

**Rereading Texts /
Rethinking Critical Presuppositions**

Essays in Honour of H. M. Daleski
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**"I MUST BE PUT SOMEWHERE, DEAR BOY":
DICKENS, TWAIN, AND NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIES**

Ten years ago I wrote an essay in which I argued that the essence of the English and the American novel, their opposition to each other, could be most readily detected in two novels by Charles Dickens and Mark Twain, *Great Expectations* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. I argued that the two youthful protagonists experienced quests and had goals that were deeply embedded in their national consciousness: "Pip wants to be a gentleman and Huck wants to break away from civilization altogether and light out for the territory.... While Pip fits comfortably into the European novel tradition of the young man from the provinces setting out for the city where he will acquire urban sophistication and life experience, Huck is a young provincial who sets out for the wilderness to cleanse himself of the corruption of society."¹ Several years later sections of the essay were reprinted in Harold Bloom's Chelsea series on Major Literary Characters, precisely those sections that emphatically drew attention to the national differences that I believed to be almost self-evident in the texts:

Pip and Huck are born into a tradition of literary orphans who, by virtue of their not being limited by the rules and constraints of parents and kin, are free to seek spiritual surrogate parents and moral codes. The rise of the novel is in part a response to the newly found freedom of such individuals in the wake of feudalism. In a new society of shifting social classes, the roving orphan or picaresque could create a past that suited his aspirations rather than his blood ties, and Dickens and Twain are both drawing on this literary heritage of either voluntary or involuntary disinheritance. *Great Expectations* begins with Pip at the gravesite of his parents where an ogre seems to rise from his father's tomb, an ogre who eventually becomes his spiritual parent. Huck, enslaved by a parent who abuses him, chooses to stage his own death, so that he can be free to follow his own course.

The loner, cut loose from family responsibilities, is an inherent part of the romance of America, of the myth of eternal fresh

organizational principles from categories that are arenas of debate in the fields from which we borrow them, such as history and political science, and in interdisciplinary study, sometimes the borrower becomes the archive, preserving the fossils that the source discipline has abandoned. There is no way out of this, of course, unless we organize literary study entirely around formal concepts, but then we would have no way of accounting for change and no way of relating the literary text to any worlds outside of it. Ignoring all forms of collective identity, whether they stem from history, politics, ethnicity, gender, class, or otherwise, in favor of the study of the individual author's textual production, simply turns an extreme form of individualism into a dogmatic literary system that never raises cultural questions about principles of selection.³ So I am not suggesting in this revision of my earlier study that the nation is no longer a useful concept for literary study, but rather that it is a more complex matter than my earlier method acknowledged, than our institutional and scholarly habits acknowledge.

Prevailing attitudes toward the study of nations, at their extreme, tend to be evolutionary and territorial on the one hand, and intentionalist and manipulative on the other. The former, exemplified by work of Ernest Renan, takes proto-national features, ethnicity for example, as primordial building materials, and then assumes that the psychological bond among members of the same "people" leads naturally to its expression in the state. For Walker Connor, the nation is a group of people who feel that they are ancestrally related, the largest group of kindred that can command a person's loyalty.⁴ Here ethnicity and nationality seem synonymous, implying that since most states are multi-national, attachment to one's nation may be at odds with attachment to one's state. By replacing nationality with ethnicity and state with nation, we arrive at the centrifugal movement that is tearing apart nations in a drama that we have been witnessing on the news with increasing intensity over the past several years, and in the drama of multiculturalism in the United States which I will discuss later.

If this model of the nation implies that it is a given entity of some sort, the competing model is that of the nation as socially constructed. The former relies heavily on the belief that cultural entities precede nationalist mobilization, while the latter insists on the inventedness of the nation, there being no necessary or natural connection among the components of protonationalism that lead to nationalism. Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" is central to this view, as is Eric Hobsbawm's idea of "invented communities."⁵ One might consider these two models as being conceived either from below or from above. The latter attributes a higher degree of agency to an elite that imagines and invents nations for highly manipulable masses, while the former envisions primordial bonds of the masses evolving into national expression. To put it in the extreme: there is a tendency to read the Nation rather restrictively, in Homi Bhabha's terms, "either as the ideological apparatus of state power, somewhat redefined by a hasty reading of Michel Foucault or Mikhail Bakhtin, or, in a more utopian

starts. Huck's predecessors are Natty Bumppo and Ishmael; his successors are numerous, from Isabel Archer and Milly Theale, orphan heiresses of the ages, Sister Carrie, and Jay Gatsby springing from "his Platonic conception of himself," to Frederick Henry walking off into the rain, Vag making his way across the U.S.A., the Lone Ranger, and Humphrey Bogart. Orphanhood in American literature is a clean slate, self-reliance, and often enchanted solitude that veers dangerously close to real loneliness. Huck's actual orphaning occurs long after his pretended death out of society and is revealed to him only at the book's end. Huck chose orphanhood for himself, and reality simply caught up with his wishes.

"While England has no shortage of orphans," I continued, contrasting the two literary cultures, "they are usually on a quest to find a place for themselves in society rather than arranging for a romantic exit."²

The rest falls into place, as I systematically compared each successive feature of the texts to line up tidily as either English or American. I was convinced that by this method I had been able to isolate the essential elements of two cultures.

In retrospect, I believe that I was resting on some questionable assumptions which at the time I accepted without reservation. The first concerns the concept of nation used as a model of collective identity and as a framework for literary categorization. I assumed that national identity could be summed up once and for all, across periods and social groups. The second concerns the notion of a representative work. Even if we grant that it is possible to make reasonable statements about national characteristics and to arrive at a representative work for any given national culture, I assumed that this could be achieved by looking at the central protagonist alone, in short by looking only at Pip and Huck. The third assumption concerns representativeness itself which I believed could be taken for granted as a heuristic device outside of ideological debate.

Let's begin with the nation. Literary study relies on temporal and spatial categorization—on periods and on places. We may require that our students take both English and American literature, for example, as we do at Tel Aviv University, and then wince at the casual way in which James Joyce, William Butler Yeats, Salman Rushdie, or Patrick White are offered as English writers along with Charles Dickens and George Eliot; or at the appropriation of Canadian literature into the imperial category of America; or at the absence of Caribbean writing because it threatens our traditional ordering of knowledge; or at the slippage between English and British, between English as nation, as language, as our modern-day *lingua franca*, as chameleonic language, shading into the languages that it has displaced and transformed. The point is that we derive our

such as F. O. Matthiessen, Richard Chase, Charles Feidelson, Henry Nash Smith, R. W. B. Lewis, Leslie Fiedler, and Sacvan Bercovitch.¹³ As Lawrence Buell has recently pointed out, "Since Matthiessen...the study of American literary emergence has revolved around assumptions about the coherence of the American canon formed in the image of such myths of American distinctiveness as Puritan inheritance or Adamic innocence, generic patterns like the jeremiad or the captivity or the romance considered as national artifacts, as well as linear succession stories like from Edwards to Emerson, Emerson to Whitman, Whitman to Stevens, etc."¹⁴ It is clear that such a hermetic model ignores the fact that almost no American writer formed his style chiefly from native sources. Unlike the English models I have cited, these American models stress the self-conscious constructedness of the American nation, the nation as invention.

There is a great deal more to be said about models of national literatures, but I would like to turn to my second assumption, the one concerning representativeness. At the time I justified my choice of texts by their unparalleled mass appeal in their respective societies, by their ability to draw vast audiences of both high- and low-brow readers, child and adult audiences. What I conveniently overlooked was the mass appeal of Dickens in American society as well, a fact that would not necessarily make him quintessentially American. In 1864 Henry Tuckerman observed that more copies of the English classics were bought and avidly read in America than in Britain. "The master minds of British literature," he wrote, "more directly and universally train and nurture the American than the English mind."¹⁵ To justify my choice further, I had also drawn on the similar history of reception of both of these authors, their parallel fate within the literary critical establishment where, with the "advent of modernism, each was found deficient for inclusion in a literary canon marked by formal elegance, and each has been zealously retrieved in the name of mythopoetic power."¹⁶ The implicit assumption here was that I approved of the retrieval, that somehow they had been restored to their rightful place. What I failed to examine were the literary models that served to place them within a new framework of their national literatures. Moreover, I built my case of national representativeness around one particular theme: the orphan who is free, or at least appears to be free to define himself, as the most apt vehicle for the representation of collective identity. While this theme affords many opportunities for the exploration of self-definition, it is not inherently more representative than domestic fiction or slave narratives or any number of other themes for the topic of national typology.¹⁷

Recently H. Bruce Franklin has argued that the *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* may serve as the touchstone of all of American literature, for the suppression of slave narratives and the repression of slavery itself as the great national sin, are the most formative aspects of the American political unconscious.¹⁸ While readings of Melville and Hawthorne through Douglass may seem to be a drastic reversal, such readings challenge the

version, as the incipient or emergent expression of the 'national-popular' sentiment preserved in a radical memory.¹⁶

When I developed my comparison ten years ago, I drew on existing models of Englishness and Americanness in literary history without sufficient awareness of the implications of these models. As a result, I assumed a high degree of consensus about what qualifies as a representative work for a nation. In the area of English literature, I accepted F. R. Leavis as the final word when he wrote: "that Dickens was a great genius and is permanently among the classics is certain.... The kind of greatness in question has been sufficiently defined."¹⁷ His singling out of *Hard Times* as Dickens's only work of real seriousness, however, the others being the product of a great entertainer and not a great moralist, is an interesting indicator of his construction of Englishness. For that novel is a critique of the industrial, technological world that Leavis felt was threatening an older, more authentic England. Leavis's past is tradition, not history: a site of "organic community" whose function is to defend English identity against the threat of heterogeneity, discontinuity, contradiction. Shakespeare, he wrote, "is the pre-eminently English poet," and Dickens alone inherits his scope. Here is Leavis on Dickens: "in ease and range there is surely no greater master of English except Shakespeare."¹⁸ Leavis's project was the constructing, imagining, if you will, of a great English literary tradition. His writings are sprinkled with supporting judgments: on Ben Jonson -- "his toughness is lively and English," and he subdued the external "classicizing" language of the Renaissance into "native sinew"; on Dryden--he exhibits "native English strength."¹⁹ As Francis Mulhern has recently observed, Leavis pits the "native, vigorous, strong, masculine" English tradition against a "classicizing, Italianate, alien, corrupt, effeminate, and impotent" Continental tradition.²⁰ When Leavis calls Wordsworth "normally and robustly human," he sums up his view of Englishness which is close to the proto-national model with its nostalgia for a more authentic pastoral community. To be English is to return to a world the opposite of Dickens's universe in his satirical novel *Hard Times*. And while Raymond Williams did a great deal to undermine Leavis's nostalgic and conservative view of Englishness, he too ends his marvelous book, *The Country and the City*, with a national claim of his own--that his tracing of the concepts of country and city have focused on "a single literature and society: a literature, English, which is perhaps richer than any other in the full range of its themes of country and city."²¹ Replacing tradition with history, obviously, does not dislodge patriotism from the critical tradition.

On the American side, I accepted uncritically models of American literature constructed by Americanists intent on proving American cultural distinctiveness, scholars who sorted authors and texts in or out of the American canon "according to a criterion of emerging indigeneness that fails to take account of such factors as the cross fertilization of the 'indigenous' and the 'foreign'."²² My analysis of Twain rested completely on the theories of scholars

prevailing idealist bias of Americanists who have constructed their national models on a set of ideas about America that was not shared by all groups within the nation. Franklin may have achieved no more than merely substituting a majority text for a minority text. But others, such as Nina Baym, Jane Tompkins, Annette Kolodny, and Walter Benn Michaels, to name only a few, have challenged static paradigms of Americanness, and have offered more dynamic models that take into account the material, social, and political circumstances that produced American's literature, and also those segments of American society whose production has been ignored or repressed.¹⁹ Feminism, cultural materialism, and multiculturalism have all played a part in reshaping the American canon, to include narratives that diverge from the lone white male in the wilderness, or as Baym has called them, "melodramas of beset manhood." Moreover, powerful popular works of literature, formerly considered aesthetically flawed by their "sentimentality," such as Cooper's Leatherstocking tales or *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, are increasingly in a central place in American cultural studies. The historical specificity of such models makes them compelling rivals of the more traditional idealist approaches.

Would I select these same books today as representative of the models that I am investigating? My answer would be yes, but for different reasons. Let me return to Englishness and to Dickens. The source for my map of the English novel has also tended to be American critics, who constructed an Englishness against which they could measure American difference. They argued that the English novel concerns itself with the shifting social classes within its own boundaries, with "reality," rather than with the "abstractness and profundity of romance" that allows for the formulation of "moral truths of universal validity," in the words of Chase.²⁰ But Leavis's claim is clearly at odds with that of Chase, for Leavis defines his English Great Tradition by its "moral intensity." While the English critic concedes that Henry James was an American, he insists on the relevance of his having been "actually a New Yorker," which brought him close to "that refined civilization of the old European America."²¹ James qualifies as a member of the English Great Tradition, according to Leavis, because he was quick to notice the moral divide between himself and Flaubert, and any author who chooses English rectitude over French diffidence, such as Conrad, has paid adequate dues to his adopted country.

Leavis's constructed Englishness, then, is the product of implicit comparisons with France and America, and Chases's constructed Americanness is the product of a comparison with England, although both insist that their models are descriptive rather than comparative, and that moral intensity is an inherent and distinguishing quality of each national literary tradition. My earlier analysis of *Great Expectations* had taken its cue from Lionel Trilling's insistence on the social class basis of the novel tradition in general, and English literature in particular. Thus, I confined my analysis to the thwarted goals and finally apparent

humble compromises of the protagonist, Pip, the orphan who achieves middle class security and Christian gentility.²²

In 1882 Ernest Renan, in his essay "What is a Nation?," singled out the act of forgetting as a necessary prerequisite in the making of national consciousness: "Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation."²³ By shifting to the forgotten and the marginal, both *Great Expectations* and *Huckleberry Finn* may still serve as representative texts, but not of an insular England in the case of the former, as I had previously assumed, but of Great Britain, the Empire. Acting as an arena for the working out of social and moral problems, Dickens's novel "forgets" the means by which these problems are solved, namely, by the material resources generated by the Empire. Twain's novel would also continue to be representative, but as a post-colonial novel both deriving its identity and fueling its resistance in relation to England, yet with an already emergent imperial sensibility of its own (regarding the West).²⁴ In both cases, I would like to shift the focus of my analysis to the characters and spaces outside of the acknowledged boundaries of the imagined nation, to Jim and the invisible Native American on the Frontier in *Huckleberry Finn* and to Magwitch and the invisible Australian natives in *Great Expectations*. This shift in model should yield slightly different readings of the books.

The following passage in *Great Expectations* may serve as a good sample of this revised reading. These are Magwitch's words to Pip when he reveals his identity as the boy's benefactor upon his illegal and doomed return to England:

"And then, dear boy, it was a recompense to me, look'ee here, to know in secret that I was making a gentleman. The blood horses of them colonists might fling up the dust over me as I was walking; what do I say? I says to myself, 'I'm making a better gentleman nor ever you'll be!' When one of 'em says to another, 'He 'was a convict, a few years ago, and is a ignorant common fellow now, for all he's lucky,' what do I say? I says to myself, 'If I ain't a gentleman, nor yet ain't got no learning, I'm the owner of such. All on you owns stock and land; which on you owns a brought-up London gentleman?' This way I kep myself a going. And this way I held steady afore my mind that I would for certain come one day and see my boy, and make myself known to him, on his own ground."²⁵

This passage is a rich nexus of plot, theme, and genre. In terms of plot, it becomes apparent that the "problem" posed at the start, that of Pip's expectations for a transcendence of his social class without the means to become a gentleman has been "solved," but outside the boundaries of the depicted world, somewhere in the colonies where new wealth can be generated. Like Jane Eyre's sudden, almost

"pastoralism" expressed in an idealization of a precolonial order as a badge of distinctiveness. For Canadian, Australian, and American writings, this has been an idealization of nature; for third world writing, it has been an idealization of a non-white indigenous culture. The sections of *Huckleberry Finn*, then, that deal with the Duke and the Dauphin and with nature and Huck's native "dialect" all fit neatly into models of post-colonial writing. But then where do we fit Jim and the Territories?

In Twain's novel there is a movement outward, beyond existing boundaries, as there is in Dickens's book, but it is Huck who aims to go there, and not Magwitch's equivalent, Jim. When Huck lights out for the Territory, it is not an uncharted wilderness; it is land that has been confiscated from native Indian tribes by an Act of Congress and prepared for eventual statehood. In other words, Huck is not moving to a place that, like Australia, will always remain an outlying area, the periphery, significant only for its resources. Huck is going to colonize land and then annex it to the nation, whose center is ever expanding to include more and more terrain. This historical Territory does not cancel out the symbolic ideal territory of an alternative to civilization, but it does contain the roots of American imperial expansion that is also a mark of its literature. Furthermore, while Huck may represent the American as a post-colonial figure when he defines himself against the English parent culture of the Walter Scott, or more broadly against the European parent culture of dukes and dauphins, Jim cannot be relegated to the same category. In *Great Expectations* there can be no room for Magwitch who, having returned to the bounds of the nation, must die out of it. Jim, by contrast, while placed outside the circle of humanity by his enslavement, is still within the circle of nationhood, and it is this contradiction that embodies one of the main problems of the novel when it comes to national self-definition.

This is conveyed most dramatically in the Frenchman dialogue between Huck and Jim: in the tradition of the minstrel show, Jim is the straight man exposed as a fool, yet in the book's ironic structure, his attitude is actually vindicated. At first, Huck appears to get the upper hand when he argues that human beings speak different languages. The flaw lies in his reasoning, for he arrives at the accurate conclusion by a false analogy in which he likens different animal species to different nations.

"Looky here, Jim; does a cat talk like we do?"

"No, a cat don't."

"Well, does a cow?"

"No, a cow don't nuther."

"Does a cat talk like a cow, or a cow talk like a cat?"

"No dey don't."

"It's natural and right for 'em to talk different from each other, ain't it?"

magical inheritance of a Madeira plantation which restores her to her rightful place in society, so Pip's magical transformation is made possible by Australia, a penal colony established in the late eighteenth century "so that England could transport an irredeemable, unwanted excess population of felons to a place, originally chartered by Captain Cook, that would also function as a colony replacing those lost in America."²⁶ As Robert Hughes has pointed out, "Dickens knotted several strands in the English perception of convicts in Australia at the end of transportation. They could succeed, but they could hardly, in the real sense, return.... [T]hey were capable of redemption, as long as they stayed in Australia."²⁷ Social injustice in Britain led Magwitch to crime, Dickens claims, which led him to deportation, to denationalization, to being excluded from the circle that is England. But that center is held together by wealth generated in places beyond the national but not imperial boundaries. Magwitch claims that he "owns" Pip, and while Dickens will not let Pip continue to benefit from Magwitch's wealth in order to impress upon the reader the moral integrity of Pip's spiritual gentlemanliness, he has to restore Pip to the security and comfort that will insure that he need never steal for food. The solution to this problem is easily solved by another turn of the plot that looks beyond national shores. He will become Herbert Pocket's clerk and future partner in a business venture in Cairo. Unlike Australia, where a felon can make his fortune sheep farming in a land depicted as empty save for the English colonists, Egypt is a destination more fit for a middle class businessman on the way up, for commerce as an end in itself.

So stunned is Pip by the revelation of his benefactor's identity, that Magwitch, tired from his tortuous journey back to England, must remind him of his obligation as host: "Where will you put me?... I must be put somewhere, my boy." But he cannot be put into the English nation; he must either remain the invisible magical benefactor who spins out the commodities that keep the Empire going, or he must die. There is no place for him "at home."

Twain's novel offers a nineteenth-century construction of America that, on the one hand, self-consciously pits itself against its European origins in the comic sinking of the Walter Scott and the farcical European pretensions of the Duke and the Dauphin, while on the other hand, it "forgets" that the Frontier is not simply empty Territory for the pioneer to conquer, and that the newly emancipated black slave has now to be brought into the circle of nation. Summaries of the novel prepared by the publisher in close collaboration with Twain to promote door-to-door subscriptions singled out the King and the Duke as the main selling point, while Jim is not even identified as a slave.²⁸ Clearly, Twain foregrounded resistance to and dependence on European culture over other themes in his work, and this theme of cultural hybridization has recently been proposed, more generally, as a dominant feature of post-colonial writing. Among other characteristics often cited are: the use of received English along with a resistance to it;²⁹ the problem of European genres incompatible with native experience; and

replacing Huck with Jim. I would draw a somewhat different conclusion from her findings. Americanness is a multi-racial entanglement, with one of its roots in the minstrel show tradition of whites impersonating blacks which led to blacks impersonating whites impersonating blacks. In contrast to what I argued ten years ago, I would relocate Huck as only one part of the American national identity, shaped by its bond with the slave, the self-willed seeker of family and community. The representative American, if the term is still viable, would be a complex amalgam of identities, as in the minstrel figure, where primary and secondary identities, authentic and mock selves, are so intertwined as to be inseparable.

Nineteenth-century British and American literature, I would still maintain, are well served by these two novels as representative works, but by focusing on Magwitch and Jim as well as on Pip and Huck, by looking at character interactively rather than singularly, and by reading what falls outside the apparent boundaries of the nation as defined in its time, we can arrive at a fuller view of how the nation is constructed and invented in the imaginations of the authors and their readers. For Dickens, social class within the bounds of England determines the debate on national character, and Great Britain, the outlying domains of Empire, is a convenient empty space for the exchange of undesirable people for desired goods. For Twain, race outweighs social class (although it cannot be entirely divorced from it), and the Territory is empty space for the expansion of the nation, a place of escape not for convicted felons, as in Dickens, but for white Americans not yet ready to forge a new post-slavery national identity that includes blacks. Dickens gives us the literature of Empire, but so does Twain, along with the literature of post-colonialism. This seeming contradiction in American literature--of an imperial sensibility regarding the Frontier and a post-colonial consciousness regarding imperial Great Britain, combined with strategies of evasion when it comes to African Americans who do not fit into either of these two cultural locations--serves as a more accurate model of American self-definition than the simpler resistance to European culture traditionally invoked in discussions of American art.³¹

These claims, however, make me uneasy because I do not want to appear to have taken a circuitous route to a few fashionable labels. By questioning the concepts of nation that I employed ten years ago, and the implications that these models had for literary history, I have read these novels somewhat differently today than I did in the past. By focusing on similarities beyond national geographies, I have noted that Dickens and Twain share certain features as writers of Empire. And in place of homogeneous and coherent national models that make for a neat opposition between American and English novels, I have located differences within, so that in the case of American literature Huck is not representative of an entire nation but of only one sub-group within it. But what is at stake is more than a reading of two texts; it is the very concept of representativeness and its usefulness in literary study, the third assumption that

"Course."
 "And ain't it natural and right for a cat and a cow to talk different from us?"
 "Why, mos' sholy it is."
 "Well, then, why ain't it natural and right for a Frenchman to talk different from us? You answer me that?"³⁰

Jim, however, has a vested interest in proving that all of humanity speaks the same language. So ignoring the mediation of culture that determines human language, Jim is shown to be the fool logically, but the wise man morally.

"Is a cat a man, Huck?"
 "No."
 "Well, den, day ain't no sense in a cat talkin' like a man. Is a cow a man?--or is a cow a cat?"
 "No, she ain't either of them."
 "Well, den, she ain't got no business to talk like either one yer the yuther of 'em. Is a Frenchman a man?"
 "Yes."
 "Well, den! Dad blame it, why doan he talk like a man? You answer me *dat!*"³¹

Magwitch's question to Pip would be equally appropriate if posed by Jim to Huck, "Where will you put me?... I must be put somewheres, dear boy." Because unlike Magwitch, for whom there is no place in English society except at the far reaches of the Empire, Jim is there at the novel's end not to light out for the Territory and "go for howling adventures amongst the Injuns," as Tom plans, but to be reunited with his family and to build a community, to remain as a free man in what is the American nation. At the book's end, then, two characters occupy two different spaces on the American landscape, a mercurial nomad pushing the boundaries further West, and a sedentary hero, pushing the racial boundaries of Americanness to greater limits, diversifying Americanness to the point where, far in the future, it might also include the invisible "Injuns."

Shelley Fisher Fishkin in her book *Was Huck Black?* has recently argued that Twain's linguistic model for Huck was a black slave whom he knew in his youth.³² Whatever methodological problems there may be in her argument that stem from Twain's self-conscious posturing in his letters and other documents, her claim is an important one for the discussion of national identity in literature. The implication here is similar to Franklin's argument cited earlier, that the African-American is the most representative of Americans, the most indigenous member of the American people. But just as Franklin is doing nothing more than replacing one essential text for another, Fishkin may be, in like manner, merely

guided my earlier study. I am not suggesting that we simply shift our basis for representativeness and that by replacing an essentialist national model with essentialist proto-national models--such as ethnicity, gender, or race--we have solved the problem of collective identity and literary categorization. What is clear is that the last two decades have seen the demise of the notion of an all-encompassing American or British identity, and simultaneously the rise of personal and collective identity as a self-conscious factor in literary critical debate.³⁴ The best that we can do is to keep reminding ourselves that we cannot read outside of collective identity models (whether we are dealing with problems of authorship, audience, intertextuality, theme, or genre), but that indispensability does not confer certainty, and like the novels, the collective geographies are themselves always in the process of being invented.

- 1 Hana Wirth-Nesher, "The Literary Orphan as National Hero: Huck and Pip," in *Dickens Studies Annual: Essays on Victorian Fiction* 15 (1986): 259-75.
- 2 Harold Bloom, ed., *Major Literary Characters: Huck Finn* (New York: Chelsea House, 1990), p. 34.
- 3 Moreover, in *Textual Criticism and Literary Interpretation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), Jerome McGann has also made us aware that the decision to focus exclusively on the text inevitably leads to questions about the establishment of the text, questions which reach back into the cultural and ideological dynamics of text production. For revisions of the British literary canon in the light of post-structuralist theories, see Karen R. Lawrence, ed., *Decolonizing Tradition: New Views of Twentieth-Century "British" Literary Canons* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1992).
- 4 Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?" in *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 8-23; Walker Connor, "The Nation and Its Myth," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* 33 (1992): 48-57.
- 5 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983); Eric Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
- 6 Homi K. Bhabha, "Introduction: Narrating the Nation," in *Nation and Narration*, p. 3.
- 7 F. R. Leavis, *The Great Tradition* (New York: New York University Press, 1967), p. 19.
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 247.
- 9 F. R. Leavis, *Revaluation* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972), pp. 29, 118.
- 10 Francis Mulhern, "English Reading," in *Nation and Narration*, p. 254.
- 11 Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 291.
- 12 Lawrence Buell, "American Literary Emergence as a Postcolonial Phenomenon," *American Literary History* 4 (1992): 412.
- 13 F. O. Matthiessen, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941); Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition* (New York: Doubleday, 1957); Charles Feidelson, Jr., *Symbolism and American Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953); Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land* (New York: Vintage, 1950); R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy, and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955); Leslie Fiedler, *Love and*

- Death in the American Novel* (New York: Stein and Day, 1960); Sacvan Bercovitch, *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975).
 - 14 Buell, "American Literary Emergence," p. 413.
 - 15 Henry T. Tuckerman, *America and Her Commentators* (New York, 1864), p. 288; reprinted in Buell.
 - 16 Wirth-Nesher, "The Literary Orphan," p. 259. In a study of Christina Stead, Jonathan Arac observes that Dickens and Twain constitute for her what Harold Bloom has referred to as a "composite precursor." See Arac, "The Struggle for the Cultural Heritage: Christina Stead Refunctions Charles Dickens and Mark Twain," in *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Aram Veeser (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 116-32.
 - 17 Arac has argued that the national narrative preceded the literary narrative in American culture, with Cooper's novels as exemplars of the genre. *Huckleberry Finn*, he claims, has been wrongly canonized as a national narrative when, in fact, it is a literary narrative that evades national problems. The nationalizing of a literary narrative such as *Huckleberry Finn*, he writes, "produces and reinforces the belief that there is a true America made up by those who take their distance from actually existing America" (see Arac, "Nationalism, Hypercanonization, and *Huckleberry Finn*," *Boundary 2*, 19 [1992]: 14-33). As Arac acknowledges, Sacvan Bercovitch has made this argument in his critical works on American culture. For a condensed form of this argument, see the "Afterword" to *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch and Myra Jehlen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
 - 18 H. Bruce Franklin, *The Victim as Criminal and Artist* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), pp. 4-5.
 - 19 Nina Baym, "Melodramas of Beset Manhood: How Theories of American Fiction Exclude Women Authors," in *The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*, ed. Elaine Showalter (New York: Pantheon, 1985) pp. 63-81; Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1975); Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Walter Benn Michaels, *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).
 - 20 Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition*, p. 125.
 - 21 Leavis, *The Great Tradition*, p. 11.
 - 22 Lionel Trilling, "Manners, Morals, and the Novel," *The Liberal Imagination* (New York: Doubleday, 1953), p. 205.
 - 23 Renan, "What is a Nation?" pp. 8-23.
 - 24 Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin have pointed out that post-colonial theory has produced three principal types of comparison: "between countries of the white Diaspora--the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand--comparison between areas of the Black diaspora, and thirdly, those which bridge these groupings, comparing, say, literatures of the West Indies with that of Australia." See Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Strikes Back. Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 19.
- I am, of course, dealing with the first category, although I am aware that there is a debate as to whether the term post-colonial applies to white settler societies because of the extent of their implication in contemporary capitalism or because of their historical relation to the colonizing power. See Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, "Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: an Introduction," in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A*

- Reader, ed. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 1-20. For the problematics of the term itself, see Anne McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-colonialism,'" in the same volume; and Linda Hutcheon, "Colonialism and the Postcolonial Condition: Complexities Abounding," *PMLA* 111 (1995): 7-16. The United States is particularly interesting in this regard because, on the one hand, it shares the post-colonial tendency of looking backward with the impotence of exile and forward to desired indigeneity, while on the other hand, it is itself an imperial power displacing indigenous peoples.
- 25 Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 339.
- 26 Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993), p. xv.
- 27 Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore: The Epic of Australia's Founding* (New York: Knopf, 1987), p. 586.
- 28 Arac, "Nationalism, Hypercanonization, and *Huckleberry Finn*," pp. 14-33.
- 29 "English always written out of the tension between the abrogation of the received English which speaks from the center, and the act of appropriation which brings it under the influence of a vernacular tongue" (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, p. 39).
- 30 Samuel Clemens, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (New York: Norton, 1961), p. 67.
- 31 *Ibid.*, p. 67.
- 32 Shelley Fisher Fishkin, *Was Huck Black?* (London: Oxford University Press, 1993).
- 33 For a discussion of the role of the Empire in Dickens's *Dombey and Son*, see Suvedrini Perera, "Wholesale, Retail, and for Exportation: Empire and the Family Business in *Dombey and Son*," *Victorian Studies* 33 (1990): 603-620.
- 34 For a concise and insightful overview of developments in American studies during the past three decades, see Myra Jehlen, "Introduction," *Ideology and Classic American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 1-21. Jehlen maintains: "The tradition of Van Wyck Brooks and F. O. Matthiessen thus acquires, in ideological criticism, a sober and skeptical heir whose interests (and perhaps sympathies) are broader for reflecting a heightened awareness of the world beyond the United States, and in the United States, of multiple Americas, none of them transcendent" (p. 15). This passage succinctly states the premise of my own revised essay on Dickens and Twain.