somewhat larger.'[52] It is now held by many to be a children's novel, and this is indubitably true. However, it is no less an

[49] Robert Alter, *Rogue's Progress: Studies in the Picaresque Novel* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964), pp. 117-121. Alter believes that *Huckleberry Finn* is much superior to the traditional picaresque novel in its use of language, which reflects Huck's moral position.
[50] Ruth K. MacDonald has argued that *The Pilgrim's Progress* was much more influential in the United States than it ever was in England. See *Christian's Children: The Influence of John Bunyan's The Pilgrim's Progress on American Children's Literature* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), *passim*.
[51] Beverly Lyon Clark, *Kiddie Lit: The Cultural Construction of Children's Literature in America* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), p. 101.
[52] Lionel Trilling, 'Huckleberry Finn', in *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society, op. cit.*, pp. 104-117 (p. 106).

adult's novel. *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* are alternative versions of a similar story, the common features of which are feigned death, escape to an island, nocturnal journeys, ghost watches, redemptive figures, and eventual triumph. Nevertheless, *Huckleberry Finn* is something more than a mere sequel. T. S. Eliot was in no doubt as to the place of *Huckleberry Finn* in the Anglospheric literary pantheon:

> Twain, at least in *Huckleberry Finn*, reveals himself to be one of those writers of whom there are not a great many in any literature, who have discovered a new way of writing, valid not only for themselves, but for others. I should place him, in this respect, even with Dryden and Swift, as one of those rare writers who have brought their language up to date.[53]

It may be significant that Eliot compares Twain with English authors, and not Anglo-Americans. It may also be significant that he does not compare Twain with any African-American authors. *Huckleberry Finn* is perhaps unique in the extent of its appeal, for distinguished literary critics, novelists of note, and general readers of all ages continue to hold it in high regard. Twain's linguistic idiosyncrasies, and extensive use of vernacular, places him in the tradition espoused by William Wordsworth.[54]

It is Huck, a roguish anti-hero at the bottom of the social scale, who narrates the story, but he does so with a cynicism, a mock naivety, that would seem to belie his years. (In comparison, Jim Hawkins is rather straight-laced, narrating his own story in a much more restrained manner.) Huck makes the authorship of its prequel, *Tom Sawyer*, transparently plain in the opening paragraph of *Huckleberry Finn.* Twain's sequel moves beyond the boy's own

[53] T. S. Eliot, 'American Literature and the American Language', *Washington University Studies in Language and Literature*, 23 (1953), pp. 16-17.
[54] Twain and Wordsworth both disliked what they saw as overly refined literary language. Wordsworth's influence on American writers should not be underestimated. See *Wordsworth in American Literary Culture*, ed. by Joel Pace and Matthew Scott (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), *passim*. See also Tony Tanner, 'A System of Reduction', in *The Reign of Wonder: Naivety and Reality in American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 104-126.

tradition, but it does spring directly from *Tom Sawyer*, which is aimed mainly at the juvenile reader.[55] Twain introduces Huck in Chapter Six of *Tom Sawyer*:

> Tom came upon the juvenile pariah of the village, Huckleberry Finn, son of the town drunkard. Huckleberry was cordially hated and dreaded by all mothers of the town, because he was idle, and lawless, and vulgar and bad — and because all their children admired him so, and delighted in his forbidden society, and wished they dared to be like him.[56]

Huck is an unabashed anti-hero who presents a comedic challenge to a calcified community. Respectable folks abhor Huck for his godlessness, shameless lying, inveterate insolence, petty criminality, habitual use of foul language, precocious consumption of tobacco products, poor personal hygiene, lack of parental influence, persistent absenteeism from Sunday school, and brazen ignorance of the principles and processes by which sentences are constructed in the English language.[57] Yet, it is these self-same traits that endear such a miscreant to all of the children with whom he interacts in the story.

Twain, like so many other writers, was an incorrigible intertextualist. He digested what he had read, and then rewrote it in his own inimical style. As he explained: 'an author may often fall into the error of copying in part a character already drawn by another, a character which impressed itself upon his memory from some book…We mortals can't create, we can

[55] In a letter to his publisher, William D. Howells, Twain declared *Tom Sawyer* to be '*not* a boy's book at all. It will only be read by adults. It is only written for adults.' However, a few months later Howells advised him 'I think you ought to treat it explicitly *as* a boy's story. Grownups will enjoy it just as much if you do.' On reflection, Twain concurred, and adopted this approach in his Preface to *Tom Sawyer*, saying that it was 'intended mainly for the entertainment of boys and girls', while adding that it should not be 'shunned by men and women on that account'. See *Mark Twain-Howells Letters*: *The Correspondence of Samuel L. Clemens and William D. Howells, 1872-1910*, ed. by Henry Nash Smith and William M. Gibson, 2 vols (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960), I, pp. 87-124.

[56] Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, op. cit.*, p. 50.

[57] Twain believed children's speech to be an important literary element, and one that merited careful critical analysis. See Mary Jane Hurst, *The Voice of the Child in American Literature: Linguistic Approaches to Fictional Child Language* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), p. 25. Shelley Fisher Fishkin discusses African-American speech patterns as reflected in Huck's dialogue. See *Was Huck Black? Mark Twain and African-American Voices* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), *passim.*

only copy.'[58] Indeed, nowhere does Twain reveal his originality as forcefully as in the ideas that he borrowed. Moreover, the influence was by no means one way.

Rudyard Kipling, another explicitly white writer, much admired Twain's work, and presented his own allegory of America through the experiences of a boy on a voyage in *Captains Courageous* (1896).[59] Huck Finn's raft voyage down the Mississippi provides a template for Harvey Cheyne's experiences on a New England fishing vessel in the North Atlantic. Both novels demonstrate the getting of wisdom as Huck and Harvey become cognisant of the true nature of the society in which they live, which is one obsessed with money and status. Both novels, though accessible to naïve readers, can be comprehended by sophisticated ones only. Twain's influence can also be seen in Kipling's *Kim* (1901), which sees a boy who sets out on a journey that, though fraught with danger, promotes his psychological and moral maturation. As we will see in the following chapter, *Huckleberry Finn* served to some extent as a flexible template for *Kim*. It is surely no coincidence that Kim, in common with Huck, bears an Irish surname, in this case, O'Hara, and that he lives a similarly vagabond existence. Twain influenced, and was influenced by, the literary Anglosphere to such an extent that his work cannot be fully comprehended outside of an Anglospheric context. Kipling's English reserve and Twain's American amenability are more closely related than is immediately obvious. The connection is that they *demonstrate* morality to their readers as opposed to merely preaching it.

Huck, and his boon companions, delight in the supernatural. Tom Sawyer, in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, is prone to a fit of melancholy just before he runs off to the graveyard with Huck in the middle of the night:

> Tom lay awake and waited, in restless impatience…This was despair…The ticking of the clock began to bring itself to notice. Old beams began to crack mysteriously. The

[58] Twain, *Oregonian*, 9 August, 1895, p. 11.
[59] Andrew Lycett, *Rudyard Kipling* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2015), pp. 243-244.

> stairs creaked faintly. Next, the ghastly ticking of a death-watch in the wall at the bed's head made Tom shudder — it meant that somebody's days were numbered.[60]

In the same novel Huck recounts that:

> they say a stray dog come howling around Johnny Miller's house, 'bout midnight, as much as two weeks ago; and a whippoorwill came in and lit on the bannisters and sung, the very same evening, and there ain't nobody dead there yet.[61]

Similarly, in *Huckleberry Finn*, Huck evinces a morbid preoccupation with death and dissolution:

> The stars was shining, and the leaves rustled in the woods ever so mournful; and I heard an owl, away off, who-whooing about somebody that was dead, and a whippoorwill, and a dog crying about somebody that was going to die'.[62]

Owls have long been considered birds of ill-omen. Edmund Spenser refers in *The Faerie Queene* (1590) to 'The ill-fast owle, deaths dreadful messenger'.[63] The influence of Joel Chandler Harris can also be discerned in *Huckleberry Finn*, particularly in the use of dialect,[64] though Twain certainly had first-hand knowledge of such dialect.[65] The eponymous storyteller of *Uncle Remus, his Songs and Sayings* (1880) informs a little boy that 'Squinch-owl holler eve'y time he see a witch, en w'en ya hear de dog howlin' in de middle er de night'.[66] Twain explains in his Preface to *Tom Sawyer* that 'The odd superstitions touched upon were all

[60] Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, op. cit.,* p. 69.
[61] *Ibid.,* p. 73.
[62] Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, op. cit.,* p. 51.
[63] Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (London, Penguin, 2003), p. 370.
[64] Twain influenced Chandler in turn. See Edward J. Piacentino, 'Another Chapter in the Literary Relationship of Mark Twain and Joel Chandler Harris', *Mississippi Quarterly*, 38 (1984), pp.73-85.
[65] Terrell Dempsey, *Searching for Jim: Slavery in Sam Clemens' World* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2003), pp. 160-161.
[66] Joel Chandler Harris, *The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), p. 93. Toni Morrison has discussed the manner in which negative behavioural traits are commonly conflated with sub-Saharan African ethnicity. See *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1992), *passim*. On a similar note, see also Elaine Mensch and Harry Mensch, *Black, White, and Huckleberry Finn: Re-imagining the American Dream* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000), p. 109.

prevalent among children and slaves in the West at the period of this story'.[67] Frederick Douglass ventured in his partly autobiographical *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845) that the owl was a potent symbol to the chattel slave:

> The hearth is desolate. The children, the unconscious children, who once sang and danced in her presence, are gone…Instead of the voices of her children, she hears by day the moans of the dove and by night the screams of the hideous owl. All is gloom.[68]

In *Huckleberry Finn*, Jim is also comically constant in his superstitious beliefs.[69] He claims to be in league with witches, and wears a homemade talisman:[70]

> Jim always kept that five-center piece around his neck with a string and said it was a charm the devil give to him with his own hands and told him that he could cure anybody with it and fetch witches whenever he wanted to, just by saying something to it; but he never told what it was he said to it.[71]

Slaves commonly wore silver coins as a protection against voodoo. Harriet Beecher Stowe describes a similar episode in *Uncle Tom's Cabin; or, Life Among the Lowly* (1852) when Legree asks Sambo what it is he has in his possession:[72]

---

[67] Mark Twain, 'Preface', in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, op. cit.*, p. 10.
[68] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 58. See also Paul Giles, 'Narrative Reversals and Power Exchanges: Frederick Douglass and British Culture', in *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2002), pp. 22-46.
[69] Jonathan Arac, *Huckleberry Finn as Idol and Target: The Function of Criticism in Our Time* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1997), p. 23. Arac has protested the 'hypercanonization' of *Huckleberry Finn*. He argues that the evaluations of Ernest Hemingway and Lionel Trilling have led to a misreading of the text.
[70] Dorothy M. Broderick, *The Image of the Black in Children's Fiction* (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1973), pp. 13-18.
[71] Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, op. cit.*, p. 55.
[72] Stowe was yet another author who stretched the parameters of intertextuality. Subsequent to the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* Stowe felt compelled to make public that she had indeed borrowed from an autobiographical work by Josiah Henson, whose *The Life of Josiah Henson, Formerly a Slave, Now an Inhabitant of Canada, as Narrated by Himself* (1849) contains a number of similar narrative elements, and is also set in the same geographical locations. See Robin W. Winks, *Autobiography of Josiah Henson: An Inspiration for Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom* (New York: Dover, 1969), *passim*. Richard Wright's response to Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Children* (1938), is similarly a fictional work based on autobiographical accounts. Correlatively, there is the apocryphal, albeit widely believed, story of how Abraham Lincoln greeted Harriet Beecher Stowe on Thanksgiving Day, 1862, with the words, 'So you're the little woman who made this great war!' See Daniel R. Vollaro, 'Lincoln, Stowe, and the "Little Woman/Great War" Story: The Making, and Breaking, of a Great American Anecdote', *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, 30 (2009), pp. 18-34.

> ‘Somethin’ that niggers gets from witches. Keeps ’em from feelin’ when theys flogged. He had it tied round his neck, with a black string.’
>
> Legree, like most godless and cruel men, was superstitious. He took the paper, and opened it uneasily.
>
> There dropped out of it a silver dollar…[73]

The potency of such talismanic artefacts was derived from the commonly held belief that they had been touched by supernatural beings such as witches or the Devil. Harold Bloom explains in his ‘Introduction’ to Pamela Loos’ edition of *Huck Finn* (1990) that:

> Huck’s superstitions (and Jim’s, and Twain’s, for that matter) are not at all African-American, but go back to the Thracian, shamanistic origins of Western folk-religion, to what can be regarded as the Orphic traditions. As befits an American Orphic, Huck’s Orphism bears a marked difference from the ancient variety. The emphasis is not upon the survival of an occult Self, but upon survival plain and simple, upon the continuity of the Self.[74]

These superstitions became part of Western popular culture, including that of African-Americans, and Huck’s subscription to them is more like Barthes’ intertextuality than conventional allusion. However, *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* amply evidence that irrational thought is by no means unique to African-Americans.[75] Indeed, both novels purport to show that white children shared the beliefs of black slaves.[76] He thereby sets up a dialogue between institutionalised Christianity, a Levantine doctrine with a European veneer that is satirised throughout, and the life-affirming, though equally ludicrous, superstitions that

---

Colleen G. Boggs notes that in ‘Writing for *The Nation* in 1868, John William De Forest coined the phrase “The Great American Novel” in reference to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.’ *Transnationalism and American Literature: Literary Translation, 1773-1892* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 127.

[73] Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 379.

[74] Harold Bloom, ‘Introduction’, in Pamela Loos, *Huck Finn* (New York: Chelsea House, 2004), p. 2.

[75] Twain undermined received opinion even as he played to it. See Andrew Levy, *Huck Finn’s America: Mark Twain and the Era that Shaped His Masterpiece* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), pp. 8-9. See also Richard S. Lowry, ‘Mark Twain and Whiteness’, in *A Companion to Mark Twain*, ed. by Peter Messent and Louis J. Budd (Oxford: Blackwell, 2015), pp. 53-65, and Richard Locke, ‘Mark Twain’s Free Spirits and Slaves’, in *Critical Children: The Use of Childhood in Ten Great Novels* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 50-86.

[76] Daniel Hoffman, ‘Black Magic — and White — in *Huckleberry Finn*’, in *Form and Fable in American Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 317-342.

emanate from sub-Saharan Africa.[77] *Huckleberry Finn* questions the centrality of religion to white communal self-definition, perhaps implying a revision in orthodoxy is required in order to create a wholly relevant tradition.

Huck appears to have little trouble in conflating the fundamental tenets of Christian teaching with the ethics of enlightened self-interest. In *Huckleberry Finn*, he exhibits some degree of scepticism regarding Miss Watson's Sunday-School instruction. Twain perhaps alludes to Scripture when Huck describes being admonished for a petty infraction: 'Then Miss Watson she took me in the closet and prayed, but nothing come of it.'[78] Twain himself was by no means convinced as to the efficacy of prayer: 'When we pray, when we beg, when we implore, does He listen? There is not a single authentic instance of it in human history.'[79] However, the Biblical symbolism in *Huckleberry Finn* is transparent.

The Widow Douglas, Huck Finn's foster mother, may perhaps desire that her delinquent ward should identify her with the Pharaoh's daughter who adopted the infant Moses:

> After supper she got out her book and learned me about Moses and the Bulrushers; and I was in a sweat to find out all about him; but by-and-by she let it out that Moses had been dead a considerable long time; so then I didn't care no more about him; because I don't take no stock in dead people…Here she was bothering about Moses, which was no kin to her, and no use to anybody…[80]

Huck's apparently casual reference to the second book of the Pentateuch ironically adumbrates a fundamental theme of his tale. Moses' manumission of the Israelites can be likened to the

[77] African diasporic religious belief and ceremony often combined Christianity with some element of West African tradition. This merging of disparate belief systems is known as religious syncretism. See David W. Wills, 'The Central Themes of American Religious History: Pluralism, Puritanism, and the Encounter of Black and White', in *African-American Religion: Interpretive Essays in History and Culture*, ed. by Timothy E. Fulop and Albert J. Raboteau (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp 7-20. See also Albert J. Raboteau, 'Religious Life in the Slave Community', in *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp. 211-288.
[78] 'But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.' *The Bible: Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha. The Gospel According to Matthew* 6:6. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, op. cit.*, p. 60.
[79] Quoted in Charles Neider, 'Reflections on Religion', *Hudson Review*, 16 (1963), pp. 340-362 (pp. 344-345).
[80] Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, op. cit.,* p. 50.

assistance rendered by Huck to Jim in fleeing the slave owner.[81] Huck has the role of a latter-day Moses foisted upon him. Twain's contemporary readers would doubtless have been aware of the biblical parallels.[82] Indeed, among literary allusions in Twain's work, Edward Wagenknecht has listed more from the Bible than from any other source, with Shakespeare next in order.[83] The King James Bible, though obviously not of Anglospheric origin, has long been assimilated into the Anglospheric literary consciousness. Both boys, Huck and Moses, are wards of women of the slave-owning class who are considerably higher up the social scale than themselves. Moses and Huck both use the river as an avenue of escape.[84] Moses is cast adrift on the Nile in a basket that is made out of bulrushes, and Huck takes to a raft to make good his escape on the arterial, serpentine waterway of the Mississippi, 'the Abraham of rivers' as Herman Melville is wont to call it in his own series of riverine escapades, *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerades* (1857).[85] Huck is perhaps being portrayed as a redemptive figure.

Huck's riparian adventures are indeed the substance of the story, but Harold Beaver believes it possible to read *Huckleberry Finn* as a runaway slave narrative, albeit one surveyed from a distinctively white viewpoint.[86] Jim is a black man living in a white man's world.[87] He

[81] William G. Collins, 'Huckleberry Finn: A Mississippi Moses', in *Journal of Narrative Technique*, 5 (1975), pp. 86-104.
[82] *The Bible: Authorized King James Version with Apocrypha. The Book of Exodus* 2:3-10. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).
[83] Edward Wagenknecht, *Mark Twain: The Man and His Work* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971), pp. 35-43. One should bear in mind that Colonial America formed part of the British Empire for a not inconsiderable period of time, and that the relationship between English literature and British people of American domicile can be traced back to the days of Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516) and Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1610). See Jeffrey Knapp, *An Empire Nowhere: England, America, and Literature from* Utopia *to* The Tempest (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), *passim.*
[84] Steven Mintz, *Huck's Raft: A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 184. See also Peter Schmidt, 'The "Raftsmen's Passage", Huck's Crisis of Whiteness, and *Huckleberry Finn* in United States' Literary History', *Arizona Quarterly*, 59 (2003), pp. 35-58.
[85] Herman Melville, *The Confidence-Man: His Masquerades* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 100.
[86] Harold Beaver, 'Run, Nigger, Run: *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* as a Fugitive Slave Narrative', *Journal of American Studies*, 8 (1974), pp. 339-361. Julius Lester complained that 'we are now to believe that an old white lady would free a black slave suspected of murdering a white child. White people might want to believe such fairy tales about themselves, but blacks know better.' See 'Morality and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*', *Mark Twain Journal*, 22 (1984), pp. 43-46 (p. 45).
[87] Walter Johnson, 'The Empire of the White Man's Will', in *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2017), pp. 176-208.

affects compliance and servility in order to shield himself from harm, having doubtless learned from experience to merge into the background by simply holding up a mirror to white preconceptions.[88] David L. Smith has noted that 'In assessing Jim's character, we should keep in mind that forethought, creativity, and shrewdness are qualities that racial discourse…denies to the Negro. In that sense, Jim's darkie performance…subverts the fundamental definition of darkie.'[89] Jim behaviour is representative of a slave; it is *not* representative of a man of sub-Saharan African ethnicity.[90] Uncle Tom's heroic pacifism is perhaps the best known literary example of this.[91] However, there is a significant African-British influence in the development of the African-American slave narrative. *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African, Written by Himself* (1789) instigated the conventions reproduced in so many of the nineteenth-century factual and fictional slave narratives; 'an engraved frontispiece, a claim of authorship, testimonials, an epigraph, the narrative proper, and documentary evidence.'[92] Black literary culture is founded on ethnic identity.

If *Huckleberry Finn* can be viewed as a runaway slave narrative, and that is certainly moot, it is a decidedly odd one. Anyway, as we have seen, Twain was influenced by eclectic sources in his presentation of otherworldly notions. However, he does not appear to have been

[88] Richard Yarborough, 'Strategies of Black Characterization in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Early Afro-American Novel', in *New Essays on Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ed. by Eric J. Sundquist, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 45-84 (p. 51).
[89] David L. Smith, 'Huck, Jim, and American Racial Discourse', in *Satire or Evasion? : Black Perspectives on "Huckleberry Finn"*, ed. by James S. Leonard, Thomas A. Tenney, and Thadious M. Davis (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1991), pp. 103-120 (pp. 109-110).
[90] John W. Roberts, *From Trickster to Badman: The Black Folk Hero in Slavery and Freedom* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), p. 176. See also Lawrence W. Levine, 'The Slave as Hero', in *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 386-396.
[91] Bertram Wyatt-Brown, 'The Mask of Obedience: Male Slave Psychology in the Old South', *American Historical Review*, 93 (1988), pp. 1228-1252. In addition, Ruth Frankenberg has noted that one can 'learn much about whiteness from asking how white people depict people of color'. See 'The Mirage of an Unmarked Whiteness', in *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*, ed. by Birgit Brander Rasmussen (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2001), pp. 72-96 (p. 79).
[92] Vincent Carretta, 'Olaudah Equiano: African-British abolitionist and founder of the African-American slave narrative', in *The Cambridge Companion to the African-American Slave Narrative*, ed. by Audrey Fisch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 44-60 (p. 44).

greatly influenced by African-American writers, for his buffoonish stage Negro, Jim, has no recognisable avatar in any slave narrative of the *antebellum* period. Jim is indeed a caricature, but so too is Huck. Irish-Americans are evidently less sensitive to wilful misrepresentation than their African-American counterparts.

Twain would appear to have been influenced to some degree by Miguel de Cervantes' *El ingenioso hidalgo don Quijote de la Mancha* (published in two volumes, 1605 and 1615), commonly known in the Anglosphere as *Don Quixote*. Allusions to Cervantes' novel, which occupies a canonical space in the realm of Western literature, reverberate throughout *Huckleberry Finn*.[93] Don Quixote belongs to that that class of foreign literature that has become culturally embedded in the collective literary consciousness of the Anglosphere, such as the King James Bible, *Arabian Nights*, and fairy tales such as Hans Christian Andersen's 'The Emperor's New Clothes' (1837) and 'The Ugly Duckling' (1843).

In *Huckleberry Finn*, Tom informs his youthful associates that Spanish merchants and wealthy Arabs would be camping in Cave Hollow, and that they would be accompanied by elephants, camels, and mules. The boys visit the site only to find a Sunday-school picnic, and are put to flight by a Sunday-school teacher. Tom's quixotic raid is based not on reality, but rather on his reading of *Don Quixote* and *Arabian Nights*, which were works widely known, if not widely read, in the Anglosphere. Huck protests about the abortive raid, but Tom lets it be known that any lack of success was due to Huck's intellectual limitations:

> He said if I warn't so ignorant, but had read a book called "Don Quixote", I would know without asking. He said it was all done by enchantment. He said there was hundreds of soldiers here, and elephants and treasure, and so on, but we had enemies which he called magicians, and they had turned the whole thing into an infant Sunday school, just out of spite. I said, all right, then the thing for us to do was to go for the magicians. Tom Sawyer said I was a numskull.[94]

[93] Graham Greene reprised *Don Quixote* for his own age when he wrote *Monsignor Quixote* (1982). Greene's pastiche is eminently more readable than the work from which it takes inspiration.
[94] Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, op. cit.,* p. 62.

This passage is indeed redolent of an episode in *Don Quixote* in which the eponymous hero explains to his long-suffering retainer, Sancho Panza, after they have been driven off by enraged shepherds, that his mortal enemy, an illusionist, has transformed an army of knights into a flock of sheep:

> 'Did I not tell you, Don Quixote, sir, to turn back, because what you were attacking were not armies, but flocks of sheep?'
>
> 'This just shows how my enemy, that scoundrel of an enchanter, can transform things and make them disappear. I would have you know, Sancho, that it is very easy for such people to make us look like whatever they want, and this villain who is persecuting me, envious of the glory he saw I was about to conquer in this battle, turned the armies of enemy forces into flocks of sheep.'[95]

Don Quixote believes unquestioningly all that he has read about chivalry and sorcery, but he is otherwise in full command of his mental faculties. Tom Sawyer suffers from a similar form of cognitive dissonance. He is intelligent, but is unable, or perhaps simply unwilling, to distinguish between fact and fiction. Sancho Panza and Huck Finn are not as well-educated as their companions, but they are much more down to earth. Don Quixote and Tom Sawyer are demonstrably foolish, but the greatest fools are sometimes more clever than those who mock them. In this respect, both Cervantes and Twain teach lessons of no little import to their readers, which is that educated fools can be much more foolish than uneducated fools, and that the comedic and the tragic may reflect one another.[96]

Cervantes' influence on Twain can perhaps be seen in an earlier work, *The Innocents Abroad, or The New Pilgrims' Progress* (1869), which is a record of Twain's travels in Western

[95] Miguel de Cervantes, *Don Quixote* (London: Penguin, 2003), p. 143.
[96] Edward L. Galligan, 'True Comedians and False: *Don Quixote* and *Huckleberry Finn*', *Swanee Review*, 86 (1978), pp. 66-83.

Europe and the Middle East in 1867. (*Huckleberry Finn* is an account of a rogue's progress.) Twain recounts the bizarre behaviour of his associates on their pilgrimage:

> The pilgrims read "Nomadic Life" and keep themselves in a constant state of Quixotic readiness. They have their hands on their pistols all the time, and every now and then, when you least expect it, they snatch them out and take aim at Bedouins who are not visible, and draw their knives and make savage passes at other Bedouins who do not exist.[97]

Twain's opinion of Cervantes grew steadily. In the course of writing *Huckleberry Finn* he compared Sir Walter Scot unfavourably with Cervantes, and made the following statement of literary conviction in *Life on the Mississippi* (1883):

> A curious exemplification of the power of a single book for good or harm is shown in the effects wrought by 'Don Quixote' and those wrought by 'Ivanhoe'. The first swept the world's admiration for the mediaeval chivalry-silliness out of existence; and the other restored it. As far as our south is concerned, the good work done by Cervantes is pretty nearly a dead letter, so effectually has Scott's pernicious influence undermined it.[98]

Twain tries to counteract this 'mediaeval chivalry-silliness' that supposedly bedevilled the American South. It is thus notable that there is some similarity between episodes of *Don Quixote* and those of *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. Don Quixote, confined to his home, becomes a voracious reader of chivalric romances, and feels compelled to adopt the role of itinerant knight, rescue princesses who are held captive, and redress any amount of wrongs. Indeed, just as Don Quixote is a man built by books, so too is Tom Sawyer a boy built by books.[99]

---

[97] Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 406. Twain is referring to William C. Grimes' *Nomadic Life in Palestine*, which is an imaginary work mentioned earlier in the text. In fact, Twain is poking fun at William Cowper Prime's fanciful travelogue, *Tent Life in the Holy Land* (1857), which was widely read at the time.

[98] Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* (London: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 329.

[99] Kenneth Kidd, 'Bad Boys and Men of Culture', in *Making American Boys: Boyology and the Feral Tale* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), pp. 49-86. See also John Hinz, 'Huck and Pluck: "Bad" Boys in American Fiction', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, 51 (1952), pp. 120-129.

The appeal of Cervantes' story consists in the contrast between the pragmatic and sober persona of Sancho Panza, and the frivolous romanticism of Don Quixote.[100] Generally, Sancho Panza manages to dissuade his master from the perpetration of foolish acts, despite Don Quixote's insistence that he must behave in the manner of the fictional characters he so much admires. Thus, Tom Sawyer is Don Quixote to Huck Finn's Sancho Panza. Tom's condescending manner toward Huck, and Huck's long-suffering tolerance of Tom's literary-inspired delusions, mirrors Cervantes' accounts of the dialogues between Sancho Panza and Don Quixote. As Olin Harris Moore has it:

> The humor of the romance lies in the contrast between the matter of fact philosophy of Sancho Panza and the romantic spirit of Don Quixote. Usually Sancho Panza tries to dissuade his companion from acts of folly. The hero replies that things must be done according to the books.
>
> For the man Don Quixote Mark Twain substitutes the boy Tom Sawyer…Twain makes of Huck a sort of Sancho Panza, who attempts by commonplace reasoning to put a damper on the fancies of his Quixotic playmate.[101]

Yet, romantic illusions are infectious. Those all-American boys, Tom Sawyer and Joe Harper, confess in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* that they 'would rather be outlaws for a year in Sherwood Forest than President of the United States'.[102] Tom and Joe revel in the roles of Robin Hood, Little John, and the Sheriff of Nottingham, and Tom insists that they must play by the book.[103] Robin Hood and his Merry Men were also much admired by the youthful Samuel L. Clemens.[104] In addition, Tom and Joe enjoy pretending to be pirates. Ironically,

---

[100] P. G. Wodehouse revisited this theme of wise servant and unwise master when he wrote of the feather-brained Bertie Wooster, and his sagacious valet, Jeeves, in a series of novels that ran from 1915 till 1974.
[101] Olin Harris Moore, 'Mark Twain and Don Quixote' in *Publications of the Modern Library Association*, 37 (1922), pp. 324-346 (p. 327). Yet, Arturo Serrano-Plaja has questioned how much influence Cervantes actually had on Twain. 'The fact is that references to Don Quixote, or to Cervantes, even in what is obvious imitation, are few and far between in Twain's work. In the biography, *Young Sam Clemens* (1942), written by Mark Twain's son, Cyril Clemens, Cervantes is given no special importance in the literary terrain occupied by his father.' See *Magical Realism in Cervantes: Don Quixote as seen through Tom Sawyer and The Idiot*, trans. by Robert S. Rudder (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), pp. 23-24.
[102] Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, op. cit.*, p. 68.
[103] Stephen Percy, *Robin Hood and his Merry Foresters* (London: Joseph Cundall, 1845), *passim.*
[104] Howard G. Baetzhold, *Mark Twain and John Bull: The British Connection*, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

however, Tom and Huck have a real-life adventure, and really do discover hidden treasure. In other words, Tom's dreams come true. Tom derives all these assumed characters and boyish dreams from 'his favourite literature'.[105] He is never actually caught by the reader in the act of reading a book, but he is patently a voracious reader whose naivety matches that of Don Quixote. Cervantes undermined the chivalric code in Spain by simply poking fun at it; it was a stratagem that led many people to question what had hitherto been received opinion. Twain appears to have taken the same course regarding the legal, religious, moral, and social codes of *antebellum* America.

Nevertheless, there is no evidence whatsoever that Twain consciously modelled Tom and Huck on Don Quixote and Sancho Panza. *Don Quixote* is presented as a translated history, which is artfully self-referential, and its comedic appeal is limited. In addition, the protagonists are men. *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* are reliant on burlesque and parody, and the protagonists are boys. While there are interesting similarities between the stories, there are also significant differences, which is perhaps necessarily the case with intertextuality.

As mentioned earlier, Edward Wagenknecht has revealed that allusions to Shakespeare in Twain's novels are second only to the Bible. Shakespeare's plays were widely read, and performed, in nineteenth-century America. Twain developed an interest in theatre in his early years, and was particularly interested in the plays of Shakespeare. He attended a number of Shakespearean performances, and was particularly taken by a performance of *Richard III*. Indeed, he later took inspiration from this play when he created the ludicrous swordfight in

[105] Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, op. cit.*, p. 95.

*Huckleberry Finn*. Twain was later to embrace the Baconian heresy, but that did nothing to diminish his high opinion of the plays and sonnets.[106]

Twain took intertextuality to the extreme when he plagiarised verbatim sixteen consecutive pages of Sir George C. Greenwood's *The Shakespeare Problem Restated* (1908) in his *Is Shakespeare Dead?* (1909). Greenwood was furious, and threatened legal action. Twain was compelled to insert an erratum sheet after the copyright notice that read: 'Chapter VIII, "Shakespeare as a Lawyer", is taken from *The Shakespeare Problem Restated* by Sir George C. Greenwood.'[107] Twain explained to his friends that, though it was Greenwood who had actually written the chapter, he nevertheless regarded it as all his own work. Huck Finn himself could not have dissembled more shamelessly.

In *Huckleberry Finn*, the Duke and the King, a pair of workshy mountebanks with a command of sententious humbug equal to, if not indeed surpassing, that of Huck Finn in full flow, decide to perform passages from Shakespeare in the hope of improving their financial position: 'The first good town we come to, we'll hire a hall and do the sword-fight in *Richard III* and the balcony scene in *Romeo and Juliet*.'[108] *Richard III* (1591), perhaps because of the sword fight, was one of the most popular plays of American touring companies in the nineteenth century.[109]

The Duke and the King appear to be psychologically unmoored in their brazen moral turpitude. There is a psychological condition known as *folie à deux* in which two individuals contribute to a joint madness. It is as if each man becomes half of a single madman, as if this

[106] This is the argument that Francis Bacon was the author of the works allegedly misattributed to William Shakespeare. Twain's views on this subject are discussed at some length by James Shapiro in *Contested Will: Who Wrote Shakespeare?* (London: Faber and Faber, 2010), pp. 131-160.
[107] *Ibid.*, p. 38.
[108] Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, op. cit.*, p. 190.
[109] Frances Teague, *Shakespeare and the American Popular Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 20.

joint lunacy merges into some sort of closed circular system in which the excesses of one are instrumental in begetting the yet greater excesses of the other. Each man makes madness somehow acceptable to the other, makes it possible, even desirable, and the conflation of identities created by this mirrored madness acts as an agent of their inevitable downfall. It is this madcap will to self-enrichment by illicit means that dissolves their noetic faculties. Indeed, the essential nature of their disparate relationship is one of an endless circling of a moth around the very same naked flame that must inevitably consume it. However, Tom and Huck, whose juvenile japes border on the felonious, are perhaps not so very different.

Twain recalled in his autobiographical *Life on the Mississippi* that: 'a couple of young Englishmen came to the town and sojourned a while; and one day they got themselves up in cheap royal finery and did the *Richard III* swordfight with maniac energy and prodigious powwow, in the presence of the village boys.'[110] Tom and Huck discuss *Richard III* in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*:

> 'Like that old hump-backed Richard.'
> 'Richard? What's his other name?'
> 'He didn't have any other name. Kings don't have any but a given name.'[111]

The sword-fight in *Richard III* is the climax of Shakespeare's tragedy. Richard III and Henry, Earl of Richmond close with one another in mortal combat, and the King is slain. Richmond, or Henry, Earl of Richmond, is then proclaimed King Henry VII.

In *Huckleberry Finn*, Twain parodies *Hamlet* (1603, 1604, 1623), *Macbeth* (1606), and *Richard III*. The Duke strikes a thespian pose that is a burlesque on his own conceit, and presents a conflation of quoted and misquoted well-known lines of Shakespeare. These lines in effect signal Twain's willingness to have his characters adapt and paraphrase throughout

[110] Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, *op. cit.*, p. 356.
[111] Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, op. cit.*, p. 160.

*Huckleberry Finn*; these are extended allusions, albeit of an oppositional nature.[112] However, the comedy of the Duke's mishmash of Shakespearean allusions and references to some extent depends upon the reader having knowledge of these plays.[113] Yet, a naïve reader, though perhaps not grasping the allusions, would nevertheless be entertained by the banter.

The Duke and the King's travesty of the balcony scene from *Romeo and Juliet* (1595) is very much of its time. The Duke plays the role of Romeo, and the King that of Juliet, who is a thirteen-year-old girl. However, the King observes that his bald pate and white beard preclude him from playing the role of a young girl, but the Duke assures him:

> No, don't you worry — these country jakes won't ever think of that. Besides, you know, you'll be in costume, and that makes all the difference in the world; Juliet's in a balcony, enjoying the moonlight…and she's got on her night-gown and her ruffled night-cap.[114]

This may not be as mindless as it would initially appear. Dixon Wecter has noted that at this time in the American Midwest, as indeed in Shakespeare's own day, no woman could appear on the stage; all female roles were played by men. In 1842, the Thespian Society of Hannibal, which was Twain's hometown, disbanded because those actors who played female roles had 'too large beards to perform well'.[115] Interestingly, the plot of *Romeo and Juliet* is presaged, albeit partly, in an earlier chapter. The feud between the Grangerford and Shepherdson families is similar to that waged between the families of Montague and Capulet. In addition, the clandestine romantic relationship between Harney Shepherdson and Sophie Grangerford bears

[112] An allusion of opposition can be singularly abstruse, for its employment can bring to a text a level of complexity that renders it difficult to notice and interpret. Reference and referent merge to form something different from either. See Allan H. Pasco, *Allusion: A Literary Graft* (Charlottesville, Virginia: Rockwood Press, 2002), p. 98.
[113] Alexis de Tocqueville, in *Democracy in America* (1835-1840), wrote that the works of Shakespeare could be found 'in the recesses of the forests of the New World. There is hardly a pioneer's hut that does not contain a few odd volumes of Shakespeare. I remember that I read the feudal drama of *Henry V* for the first time in a log cabin.' *Democracy in America*, trans. by George Lawrence, ed. by J. P. Mayer (London: Fontana, 1994), p. 544.
[114] Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, op. cit.*, p. 191.
[115] Dixon Wecter, *Sam Clemens of Hannibal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), p. 186.

some resemblance to that between Romeo Montague and Juliet Capulet. Twain would appear to be signalling to his readers, though what it is he wishes to signal is moot. However, the King and the Duke's dramatic rigmarole can certainly be read as a comedic underscoring of the chivalric code of honour espoused by Scott.

In *Huckleberry Finn*, *Romeo and Juliet* is transformed into a Wild West vendetta; the mediaeval is transformed into the modern. Such an oppositional allusion depends for effect on its extension and regularity. The reader must bear in mind both the lessons of the pattern of meaning to which Twain alludes, and the distortions that occur in his own text, which could be viewed as a conduit metaphor.[116] Twain employs the totemic status of Shakespeare among his targeted readership to convey, and to affirm, his literary values, which reflected his own contrariness. As we have seen, the text of *Huckleberry Finn* does contain an underlying esoteric literariness.

Shakespeare played a role in shaping American culture, but American culture also shaped Shakespeare.[117] Indeed, Shakespeare's plays were often performed in ways that were idiosyncratically American, and Twain was certainly an idiosyncratic American himself.[118] However, many of the actors who played leading roles in Shakespearean productions in metropolitan America were British-trained. American schoolchildren recited, and often committed to memory, speeches from Shakespeare's plays, which inevitably led to parodies

[116] Literary language may be used as a conduit to convey implicit moral concepts from writer to reader. See M. J. Reddy, 'The Conduit Metaphor: A Case of Frame Conflict in our Language about Language', in *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. by Andrew Ortony (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 284-310.
[117] Michael D. Bristol, *Shakespeare's America, America's Shakespeare* (London: Routledge, 2015), *passim*.
[118] The idea that Shakespeare created a specifically American experience was articulated by Ralph Waldo Emerson, who described him as 'the father of the man in America'. See 'Shakespeare; or, the Poet', in *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. by Brooks Atkinson (New York: Modern Library, 2000), pp. 287-306 (p. 303).

and lampoons. America's favourite Shakespearian burlesque, however, is surely that which is to be found in Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*.[119]

In *Huckleberry Finn*, Huck's alarm upon learning that he is not alone on what he had hitherto assumed to be a deserted island is at first glance inspired by Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), when Crusoe discovers a footprint on the beach, which disconcerts him greatly. Huck discovers a camp fire, and this causes equal alarm:

> I clipped along, and all of a sudden I bounded right on to the ashes of a camp fire that was still smoking.
>
> My heart jumped up amongst my lungs. I never waited for to look further, but uncocked my gun and went sneaking back on my tip-toes as fast as ever I could. Every now and then I stopped a second, amongst the thick leaves, and listened; but my breath came so hard I couldn't hear nothing else.[120]

There is also some similarity to Jim Hawkins' discovery of Ben Gunn in *Treasure Island* when Jim is terrified by the sudden and strange appearance of the maroon. However, in *Huckleberry Finn* it is the adult, Jim, who takes fright on seeing the boy, Huck, who had previously faked his own death. Jim thinks that Huck is a ghost:

> He bounced up and stared at me wild. Then he drops down on his knees, and puts his hands together and says:
>
> 'Doan hurt me — don't! I hain't ever done no harm to a ghos'. I awluz liked dead people, en done all I could for 'em. You go en git in de river agin, whah you b'longs, en doan' do nuffin to Ole Jim, 'at 'uz awluz yo' fren'.'[121]

Twain's rendering of Nonstandard Negro English is doubtless intended to amuse.[122] However, *Huckleberry Finn* also evokes *Robinson Crusoe* insofar as Twain has a protagonist bond with

[119] Alden T. Vaughan and Virginia Mason Vaughan, 'Making Shakespeare American', in *Shakespeare in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp.35-70.
[120] Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, op. cit.,* p. 92.
[121] *Ibid.,* p. 94.
[122] This type of speech is sometimes referred to as Ebonics, Black English, or African-American Vernacular English. See Lisa J. Green, *African-American English: A Linguistic Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), *passim*. Interestingly, Beatrix Potter, that quintessentially English writer, mimicked

a person of exotic ethnicity, a bonding which may have been perceived as improper by some contemporary readers.[123] Huck seems to see it as his business to point out the farcicalities of society's various shibboleths, though he at no time rails against them. He may regard the morality of the age as little more than the enfeebled heir of religiose principle, but he indubitably knows the difference between right and wrong, even though he commonly chooses to ignore it. Huck's illumination of life's little ironies are, implied or otherwise, neither affected nor cynical.

Twain made a number of disparaging remarks about the literary output of Scott, bemoaning the 'Sir Walter disease', and propagating the belief that his books had done much to nurture a reactionary collective frame of mind in the American South. He catalogues his objections in *Life on the Mississippi* (1883):

> Then comes Sir Walter Scott with his enchantments…with the sillinesses and emptynesses, sham grandeurs, sham gauds, and sham chivalries of a brainless and worthless long-vanished society…in our South they flourish pretty forcefully still…There the genuine and wholesome civilization of the nineteenth century is seriously commingled with the Walter Scott Middle-Age sham civilization, and so you have practical common sense, progressive ideas, and progressive works, mixed up with the duel, the inflated speech, and the *jejune* romanticism of an absurd past that is dead and out of charity ought to be buried.[124]

However, Henry James, writing twenty years earlier, claimed that Scott's influence was already much diminished, and was continuing to wane: 'Sir Walter's reputation is indeed the inevitable lot of great writers. He has submitted to the somewhat attenuating ordeal of classification; he has become a standard author.'[125] For James, then, in contrast to Twain, there was no longer

---

nineteenth-century African-American linguistic traits when she wrote *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902). She borrowed such words as Cotton-tail, Puddle-duck, and lippity from Joel Chandler Harris' compilations of Negro folktales. Potter provided some illustrations for a British edition of Harris' 'Brer Rabbit' stories. See Linda Lear, *Beatrix Potter: The Extraordinary Life of a Victorian Genius* (London: Penguin, 2008), p. 131.

[123] Dennis Todd, 'Mastering the savage: conversion in *Robinson Crusoe*', in *Defoe's America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 32-75.

[124] Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, *op. cit.*, p. 327.

[125] Unsigned Review of Nassau Senior's *Essays on Fiction*, *North American Review*, 98 (1864), reprinted in *Walter Scott: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by John O. Hayden (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970), pp. 427-431 (p. 427).

an unbridled adulation of Scott's work in America, for though James admired Scott's novels he believed that they had limited influence on contemporary literature. Moreover, James considered that the debasement of Southern literary culture was due to the lasting, and profoundly deleterious, effects of slavery in society, and to 'the intimate presence of the negro'.[126] Nevertheless, Scott did indeed influence Southern culture, but it was more a case of seed falling on fertile ground.[127]

However, Twain did admit to an admiration of *Quentin Durward* (1823), and consulted it intermittently while researching and writing his own playful rejoinder to Scott's mock medievalism and pseudoarchaic English language, *The Prince and the Pauper: A Tale for Young People of All Ages* (1881).[128]

Howard G. Baetzhold has suggested that Twain may be making an allusion to a character in *Quentin Durward* when he describes the stealthy undertaker in *Huckleberry Finn*:[129] 'He never spoke…and done it all with nods, and signs with his hands…He was the softest, glidingest, stealthiest man I ever see; and there warn't no more smile to him than there is to a ham.'[130] Scott does indeed describe Oliver le Dain, a sycophantic, manipulative barber and advisor to Louis IX, in a similar manner, likening the French court sycophant to a cat:

> a little, pale, meagre man…His visage was penetrating and quick, although he endeavoured to banish such expression from his features by keeping his eyes fixed on the ground, while, with the steady and quiet pace of a cat, he seemed modestly rather to glide than to walk through the apartment.[131]

Huck notes the feline characteristics of the undertaker: 'he slid around in his black gloves with his softy soothering ways, putting on the last touches, and getting people and things all ship-

[126] Henry James, 'Richmond', in *The American Scene* (London: Penguin, 1994), pp. 172-185 (p. 176).
[127] W. J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Vintage, 1991), p. 65.
[128] *Huckleberry Finn* was certainly popular with readers, but contemporary critics much preferred *The Prince and the Pauper*, as did Twain's own family. See Bellamy, *Mark Twain as a Literary Artist*, *op. cit*., p. 337.
[129] Howard G. Baetzhold, *Mark Twain and John Bull: The British Connection*, *op. cit.,* p. 95.
[130] Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *op. cit.,* p. 246.
[131] Sir Walter Scott, *Quentin Durward*, ed. by J. H. Alexander and G. A. M. Wood (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), p. 222.

shape and comfortable, and making no more sound than a cat.'[132] The comparable use of anthropomorphism is, in the above instance at least, a testimony to Scott's influence. Twain's literary recycling highlights the process of imitation.

Huck tells us in *Huckleberry Finn* that 'One time Tom sent a boy to run about town with a blazing stick, which he called a slogan (which was a sign for the Gang to get together)'.[133] Tom appears to have read, or otherwise known about, Scott's 'The Lady of the Lake' (1810), in which the rebel clan chief, Roderick Dhu, fashions and sets alight the fiery cross and hands it to his retainer, Malise, to run through the hills with it and summon the clan to war. 'The Cross of Fire should take its road'[134] avers Roderick Dhu, and the clansmen rally to their Chief:

> And fast the faithful clan around him drew,
> What time the warning note was keenly wound,
> What time aloft their kindred banner flew,
> While clamorous war-pipes yelled the gathering sound,
> And while the Fiery Cross glanced like a meteor, round.[135]

A slogan is defined in Scott's 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel' (1805): 'The slogan, or war-cry of this powerful family, was, "A Home! A Home!" It was anciently placed in an escroll above the crest.'[136] The bookish Tom Sawyer has clearly confused 'slogan' with 'Fiery Cross'.[137] It would appear that confusion is Tom's default state of mind.

---

[132] Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, op. cit.,* p. 245.
[133] *Ibid.,* p. 62.
[134] Sir Walter Scott, 'The Lady of the Lake' (Canto Third), in *Scott's Poetical Works*, ed. by Andrew Lang (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1898), pp. 385-518 (p. 430).
[135] *Ibid.,* p. 429.
[136] Sir Walter Scott, 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel' (Canto Fifth), op. cit., pp. 61-150, (p. 121).
[137] Thomas Dixon, in his inflammatory novel, *The Clansman: A Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (1905), may have taken the idea of a burning cross from one or both of these sources. A film based on this book, *The Birth of a Nation*, was released in February, 1915. The first recorded instance of the Ku Klux Klan burning a cross is in November, 1915, at Stone Mountain, Georgia. This is perhaps an example of life imitating art. See Wyn Craig Wade, *The Fiery Cross: The Ku Klux Klan in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 144.

Scott's influence can again be discerned when Huck holds forth on the nature of monarchy. The allusion is obscure, but no less pertinent for so being. Huck believes that kings simply 'set around' unless engaged in martial activities of one kind or another, and 'other times they just lazy around; or go hawking — just hawking and sp—.'[138] Huck is then interrupted by a noise offstage and fails to complete the play on words. However, in Scott's *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822), a novel to which Twain also refers in his study notes for *The Prince and the Pauper*, there is a markedly similar incident. The rake, Dalgarno, seeking to assuage the understandable apprehension of Nelly Christie, the ship-chandler's wife with whom he has eloped, promises that they will subsequently 'ride a-hunting and hawking with a lord, instead of waiting upon an old ship-chandler, who could do nothing but hawk and spit.'[139] Twain may be making the point, though somewhat indirectly, that kings and commoners are not dissimilar in their personal habits.

Twain's aversion to Scott's romanticism leads him to employ irony when he has Huck recount the symbolic episode of the foundered steamboat 'the *Walter Scott*?'[140] Huck's reading of 'a lot of books' salvaged from that steamboat is the source of his first conversation with Jim about the nature of monarchy.[141] Huck is not a monarchist, but he does possess an advantage over Jim, who is a member of a subject people. Huck's comments on heritable rank could be construed as an oblique condemnation on the iniquitous social system that then prevailed. However, *contra* Twain's fanciful suppositions, there is no record of Scott having supported

[138] *Ibid.*, p. 133.
[139] *The Fortunes of Nigel* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), p. 390.
[140] Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, op. cit.*, p. 129. In fact, a paddle-steamer called *Sir Walter Scott* foundered near New Orleans in 1838. See William M. Lytle and Forrest R. Holdcamper, *Merchant Steam Vessels of the United States, 1807-1868* (Warwick, Rhode Island: Steamship Historical Society of America, 1952), p. 305.
[141] *Ibid.*, p.132.

slavery. The foundered steamboat, 'the *Walter Scott'*, is perhaps meant to be symbolic of the Confederacy.[142]

Huck's response to Aunt Sally's concern over his fictional steamboat accident, 'Good gracious! Anybody hurt?' is simply 'No'm. Killed a nigger', to which Aunt Sally responds, 'Well, it's lucky; because sometimes people do get hurt.'[143] Now, some readers may infer that Huck and Aunt Sally believe 'niggers' and 'people' to be fundamentally different life forms, though others may infer this exchange to be of a distinctly Swiftian nature. Twain's target is the hegemonic culture that has shaped mores and folkways.[144] White identity was premised to some degree on the Negro's otherness. There was an emotional, and consequently social, distance between African-Americans and Anglo-Americans of which both parties were always conscious, and such distance rendered familiarity difficult.[145] Twain's throwaway line about an African-American not being anybody is a jest, though he is doubtless well aware that there is many a true word spoken in jest.[146] Twain's skill in imitating, and thereby mocking, a callous indifference toward the welfare of an enslaved people served him well as a rhetorical device, thereby enabling him to signal some measure of thematic irony to his more perceptive readers.[147] Twain was a deft ironist, but like many ironists his meaning is often obscure, and as a consequence misread. Huck's unabashed whiteness, his racial identity, is made manifest in a

[142] Lyle H. Kendall, 'The *Walter Scott* Episode in Huckleberry Finn', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 16 (1961), pp. 279-281.
[143] Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, op. cit.,* p. 130.
[144] Jocelyn Chadwick-Joshua, 'Mark Twain and the Fires of Controversy: Say the N-Word and Out You Go: Teaching "Huck Finn" and Other Racially-Sensitive Literature', in *The Critical Response to Mark Twain's* Huckleberry Finn, ed. by Laurie Champion (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1991), pp. 228-237 (p. 229).
[145] Rosemarie Klaus, 'Mark Twain und die Negerfrage — *Huckleberry Finn*', *Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik*, 5 (1957), pp. 166-181, (p. 167).
[146] Lowry, Richard S., *Littery Man: Mark Twain and Modern Authorship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 19.
[147] Richard K. Barksdale, 'History, Slavery, and Thematic Irony in *Huckleberry Finn*', in *Satire or Evasion? Black Perspectives on "Huckleberry Finn"*, ed. by James S. Leonard, Thomas A. Tenney, and Thadious M. Davis (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1992), pp. 49-61. Huck Finn may himself be descended from slaves, for Ireland was a major source of slaves in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. See Don Jordan and Michael Walsh, 'Foreigners in their own land', in *White Cargo: The Forgotten History of Britain's White Slaves in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2008), pp. 137-154.

casual remark that indicates how irrelevant Negroes are to Anglo-American society.[148] As a corollary, William H. MacNeill, has argued that ethnically heterogeneous 'civilised societies have nearly always subordinated some human groups to others of a different ethnic background, thereby creating a laminated polyethnic structure.'[149] Indeed, the fissiparous impact of ethnic consciousness is a pervasive fault line in every heterogeneous society.

Ralph Ellison, in a review of Gunnar Myrdals's *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1944), inquires whether 'American Negroes are simply the creation of white men, or have they at least helped to create themselves out of what they have found around them?'[150] Perhaps Twain tacitly invites his overwhelmingly white readership to ponder a similar question.[151] Ellison further claims that 'the black man was a co-creator of the language that Mark Twain raised to the level of literary eloquence.'[152] Nigger Jim, the avuncular enslaved Negro, and Wigger Huck,[153] the harum-scarum Irish-American waif, do indeed share linguistic commonalities that place them beyond the pale of respectable society.[154] Yet, though Huck and Jim share a common tongue, they do not appear to speak the same

[148] Thomas F. Gossett, 'The Status of the Negro: 1865-1915', in *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 253-286.
[149] William H. MacNeill, *Polyethnicity and National Unity in World History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. 6-7.
[150] Ralph Ellison, '*An American Dilemma*: A Review', in *Shadow and Act* (New York: Random House, 1953), pp. 290-302 (p. 301). See also Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Pantheon, 1962), *passim*.
[151] Jocelyn Chadwick-Joshua, 'Reading Race: A Dilemma', in *The Jim Dilemma: Reading Race in Huckleberry Finn* (Jackson: University of Mississippi, 1998), pp. 3-28 (p. 4).
[152] Ralph Ellison, 'What America Would Be Like Without Blacks', in *Going to the Territory* (New York: Random House, 1987), pp. 104-112. Huck may evidence some African-American linguistic traits, but his own ethnicity is supposedly made manifest by his turn of speech. Twain, in a letter to his then publisher, Charles L. Webster, dated May 7, 1884, reflected that Huck Finn's 'mouth is a trifle more Irishy than necessary'. See *Mark Twain's Letters to Publishers, 1867-1894*, ed. by Hamlin Hill (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 174.
[153] John Strausbaugh has observed that some black cultural nationalists have embraced Huck Finn as a 'white nigger'. See *Black Like You: Blackface, Whiteface, Insult, and Imitation in American Popular Culture* (New York: Penguin, 2007), p. 314. See also Nelson George, 'White Negroes' (1988), in *Black on White: Black Writers on What It Means to Be White*, ed. by David R. Roediger (New York: Schocken, 1998), pp. 225-232.
[154] Norman Mailer, 'The White Negro', in *Mind of an Outlaw: Selected Essays* (New York: Random House, 2012), pp. 41-65. See also Ernest F. Dunn, 'The Black-Southern White Dialect Controversy: Who did what to whom?', in *Black English*, ed. by Deborah Sears Harrison and Tom Trabasso (Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1976), pp. 105-122.

language. However, it is Twain's ability to imbricate orality into written form that transforms *Huckleberry Finn* into something much more than a mere entertainment.[155]

In the nineteenth century, there was a trite denigration of Negroes as subhuman, apelike, and primitive.[156] Yet, in British periodicals of the time the Irish were also depicted as evincing simian phenotypical characteristics and behavioural patterns,[157] though there is no evidence that American writers ever referred to the Irish as monkeys or apes.[158] Such a simianisation of the Negro, and of Irish indigents, marked them as so wholly *other* as to almost constitute a separate species. In America, Irish workers were often called 'nigger Irish', and African-American workers were sometimes referred to as 'smoked Irish'.[159] The Irish-American community, in their determination to align themselves with mainstream white society, treated blacks with the utmost contempt and brutality.[160] Twain, in his choice of an Irish-American boy as a protagonist, evidenced an awareness of the changing face of whiteness in nineteenth-century America.[161] *Huckleberry Finn* could perhaps be read as an Irish-American novel.[162] As we have seen, Twain was not just an Anglo-American writer; he was a white writer. Huck Finn

[155] Cedric J. Robinson, 'Ventriloquizing Blackness: Eugene O'Neil and Irish-American Racial Performance', in *The Black and Green Atlantic: Cross-Currents of the African and Irish Diasporas* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), pp. 49-63 (p. 51).
[156] For examples of British and Anglo-American comparisons of Irish and African racial inferiority, see Dale T. Knobel. *Paddy and the Republic: Ethnicity and Nationality in Antebellum America* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1986), *passim*.
[157] L. Perry Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (New Abbott: Davis & Charles, 1971), *passim*. See also J. J. Lee, 'Interpreting Irish America', in *Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States*, ed. by Marion Casey (New York: New York University Press, 2006), pp. 1-62 (p. 25).
[158] Richard Jensen, '"No Irish Need Apply": A Myth of Victimization', *Journal of Social History*, 36 (2002), pp. 405-429 (p. 426).
[159] James R. Barrett, *The Irish Way: Becoming American in the Multiethnic City* (New York: Penguin, 2013), p. 4.
[160] Strausbaugh, *Black Like You: Blackface, Whiteface, Insult, and Imitation in American Popular Culture*, op. cit., p. 92.
[161] Catherine M. Eagan, 'Still "Black" and "Proud": Irish America and the Racial Politics of Hibernophilia', in *The Irish in Us: Irishness, Performativity, and Popular Culture* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 20-63.
[162] Catherine M. Eagan, '"White", if "Not Quite": Irish Whiteness in the Nineteenth-Century Irish-American Novel', *Éire-Ireland: A Journal of Irish Studies*, 36 (2001), pp. 66-81.

may well be poor white trash,[163] but he is surely hewn from the crooked timber of Twain's own humanity.[164]

As we have seen, Jim and Huck have much more in common than is immediately obvious to the casual reader.[165] Twain uses Jim and Huck's relationship to illustrate the analogy between racial debasement and class degradation.[166] Jim is the Other; Huck is the otherly white.[167] However, Huck is no metaphorical piccaninny-in-whiteface, though his liberal use of Negro vernacular could perhaps suggest otherwise.[168] He is indeed white, but the reader is made aware that whiteness comes in many guises.[169] One may infer that ethnic affiliation is located along a continuum, and that such an affiliation is capable of accommodating some form of fictive element. It cannot be gainsaid, however, that ethnic identity is commonly given, not chosen. Twain illustrates how racial identifiers form and fuel stereotypes. It would appear that all too many readers are blind to the satirical nature of *Huckleberry Finn*.[170] Twain may be inviting his readers to ponder what it is that makes *whiteness* white, for just as he used his

[163] Annalee Newitz and Matthey Wray, 'What is "White Trash"? Stereotypes and Economic Conditions of Poor Whites in the United States', in *Whiteness: A Critical Reader*, ed. by Mike Hill (New York: New York University Press, 1997), pp. 170-184 (p. 172).
[164] Shelley Fisher Fishkin, *Lighting Out for the Territory: Reflections on Mark Twain and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 21-23.
[165] Ronald Takaki has noted that 'The Irish too came to the United States from what was basically a pre-modern agricultural society. Throughout the nineteenth century, they displayed social pathologies strikingly similar to those of the contemporary American black ghetto: poverty, disease, violence, family breakdown, drug addiction (alcohol in those days) and, perhaps not surprisingly, virtually no intermarriage.' See *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston, Massachusetts: Little, Brown, 1993), p. 154.
[166] Bill V. Mullen, 'Teaching U.S. Working Class Literature; or, Firing the Canon', in *Class and the Making of American Literature Created Unequal* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 265-280 (p. 270).
[167] Gunn, Giles, 'The American Writer and the Formation of an American Mind: Literature, Culture, and Their Relation to Ultimate Values', in *The Interpretation of Otherness: Literature, Religion, and the American Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 126-174 (pp. 146-148).
[168] James P. Byrne, 'The Genesis of Whiteface in Nineteenth-Century American Popular Culture', *Melus*, 29 (2004), pp. 133-149.
[169] Richard Dyer has argued that the 'category of whiteness is unclear and unstable, yet this has proved its strength'. See 'The Matter of Whiteness', in *White* (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 1-40 (p. 20).
[170] Northrop Frye delineates classical satire and its purpose, showing that 'satire deals less with people…as such than with mental attitudes. Pedants, bigots, cranks, parvenus, virtuosi, enthusiasts, rapacious and incompetent professional men of all kinds, are handled in terms of their occupational approach to life as distinct from their social behaviour…satire…presents people as mouthpieces for the ideas they represent.' See *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (New York: Atheneum, 1966), p. 309.

writing to wear a variety of masks, and to play with different voices, his literary manifestations of whiteface and blackface to some degree reflect one another.[171]

Susan Manning has presented an incisive analysis of Twain's virulent criticism of Scott in general, and *Ivanhoe* in particular.[172] She claims that Twain's misrepresentation of Scott's view of chivalry is born of a misreading of *Ivanhoe*. Moreover, given that Twain did not lack critical acumen, Manning's argument continues, this misprision of Scott can only be explained by Twain's anxiety regarding the manifold social, political, and cultural divisions in American society. This is by no means *argumentum ad hominem*, but rather an attempt to understand Twain's motives. Indeed, his claim that 'Sir Walter had so large a hand in making Southern character, as it existed before the war, that he is in great measure responsible for the war' does little more than evidence his proclivity for gross exaggeration.[173] In addition, he seems to be giving voice to the cultural anxiety of nineteenth-century American writers overall.[174] Twain evidently possessed a facility to form a misperception of the past in the public mind, albeit by means of hyperbole, and a trading on his literary reputation. It does not do to accept Twain's pronouncements at face value. Denizens of the Southern States did not think the way that they did simply because they read the wrong sort of novels.[175] Extraliterary cultural formations did

[171] Cary Wall, 'The Boomerang of Slavery: The Child, The Aristocrat, and Hidden White Identity in *Huckleberry Finn*', *Southern Studies*, 21 (1982), pp. 208-221.
[172] Susan Manning, 'Did Mark Twain Bring down the Temple on Scott's Shoulders', in *Special Relationship: Anglo-American Affinities and Antagonisms, 1854-1936*, ed. by Janet Beer and Bridget Bennett (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 8-27.
[173] Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, op. cit., p. 272.
[174] Robert Weisbuch notes that 'Twain seems almost anachronistic in his struggle with the British. His attacks on Scott in *Huckleberry Finn* and elsewhere broaden into an Emersonian worry with an America that refuses its fresh self for Old World pretensions.' *Atlantic Double-Cross: American Literature and British Influence in the Age of Emerson* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 32.
[175] Twain served with a Confederate militia, the Marion Rangers, for a fortnight in 1861, and then deserted. He subsequently sought sanctuary in California for the duration of hostilities. His military record, such as it was, did not endear him to citizens of the former Confederate States, and well he knew it, for throughout his life he continued to receive poison-pen letters denouncing him as a coward. In 1879, Twain delivered a hagiographic speech at a banquet held in honour of Ulysses S. Grant, who had served as Commanding General of the Union Army during the war. He also joined in the singing of Union Army marching songs. The newspaper reports of this event were not well received by Confederate Army veterans. Twain's antagonism toward the Southern States may well have stemmed from a guilty conscience. Neil Schmitz discusses Twain's rejection of Southern identity, and invention of a Yankee persona, the burnished mask of a manufactured Self, in 'Mark Twain, Traitor', *Arizona Quarterly*, 63 (2007), pp. 25-67.

indeed shape literary discourse, though one does feel compelled to question how well literary and critical practise reflects, or indeed prescribes, popular opinion or belief.

As we have earlier seen, Twain contrasted the supposedly pernicious influence of *Ivanhoe* with that of *Don Quixote*, praising the role of the latter in the promotion of a reform in ways of social thinking, but it is not entirely clear why Twain singled out *Ivanhoe* among Scott's works, for his other novels, and his poetry, gained a wide readership in North America, and not just in the Southern States. Indeed, despite Twain's assertion to the contrary, there is no verifiable evidence that Scott's influence was any greater in the Southern States than elsewhere in North America in terms of either book sales or reviews in newspapers and journals.[176] Perhaps *Waverley* (1814) would have provided a more representative indicator of the mentality and mores of the *antebellum* Southern States. Twain may well have been ambivalent toward Scott's literary works, but he was demonstrably inspired by them.[177]

Charles Dickens' *American Notes for General Circulation* (1842), a travelogue, was the cause of no little consternation among his American readership. Dickens poked fun, albeit of a distinctly caustic nature, at America, Americans, and Americanisms. Dickens castigated whiteness in America, but blackness in America was discussed more sympathetically. Twain may have seen the joke; a good many of his fellow countrymen did not.[178] Dickens roundly condemns slavery in a penultimate chapter, though he appears to have had nothing original to say on the subject,[179] for he possessed little more than second-hand knowledge of enslaved Negroes and their debased condition. Dickens' whiteness was of a distinctly literary nature.

[176] Ronald J. Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 164-169.
[177] Twain's views on Scott are discussed by Grace Warren Landram in 'Sir Walter Scott and his Literary Rivals in the Old South', *American Literature*, 2 (1931) pp. 256-276. The legitimacy of Twain's assertions are also discussed by G. Hamilton Orians in 'Walter Scott, Mark Twain, and the Civil War', *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, 60 (1941), pp. 342-359.
[178] Nicolas Mills, 'Charles Dickens and Mark Twain', in *American and English Fiction in the Nineteenth Century: An Anti-Genre Critique and Comparison* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), pp. 92-109.
[179] Dickens plagiarised verbatim a substantial part of his chapter on slavery from an abolitionist pamphlet authored by Theodore D. Weld. He also paraphrased a section of it. See Louise H. Johnson, 'The Source of the Chapter on Slavery in Dickens' *American Notes*', *American Literature*, 14 (1943), pp. 427-430.

Twain had a high opinion of Dickens' writing, though he had no great interest in the other major Victorians, with the notable exception of Robert Louis Stevenson, and perhaps Alfred, Lord Tennyson.[180] Indeed, Twain's influence can be seen in Stevenson's work. *Kidnapped* (1886) is perhaps similar to *Huckleberry Finn*, at least insofar as it is a picaresque tale of a boy's peregrination through his native land. Both works are part boy's own adventure story, part travelogue, part social satire, and part psychological study. However, Twain's brand of folksy humour is conspicuous by its absence.

Similar to Dickens, Twain's childhood experiences bordered on the melodramatic, though he escaped the traumas that were to form the basis of *Oliver Twist* (serialised 1837-1839; book form 1839), and *David Copperfield* (serialised 1849-1850; book form 1850). Twain himself was often called 'the American Dickens', which is hardly surprising given that Twain borrowed a number of characters and scenes from Dickens' novels.[181] A distinctly Dickensian influence can be seen in the theatricality of Twain's prose: the marriage of the grotesque and the ironical, and humour linked indivisibly with sadness, and bleak realism entwined with scathing satire. Dickens lampoons Elijah Pogram's *faux* Emersonian oratory in *The Life and Adventures of Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-44 in serial form, 1844 in book form), a novel that is set partly in the United States. Pogram's soliloquy on the nature of the true-born American is ludicrous:

> 'Our fellow-countryman is a model of a man, quite fresh from Natur's mould!' said Pogram, with enthusiasm…'He is a true-born child of this free hemisphere! Verdant as the mountains of our country; bright and flowing as our mineral Licks; unspiled by withering conventionalities as air our broad and boundless Perearers! Rough he may be. So air our Barrs. Wild he may be. So air our Buffalers. But he is a child of Natur',

[180] There was mutual admiration. 'Have you read *Huckleberry Finn*?' Stevenson inquired of J. A. Symonds in a letter of March 1885. 'It contains many excellent things; above all, the whole story of a healthy boy's dealings with his conscience, incredibly well done.' *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. by Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew, 8 vols (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), V, p. 80.
[181] Malcom Bradbury, *Dangerous Pilgrimages: Trans-Atlantic Mythologies and the Novel* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1995), p. 169. See also Christopher Gair, 'The "American Dickens": Mark Twain and Charles Dickens', in *A Companion to Mark Twain*, ed. by Peter Messent and Louis J. Budd (Oxford: Blackwell, 2015), pp.141-156 (p. 143).

> and a child of Freedom; and his boastful answer to the Despot and the Tyrant is, that his bright home is in the Settin Sun'.[182]

Twain read *Martin Chuzzlewit*, and doubtless learned from it.[183] There is indeed something of Elijah Pogram's buffoonery in Huck Finn's habits of speech, though leavened with a modicum of self-deprecation. For example: 'Jim said that bees won't sting idiots, but I didn't believe that, because I tried them lots of time myself and they wouldn't sting me.'[184] Huck's buffoonery is perhaps a nod and a wink to the perceptive reader.

Martin Chuzzlewit learns humility while tending to the fever-stricken Mark Tapley, who has stood by him loyally through the course of a life-threatening illness brought about by their ill-advised residence in the pestilential swampland in which Eden is situated. Martin is compelled to reflect, 'how was it that this man who had had so few advantages, was so much better than he who had had so many?'[185] He enters into a period of self-inquiry, asking of himself in what way they differed, and his notion of superiority based on an unearned class privilege melts away. Indeed, given his actions and utterances hitherto, it is perhaps a conversion of truly Damascene moment. Similarly, when Tom Sawyer suffers a gunshot wound, and is faithfully nursed by Jim, who refuses to desert him, Huck's acceptance of Jim as a human being, as opposed to a chattel slave, lends sense and meaning to their travails. Huck's whiteness does not blind him to Jim's virtues. The journey as a path to self-knowledge through any number of happenstances is a long-established literary tradition.

In *American Notes for General Circulation*, Dickens describes a dismal morass at the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi waterways. It was a ramshackle settlement called

[182] Charles Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 460.
[183] Howard G. Baetzhold, *Mark Twain and John Bull: The British Connection, op. cit.,* p. 305
[184] Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, op. cit.,* pp. 98.
[185] Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit, op. cit.,* p. 451.

Cairo,[186] though Dickens ironically names it Eden in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Huck and Jim set out for Cairo, Illinois, whence Jim would seek liberty. The Illinois Constitution of 1848 specifically banned slavery. In a fog, they pass Cairo by, Huck simply says, 'Jim was awful disappointed, but I said never mind, Cairo would be the next place, I reckoned…I begun to suspicion something. So did Jim.' Huck does not share Jim's despair at this event. Jim responds, 'Doan less' talk about it, Huck. Po' niggers can't have no luck.'[187] However, Jim's response is not simply one of fatalism, but a recognition that he has lacked agency throughout his life. Martin and Mark have a similar exchange in the course of their waterborne journey to Eden when Mark warns Martin against excessive optimism. 'Why, you know, sir…we must guard against being too sanguine… Even Eden, you know, ain't all built.' However, Martin has already intuited that all is not well, and responds angrily, 'don't mention Eden in the same breath as that place. Are you mad?'[188] Martin's place in society has granted him agency in life, though little good it does him. Like Huck, Mark's frame of mind blinkers him, and prevents him from fully empathising with his companion. Cheerfulness is not always the most apposite response to adversity.

Huck wrestles with his conscience, and his decision to assist Jim parallels that of Philip Pirrip, nicknamed Pip, in *Great Expectations* (1861), in which he lends assistance to Magwitch, a convicted criminal who has escaped custody.[189] Pip has been instructed in the moral code by an abrasive older sister, Georgiana Maria, who is perhaps comparable to Miss Watson, and in each book there is a collision with a steamboat on a river.[190]

[186] Charles Dickens, *American Notes for General Circulation* (London: Penguin Books, 2000), p. 190. Twain noted in *Life on the Mississippi* (1883) that Cairo had grown into a pleasant town with brick-built buildings since Dickens had visited it in 1842. See *Life on the Mississippi* (New York: Modern Library, 2007), p. 151.
[187] Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *op. cit.*, pp.
[188] Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*, *op. cit.*, p. 324.
[189] Irene Morra, 'The Spectre on the Stair: Intertextual Chains in *Great Expectations* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*', *Literary Imagination*, 17 (2015), pp. 71-94.
[190] J. M. Ridland, 'Huck, Pip, and Plot', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 20 (1965), pp. 286-290.

There is one commonly quoted passage in *Huckleberry Finn* that would appear to take 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 mosquitos 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…[191]

This account is redolent of an exchange 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…'[192]

Magwitch dips his hand into the water, while 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.' In the staging of a moment of reverie on the river, swathed in smoke and sky, both of these passages affirm a passion for friendship and liberty. Similarly, Twain's construction of a raft as a means of escape for Huck and Jim perhaps derives from this passage, with its celebratory account of freedom from societal constraints and the joy of liberty, however temporary.[193]

In *Huckleberry Finn*, Huck's drunken reprobate of a father scolds him for his starched clothes and his alleged assumption of airs above his place in the social hierarchy:

> 'Don't you give me none o' your lip,' says he. 'You've put on considerable many frills since I been away. I'll take you down a peg before I get done with you. You're

[191] Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *op. cit.*, pp. 124.
[192] Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 370.
[193] Philip V. Allingham, 'Patterns of Deception in *Huckleberry Finn* and *Great Expectations*', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 16 (1992), pp. 447-472.

> educated, too, they say; can read and write. You think you're better'n your father, now, don't you, because he can't? I'll take it out of you. Who told you you might meddle with such hifalut'n foolishness, hey? — who told you you could?'…I'll learn people to bring up a boy to put on airs over his own father and let onto be better'n what *he* is.'[194]

A close approximation to pap Finn's ranting may be found in Charles Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-1865), in which Jesse 'Gaffer' Hexam rebukes his aspirational son, Charley, on discovering that the boy has learned to read and write:[195]

> 'Let him never come within sight of my eyes, nor within reach of my arm,' he says. 'His own father ain't good enough for him. He disowns his own father. His own father, therefore, disowns him for ever and ever, as an unnat'ral young beggar…Now I see why them men yonder held aloof from me. They says to one another, "Here comes the man as ain't good enough for his own son"!'[196]

Twain seems to poke fun at pompous fathers in the manner of Dickens. Both authors used a form of humour that was never self-conscious. They do not point out to their readers that these overbearing buffoons are humorous. Instead, readers are invited to draw their own conclusions. These two paternal figures have fragile egos, and are laughable, but they also pose a physical threat to their offspring. Once again, the ingenuous and the disingenuous are indistinguishable in Twain's writing.

## Conclusion

We have seen that at the time Twain was writing the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural character of the Unites States was atavistically British. American nationality and white ethnicity were equated and conflated. Whiteness was a determinant of normality. Indeed, Winthrop D. Jordan claims that Anglo-Americans were already identifying themselves as 'whites' rather than

[194] Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70.
[195] Joseph H. Gardner, 'Gaffer Hexham and Huck Finn', *Modern Philology*, 66 (1968), pp. 155-156.
[196] Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 75-76.

'Englishmen' as early as 1680.[197] Such a rising use of whiteness to denote Anglo-American social identity had perforce an exclusionary aspect. However, Twain was writing at a time when the notion of whiteness was changing. There were demonstrably gradations of whiteness.[198] As Jay P. Dolan has it, 'Ellis Island whiteness' was coming to replace 'Plymouth Rock whiteness'.[199] It was a demographic phenomenon that would assist Huck Finn's Hibernian brethren to merge into mainstream White America.[200] The literary representation of whiteness functioned as a unifying device in an ethnogenic process that progressively imposed a common culture and identity on a white society of diverse origins.[201]

Twain can be seen to plunder the works of his literary predecessors with unabashed abandon, as though he has been granted unfettered access to the fancy-dress box stored in the house of literature's capacious attic. However, he does on occasion appear to utilise its contents with more enthusiasm than skill. Yet, the absence of references or allusions to African-American literature can perhaps be explained, though not excused, by Twain's whiteness. His intertextual references and allusions, though eclectic, are uniformly white.

The originality of *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* does not lie in the subject-matter, but rather in Twain's treatment of it. He entices those who are most well-read among his readership with abundant echoes of other writers' works, and creates layers of meaning in his stories by the inclusion of references and allusions that would seem to invite multiple readings. *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* are plainly crossover novels aimed at offering younger

---

[197] Winthrop D. Jordan, *The White Man's Burden: Historical Origins of Racism in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 52.
[198] Matthew Wray, 'Limning the Boundaries of Whiteness', in *Not Quite White: White Trash and the Boundaries of Whiteness* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2006), pp. 133-144.
[199] Jay P. Dolan, *The Irish Americans: A History* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008), p. 305.
[200] Thomas Sowell, 'The Irish', in *Ethnic America: A History* (New York: Basic, 1981), pp. 17-42. Wyndham Lewis, describing a mixed Anglo-Irish demonstration in London, wrote, 'I was never able to discover which were Irish and which were English, they looked to me exactly the same.' See *Paleface: The Philosophy of the Melting Pot* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1929), pp. 284-285. Luke Gibbons discusses the 'whiteness' of the Irish, and their lack of visible racial markers, in 'Race against Time: Racial Discourse and Irish History', *Oxford Literary Review*, 13 (1991), pp. 95-117.
[201] As Sir Arthur Keith characterised it: 'In Europe the stock has been broken up into local national breeds; in America the local breeds have been reunited.' *A New Theory of Human Evolution* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1968), p. 397.

readers a glimpse of maturity, while reminding older readers that immaturity may possess its own literary rewards.

The influence of British literary sources on the writing of *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* is extensive and irrefutable. I have made no attempt to list each and every British author who influenced Twain's writing of his hymns to boyhood, for such an enterprise would be vast in scope and ambition. Neither did I attempt to analyse his debt to the King James Bible, which would be a no less significant undertaking. Instead, I have illuminated the most salient Anglospheric influences to be found in his novel. Twain's novels have been revealed to be crowning examples of Anglospheric intertextuality, but that was to be expected, for Twain wrote for and about the Anglosphere. Olin Harris Moore noted,

> It will…come as a rude shock to many readers who have habitually fled to Mark Twain as a refuge from Europeanism to know that their favourite drew much of his inspiration for his most American books from European models; that he was in earnest when he declared, in a heated controversy, that 'there is not a single human characteristic which can be safely labelled as "American".'[202]

It is evidently the case that the greater part of the 'European' influence on Twain originated in the British Isles. Twain cannot therefore be easily pigeonholed as an all-American storyteller. His writing, even though covered in an aesthetically pleasing veneer of parochialism, reveals a wide-ranging study of *bonae litterae,* though he does not appear to have been well-versed in African-American literature. He was widely travelled, conversant in several languages, and a good deal more cosmopolitan in outlook than many of his fellow countrymen. Twain's novels are as much intergeneric as intertextual. *Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer* are akin to a literary echo chamber that reverberates with everything that Twain ever read. Indeed, as we have seen, his writing reflects an inherent propensity for the wrapping of inconvenient truths in airy persiflage. He does this not by debating whether the society he describes is fact or fiction, as

[202] Moore, *op., cit.,* p. 325.

Henry Fielding does in his *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* (1749), who is another good-*cum*-bad boy, but rather by making plain that he is dealing in paradox, irony, and burlesque. Perceptive readers who follow Twain as he weaves his way through a maze of childish nonsense may feel compelled to reflect upon the absurdity of the human condition, for every supposed truism, and indeed falsism, invoked by him is seen to be more rainbow-hued than black-and-white. What is sometimes seen as Twain's simplicity is really his duplicity.[203]

As should now be evident, one does not turn to Twain for any sort of intellectual architectonic based on a rigorously dispassionate analysis of the nature of *antebellum* American society and letters. Twain is a parodist. *Huckleberry Finn* is indeed a worthwhile entertainment, but it also contains an element of creative subversion that to some degree conceals an underlying seriousness of purpose. Robert Frost wrote that worthwhile poetry 'begins in delight and ends in wisdom'.[204] A similar definition is perhaps applicable to a certain kind of prose. Twain's cracker-barrel philosophy and folksy banter delight the reader, and his literary idiosyncrasies do much to assert his place in the cultural tradition, and ethnic consciousness, of America.

In *Huckleberry Finn*, Twain reflects on a set of ideas that arise from the concept of identity, the most salient of which is whiteness. *Huckleberry Finn* is an identifiable symbol of whiteness. It can be seen that whiteness is at its very foundation a visually defined quality. The lived experience of being white is constructed through the valuations given to visible phenotypic traits and sustained through, among other modes, literary manifestations. As a corollary, white literature has consistently presented commentary on the meaning of whiteness

[203] Leslie A. Fiedler, '*Huckleberry Finn*: Faust in the Eden of Childhood', in *Love and Death in the American Novel* (Champaign, Illinois: Dalkey Archive, 1960), pp. 553-594 (pp. 553-554).
[204] Robert Frost, 'The Figure a Poem Makes', in *Collected Poems, Prose, and Plays* (New York: Library of America, 1995), p. 777.

by questioning the relationship of what is seen to what is.[205] *Huckleberry Finn* offers a learning experience that assists in navigating the complex arrays of human experience. Huck learns in the course of his journey that personal experience is a better guide to conduct than received opinion.

However, it is a study of Twain's allusions and references that unlocks the meaning, and reveals the profundity, of *Huckleberry Finn*. Twain's *Weltanschauung* is of a much less American nature than some critics would allow. He was, as a close reading of *Huckleberry Finn* reveals, a self-aware member of the Anglosphere writing in the web of tradition. Twain was indeed a profoundly ethnocentric writer, an inveterate Anglophile, though one who deemed it politic, and indeed fiscally advantageous, to wrap himself in Old Glory. As we have seen, *Huckleberry Finn* is very much a white novel, albeit a singularly curious one.

[205] Jason E. Pierce, 'The Limits and Limitations of Whiteness', in *Making the White Man's West: Whiteness and the Creation of the American West* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2016), pp. 247-262.