

**The Diaspora of Dickens:
Charles Dickens and Writers of the American South**

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Abstract

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By the early twentieth century, Dickens's works were read widely throughout the United States and Dickens was a household name; even if early twentieth century Americans had not read the canon of Dickens, they were culturally aware of him. Edgar Allan Poe, William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor and Carson McCullers all cited Dickens as having influenced their works and they utilized archetypal characters created by him as springboards for their own creations. My research demonstrates that there is a connection between literature hailing from the American Southern Gothic movement and from Dickens. Dickens's influence upon modern culture has been researched by Juliet John and his characters have been catalogued, but never before has their influence upon later novels of twentieth century America been examined. This thesis examines how modern authors read and interpreted Dickens's texts and utilized his archetypal figures to create new characters of their own. These figures then experienced new incarnations in a different landscape, that of the American south.

Dickens's works impacted his American audience and helped to shape their creative endeavours through his interpretations of isolation and loss. As a contemporary of Dickens, Poe sought a literary relationship with him and I demonstrate that Poe sharply honed and re-packaged ideas originating from Dickens's works in his own. Faulkner utilized Dickensian outsiders in order to create repudiated characters whom society must redeem. O'Connor studied Dickensian orphans and his dark humour to create lost children of the South with whom readers could sympathize. McCullers took from Dickens's nonnormative figures to form a foundation for her creations of queer characters. A commonality in Dickens's works is his understanding of the human spirit's ability to triumph over obstacles, and it is ultimately this determination to conquer loss that emerges in the works of the Southern Gothic movement. This thesis shows how Dickens's writing has influenced other authors' creations, and further, how reading these modern works enables us to look at and more fully interpret Dickens's universe.

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List of Abbreviations

Works by Charles Dickens:

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 1. <i>A Christmas Carol</i> | <i>Carol</i> |
| 2. "A Preliminary Word" | "Preliminary" |
| 3. <i>A Tale of Two Cities</i> | <i>Two Cities</i> |
| 4. <i>Bleak House</i> | <i>Bleak</i> |
| 5. <i>David Copperfield</i> | <i>Copperfield</i> |
| 6. "Gone Astray"..... | "Gone" |
| 7. <i>Great Expectations</i> | <i>Expectations</i> |
| 8. <i>Oliver Twist</i> | <i>Twist</i> |
| 9. <i>Our Mutual Friend</i> | <i>Friend</i> |
| 10. "The Clock-Case. A Confession Found in a Prison in the
Time of Charles the Second"..... | "Confession" |
| 11. <i>The Life of Our Lord</i> | <i>Our Lord</i> |
| 12. <i>The Mystery of Edwin Drood</i> | <i>Drood</i> |
| 13. <i>The Old Curiosity Shop</i> | <i>Curiosity</i> |

Works by William Faulkner

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 14. <i>Absalom, Absalom!</i> | <i>Absalom</i> |
| 15. "A Rose for Emily"..... | "Rose" |
| 16. <i>Intruder in the Dust</i> | <i>Intruder</i> |
| 17. <i>Light in August</i> | <i>August</i> |
| 18. <i>The Sound and the Fury</i> | <i>Fury</i> |

Works by Michael Millgate

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| 19. "A Novel: Not an Anecdote" | "A Novel" |
| 20. <i>Lion in the Garden: Interviews with William Faulkner</i> | <i>Lion</i> |

Works by Carson McCullers

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 21. <i>Clock Without Hands</i> | <i>Clock</i> |
| 22. <i>The Heart is a Lonely Hunter</i> | <i>Heart</i> |
| 23. <i>The Member of the Wedding</i> | <i>Wedding</i> |

Works by Flannery O'Connor

- | | |
|--|----------------|
| 24. "A Good Man is Hard to Find"..... | "Good Man" |
| 25. "A Late Encounter with the Enemy"..... | "Encounter" |
| 26. "A Temple of the Holy Ghost"..... | "Temple" |
| 27. "A View of the Woods"..... | "A View" |
| 28. "Good Country People"..... | "Good Country" |
| 29. "The Life You Save May Be Your Own"..... | "The Life" |
| 30. <i>Wise Blood</i> | <i>Blood</i> |

Works by Edgar Allan Poe

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| 31. "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" | "Valdemar" |
| 32. "The Tell-Tale Heart"..... | "Tell-Tale" |

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Introduction

“Everywhere there is connection, everywhere there is illustration. No single event, no single literature is adequately comprehended except in relation to other events, to other literatures” (Matthew Arnold, On the Modern Element in Literature, lecture).

Throughout this thesis I will explore the degree to which the works of Charles Dickens have impacted American consciousness and the extent to which his works influenced writers associated with the American Southern Gothic literary movement of the twentieth century. My research will specifically focus on the works of William Faulkner, Flannery O’Connor and Carson McCullers; three authors heavily associated with Southern Gothicism in the early- to mid-twentieth century. The thread of connection which draws Dickens to these latter American twentieth-century authors can be firstly traced through Dickens’s contact with Edgar Allan Poe. This influence can best be understood through the theories of comparative literature, intertextuality and re-readings. In chapter one, I demonstrate that both Dickens and Poe were equally influential to each other, and that both endeavoured to construct something unique for the 1830s–1840s, the time period in which they both wrote. While Poe did not live to read some of Dickens’s larger literary achievements, he was greatly taken by Dickens’s early work (and, as I will demonstrate, Dickens admired Poe’s work), and the two shared a brief, but creatively significant, correspondence.

Nineteenth-century American authors, artists and politicians sought to be viewed by their European peers as having a unique, national identity separate from that of their mother country.¹ Dickens chronicled seeing this desire in the Americans he met on his first visit to the States in the 1840s and summarizes this ideology in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844) with “the Honourable Elijah Pogram,” who Martin and Mark meet on their journey home. The caricature of the self-righteous American is seen most in Pogram, who lectures Martin and Mark of the wonders of America and American men: ““Our fellow-countryman is a model of a man, quite fresh from Natur’s [sic] mould!...He is a true-born child of this free hemisphere...and his boastful answer to the

¹ From 1835 until his death in 1849, Poe wrote approximately one thousand critical pieces and defined the American “standard for book reviewing” (Hutchisson 57). Poe also critiqued many American newspapers for “puffing” second-rate American books simply because they were American. When he and Dickens met in 1842, “the two men discussed the backward state of American poetry, with Poe reading Emerson’s poem ‘The Humble Bee’ [to Dickens] as an example of the amateurish state of American letters” (Hutchisson 126).

² Robert McParland notes: “The condition of England and the condition of America were at stake in the nineteenth century. Thomas Carlyle wrote: ‘We call it a Society; and go about professing openly the total separation, isolation. Our life is not mutual helplessness; but rather...mutual

Despot and the Tyrant is, that his bright home is in the Settin [sic] Sun” (Dickens *Martin Chuzzlewit* 505). Poe as well saw this uprising of a want for national identity in American fiction and poetry, and during his days working as an editor, he sought for American literature to be appreciated not merely because it was American (and therefore somehow inherently unique because of the young democracy as characters like Elijah Pogram would have listeners believe), but because it had merit on its own. Dickens again visited the United States in 1867–1868, only a few years after the conclusion of the American Civil War, the outcome of which had disastrous effects upon the landscape, the people and the economy. His second visit was more favourable, and he instead this time witnessed a sense of national sorrowing. In her 2008 text, Drew Gilpin Faust chronicled the birth of this sense of national identity in sorrow which ensued from the Civil War. There is a shared understanding of national sorrowing that occurs in both Dickens’s and Poe’s works, and on which Dickens begins to focus more acutely in his later pieces. I utilize Faust’s text later in this thesis, but it is in part due to this sense of sorrow that the work of Dickens and Poe took root in the minds of those born the generation after the Civil War, namely the twentieth century authors on whom I am focusing my research.

Susan Bassnett’s text, *Comparative Literature: A Critical Introduction* (1993) outlines the often misunderstood and misidentified discipline of comparative literature. In her explanation of the subject, Bassnett utilizes the contemporaneous works of Philarète Chasles and Lord Byron, who both had opposing views on the topic of comparing works of literature. She writes Chasles “refers to the ‘spirit’ of a nation or of a people, and suggests that [Chasles felt it was]...possible to trace how that spirit may have influenced another writer in another culture” (13). Byron, on the other hand, “could see...the close relationship between national identity and cultural inheritance...the fine line between influence perceived as borrowing and influence perceived as appropriation or theft was very much [to Byron] a matter of perspective” (14). Bassnett’s book analyses the difficulties within the discipline of comparative literature, and takes into account the nuances of the study including the tendency to compare identities, cultures, genders and themes. She defines the study as the ability to recognize and understand influences and borrowings in texts which come from other texts and cultures. Bassnett begins her explanation of the discipline in an easily-understood construct: “It could almost be argued that anyone who has an interest in books embarks on the road towards what might be termed comparative literature:

reading Chaucer, we come across Boccaccio; we can trace Shakespeare's source materials through Latin, French, Spanish and Italian..." (1). Further, she argues: "Once we begin to read we move across frontiers, making associations and connections, no longer reading within a single literature but within the great open space of Literature with a capital L, what Goethe termed *Weltliteratur*" (2). This understanding of comparative literature frames my research on the influence the works of Dickens had upon those of the American South. Simply put, once a reader is aware of Dickens's plot devices, descriptive settings, character names and types, he/she sees his writing repurposed in works which come after him. Bassnett as well offers an interesting view on the discipline of comparative literature in the United States: "Just as the United States prided itself on providing a melting pot for all comers, into which national and linguistic differences would be cast so as to be forged into something new and all-encompassing, so the American perspective on comparative literature was based from the start on ideas of interdisciplinarity and universalism" (33). This understanding, Bassnett writes, is partly due to Charles Mills Gayley who began a program of comparative literature study at Berkeley in the 1890s. Gayley "saw his work as quintessentially humanitarian" and was very aware of the issues facing the methodology (33). He sought to define his Berkeley program as one that involved interdisciplinary work, upholding the importance of "psychology, anthropology, linguistics, social science, religion and art in the study of literature" (33). It is Bassnett's (and Gayley's) theories on comparative literature which I utilize in this thesis in order to highlight the affinities that Dickensian figures shared with their twentieth-century American counterparts.

Critical analysis of Dickens's contemporaneous American audience is explored in Robert McParland's text (2010) and an understanding of how Dickens was read and shared in nineteenth-century America is also a crucial framework for this thesis. McParland states that Dickens "was popularly acclaimed and converted into an American product. The appropriation of Dickens had a significant impact upon American culture" (15). Both nineteenth-century England and America faced similar upheavals: major population shifts from rural to urban areas due to industrialization which caused over crowding in living spaces, competition for work and living spaces

such as they were, and a changing idea of home and family.² All of these points culminate in both cultures experiencing a large degree of social isolation within the larger metropolitan cities. McParland writes that for Americans, reading Dickens became a “shared experience” which enabled common reference points for “social sentiment” in a culture which, like England, was feeling the strains of changing domestic life and cultural isolation (6). Because of the ease with which Dickens’s works were disseminated throughout the States to those who could read as well as to those who could not (through pirated cheap editions, theatrical performances on both the stage and street, and adaptations), Americans came to acknowledge his characters as common reference points, or “imagined communities” which they “appropriated” (McParland 7). Ultimately, these imagined relationships created a “community of readers” for those who were isolated by the new, mechanized nineteenth-century way of life (McParland 7).

The first generation of writers to come after Dickens began to express in their own works the larger impact his imagined world had upon their forming psyches. The screen writer (Sidney Howard) of Margaret Mitchell’s still popular ode to Antebellum Georgia novel *Gone With the Wind* (1936), planted *David Copperfield* (1850) within the film script; the group of women waiting for their husbands to return from a secret meeting of Southern defenders read *David Copperfield* aloud to pass the time and quell their nerves. The opening lines of the text in particular, which have David questioning whether or not he shall turn out to be the hero of his own story, make a lasting impression in Howard’s version of the story. David’s inclusion in the film *Gone with the Wind* (1939), forms a connection between the two protagonists, David and Scarlett, as the movie viewer wonders if Scarlett, like David, will turn out to be her own heroine. More than this, the opening lines being included in the plot (a story within a story), displays the ease with which Dickens’s world could be introduced into new period pieces in order to create a sense of “Victorian atmosphere.” David’s addition in the film of *Gone With the Wind* is purposeful; his inclusion creates an association by

² Robert McParland notes: “The condition of England and the condition of America were at stake in the nineteenth century. Thomas Carlyle wrote: ‘We call it a Society; and go about professing openly the total separation, isolation. Our life is not mutual helplessness; but rather...mutual hostility’...Dickens’s writing was, in part, a response to overcome such isolation...Dickens, as humorist, entertainer, and social critic, sought to preserve the ‘amusements of the people,’ give voice to society, and restore the deepest sense of ‘home’: the imagined community with a heart of mutual sympathy” (3). That upheavals in the United States mirrored those of England in the mid-nineteenth century, accounts for part of Dickens’s success in the United States.

affiliation from a newly written text made into a screenplay (Mitchell's and Howard's), to a well-respected novel (Dickens's). As well, David continues this tradition of a "community of readers" of Dickens's works as Howard creates a fictional community who are both entertained and calmed by the act of reading Dickens aloud, much like McParland explains actual nineteenth-century Americans would have done in such a situation.

Both Dickens and Poe addressed mesmerism in their works, and as well, both had an understanding in their personal lives of the depths to which loss can impact the human spirit. Both authors used the theme of mesmerism to demonstrate the depths to which one experiences loss, and also to show that there is yet a chance of redemption. Besides the intertextuality which occurs with their works, mesmerism and spirituality is another affinity the two authors share. Dr John Elliotson introduced Dickens to the study of mesmerism, the chief belief of which was that a fluid surrounded the body which could be manipulated in order to bring relief to the afflicted.³ Peter Ackroyd surmises that Dickens was interested in mesmerism because of the theory that "the energies and powers within the human body...could be harnessed by the human will" ultimately combining for Dickens the linked ideas of "power and dominance" (244). Through "verbal free association," Dickens used mesmerism to calm the nerves of several "patients" (Ackroyd 449). Dickens includes some instances in *The Life of Our Lord* (1934, posthumously) of Jesus performing what looks to be a form of mesmerism (at least in the way in which Dickens chooses to highlight the story). A centurion requires the healing help of Jesus in Luke 7:1-10, but is too ashamed to have Christ to his house. The centurion begs of Jesus, "'Say the word only, and I know he [the centurion's servant] will be cured.' Then Jesus Christ, glad that the centurion believed in Him so truly, said, 'Be it so!' And the servant became well, from that moment" (Dickens, *Our Lord* 37). Jesus's power to cure the servant with only his word, is reminiscent of how mesmerists worked with their patients. It is important to note that Dickens's inclusion of such a mesmeric practice as verbal healing in *The Life of Our Lord* has much to do with his own practice of the act of mesmerizing to heal. I would argue that Dickens's choice to include this particular story of Jesus curing the servant with only a phrase is inextricably linked to his interest in, and practice of, mesmerism

³ Steve Connor chronicles Dickens's education in and practice of mesmerism in "All I Believed is True: Dickens under the Influence" (2010). Fred Kaplan also writes on Dickens's interest in and study of mesmerism in *Dickens and Mesmerism: The Hidden Springs of Fiction* (1975).

and his desire to unite the esoteric with the factual, thus proving the validity of his own practice. Dickens also discusses the act of gazing in his works, utilizing the language of mesmerism in *Bleak House* (1853) which I examined more closely in my master's thesis.⁴ Poe also utilizes mesmerism in "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" (1845), "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains" (1844) and "Mesmeric Revelation" (1844). "Valdemar" was believed by readers to be a factual account of a dying man who in life, worked as a translator, and in his death, is "called upon again as a mediator—between different worlds" under a mesmeric trance induced by the narrator (Hayes 339). I assert that it was in part believed to be a non-fiction account because the unnamed narrator is given the title, "P—" and utilizes first person narration (Poe "Valdemar" 339). Poe does this with "Mesmeric Revelation" as well. He often enjoyed playing such tricks with his readers.⁵ Kevin Hayes explains that "Valdemar" was printed in "newspapers and magazines across the nation...and other reprints appeared in the British press, causing an international stir...it was, as Poe later admitted, intended as a hoax" (337). I explore Poe's and Dickens's use of gaze in chapter two, which is devoted to both authors, but it is important to note that their use of the starrer and staree is based on the language of mesmerism and this is another correlation between their two bodies of work.

Recent research has been done on Dickensian character names and themes being revisited in the works of other authors, and John Bowen cites the reoccurrence of Dickensian names in the works of Evelyn Waugh (2018). Bowen explains that oddly, Dickens and Waugh led parallel lives, although the latter was living in Flannery O'Connor's generation in the early to mid-twentieth century. Bowen writes, "Waugh's writing is parasitic on Dickens's, burrowing into it to take names, analogies and narrative tropes; through their incorporation within Waugh's host texts, these act like parasites that embed their own disturbing trajectories and associations within their new fictional homes" (4). Bowen cites that Waugh was quite critical of Dickens, but he points to Waugh's dislike of Dickens's texts as having more to do with Waugh's father's work with Chapman and Hall and with compiling the "Nonesuch Edition" (1938–39).⁶ Bowen argues that Waugh is haunted by Dickens's works, despite

⁴ "Dickens, Decay and Doomed Spirits: Ghosts and the Living Dead in the Works of Charles Dickens" (2013).

⁵ Galván 11.

⁶ Interestingly, Waugh was also hyper critical of Flannery O'Connor's book, *Wise Blood* (1952). His comment to her request of a short review was, "[if] you want a favorable opinion to quote. The best I can

disparaging them, and that the “question of Dickens for Waugh is intimately bound up with the question of voice” (16). That it was Dickens’s voice itself that was influential to others is of much interest to my own research. Dickens was an author whose works were, and continue to be, read aloud (as already mentioned when discussing the film *Gone With the Wind*), and his theatrical staging and comic timing still live through his works today. Bowen writes that for Waugh, Dickens’s voice is similar to “life waves that get into [Waugh’s] button holes and between his laces, working away on his flesh and under his skin” (22).

Although the affinities between the works of Dickens and Waugh are thought provoking, the question remains as to why these affinities are present. Bowen utilizes the analogy of a parasite to try to explain the reoccurrence of Dickensian names and plot devices in the works of Waugh, who was outwardly critical of Dickens. Bowen argues that it was the power behind Dickens’s voice which caused such a high level of borrowing from him. The assertion in Bowen’s article is that Dickens’s voice was mesmeric to Waugh (despite the latter’s dislike of the former), and I utilize this concept from Bowen’s work in order to build upon my argument here. It is interesting that Bowen utilizes Dickens’s mesmeric powers as a way of describing his influence, as my assertion is that Dickens inserts references to mesmerism throughout his works in order to bolster his own interest in the field. This inclusion of the “pseudo-science” in Dickens’s fictional works both reflects and lends authority to his interest in that field. Bowen’s inference is that Waugh was drawn to reuse Dickensian tropes unwillingly due to the mesmeric power of Dickens’s voice, as heard through his characters and narrators. In this thesis, I argue that Dickens’s literary voice was indeed mesmeric and that this was partly why his books have such a lasting power with readers throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, and is also, in part, why readers develop felt relationships with his characters. However, I disagree with influence being parasitic, and instead offer the idea that influence has more to do with the nature of how we read: readers want to build bridges with the author and his/her protagonists to their own experiences.

Bassnett points out that comparative literature is a discipline which is surrounded in much debate, but she mentions that the “classic formalist viewpoint” of

say is: ‘If this is really the unaided work of a young lady, it is a remarkable product.’ ...Why are so many characters in recent American fiction sub-human?’ (Waugh qtd. in O’Connor *The Letters of Flannery O’Connor and Caroline Gordon* 39).

comparative literature, which is “influential in western Europe and in the United States” is one which envisions texts as “free floating agents” capable of crossing “all forms of boundaries” (115). When comparing the work of Dickens with twentieth-century modernists, we must be careful not to fall into the comparative trap of primary and secondary literature or “greater and lesser texts” (Bassnett 92). Instead, the aim of this research is to discover the felt relationships that readers of Dickens had with his characters, and how these relationships helped to build connections between times and places haunted by trauma. Bassnett utilizes the resurgence of the Arthurian legend in the works of Alfred, Lord Tennyson and William Morris in the nineteenth century, and the re-adapted *The Once and Future King* (1958) by T. H. White to describe how re-reading and comparative literature can work. She explains that Arthurian legend had “disappeared for centuries” from English literature until the mid-nineteenth century, but how these Victorians “retold the story exposes some of the contradictions at the heart of Victorian society” (127).⁷ In the twentieth century, White undertook a “detailed study” of Sir Arthur Mallory and *Le Morte d’Arthur* (1485), and his novelisation of the Arthurian legend is “his attempt at bridge building between the despair he experienced in the early years of the Second World War and the troubled violent world of the late fifteenth century” (Bassnett 126). Therefore re-reading has as much to do with power of the original text, as it does with the reader’s own social constructs.

There is no doubt that Dickens’s mesmeric power influenced the works of his contemporaries. The following chapter on Poe demonstrates the extent to which he borrowed from Dickens’s works, and functions as an example of the concrete influence between the works of Dickens and Poe. Influence that occurs between Dickens and other American writers working from the Southern Gothic tradition after the nineteenth century can be understood more fully through the discipline of comparative literature. Through the comparison of the authors included in this thesis, we can see that “not a text in history...is truly self-sufficient” (Hutchinson 02:06-02:09). In his lecture on comparative literature, Ben Hutchinson explained, “how we understand one work of literature is contingent on how we understand another work of literature” (2:17-02:22).

⁷ Bassnett explains that the Victorians re-read the Arthurian legends and “retold the story” exposing some of their own contradictions such as “the contrast between images of idyllic childhood and the prevalence of child prostitution, the ideal of the ‘Angel in the House’ and the number of writers obsessed with woman’s adultery, the discrepancy between the image of England as the powerhouse of the world and the appalling social conditions in which the workers who toiled in that powerhouse lived, the development of an ideal of Englishness set against a background of xenophobia and overt racism” (127).

Therefore, how we understand Faulkner, O'Connor and McCullers is contextualized by our reading of Dickens, and vice versa. Following Dickens's mesmeric voice through these authors' works enables us to better understand the works themselves, and also gives us a more complex knowledge of Dickens's works. As Hutchinson explained, "the more we know, the more we contextualize...knowledge itself is comparative" (02:22-02:31).

When Dickens's fictional figures are evoked in new creations and through new plot lines, the literary exchange that occurs is one that Roland Barthes discusses in this theoretical analysis of "Sarrasine." Barthes' *S/Z* (2970) explains that literary influence is a form of "re-reading," and that texts therefore have infinite meaning. Further, he writes that it is not the author who gives his/her text meaning, but the reader. The reader does this in the act of reading which bestows upon the text its meaning. However, we as readers do not travel this path alone, instead we follow the literary clues left by the author to guide us. Words are imprecise, they are the signs of things but not the things they symbolize themselves. They offer a gateway into meaning but not one single interpretation of that meaning. As previously explained, this research will focus on authors who are engaging in their own re-readings of Dickens's texts. With these re-readings, the individual authors are crafting their own interpretations of Dickensian characters. But more than a re-reading, how these twentieth century authors interpreted Dickens's works re-shape the texts and demonstrate a new way of understanding Dickens's tales. Through the framework of comparative literature and re-reading, as defined by Barthes, we can see how the works of Southern Gothicism express similar themes of national sorrowing, isolation and loss as Dickens's works do, and additionally these latter works form critical responses to Dickens through their re-imaginings.

These modern authors are not re-telling Dickensian stories, they are utilizing motifs (or signs) made popular by his works and acclimatizing them to a modern landscape. For example, chapter three explains that through Faulkner's re-reading of Dickens, a connection between spiritual isolation and social outsiders can be seen, most significantly in his creation of the character Joe Christmas in *Light in August* (1932). Additionally, chapter four explains how Flannery O'Connor uses signs from Dickensian haggard and savage children to create a Southern American landscape peppered with children who bear the faces of old men and who, through their sufferings, guide those around them to redemption. Dickens's savage children are most often viewed as

purposeful plot devices in his texts, which point the reader back to Dickens's desire to educate his readers on the need for social reforms in nineteenth-century England. However, viewed comparatively, a further insight into these figures is brought into focus. The Dickensian characters are given more meaning as spiritual beacons who point the way towards grace for those around them that are lost. Through the lens of later texts which utilize these character types, modern readers can re-read Dickens's children as not being mere plot devices, but as being symbols for the opportunity for redemption of the other characters who interact with them. Through reading Dickens comparatively alongside the American authors referenced in this thesis, it becomes evident that Poe was one of the keys to which the dissemination of Dickens's works can be traced. These authors' work collectively show that the American landscape of Southern Gothicism was expressing themes of isolation and loss, which Dickens so aptly expresses in his works and which underpin even the most comic of his pieces.

The melding of the past and the present is a strange type of time travel that occurs in such comparative readings, and T. S. Eliot discusses the idea in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919). In this essay, Eliot argues that poems are gateways to the past, and this "historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence" (49). This is famously restated in William Faulkner's 1951 novel, *Requiem for a Nun*: "The past is never dead. It's not even past," by which Faulkner means that the past is in the now, and is ever re-occurring simultaneously with both past and present influencing the other outside of a linear understanding of time (92). According to Eliot, it is the surrender of emotion, or as he describes, "the depersonalization" of the poet through his/her work that bridges the past to the present (53). Eliot's theory on poetry helps further explain the bridge building through time and culture that occurs in re-readings. Through an understanding of the past (specifically for this thesis, the European past), authors such as Faulkner, O'Connor and McCullers demonstrate the authorial relationship of American writers to their European predecessors, notably Dickens. Further, I aim to demonstrate that these "modern" writers and the works of Dickens can be understood in relation to each other, or as Eliot writes, they can be "measured by each other" (50). None of the twentieth-century works sought to adapt the texts of Dickens, but his characters and themes re-emerge in their works and can be explained through this understanding of intertextuality as defined by Eliot: that the past is contained within the present.

Chapter two examines how the mesmeric voice of Dickens is clearly heard in Faulkner's works when analysed alongside *Great Expectations*. This chapter demonstrates, through a comparison of literature, that Faulkner was writing of his own re-reading of Dickens's book. To Faulkner, Miss Havisham becomes timeless and is able to transcend her own plot-driven timeline. She becomes individual and is imbued with the meaning that Faulkner, a voracious reader, gives her vis-à-vis authorial clues from Dickens. In his re-reading, Faulkner, like all readers, re-invents and envisions Miss Havisham in his consciousness and imbues Miss Havisham with the ability to step out of her nineteenth-century Satis House and into Faulkner's created town of Jefferson, Mississippi in his novel, *Intruder in the Dust* (1948). A more conscious and tongue-in-cheek example of this type of re-reading occurs in the Jasper Fford text *Lost in a Good Book* (2002), where Miss Havisham, conscious of her place as a fictional character with lines to be recited to the reader upon each reading, steps out of her own text to join in Franz Kafka's "The Trial," and then ultimately returns to *Great Expectations* where she helps save Abel Magwitch from drowning. Fford follows Barthesian ideas of "play" where all re-reading is playing with the text to obtain different understandings of plurality of meaning (16). Fford blatantly, yet jovially, acknowledges his re-readings and means for his texts to be read along with those of his predecessors, thus bringing the past into the present. These works by Faulkner and Fford both show how Eliot's ideas on literary persistence works: through reading earlier and later texts together, each can change the other and inspire new readings and meanings through the re-readings. As Bassnett argued, when we read, "we move across frontiers, making associations and connections" (2).

Further, chapter two shows that although Faulkner does not have concrete biographical ties to Dickens, he grew up reading the works of Dickens. Faulkner was born only a generation after the Civil War (his great-grandfather had been a colonel) and grew up thickly immersed in the aftermath of the trauma of this war.⁸ Also lacking in concrete biographical links is O'Connor, who denies having grown up reading much of anything, except for Greco-Roman myths and Poe.⁹ Chapter six explains how McCullers chose to include Dickens in her text, *Clock Without Hands* and utilizes her

⁸ McHaney *Literary Masters: William Faulkner* 77 and Dobbs "Case study in social neurosis; Quentin Compson and the lost cause").

⁹ In my chapters on O'Connor, I address these claims made by her and examine how they largely were spread to serve her aim to evoke New Criticism and the separation of the author and his/her text. As well, her library at Georgia College and State University holds several Dickens texts.

characters' different reactions to Dickens to demonstrate an understanding of loneliness and the outsider (which is another example of a story within a story such as the film *Gone With the Wind* utilizes). For this research, I have chosen integral, popular works of Dickens to examine via close reading with texts in the twentieth-century Southern Gothic genre. Dickens's journal articles and lesser-known works, while important to Dickens studies, are not relevant to my work here as many were pieces that were not read widely in Dickens's own time, and so were not as popular with readers in the twentieth century. It is not important to my research whether or not the twentieth-century authors I examine here were familiar with any lesser-known Dickens pieces, because those texts were not as freely available to the twentieth-century paper back reader (I examine the libraries of Faulkner, O'Connor and McCullers in their respective chapters and demonstrate that it was the major works of Dickens which were so influential to them). It is the main, well-known texts which are so central to my argument (namely the thirteen I chose).

As mentioned previously, chapter one details the affinities between the works of Poe and Dickens and how both authors aimed to construct the psyche of the killer in their fiction: the "why-done-it" as opposed to the "who-done-it" of mysteries. Further, this chapter explains how both authors shared correspondence on the craft of writing, and that they each held an appreciation for the other's works. Chapter two examines how the intertextuality and borrowing of Dickens moved into the twentieth century through an analysis of the works of William Faulkner. There are many concrete areas where Faulkner borrows from Dickens, but chapter two also shows how the nuances can be more subtle, and that similar circumstances in both authors' biographies culminated in shaping their respective views of humanity. Chapter three is a close reading of Faulkner's *Light in August* alongside Dickens's novels that are concerned with those figures who are enmeshed in what I term a "living death." Through examining Faulkner's outsider character Joe Christmas alongside figures like Lady Dedlock and the boys of Dotheboys Hall, we come to learn that Dickens's "living dead" are characters who are experiencing a social death. The redemption of these figures, who are repudiated by their communities, is what chiefly concerns both Faulkner and Dickens in their novels. Chapter four moves the influence of Dickens forward in chronological time from Faulkner to Flannery O'Connor and analyses how both Dickens and O'Connor shared a similar view of the role of the author. O'Connor's readings of Dickens's works shaped her style of character development, and through

comparing her short stories and novel alongside those of Dickens's, it becomes evident that both were working with fractured family relationships and the violence which erupts from these situations. Chapter five focuses more acutely on the comedic violence that both O'Connor and Dickens employ, and how through analysing where and why the audience laughs, we can learn how the protagonists of these stories are moved via comedy to a more diverse understanding of the nature of being human. Finally, chapter six brings forward the discussion of intertextuality to the works of Carson McCullers and examines her queer youth figures alongside similar characters in Dickens's texts. Through understanding how McCullers utilized her concept, "the we of me," we can see how Dickens also employs a similar idea in his works. Both authors use these non-romantic groups to explore the stories of "non-normative" children: how they are ostracised by their communities and how they might regain acceptance and self-love.

Throughout the twentieth century, Dickens has become immersed in American culture through the lasting power of his works, but as well through theatre, television, and the influence of Hollywood productions, and many have examined the reach of his works into modernity.¹⁰ That Dickens became an influential part of American culture is an underpinning of my research. Standing out above the aforementioned themes of isolation and loss, is Dickens's belief in the human spirit's ability to triumph over these obstacles, and it is ultimately this determination to conquer loss that emerges in the works of the Southern Gothic movement. Dickens's belief in the power of the human spirit prevails in his works and much like David Copperfield ponders if he will be the hero of his own story, or if someone else will come to fill that space, I will demonstrate in this thesis that the American authors impacted by Dickens's works seek to answer David's question in the affirmative: that we all have the power to overcome our losses and live as the heroes of our own stories.

¹⁰ Juliet John researched the larger cultural impact that Dickens and his works have had in *Dickens and Mass Culture* (2010) and in "Literary History: Retelling *A Christmas Carol*: Text and Culture-Text" Paul Davis wrote that the plot details behind *A Christmas Carol* change with each re-write. He explains that the various versions of Dickens's story are all woven into cultural consciousness: "[*Carol*] could be said to have two texts, the one that Dickens wrote in 1843 and the one that we collectively remember" (110). Additionally, *Dickens After Dickens* is a text (forthcoming) which chronicles the after effects of Dickens's works, and shows intertextual connections between his writings and other authors who borrow from him.

Chapter One — Edgar Allan Poe: the Purloined Victorian

Although Edgar Allan Poe is remembered as a poet and writer of gothic “tales,” he earned his living (albeit a meagre one) as a journalist, writing more literary criticism than poems or tales. From 1835 until his death in 1849, Poe wrote approximately one thousand critical pieces and defined “a national standard for book reviewing” (Hutchisson 57). In these critiques, he called for American literature to be held to the same standards to which European literature was held. Poe also critiqued many American newspapers that deemed American fiction as being of a higher value than its contemporaries merely because the literature was of American origin.¹¹ In his biography of Poe, James M. Hutchisson writes, “After the Revolution, Americans began issuing calls to their fellow citizens to consider the question of national culture, as illustrated in works of art. A native literature would solidify the country’s autonomy and enable it to stand up to its British and Continental critics” (57-58). This call to maintain American solidarity can be seen in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844) when characters repeatedly refer to themselves and others as “remarkable” specimens of the country (the emphasis of this overstatement is that all Americans in *Martin Chuzzlewit* deem themselves “remarkable”) (Dickens *Chuzzlewit* 261). Dickens’s representations are caricatures of course, but they represent the very real post-Revolution movement to maintain a separate identity. Hutchisson further remarks that the struggle to create a “national literature” was hindered in part by the American literary market which was “flood[ed]...by British books and periodicals that came without any barrier of copyright and were actually cheaper to buy in New York than in London” (58). This saturation of cheaply bought British books, as well as already established popular periodicals such as *Blackwood’s* and the *Edinburgh Review*, kept a “suffocating cultural stranglehold on the United States by its mother country” (Hutchisson 58). Sydney Smith summarized the world’s opinion of the literature America had to offer in the early nineteenth century: “In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book? or goes to an American play?” (Smith qtd. in Hutchisson 58). The answer to Smith’s rhetorical question implicitly being no one.

¹¹ Poe “displayed an intolerance for ‘puffing’ second-rate American books simply because they were American...Motivated by an unsparing devotion to the idea that Americans should be taught to distinguish between ordinary or even commendable works and true masterpieces, Poe held up high standards that were usually at odds with the literary establishment” (Hutchisson 57).

Mary Ann Tobin also discusses the literary battle which American authors fought in order to have their works read.¹² Tobin notes that American authors like Poe “rarely had the opportunity to publish whole books in their native land...[and that] US Copyright laws were designed to punish the formerly tyrannical homeland financially while continuing to benefit intellectually from its greatest thinkers” (119-120). Because British works were in “high demand and could be published without paying royalties,” it made fiscal sense for American publications to reprint British works instead of committing “financial suicide” by paying for American works when British ones were popular and free (Tobin 120). Besides battling the inequalities of copyright, Poe identified himself as being one of the first American fans of Dickens when he reviewed *Sketches by Boz* in June of 1836. Hutchisson notes that in Dickens’s case, “Poe’s admiration seems sincere, since he devoted more critical space in print to the works of Dickens than to those of any other novelist” (126). Poe had never heard of Dickens (or Boz) prior to his review (*Sketches* was Dickens’s first collection, so few readers knew of him), and Poe wrote of Dickens: “we know nothing more than that he is a far more pungent, more witty, and better disciplined writer of sly articles, than nine-tenths of the Magazine writers in Great Britain (Poe, “Watkins Tottle”).

Although creative writing was the direction in which Poe pushed his career, he languished terribly on his own in New York after his adoptive father Allan cut all ties with the young writer, and this left Poe trying to fend for himself financially by submitting stray poems to magazines to keep debtors at bay. In 1835, Poe was taken on as a literary writer for the *Southern Literary Messenger* under the direction of Thomas White, and quickly gained the nick-name of “the man with the tomahawk,” a racist epithet but one which was meant to make light of his cutting negative critiques of which there were many (Hutchisson 62).¹³ Arthur Hobson Quinn writes of Poe’s “tomahawking”: “Again and again through his career he made enemies and alienated friends by the viciousness of his attacks, often unfair, and apparently made to satisfy some bitterness of spirit which demanded expression” (244). Bad reviews notwithstanding, Dickens’s *Sketches* helped Poe to frame the parameters of what a “tale” was to be. One of the defining aspects was the ability for the “tale” to be read in one sitting, or “taken in at one view,” which Poe later used to help define what the

¹² Tobin, Mary Ann. "Dickens, Poe and the International Copyright Battle." *Dickensian*. 98.2 (2002): 119-126. Web. 22 Nov. 2015.

¹³ Barnes 89.

length of a good poem would be with “The Philosophy of Composition” (Hutchisson 66). Hutchisson points to these early reviews as a way for Poe to “hammer...out his aesthetic ideas in a kind of critical workshop” (67). Edd Winfield Parks notes that by the time that Poe reviewed *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (1836), Poe knew that Boz was Charles Dickens and therefore, “*Pickwick*, fully sustained his ‘high opinion of the comic power and of the rich imaginative conception’ of [*Sketches*]” (66).

Poe left the *Messenger* in 1836 after continued squabbles with White over money and control of the magazine (two motifs which continually recurred throughout Poe’s life), and ultimately moved from New York to Philadelphia in 1838, gaining employment from William Evans Burton, an English actor who had immigrated to the States and had begun *Burton’s Gentleman’s Magazine*.¹⁴ Poe worked for Burton only briefly, but wrote a favourable review of *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby* in December of 1839.¹⁵ Poe commended this latest work by Dickens saying that although it is “in some respects, chargeable with exaggeration,” that overall, it was a work which was “unequaled” (Poe, “Review of *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*”). Poe, “the man with the tomahawk,” known for his harsh critiques, went on to write: “Charles Dickens is no ordinary man, and his writings must unquestionably live. We think it somewhat surprising that his serious pieces have elicited so little attention; but, possibly, they have been lost in the blaze of his comic reputation” (Poe, “Review of *The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby*”). By the end of 1840, *Burton’s* had been acquired by George Graham and modified to become *Graham’s Magazine*.¹⁶ Still based in Philadelphia, the magazine took on Poe as its editor and he reviewed *The Old Curiosity Shop* and the first American instalment of *Barnaby Rudge* in 1841, reviewing the completed novel in 1842 for the magazine.¹⁷ *The Old Curiosity Shop* was much admired by Poe. With his review, Poe crafted a defence of the major criticism of the time against Dickens: that his characters were larger than life exaggerations. Poe felt the charge was “grossly ill-founded. No critical principal is more firmly based in reason than that a certain amount of exaggeration is essential to the proper depicting of truth itself” (Poe, “Review of New Books” 251). This explanation of caricature being a form of truth connects with Dickens’s own explanation of this critique against his work in *Oliver Twist* in 1838. In his *Preface* to

¹⁴ Hutchisson 80.

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ Hutchisson 108.

¹⁷ Hutchisson 109.

Twist, Dickens defends his depictions of street urchins and prostitutes as being ugly truths which he felt some of his readers wished to deny. On this subject Poe remarks, “We do not paint an object to be true, but to appear true to the beholder. Were we to copy nature with accuracy the object copied would seem unnatural” (Poe, “Review of New Books” 251). Poe finishes his review by stating that the “great[est] feature” of the book was “its chaste, vigorous, and glorious *imagination*” (Poe, “Review of New Books” 251, author’s emphasis). This, Poe writes, would alone “suffice to compensate for a world more of error than Mr. Dickens ever committed” (Poe, “Review of New Books” 251).

In the July 1841 issue of *Graham’s*, Poe stated that he could solve any cryptogram in “French, Italian, Spanish, German, Latin or Greek, (or in any of the dialects of these languages,)” (“A Few Words on Secret Writing” 36). Nigel Barnes calls this “an incredible boast,” but one which proved his “precise mathematical mind” (135). Poe correctly solved the mystery of the murderer in *Barnaby Rudge* after having read only the first three available chapters. Hutchisson states Poe himself “said he had figured this out by page seven of the book” (125). Before Dickens finished *Rudge*, he came to see Poe’s written speculation concerning the murderer’s identity. Dickens reportedly was taken aback at the American author’s deduction abilities and said Poe, “must be possessed of the devil” (Dickens qtd. in Moskovitz). In effect, through the serialization of *Barnaby*, Poe was able to become the pinnacle of an active reader; he incorporated his own fingerprint into the story line by theorizing the outcome of the mystery. Through his reading and critique of *Rudge*, Poe crafted the framework necessary for a finely tuned detective story. Edd Winfield Parks writes, “Poe may not have been the father of the detective story, but he was certainly the first important critic who attempted to set an aesthetic for the *genre*” (46, author’s emphasis). This “aesthetic” was in part compiled through Poe’s review of *Pickwick Papers* and *Barnaby Rudge*. Parks notes that Poe generated four main points necessary for a mystery: the author may never mislead the reader, the secret of the mystery must always be “well kept,” the author of a mystery must actively seek to conceal his character instead of reveal and develop him, and finally, all of the previous three points can be best achieved by an omniscient narrator (46-48). All of these points which evolved into

Poe's "Philosophy of Composition" (1846) were grounded within his criticism of *Barnaby Rudge*.¹⁸

After Poe's rave reviews of Dickens's early work (and Poe's cryptographic analysis of *Barnaby Rudge*'s killer), the two authors had a meeting in Philadelphia sometime in early March 1842. Poe had written to Dickens requesting the interview; more than likely Poe, like many Americans, was curious to know about the popular English author, but Poe also had hopes of furthering his own career by the association.¹⁹ Most biographers of Poe point to the author's own claim that Dickens agreed to meet him twice, however, Burton R. Pollin has surmised that there could only have been one meeting, due in part to Dickens's limited availability on his American tour, but also to Dickens's reply to Poe which stated the two could meet the following day during a free hour which Dickens had available.²⁰ During this one interview, "they got along very well, although there is no record of their meeting; they subsequently maintained a mutual respect" (Barnes 143). Hutchisson notes that although Poe admired Dickens, *Barnaby Rudge*'s culmination had been somewhat of a disappointment to Poe (as he makes known in his second review of the novel). However, "Despite [Poe's] distaste for sentimentality and his objections to the novel as inimical to his ideas of unity of effect, Poe nonetheless lauded Dickens, displaying his ability to appreciate great talent, even if at odds with his conception of the aims of literature" (Hutchisson 125). Poe often faced terrible financial difficulties, and because of this he tried to make the most out of professional connections, always in the hopes of securing a better spot for himself as editor or literary critic, as well as for his own creative works. Poe sent Dickens copies of some of his writing ahead of the interview, but there appears to be no evidence as to what these works were. Whatever pieces were sent, "Dickens apparently read them and was favorably impressed, for he arranged for Poe to see him in Philadelphia...[where] the two men discussed the backward state of American poetry,

¹⁸ "It is, perhaps, but one of a thousand instances of the disadvantages, both to the author and the public, of the present absurd fashion of periodical novel-writing, that our author had not sufficiently considered or determined upon *any* particular plot when he began the story now under review (Poe "Charles Dickens" 475, author's emphasis).

¹⁹ Burton R. Pollin, note 3 and Hutchisson 126.

²⁰ "The sole evidence for two meetings is Poe's assertion in his letter to James R. Lowell of July 2, 1844, when he is trying to prove his 'personal' acquaintance with Dickens's style and ways of thinking via 'two long interviews' in 1842...Dickens was ill both in New York City and during his mere three days in Philadelphia, a stay scheduled for the projected book about his tour (*American Notes*, 1842). He desperately sought to avoid impositions on his time, yet had to waste a whole morning shaking over 600 hands, and he also visited the penitentiary and other public places, before moving on to Washington. Clearly Poe had only a single interview, as a scrutiny of Dickens's time frame shows. There is no thorough, comprehensive study of their relations..." (Pollin, note 3).

with Poe reading Emerson's poem 'The Humble Bee' as an example of the amateurish state of American letters" (Hutchisson 126).

Dickens took away from the interview a copy of Poe's *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840) in order to try to find a publisher for it in Britain, but ultimately failed to do so.²¹ Later that year from England, he wrote to Poe:

I have mentioned it to publishers with whom I have influence, but they have, one and all, declined the venture. And the only consolation I can give you is that I do not believe any collection of detached pieces by an unknown writer, even though he were an Englishman, would be at all likely to find a publisher in this metropolis just now.

Do not for a moment suppose that I have ever thought of you but with a pleasant recollection; and that I am not at all times prepared to forward your views in this country if I can. (Dickens *Pilgrim Letters* 3: 384-385).

Dickens was, as Slater refers to him, Chapman and Hall's "most golden of geese," and given Dickens's already established aim in promoting writing as a career and not merely a hobby, if Dickens could have used his influence with his own publishers to gain publication for Poe in England, he would have done so (Slater 170). Dickens had successfully obtained a paid sabbatical (albeit a loan upon his further work with them) after *Barnaby* from Chapman and Hall, and the fact that he could not get Poe's work published in Britain speaks more to the economic climate of England in the 1840s than it does to what publishers in England felt regarding Poe's creative talent. Upon Dickens's second trip to the United States in the 1860s, he took the time to locate Poe's now destitute aunt/mother-in-law Maria Clemm "and made a contribution to her support" (Quinn 367). This could demonstrate that not only did Dickens feel Poe was worthy of publication, but that he perhaps felt a sense of regret that Poe and his family remained financially handicapped in spite of Poe's efforts and abilities.²²

It was Poe and Dickens's discussion of the state of American writing which eventually lead to their falling out. In January 1844 an anonymous article in the London publication *Foreign Quarterly Review* synopsised contemporary American

²¹ "To Edgar Allan Poe, 27 November 1842." *Pilgrim Letters* 3: 384-385.

²² During 1863-1865, Maria Clemm had been in contact with several authors and publishers with which Poe was a contemporary asking for monetary support due to her dire financial situation. Among these were Gabriel Harrison, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and N. P. Willis (*Poe Collection of the Enoch Pratt Free Library*, Baltimore, Maryland). Dickens was one of several literary figures who donated to Maria's care.

writing and “concluded that the national literature was still undeveloped and backward” (Hutchisson 127). Hutchisson notes there were rumours that Dickens was the author of the piece, however Parks cites that Poe’s fellow author and friend James Russell Lowell believed the author was John Forster, and was only somewhat aided by Dickens, which is the most likely assumption (75). In the article, Poe was said to be a “capital artist after the manner of Tennyson” (Hutchisson 127). The article also lauded Henry Longfellow as being “unquestionably the first of American poets...and the only original poet in the United States” (Parks 75). Because Poe was formally educated in Europe as a young man (and perhaps because of his preferred subject matter), he was completely dismissed by the *Review*. Poe’s response to his friend James Russell Lowell was a hypersensitive defence of his work: “Among the other points he [Dickens] accuses myself of ‘metrical imitation’ of Tennyson, citing, by way of instance, passages from poems which were written and published by me long before Tennyson was heard of” (Poe qtd. in Galván 12). Prior to this article, Poe was already furious with the accusation that with “The Beleagured City,” (1839) Longfellow had plagiarised Poe’s “Haunted Palace” (1839) and “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839).²³ There was nothing so base as plagiarism to Poe’s mind.²⁴ So it was especially cutting to Poe for this article, presumably written by Dickens, to dismiss Poe in place of a poet whom the author felt was less than deserving. In defence of Dickens, Slater mentions that John Forster was the editor of *Foreign Quarterly* but chose to keep this “quiet” (203).

In “Concluding Remarks” of *American Notes*, Dickens denounces the American newspapers and then footnotes “an able, and perfectly truthful article, in *The Foreign Quarterly Review*, published in the present month of October; to which my attention has been attracted, since these sheets [i.e., of *American Notes*] have been passing through the press” (*American Notes* 270, footnote). *The Foreign Quarterly Review* was also published by Chapman and Hall, Dickens’s publishers at that time, and Slater theorizes that with this, Dickens is being “more than a little disingenuous...since he had certainly been deeply involved in the production of this article” (203). This specific article footnoted in *American Notes* is not the same one that supposedly denounces Poe as a copycat of Tennyson, but it does denounce *The New York Herald*, *The Morning Courier*, and the *New York Enquirer*, and included details about these papers which

²³ “The Little Longfellow War.” *The Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore*, <https://www.eapoe.org/people/longfehwh.htm#criticism>.

²⁴ Galván 11 and Hutchisson 174.

“Forster could have derived only from Dickens” (Slater 203). Because of this, it was widely assumed in New York that Dickens himself was the author and was reprinted in the *Herald* as “Boz’s First Words on America” (Slater 203). From this, it is easy to see why Poe came to the conclusion that Dickens had been the one who denounced him, but it is more likely that it was in fact John Forster.

During Poe’s brief stint at the United States Military Academy, West Point, he wrote a great deal of poetry and other creative pieces. Peter Ackroyd writes: “On occasions Poe accused his contemporaries of plagiarism, or, worse, bad grammar” (41). There are also numerous stories which circulate concerning Poe during his career as literary critic, and his contemporaries, who engaged in attacks and counterattacks about which author or newspaper was engaging in forgery.²⁵ Believing that Dickens, an author whom Poe so much admired, had accused him of imitating the work of someone else caused Poe to write Dickens (the man but not his work) off from that point forward.²⁶ Poe never wrote negatively about any of Dickens’s subsequent work, (although he did not live to see many more of Dickens’s works published), and he does mention having read *A Christmas Carol*, *The Chimes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit* of which he spoke fondly. In 1843, Poe joined a group called the American Copyright Club which fought for laws against literary piracy.²⁷ It is interesting to see how vehemently Poe felt towards the idea of plagiarism, yet his work does often take on many aspects of intertextuality, especially with Dickens’s works. Fernando Galván cites that Poe “was paying homage (even if a silent one) to Dickens, rather than plagiarizing him” (16). The difference between the two is the purpose of this dissertation as a whole: to demonstrate that through awareness of Dickens (both unconscious and conscious), new ways in which to read the primary and secondary works are created, thus re-readings are important to the original piece’s interpretation.

There is a further piece of work which points to some negative feelings (albeit playfully expressed) which may have been harboured by Poe against Dickens. It is theorized that Poe was the author behind *English Notes* (1842) published under the nom de plume, “Quarles Quickens, Esq.” In the text the author parodies the observations

²⁵ Galván 11.

²⁶ Fernando Galván demonstrates that despite this disappointment, Poe continued to admire Dickens’s works: “But if there was a British author whom Poe admired and appreciated throughout his career and one who strongly influenced him—even after this polemic about the authorship of the review...that was Charles Dickens” (13).

²⁷ Tobin 123.

made in Dickens's *American Notes*, including the Dedication.²⁸ The author writes that the text is dedicated "to those friends of mine in England" whose good humour would allow for them to take "delight" in the negative comments "Quickens" makes upon their country, "provided that it is done in my usual vein of kindness and good humor" (Quickens Dedication *English Notes*). If indeed the Poe scholar Joseph Jackson, author of the Forward of *English Notes*, is correct that "Quickens" is Poe (many signs point to this being an accurate deduction, including that "Quarles" was the pseudonym under which "The Raven" was originally published), then it suggests that Poe did feel negatively towards Dickens and/or *American Notes* shortly after their meeting in Philadelphia and Dickens's subsequent inability to secure Poe an English publisher (Jackson qtd. in Quickens 11-35).²⁹ While there is not any known published material by Poe which would speak to any negative ideas the author may have had on Dickens, this text, should it be taken as Poe's, would demonstrate Poe's ability to mimic the authorial style of Dickens in a text which was meant to be a parody and therefore had to read in Dickens's style.

In his article on Poe and plagiarism, Galván noted, "it seems self-evident that Poe drew on many of the devices used earlier by Dickens, even though he refined and improved them" (16). What I propose in this chapter is that Poe so deeply admired the works of Dickens that he utilized Dickensian devices and motifs as the seed for his own creations. "The Raven" was published on 29 January 1845 in the *Evening Mirror* and "The Philosophy of Composition" in April of 1846 in *Graham's Magazine*. The latter of course states how Poe systematically came up with an algorithm for exploring the use of the raven in his poem. However, both of these pieces were published (and presumably written) after the accusation of Poe being a mere imitator of Tennyson was published, and so it is much easier in hindsight to see that perhaps "The Philosophy of Composition," an essay which professes Poe's plan in writing "The Raven," as an effort by Poe to distance himself from any further accusations or affiliations with Dickens, or any other established authors that he could be accused of plagiarising. Curiously, Poe begins his essay by mentioning Dickens, which is more evidence of the extent to which

²⁸ Dickens's *Dedication* reads, "I dedicate this book to those friends of mine in America who...loving their country, can bear the truth, when it is told good humouredly, and in a kind spirit" (*American Notes*). Quickens's *Dedication* reads, "...I dedicate to those friends of mine in England, who,...loving their country very much as a Jew loves pork, can bear, nay, even take delight in whatever of abuse and detraction it may give me pleasure to indulge in respecting it—provided that it is done in my usual vein of kindness and good humor" (*English Notes*).

²⁹ Slater 184 and Pollin note 3.

Poe aimed to define his literary affiliations and influence (in effect, Poe grounds his essay by name dropping in order to gain a platitude for his work).³⁰ He references a note which Dickens wrote to him in which Dickens writes, “are you aware that Godwin wrote his *Caleb Williams* backwards? He first involved his hero in a web of difficulties...and then...cast about him for some mode of accounting for what had been done” (Dickens qtd. in Poe “Composition” 163). Ultimately, this is how Poe explains his having written “The Raven,” and furthermore, it is how Poe writes that *Barnaby Rudge* should have been conceptualized.³¹

“The Raven” brought Poe the fame which he had been seeking. “Overnight [he] became a celebrity. He was nicknamed ‘The Raven.’ He was invited to soirees and functions—a celebrity whose presence graced the tables of the most illustrious literati in the land. Publishers became interested in his tales and his poems” (Barnes 176). However, he was still only earning a pittance and was striving to work out a better salary or if not, to start his own magazine.³² Francis Gerry Fairfield in “A Mad Man of Letters” (1875) stated that “The Raven” was “either consciously or unconsciously...indebted for the thesis of the poem to the raven in ‘Barnaby Rudge,’...[this] is evident from a single passage in his review of that strange novel, in which he suggests that between the raven and the fantastic Barnaby, its master, might have been wrought out an analogical resemblance that would have vastly heightened the effect intended by Mr. Dickens. This analogical resemblance, which he denies to exist in the novel, but which exists there, nevertheless, constitutes the thesis of Poe’s great literary hit” (276). Dickens himself was inspired to insert a raven into *Barnaby Rudge* as he owned several pet ravens (all named Grip) of which he always spoke fondly in letters. The actual Grips were described as being intelligent, albeit somewhat mischievous tricksters, whose daily play brought Dickens and his wife much joy.³³

³⁰ “Charles Dickens, in a note now lying before me, alluding to an examination I once made of the mechanism of ‘Barnaby Rudge,’ says—‘By the way, are you aware that Godwin wrote his ‘Caleb Williams’ backwards...’ It is only with the dénouement constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence...” (Poe “The Philosophy of Composition” 163).

³¹ Poe writes that one of Dickens’s mistakes with *Barnaby Rudge* was that he failed to execute his novel with the dénouement in sight: “He had placed himself in a dilemma from which even his high genius could not extricate him. He at once shifts the main interest—and in truth we do not see what better he could have done. The reader’s attention becomes absorbed in the riots, and he fails to observe that what should have been the true catastrophe of the novel, is exceedingly feeble and ineffective (Poe “The Philosophy of Composition” 478).

³² Hutchisson 128.

³³ “To Daniel Maclise” Dickens *Pilgrim Letters* 2: 230-232.

Before examining further the relationship between “The Raven” and *Barnaby*, there is a strong link of intertextuality between a lesser known text of Dickens’s and Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1843). Before Poe wrote “The Raven,” he was taken with Dickens’s *Master Humphrey’s Clock* production, specifically *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1840-41). Within this publication is a little referenced tale that Master Humphrey reads aloud to his social group, “The Clock-Case. A Confession Found in a Prison in the Time of Charles the Second” (1840).³⁴ Poe greatly admired this tale, and in his review of it (and *The Old Curiosity Shop*) in May of 1841, he wrote that of all the tales held within *Master Humphrey’s Clock*, “Confession” was the most “power[ful]...The other stories are brief...The narrative of “The Bowyer,” as well as of “John Podgers,” is not altogether worthy of Mr. Dickens. They were probably sent to press to supply a demand for copy...But the ‘Confession Found in a Prison in the Time of Charles the Second’ is a paper of remarkable power, truly original in conception, and worked out with great ability” (Poe “Review of New Books” 249). By taking a deeper look at both of these stories paired together, I aim to demonstrate that not only was Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” based upon the work which Dickens achieved with “Confession,” but also that Poe’s work demonstrates the extent to which Dickens was attempting to accomplish something new in literature with his work: examining the psyche of a killer.

Dickens’s tale follows the first-person confession of an ex-soldier in the late seventeenth century. Upon returning home from service, he retires to a cottage with his wife and adopted son. The son is the focus of this tale; he is the narrator’s nephew and the narrator goes to great lengths to discuss to what extent he became estranged from this boy’s father and mother, which therefore makes his relationship with his adopted son all the more strained. The boy was adopted by his uncle upon the death of his parents, and his mother seemed subconsciously to have a fear of her brother-in-law. The narrator tells us that his sister-in-law distrusted him, and seemed to unconsciously know his true inner nature of evil. He writes, she “haunted [him]; her fixed and steady look comes back upon me now, like the memory of a dark dream, and makes my blood run

³⁴ Herb Moskowitz makes mention of the plot similarities between Dickens’s “A Confession Found in a Prison in the Time of Charles the Second” and Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” in his article titled “A Literary Meeting: Dickens and Poe in Philadelphia,” but Moskowitz limits his discussion to one paragraph and does not focus on the deeper textual similarities which I have endeavoured to examine here. Mr Moskowitz and I briefly corresponded in early 2016, and I found his findings on Dickens and Poe to be confirmed by Fernando Galván’s research (which I also reference in this chapter). Moskowitz delves more into close reading with his analysis of Poe and Dickens than Galván does, and is therefore an important researcher to my thesis.

cold” (Dickens “Confession” 42). His nephew is suffused with his mother’s distrust of the narrator and his gaze becomes a doubling of his mother’s. Upon the death of the narrator’s brother, he explains to his brother that he wishes the couple to take charge of his son, and further, that should the boy die, all of the father’s property would be willed to the narrator’s wife as a way to repay their kindness. With this back-story established, the narrator then discusses how it is the boy’s gaze, or more correctly his eyes, which so disturb the narrator. They replicate his mother’s eyes, which looked upon the narrator with distrust and suspicion. The boy’s eyes haunt the narrator so that he then begins to plot the boy’s murder and with this revelation, the narrator begins a slow decent into this fixation which brings about his undoing.

In his essay “The Uncanny” (1919), Freud focuses particularly on the power of “the evil eye,” and this concept is one which both Dickens and Poe utilize in their respective works. Freud writes that “the evil eye” is related to the feeling of envy, and even projected envy, which is then “convert[ed]...into effective action” (147). In short, whenever someone possesses something of value, they can project onto others the envy that they themselves would have felt were they in the other’s place. This fear of the envy of others causes the owner of the valuable item to have “a covert intention to harm” the other person out of a need to protect himself (Freud 147). Taken in this light, because the adopted son in “Confession” gazes at the narrator with the same look his mother had, the narrator is sent the message (perhaps unconsciously) that the boy wishes in some way to harm him, which for the narrator would be to expose him in his true form as that of a weak and cowardly ex-soldier. We shall return to “the evil eye” concerning Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” shortly, but Freud also defines the uncanny as being partly to do with a remembering of something once familiar to us. He writes, “the ‘uncanny’ is that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar” (124). Dickens utilizes this motif on numerous occasions. The uncanny is the basis for Esther Summerson and Lady Dedlock’s relationship throughout the whole of *Bleak House*. Marley’s ghost is uncanny to Scrooge because he had known Marley as a living, embodied man, which thus makes the haunting so terrifying and life-changing for Scrooge. Pip’s whole journey to becoming a man is fraught with the uncanny in Miss Havisham, Magwitch and his own sister, Mrs Joe. As well there are uncanny homes throughout Dickens’s texts; these homes seem familiar and welcoming, but at the same time they are the sites of familial upheavals. Much of Dickens is at once familiar and of the “other,” therefore lending it

to be disorienting. McParland writes, “the uncanny [in the works of Dickens post 1860s], appears to connect [his] concerns with the American experience of the Civil War period [when] community and home were shattered at that time in a house divided” (9). Dickens utilizes the uncanny throughout his works and in the instance of “Confession,” the adopted son is uncanny to the narrator because he reminds the narrator of his sister-in-law, the woman who saw through to his hidden, secret self. Once the narrator thinks he is rid of the sister-in-law, it is uncanny when her knowing gaze reappears in the narrator’s life with the boy. It is for this reason, that the narrator feels he must take “effective action” (Freud 147).

When the narrator finally fashions a plan to drown the boy, he falters as he starts to see “eyes in everything” (Dickens “Confession” 44). It would seem that the boy’s gaze (in actuality his mother’s gaze) permeates everything and becomes more of a threat which must be eliminated. This sense of the murderer being haunted by his victim’s eyes is later used in *Oliver Twist* (1837) when Sikes kills Nancy. He bludgeons Nancy to death upon finding out she had met secretly with Mr Brownlow in order to help Oliver. Sikes is consumed with the thought that the corpse of Nancy is watching him:

There had been a moan and motion of the hand; and, with terror added to hate, he had struck and struck again. Once he threw a rug over it; but it was worse to fancy the eyes, and imagine them moving towards him, than to see them glaring upward, as if watching the reflection of the pool of gore that quivered and danced in the sunlight on the ceiling. (Dickens *Twist* 323).

Here Dickens again utilizes the concept of a murderer’s inability to escape being seen by his victim, the only person to have visually witnessed his crime. This demonstrates that it was a topic which Dickens wished to expound upon more fully in this later text as the core idea which so haunts Sikes.³⁵

In “Confession” Dickens glosses over the actual murder, and instead the narrator blanks out this scene, awakening with the boy already dead. Dickens chooses to focus

³⁵ Unfortunately, Poe did not write any known critical pieces on *Oliver Twist*. When *Twist* was published in 1837, Poe moved his family from Virginia to New York in the hopes of securing a position as a contributor for the *New York Review*, but this venture was not successful and he published very little during his time spent there. Arthur Hobson Quinn writes, “Of Poe’s personal life little has come down from this New York sojourn” (267). Being the fan of Dickens that Poe already was, one could assume he was familiar with the popular *Twist*, but for whatever reason (most likely the timing), he chose not to write publically on the text. I speculate that this was also the cause of Poe’s not writing a review of *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

on the psychological undoing of the narrator while he is planning to bury the boy in a part of the garden which had been newly planted. Because of this tilling, the narrator believes the signs of a second digging would not be noticed. The narrator subsequently falls into an obsession with the plot of ground, watching it every day for signs of change. On the fourth day after the murder, a colleague from the army comes to call upon the narrator, bringing with him a second unknown ex-soldier. The narrator entertains the two guests with refreshments outside and in a pompous fashion, places the table and chairs upon the very spot the boy is buried. At first, the narrator is assured that his secret is safe. However, the visit lingers on and errant bloodhounds, having escaped from their master, invade the party. They announce themselves with “a low deep howl” (Dickens “Confession” 46). The bloodhounds slowly begin circling the party, having sniffed out the boy’s remains, and the narrator gives his deed away by refusing to heed to the dogs and move from his spot over the grave. The second, unknown soldier guesses that there is a ““foul mystery”” there and the two detain the narrator while the “angry dogs t[ore] at the earth and thr[ew] it up into the air like water” (Dickens “Confession” 47). Upon the sight of the boy’s remains, the narrator confesses his guilt to his two guests, is tried and sentenced to death. The theme which Poe seemed so taken by was that of a social outsider who becomes so consumed by his fear of oppression or undoing (via the gaze of “the evil eye”), that he turns to murder in order to free himself from his perceived oppressor (“the evil eye[s]” themselves). The supposed madman then buries his victim on his own property, engages in watching the grave site, and eating meals upon it, in an attempt to flaunt his victory, but unfortunately he finds that his fear still lingers. Thus, he ends up giving his deed away to outside visitors when his descent into madness is complete. In the case of “Confession,” the perceived threat is the little boy’s eyes and gaze, which for the narrator, is a haunting of the boy’s mother, a woman who saw him for the jealous madman he hid from view.

All of the plot motifs which were put in use in “Confession,” the oppression of gaze, the burying of a victim on the grounds on which he lived, and the further flaunting of the burial spot by the murderer, are put into use in Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart.” January of 1843 saw Poe’s publication of the poem in *The Pioneer*, a short-lived publication out of Cambridge, Massachusetts founded by Poe’s friend and fellow poet James Russell Lowell. “The Tell-Tale Heart” is perhaps one of Poe’s more familiar works, and it has been brought to the cinema screen numerous times since the days of

silent film.³⁶ This tale centres on a narrator who (very much in line with Dickens's narrator of "Confession") is obsessed with "the evil eye" of a perceived oppressor. In this instance, the narrator becomes preoccupied with the eye of an old man with whom he lives. The old man has one "pale blue eye, with a film over it" (Poe "Tell-Tale" 257). The eye becomes so horrible that the narrator concludes he must murder the old man to "rid [him]self of the eye forever," thus bringing about Freud's "effective action" (Poe "Tell-Tale" 257, Freud 147). The reader is not privy to just what the narrator feels the old man's "evil eye" knows, but there is a perceived sense of "the evil eye" having secret knowledge concerning something which the narrator wants hidden. In this case, it is inferred by the narrator's opening and closing remarks (in which he exclaims he is perfectly sane), that the narrator deduces the old man's "evil eye" in its "otherness" doubts the narrator's sanity. Because the eye is different, and because the narrator is so adamant that he is sane, the pieces of the puzzle imply that in fact the narrator is *not* sane, and feels the old man's "evil eye" must know this.

Just as Dickens's narrator plans the act in advance, waiting for the perfect moment in which to murder his victim, Poe's narrator plans his murder of the old man for an entire week, watching the man while he sleeps. After the narrator engages in this secret watching (a reverse of "the evil eye"), he finally plans his attack, but upon this eighth night, the old man hears the noise of this man coming in to his room, and the two engage in an hour-long silent and still observation of the other. The narrator knows the old man is aware of his presence, but this seems to propel him on to commit the murder. The narrator kills the old man by smothering him with his bed; he then dismembers the body and buries it under the floorboards. Thus, the corpses from both stories are buried on their own premises by their murderers. This is done to elicit the least suspicion from those looking for the missing victims. Poe's narrator is exceedingly proud of his handy-work and appears less concerned with his deed being discovered. It is after the police arrive that the narrator's confidence begins to break, much like Dickens's narrator's does. Poe writes, "There entered three men...officers of the police...I smiled,—for what had I to fear?" (Poe "Tell-Tale" 264). He proceeds to entertain the police officers with refreshments upon the very spot where the old man is buried beneath the floorboards, exactly as Dickens's soldier narrator did in "Confession." Both

³⁶ The first "talkie" film version of "The Tell-Tale Heart" was released in 1934 and directed by Brian Desmond Hurst. Six more cinematic versions of the short story have been made since then, including the popular cartoon version of 1953 narrated by James Mason.

murderers try to prove to themselves how collected they are after performing their deeds by leading visitors to the spots of their hidden victims. Additionally, both engage in serving refreshments to those who would find them out on the very graves of their victims, thus engaging in a battle of wits with these men. If the visitors (in both instances, men of the law) were to dine on top of the spots where the corpses are buried without knowing, it proves to the murderer that he is indeed clever, having taken “wise precautions” to hide his victim as Poe’s narrator dictates (Poe “Tell-Tale” 264). Dickens’s narrator is found out by bloodhounds; he then “fought and bit [at his captors]...like a madman” and ultimately confesses to the crime (Dickens “Confession” 47). Poe’s narrator maintains his sanity throughout the tale (it begins with his assertion of his sanity), but when he fears he hears the beating of the old man’s heart beneath the floorboards, he “foamed—[he] raved—[he] swore!” (Poe “Tell-Tale” 265). Finally, he believes the police officers hear the beating of the heart as well and are ignoring it in order to make “a mockery of [his] horror” (Poe “Tell-Tale” 265). The story ends famously with the narrator shrieking his guilt to the officers: “tear up the planks! here, here!—It is the beating of his hideous heart!” (Poe “Tell-Tale” 265).

Unquestionably, “Confession Found in a Prison in the Time of Charles the Second” had a hand in shaping “The Tell-Tale Heart.” “Tomahawk” Poe cut down Dickens’s “Confession” into a streamlined piece which examined the psychology of the killer as well as the act of the murder. Poe kept the aspects he so loved in “Confession,” such as the first-person narration of the killer himself, the oppressive power of eyes, and the final feast over the hidden burial, but fashioned something which read more cleanly, with less established backstory. Instinctively always an editor, Poe recognized Dickens’s work as being “truly original,” but cut out the parts he felt were extraneous; in Poe’s version, the relationship between the murderer and his victim was not important, instead what was important was the perceived oppression (as Freud would say, the oppression is projected envy) which “the evil eye” held over the murderer. Poe was undoubtedly “paying homage” to Dickens (as Galván noted with regard to other works), but he does so in a way that gives a rebirth to Dickens’s works (16). Poe utilizes his skills as an editor to cut down (his critics would cite this as tomahawking) the extraneous parts of the work which he admired, and grew his own work from the same seed, thus avoiding plagiarism, but instead creating a work which was original but based upon the seed planted by Dickens.

Early nineteenth-century works under the broader genre of “horror” attracted both authors, but until Dickens and Poe, works of horror and suspense were based more in the shock value of the horror, rather than in examining the psychology of the evildoers themselves. Galván writes that as young boys, they were both shaped by the horror stories within *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, and as has been touched upon elsewhere, Dickens often spoke of his leanings towards horror stories from the nursemaids of his youth.³⁷ It could be asserted that Poe was inspired by “Confession,” as he himself said it was a piece which was truly original. With “The Tell-Tale Heart,” Poe sought to begin where Dickens did: with a murderer who is drawn to overcome his perceived oppressor by killing him. Poe takes his tale a step further into the interworking of the murderer’s mind, and endeavours to examine how the choice of burial place is conceived, and what occurs in the murderer’s psyche during the tense moments which lead to the reveal his victim’s body. As Hutchisson writes, Poe’s mystery stories are “not a whodunit or even a how-dunit, but a why-dunit,” a critique which demonstrates that Poe’s work was embarking upon something new with nineteenth-century fiction (143). By looking at “Confession” with “The Tell-Tale Heart,” it becomes apparent that Dickens is also examining the murderer from the same vantage point: as a course of examining *why* was the murder committed. After reviewing these stories together, one can more clearly see the extent to which Dickens was endeavouring to perceive and understand the psyche of a killer in his tale. The first installation of *Master Humphrey’s Clock* made good sales, but once readers saw that it was not a full-length story but a collection of smaller tales, it was not well received. Thackeray wrote of it, “Dickens is sadly flat, with his Old Clock: but still sells 50000” (Thackeray qtd. in Slater 150). This, for one of many reasons, convinced Dickens to put his miscellaneous shorter stories on hold with *Clock* and instead move to the cohesive story: *The Old Curiosity Shop*. “The Tell-Tale Heart” on the other hand, was extremely well received by both its American and British readers; it was a “sensation” (Hayes 259). Reviewing it for the *New York Tribune* in July 1843, Horace Greeley noted it “a strong and skilful, but to our minds overstrained and repulsive, analysis of the feelings and promptings of an insane homicide” (qtd. in Hayes 259). The success of “The Tell-Tale Heart” is due in part to the extent to which Poe utilized the then

³⁷ Galván 13.

undefined “uncanny,” but also to the powers of Poe’s editorial skills: his talents at seeing how to best manipulate a plot into a “tale.”

Mary Ann Tobin surmises that Poe’s own journalistic pen provides sufficient evidence that he had read and enjoyed *A Christmas Carol*. She states that in the 4 February 1845 edition of the *Broadway Journal* Poe wrote, ““We said a good many severe things, even malicious, about Dickens, as soon as he left us; but we seized on his Christmas Carol with as hearty a good will as old Scrooge poked his timid clerk in the ribs the morning after Christmas”” (123). However, the *Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore* does not list Poe as having written this criticism, although it is highly likely (since he was working at the *Broadway Journal* at the time the article was written) that he was aware of Dickens’s Christmas novella.³⁸ *A Christmas Carol* was first published in 1843, with “The Raven” following it two years after. When examining “The Raven,” it should first be stated that the poem itself is set in “bleak December,” like that of Dickens’s *Carol* (Poe “Raven” lines 12-13). The choice of “bleak” draws upon a correlation with December and death, it being the time of year when western culture has confronted the end of the planting cycle, but it as well reminds us of the cheerless day to day life of a person for whom the metaphorical light of Christmas does not touch. Dickens states in his preface to *Carol*, “I have endeavoured, in this ghostly little book, to raise the Ghost of an Idea...May it haunt their houses pleasantly and no one wish to lay it!” (Dickens *Carol* Preface). Thus, Dickens begins his story hoping that it may pleasantly frighten and positively motivate his readers into embarking upon a new understanding of each person’s individual importance to his/her greater community. Dickens also utilizes this theme of a call to love one’s community at Christmas time in his other Christmas books: *The Chimes* (1844), *The Cricket on the Hearth* (1845), *The Battle of Life: A Love Story* (1846) and *The Haunted Man and the Ghost’s Bargain* (1848). *A Christmas Carol* was a confrontation of the end of a cycle, and death itself.

Poe read and enjoyed much of Dickens’s works, and found Dickens to be one of the best of his contemporaries, and so it is easy to see the extent to which the popular Christmas story can be found reflected within Poe’s works. I propose that “The Raven” is a mirror image of *A Christmas Carol*; it is a mirror which displays the opposite world which exists to our own. Under this theory, “The Raven” is an alternate dimension of *A*

³⁸ “Edgar Allan Poe’s Writings in the Broadway Journal”, *Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore*, <https://www.eapoe.org/works/editions/mbj001c.htm#vol01>.

Christmas Carol. T. S. Eliot wrote that the modern poet's work "must inevitably be judged by the standards of the past" (50). A "judgement," in Eliot's use of the word, does not mean that one is upheld to be of higher value than the other, but that the reader can gain further depths of understanding on a text through viewing it in context to works which came before. While Dickens's work is not in the past when compared to Poe's, he was an authorial success and a predecessor to Poe, who was at that time, still struggling to make his work known. I argue that both authors' works need to be seen, or judged, within the context of the other in order to gain a more complete understanding of their importance. In essence, I argue for the works of Dickens and Poe to be seen together as an infinity mirror, reflecting the other in their own images, creating further parallel readings. With "The Raven," Poe utilizes what Eliot cites as being "an awareness" of the work which came before his, "to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show" (Eliot 52). "The Raven" utilizes the same inception as Dickens's *Carol*, but "without the Dickensian leaven of an uplifting message of hope for human improvement" as Burton R. Pollin wrote in his article on Poe's "The Bells" and Dickens's *The Chimes* (4).

To focus on the Christmas text which it has been established Poe read, *A Christmas Carol* centres on Scrooge, who is haunted by four ghosts: The Ghosts of Christmas Past, Present, Yet to Come, and of course, Jacob Marley.³⁹ With their unique voices, they all urge him to change his stagnant way of life, to release his negative fixation over money and to make "Mankind...[his] business" (Dickens *Carol* 24). In the end, Scrooge does become changed by his haunting: it awakens his understanding of a universal humanity, and encourages him to lay his previous troubles behind him (the death of his sister, the felt sense of abandonment by his father, the ending of his earlier romantic relationship). Further, the hauntings enable Scrooge to grow into a more enlightened self. Thus, through his hauntings, Scrooge "honour[s] Christmas in [his] heart,...all the year" (Dickens *Carol* 92). Poe's narrator in "The Raven" has a similar haunting to the ones Scrooge encounters in *Carol*, but Poe diverges from Dickens's intention of positive growth for his protagonist, and has an altogether different outcome from his speaker's interaction with the "spirit" in "The Raven." The scene for haunting

³⁹ Burton R. Pollin writes that Poe "unquestionably" read *The Chimes*, as it was pirated in New York, Philadelphia and as well in Wiley and Putnam's publication, "Library of Choice Reading." Pollin surmises that Poe had a "keen interest in this firm's output, which included his own two separate 1845 volumes of the poems and of the tales" (1). Pollin also examines the claim that Poe told fellow author Frederick W Thomas "'The Chimes' w[ere] Poe's] final inspiration" for "The Bells" (2).

is similar to *Carol*: the narrator sits alone in his chamber, nodding off whilst reading ancient books, and notes how the dying embers of his fire each “wrought its ghost upon the floor” (Poe “Raven” line 8). Scrooge, fresh from his first sighting of Marley as his door knocker, “double-lock[s]” himself in his own chamber and sits close to his old Dutch-made fireplace with its Biblical tile illustrations, and “brood[s] over” his encounter as he watches the fire (Dickens *Carol* 17–18). Scrooge’s fireplace is described as being quaintly ornate in its decoration of the illustration of Scriptures: “hundreds of figures to attract his thoughts; and yet that face of Marley, seven years dead...swallowed up the whole” (Dickens *Carol* 18). In an interesting parallel of Poe, Dickens utilizes the phantasmagorical quality which so characterizes Poe’s work. The narrator of *A Christmas Carol* speculates that Scrooge brooded on his door knocker vision to the point that each fireplace tile could have formed a “copy of old Marley’s head” (Dickens *Carol* 18). Both narrators sit contemplating their fires: Poe’s narrator broods over the loss of his love Lenore, and seeks to lose himself and his grief in reading. Scrooge too seeks to distract himself from his thoughts of Marley, dead for seven years, by trying to convince himself that the sighting was nothing but nonsense, or “Humbug!” (Dickens *Carol* 18). Neither achieves their hope for this distraction, as both are then visited by an entity. The narrator of “The Raven” is stirred by “a tapping,/ As of someone gently rapping” at his door (Poe lines 3-4). Finally convinced that his apparition was nonsense, Scrooge’s eyes rest upon “a disused bell, that hung in [his] room, and communicated for some purpose now forgotten with a chamber in the highest story of the building” (Dickens *Carol* 18). Bells have long been associated with spiritual visitations and nineteenth-century literature picked up on this thread of connection in part from the movement of Spiritualism.⁴⁰ The bell begins to ring and is then joined by the other bells in the house, all of which signal the presence of a spirit. The bells suddenly stop ringing in unison and it is then that Scrooge hears “a clanking noise, deep down below;...[and he] then remembered to have heard that ghosts in haunted houses were described as dragging chains” (Dickens *Carol* 18–19). The narrator of “The Raven,” answers the rapping at his door and “opened wide the / door;—/ [but finds] Darkness there and nothing more” (Poe lines 24-26). Famously, the rapping starts again for Poe’s narrator, but this time at the man’s window, and it is with the entrance of the raven itself that the narrator’s haunting begins. Thus, both

⁴⁰ I researched this connection in my master’s thesis “Dickens, Decay and Doomed Spirits: Ghosts and the Living Dead in the Works of Charles Dickens” for the University of Leicester in 2013.

spirits are accompanied by specific sounds (Marley rattles his chains and the raven both taps upon the door and says “nevermore”) which announce their coming and become the entities’ *leitmotifs*.

When both of the protagonists meet the entities that haunt them, a particular doubling of the self occurs. In “The Uncanny,” Freud remarks “the double was originally an insurance against the extinction of the self” but reemerges when discussing what is uncanny: a doubling of self is at once familiar and not familiar, which ultimately equates to “the Doppelgänger,” something both disorienting and terrifying (142). Freud discusses how at first the “double” is a symptom of narcissism: humanity’s ultimate desire to preserve him/herself (Freud proposes the soul was the first double of the body). However, Freud remarks that after this narcissism evolves, the double takes on a different aspect. It evolves from “an assurance of immortality [and]...becomes the uncanny harbinger of death” (142). Dickens utilizes the “double” in *Carol* with the relationship between Marley and Scrooge. Marley’s ghost tells Scrooge that the ghost wears the chains which he “forged in life,” and asks Scrooge if the “pattern [is] strange to [him]?” (Dickens *Carol* 22). Marley intimates that it should be very familiar to him, as the metaphorical iron bondage which Scrooge has laboured in making for himself “is a ponderous chain!” (Dickens *Carol* 22). To this, Scrooge looks about him, expecting to see “fathoms of iron cables” matching those attached to Marley, but Scrooge “see[s] nothing” (Dickens *Carol* 22). This sentence itself is pregnant with meaning, as the narrator utilizes Scrooge’s lack of sight to underscore the latter’s inability to metaphorically see the damage he has done to himself by ignoring his fellow man: both men are working similar punishments to fit similar crimes.

Marley tells Scrooge that the purpose of his appearance is to prepare Scrooge for the following visitations of the ghosts of past, present and future. More than this, Marley’s visit is meant to highlight how much alike he and Scrooge are. The narrator himself remarks in the opening passage that the two had formed a unit: “Sometimes people new to the business called Scrooge Scrooge, and sometimes Marley, but he answered to both names. It was all the same to him” (Dickens *Carol* 6). Marley cannot explain how Scrooge is able to see him on this particular night, as the former has sat beside Scrooge “many and many a day” without Scrooge’s noticing (Dickens *Carol* 24). Despite the unexplained reason behind it, Marley utilizes Scrooge’s ability to see him as a way of moving Scrooge to accept the lesson which the ghosts entreat to teach him, and it is successful. Scrooge does learn to become aware of his disconnection

from society and his social/spiritual death, and seeks to become engaged with those around him, which in turn, broadens his deeper and unseen connection to his higher self, or his super ego. Much as one's dreams are driven by the unconscious mind (as Freud proposed in 1900), Scrooge's interaction with Marley is driven by his inner desire to change. Marley merely becomes the vehicle for said change to occur.

Without a catalyst for Scrooge, there would be no way for him to make the changes in his life, therefore, Marley can be seen as a physical manifestation of Scrooge's inner self, or his id, and thus his deeper desire for change. A similar "doubling" can be seen with Poe's brooding narrator and the raven: the raven is the narrator's id, but as the narrator has no desire for change, the id (or the raven) tempts him into succumbing to his depression and isolation.

"The Raven" opens with the narrator brooding alone on the pains of his personal past and is separated from any community in what appears to be self-inflicted isolation. The raven itself enters the poem as the only other character and proceeds to tell the narrator exactly what the narrator desires to hear (much as Marley, Scrooge's "double," tells Scrooge what he secretly desires to know). The only word the bird speaks is "Nevermore," and the narrator ruminates that "nevermore," has a connection to the bird's soul: "That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour" (Poe "The Raven" lines 58, 66). "Nevermore" becomes for the raven much like the rattling of chains is to Marley. Both characters enter and exit with their established *leitmotifs*. The raven goes on to tell the narrator that he will never leave him, an ominous statement at best, and it is at this point that the narrator begins to attempt to examine the bird, in much the same way he was ruminating over the books of "forgotten lore" prior to the bird's arrival (Poe "Raven" line 2). The raven will never leave the narrator because he is in fact a manifestation of self, a "Doppelgänger." It is when the narrator begins this study ("linking / Fancy unto fancy,") that his thoughts turn to his dead Lenore, and then the "fancy" connects the raven to the woman (Poe "Raven" lines 84-85). The raven's eyes "burn[—] / into [his] bosom's core;" and the narrator then connects the raven with his lost Lenore who will "nevermore" press the velvet of his cushioned chair (Poe "Raven" line 90). The narrator becomes angry at this realization and directs the anger at the raven: "'Prophet!' said I, 'thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!'" (Poe "Raven" line 112). Despite the aggression of the narrator, the bird tells him what the narrator already knows: that there is no "balm in Gilead;" more

directly, that there is nothing which can soothe the narrator's grief over Lenore (Poe "Raven" line 109). The narrator has been privy to this knowledge, but it took the doubling of himself in the raven's presence and *leitmotif* of "nevermore" for the knowledge to make its way from the unconscious to the conscious mind.

Besides the similarities of the two works in setting, there is a shared state of Freud's "doubling" which occurs between the protagonists and the entities which haunt them. In life, Marley and Scrooge were almost interchangeable, and so in his death, Marley has the ability to commune with his business partner because the two were linked so closely in the physical world. Marley's ghost is able to begin Scrooge's lessons (which the other spirits finish) because he is a ghost and is therefore privy to legions of otherworldly knowledge. Although the raven is represented as an earthly bird at first, it gradually becomes much more than that. After the narrator talks of the raven's "fiery eyes" which burn to the man's "core," thus signifying the shift the raven undergoes from curious happenstance to ominous omen, he says he senses the "air gr[owing] denser, perfumed from an unseen / censer" (Poe "Raven" lines 90, 95-96). The incense aromas from the censer signify that the atmosphere of the narrator's chambers is changing from the everyday to that of a spiritual one. The censer harkens to Revelation 8:3-5 which describes the use of a censer and incense by angels: "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer...And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand. And the angel took the censer, and filled it with fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth" (*King James Version*). Revelation thus tells its readers that incense is a vehicle for communion with angels, saints and ultimately God. Therefore, when the narrator of "The Raven" senses the aromas of incense, he is supplying the evidence that his interview with the raven will have a spiritual significance. He realizes God has sent the raven to him as a sign of the totality of the narrator's grief: "by these angels he / hath sent thee (Poe "Raven" lines 98-99). Because the raven only says "nevermore," the narrator concludes (due to the spiritual nature of the scene and his pondering the death of his love Lenore when the raven appears) that his grief over his loss will be all encompassing and never ending. He states as he looks back upon his grief: "And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, *still* is sitting / ...just above my chamber door; / And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming" (Poe "Raven" lines 127-129). Through spiritual motifs, the raven can now be seen to be an aspect of the narrator himself: his "double" and higher self, who has the ability to

commune with God, except that this communion does not culminate in a positive spiritual growth for the narrator. Unlike Dickensian uplifting moral messages, Poe has utilized the Scrooge/Marley relationship to build a demonic connection that the narrator of “The Raven” has with himself via the raven. Poe utilized the bird to depict the inner nature of his narrator much as Dickens had Marley serve as a symbol for his inner desire for change. The raven demonstrates the narrator’s darker inner self which unlike Scrooge, who has a positive inner self who wishes for change, the narrator of “The Raven” is so driven by his grief over Lenore, that his desire to change is only for the worse in that he becomes consumed by his grief by the end of the poem.

In Poe’s first review of *Barnaby Rudge* (1841), he stated that the most important aspect of the story (so he felt the audience reading Dickens’s serialized chapters would come to realize) was the “hero” Barnaby Rudge and his pet raven Grip. Poe writes that the relationship between these two characters is so original, beautiful, but above all “true,” and that this awareness of truth “is the *sixth sense* of the man of genius” (Poe “Original Review”, author’s emphasis). Poe writes of the “beauty” of the relationship between Barnaby and Grip:

[Grip’s] croakings are to be frequently, appropriately, and prophetically heard in the course of the narrative, and whose whole character will perform, in regard to that of the idiot [Barnaby], much the same part as does, in music, the accompaniment in respect to the air. Each is distinct. Each differs remarkably from the other. Yet between them there is a strong analogical resemblance; and, although each may exist apart, they form together a whole which would be imperfect, wanting either. This is clearly the design of Mr. Dickens—although he himself may not at present perceive it. (Poe “Original Review”).

The function of the raven in Poe’s poem follows what Poe himself has outlined in his review of Dickens’s novel. Poe’s raven is the answer to the questions the narrator of the poem poses: he is the narrator’s echo from his deeper self. Poe acted upon the relationship established in *Barnaby Rudge* between Barnaby and Grip, and redirected it to outline the relationship a person can have with their depression or sense of loss, doing with Dickens’s work what Galván outlined in his article.

In many ways Poe’s work reflects the darker side of Dickens’s. Dickens often presented less-than-likeable characters and scenes of depressing isolation as a call to his readers to enact the change which nineteenth-century life needed. Some of the most

difficult scenes within Dickens's body of work are problems of society made human: the death of Jo in *Bleak House*, the abandonment of David at school and then Murdstone and Grinby's wine warehouse, the miserly behaviour of Ebenezer Scrooge. All of these figures are the embodiment of lack (societal, emotional and spiritual) that Dickens and many of his contemporaries noted existed within their everyday lives. Poe is often regarded as tracing the psychological landscape of the nineteenth-century psyche.⁴¹ In *The Victorians and their Books* (1935) Amy Cruse catalogued readers stating they felt an "affectionate intimacy" for Dickens's characters and "greeted them as family friends" (159). We, however, seldom feel such intimacy for Poe's protagonists. Dickens's figures often exhibit the familiar, and while unexpected plot twists do occur, the reader is not unsettled by the character's depictions of plot. Poe admired this in Dickens's works (he said as much in his reviews of *Barnaby*), and he as well strove to write narrators who would never mislead the reader but he felt that they should always remain somewhat undeveloped.⁴² For Poe, these omniscient narrators would be able to keep his plot twists and secrets, which accounts for the creating the effect of which Poe discusses in depth in his "Philosophy of Composition."

Instead of opting to create familiar characters with which his readers could form felt friendships, Poe chose to create narrators who were reliable yet distant. This helped to create a framework for poetry and tales by which authors could follow, which was Poe's ultimate goal. He sought to create an atmosphere of trust with his reader, mainly through the omniscient narrator who would present facts which allowed them to speak from a platform of reliability. Poe could then lead his reader down metaphorical hidden paths through the story, with the final outcome being the creation of the air of mystery for the tale itself; Poe never deceived his reader, instead he let his narrator appear reliable only to turn the tables by the end of the tale. Thus, through a careful examination of craft, Poe is able to depict the psychology of the outsider, the troubled and the mad. Ultimately, this depiction demonstrates that these outsiders are not so far distanced from ourselves. Peter K. Garrett writes that Poe's favourite Dickensian

⁴¹ "Poe tried to understand the human mind in health or disease. By observing and analyzing his own mental activities, by objective scrutiny, and by reading some of the authorities of his time, he added to his knowledge of psychology. He also had more than average understanding of those pseudoscientific offshoots of psychology, phrenology and mesmerism. His writings show interest in formal psychology, in human character as exhibited in the dramatis personae of his stories, and in insanity and the disintegration of the mind...Poe was well aware of the state of mental science in his era" (Carroll Dee Laverty, *Science and Pseudo-Science in the Writings of Edgar Allan Poe*, p 44).

⁴² Parks 46-48.

stories were the short “tales” which mirrored his own creative pieces (although I have endeavoured to prove it is Poe’s works which so mirrored Dickens). Garrett writes, “in acclaiming Dickens, he turns him into his double” (Garrett qtd. in Galván 22). It is indeed fascinating to ponder the Freudian relationship already established between the self and “the double” with regard to Dickens and Poe. There has not been an in-depth examination into how deeply the works of Dickens affected Poe, both as a reader and a writer, therefore, it is interesting to trace these lines of influence from *Barnaby* to “The Raven,” from *Master Humphrey’s Clock* to “The Tell-Tale Heart,” which allows the reader to see how far the creative reach runs, and further, to begin to understand the relationship that the self (Dickens) has with its “double” (Poe). By tracing the lines, I do not mean to imply that Poe’s work has any less merit because of its influence, quite the contrary. I assert that these works (and subsequent authors also influenced by Dickens) are made more powerful when their predecessors are examined. As Eliot expounded, a cyclical path from the past to the present and back again is forged between an author and predecessors, and there is a very real avenue through which Poe’s “The Raven,” in readerly terms, influences Dickens’s Grip. When a modern audience comes to read Dickens’s lesser known *Barnaby Rudge*, they form their understanding of Grip through their already acquired cultural knowledge of Poe’s unnamed raven, who speaks only “nevermore” and has been made the object of numerous recordings and film adaptations. As biographers have addressed, “The Raven” put Poe on the literary map, and it is with his raven that many modern day readers forge their understanding of Grip and consequently, *Barnaby Rudge*. As Barthes writes, all reading is a “re-reading,” a re-imagining which is individual to every consciousness. Thus, through the works of Poe, others who follow him are changed by their readings; they come to see Dickens through Poe’s eyes, and then with their own inevitable readings, they create him again.

The authors who come before us are resurrected in every re-reading which modern readers undertake. These long-dead literary forefathers/mothers have new life through their works and will be reborn through the threads of readerly influence into the literature which is yet to come. This is evident in the works of William Faulkner (examined in the chapters to follow) who often utilized the grotesque and the social outsider in order to move his audience to forge alliances with and to feel empathy for those who are ostracized. Although Poe soured in his opinion of Dickens the man, he never appeared to disparage Dickens the author, and he continued to write only positive

criticism of his works. Dickens reportedly never changed his mind about Poe being an important writer, which is evident in both his efforts to seek out and help the destitute Maria Clemm, and as well with what he had to say to Forster (Forster 259). Dickens wrote to his close friend that he was “really indebted for a good broad grin to [Poe], literary critic of Philadelphia, and sole proprietor of the English language in its grammatical and idiomatic purity;...to [Poe,]...who taketh all of us English men of letters to task in print, but told me...that I had ‘awakened a new era’ in his mind” (Forster 259). From Poe’s first readings of *Pickwick*, Dickens creativity moulded him in a way which can only be described as profound. Poe time and time again returned to the themes which Dickens had utilized in his works, recycling and repackaging them in order to suit his own authorial goals. In many ways Poe was Dickens’s darker double, his troubled heart beating through the floorboards.

Chapter Two — Dickens and Faulkner: the Prodigal Son

“It’s much more fun to try to write about women because I think women are marvellous, they’re wonderful, and I know very little about them...it’s much more fun to try to write about women than about men—more difficult, yes” (Faulkner qtd. in Gwynn and Blotner 45).

During his early life, Faulkner was famous for telling tall tales about himself to his friends, and later he did the same to his readership. Modern audiences still view Faulkner as something of an oddity: he is included on *Shortlist.com*’s roster of the most reclusive authors of all time, a title he shares with Emily Dickinson, Edgar Allan Poe and Cormac McCarthy.⁴³ Many contemporary critics bought into the yarns he spun about his background. At different times, these narratives stated that Faulkner had quit school at the age of seven and had been an uneducated Mississippi farmer who read only the Bible and Shakespeare. At other times, his autobiographical fantasies claimed that he had served in World War I as a fighter pilot of English descent, that he had seen combat in France and had received several injuries, and that he had been educated at Yale.⁴⁴ Faulkner adopted these different personas for various reasons: to build up his adolescent self-image after bouts with low self-esteem, to save face during traumatic romantic break-ups, or later, to evade having his private life questioned by curious reporters. For modern-day Faulkner researchers, this wide variety of false histories demonstrates the high level at which the author’s imagination always functioned.⁴⁵ In this chapter, I will examine Faulkner’s early life and how certain circumstances culminated in shaping his particular view of the human plight, a view which corresponds to Dickens’s. I will also compare via close reading how certain Faulknerian antagonists mirror Dickensian ones, most especially in regard to the sympathy Faulkner elicits from the reader for these characters, and I will present the concept that this mirroring is intentional on the part of Faulkner. Lastly, I will survey several of Faulkner’s misunderstood female characters and will present them alongside Dickens’s outsider females as I demonstrate how some Dickensian women have become archetypal, influencing later literary creations of this type.

⁴³ <http://shortlist.com/entertainment/books/the-most-reclusive-authors-of-all-time>

⁴⁴ Interview in University of Virginia *College Topics*, 1931. *Lion in the Garden*, p 17. “I think of myself as a farmer, not a writer.” Faulkner qtd. in Hutchens, 1948. *Lion in the Garden*, p 59.

⁴⁵ Faulkner’s cousin spoke about the author’s proclivity to story telling as a child saying “It got so when Billy told you something, you never knew if it was the truth or just something he’d made up” (Minter 12).

David Minter's biography of Faulkner explores the author's early life in Oxford, Mississippi, and demonstrates that Faulkner's mother Maud endeavoured to teach her young sons "the classics, including Dickens, [and kept] them well ahead of their classmates" (10). As a young boy, Faulkner excelled at school, no doubt partly due to his mother's home schooling, but by the age of ten, school had become a problem. Minter explains that while formal education took a back seat in Faulkner's life, he was by no means uneducated: "stories began filling his days...At home he spent much of his time reading...[but] when his resistance to school had been cemented, he was reading Shakespeare, Dickens, Balzac, and Conrad" (12). Faulkner's father Murry was troubled with bouts of alcoholism, and often the family would travel together to seek the help of the Keeley Institute near Memphis for Murry's "drying out." These family "vacations," coupled with Murry's economic failures, no doubt imbued the young Faulkner with feelings of unease. A sign in the Faulkner kitchen, placed there by his mother Maud, spelled out for the Faulkner boys how they were to approach life's troubles: "'DON'T COMPLAIN—DON'T EXPLAIN'" (Blotner, *A Biography* 18). In a letter to his "Aunt Bama" in 1925, he wrote of a night in which he had slept away from his Oxford home with family in Ripley. He had felt an overwhelming sense "of loneliness and nameless sorrow which children suffer, for what or because of what they do not know" (Faulkner qtd. in Blotner *Letters* 20).⁴⁶ Minter speculates that "the temporary separation from his parents made him feel permanently lost and forsaken" and that his father's inconsistency "aroused anxiety that ran deep" in the young Faulkner (15). Whether or not anxiety was aroused within the child, these various early upheavals put the future author at a particularly good vantage point for writing about those who felt a sense of loss and isolation. In many ways, Faulkner's childhood mirrored aspects of Dickens's. Extreme embarrassment over the problems of their fathers and the poverty of both families were large issues that contributed to moulding their early concepts of the human condition.

Eventually, Faulkner dropped out of high school, staying on for the required eleventh year only for the purpose of playing football despite his petit five-foot-five-inch stature. Later in life, Faulkner described himself as "'an old 8th grade man [who refused] to accept formal schooling'" (Faulkner qtd. in McHaney *Literary Masters* 16). Thomas McHaney writes that Faulkner's "frequent assertion to interviewers and

⁴⁶ Faulkner to Mrs Walter B. McLean, 10 Sept 1925, in Blotner's *Selected Letters of William Faulkner*, pgs. 19-20.

correspondents that he was without education is neither figuratively nor literally true, for he did accept instruction from several important literary mentors as he matured” (*Literary Masters* 16). Most biographical accounts assert that Faulkner was a lonely, painfully shy adolescent who felt isolated in the small Southern town of Oxford where outgoing, physically adept, masculine boys were the “norm.” After he left high school, Faulkner adopted the style of a Bohemian dandy in a further effort to define his budding character and to distance himself from his peers, whom he believed surpassed him in their masculinity and therefore in their superiority. While he felt a sense of entitlement due to his long line of Mississippian family heritage (his great grandfather had led a violent life, serving in the Mexican-American War and holding the rank of colonel in the Confederate Forces during the Civil War before ultimately being killed on the streets of Ripley, Miss.), at the same time, he considered himself “outclassed by other young men in the courtship of young women” (McHaney *Literary Masters* 17).⁴⁷ McHaney further asserts that throughout Faulkner’s life, “he expressed complicated feelings of gallantry, sentimentality, and protectiveness for women, along with strong desire and deep mistrust” (17 *Literary Masters*). The conflicting feelings that biographers claim Faulkner held towards women can be seen many times over in his creative works. Some attempts have been made to trace these ideas back to how his mother raised her children.⁴⁸ Many family friends are recorded as stating that the Faulkner boys “were too close to their mother,” and that this resulted in negative emotional attachments to her (Blotner, *A Biography* 19). While I do not wish to engage in a psychoanalysis of Faulkner, nor to assert that the culmination of a tumultuous childhood fuelled by self-education imbued Faulkner with a divine gift for creative writing, I would claim that his isolated adolescence, paired with his natural intelligence and love of literature, helped him build an early understanding of the importance of character and plot development. In essence, Faulkner’s troubled youth actually aided his ability to tell a story, much as it did his literary predecessor Dickens, whose well-documented painful childhood included struggling with poverty, working at Warren’s

⁴⁷ McHaney *Literary Masters: William Faulkner* 27 and 34.

⁴⁸ Minter explains that Maud Falkner (original spelling) pushed a “clear set of expectations [on her sons]: that they learn quickly and well; that they absorb the conventional pieties; that they live with stoic resolve; and that they give her their devotion” (10).

Blackening on the Strand and having his first romantic courtship halted by disapproving parents.⁴⁹

Turning again to the adult Faulkner, Joseph Blotner's 1964 catalogue of the author's library, indexed two years after Faulkner's death, demonstrates the extent to which Faulkner continued to self-educate with literary awareness throughout his adult life.⁵⁰ Shakespeare is, of course, represented with duplicate copies, as are Conrad, Keats, Balzac and Dickens. The author's regional affiliations can also be seen in his collection, which held copies of the works of Joel Chandler Harris, Eudora Welty, Carson McCullers and Flannery O'Connor.⁵¹ Blotner writes, "Faulkner did not, like many readers, scribble his reactions to his reading on the pages [of his books] themselves... There is only one reliable sign of esteem for books in his library. Those he cared about he inscribed... His special favorites, however, are marked not only by inscriptions but also by duplicates" (*Library* 7-9). Blotner's observation regarding duplicates and inscriptions is particularly relevant to Faulkner's copies of Dickens's works, which included *The Complete Works of Charles Dickens* (1902 ed.) in 30 volumes as well as *A Fourteen Volume Edition of the Works of Charles Dickens* (n.d.). Both *Little Dorrit* (1956 ed.) and an inscribed copy of *The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club* (1932 ed.) are held in the Faulkner library as duplicate copies of the novels. Faulkner inscribed his copy of *Pickwick* with "William Faulkner/Rowan Oak 1940" which indicates the author's specific affinity with this copy. Faulkner's reason for inscribing his copy of *Pickwick* in this way remains a mystery, but again Blotner theorizes that the novels which were duplicated in copies or inscribed "were among those books which [Faulkner] read in youth and reread throughout his life, dipping into them for the sake of the characters, he used to say, as one would go into a room to visit an old friend" (*Library* 8-9). With this analogy, Blotner is quoting Faulkner from previously recorded interviews in which the author mentions several times that when re-reading his favourite texts, he did not feel the need to read the book from start to finish

⁴⁹ "As a boy Faulkner appears to have been happy, busy, well cared for, and advantaged in many ways. As a typical adolescent, he became troubled and uncertain, seeking ways to compensate for the things that were missing from his self-perception... As a teenager, he compensated for his small size by combing his hair high in the front and playing the rough school football of the time. Such conflicts do not always produce great writers, but in great writers they often lead to the development of great characters and great stories. Such was the case with Faulkner" (McHaney *Literary Masters: William Faulkner* 17).

⁵⁰ *William Faulkner's Library—a Catalogue*. University Press of Virginia, 1964.

⁵¹ David Minter argues that Faulkner's first published poem, "The Marble Faun", shows "not the source of Faulkner's originality but the direction of his self-education... [from his self-education] he was absorbing techniques and preoccupations that would enable him to participate in the flowering of the 1920s" (36).

but could delve into the narrative at any point, meeting the characters and in essence having a conversation with them, very much indeed as if they were old friends.⁵²

Like Faulkner, Dickens was a keen observer of his surroundings, and he famously based many of his characters on actual people with whom he was familiar. Since *Sketches by Boz*, Dickensian characters often have been seen as satires of the general public, satires that encompassed the essence of a particular type of person (effectively, stereotypes). These did not necessarily embody the full psychology of the real person upon whom the satire was based. Fred Kaplan summarizes this critique in his biography of the author when discussing Dickens's early *Sketches by Boz*: "With a keen eye for social observation, he began to portray satirically, though affectionately, the variety and comic oddity of human nature in the social guises of early Victorian life" (64). An avid walker, Dickens spent his afternoons wandering through the streets of London, coming into contact with all sorts of people, from impoverished street children to the wealthy elite, and this ambulation has often been seen as the source for Dickens's creative character development.⁵³

Faulkner as well was absorbed by his surroundings, particularly as a young man in Oxford, Mississippi. After his discontent with school had set in, he turned to educating himself via his environment, listening to stories that his family's African-American maid (known to the family as Mamie Callie) told the Falkner (original spelling) boys at home about the Falkner family and the old South.⁵⁴ He also was a silent listener at his father's office, where tales were swapped during whiskey breaks. At the Oxford courthouse, "he listened to old men tell stories about the [Civil] War" (Minter 12). When his childhood sweetheart Estelle Oldham announced her marriage to another man, Faulkner turned his attentions to a new love, Helen Baird. He wrote numerous poems explicating his deep love for her and hoping that she would soon return it. Although Helen too would reject Faulkner as a lover, Minter writes that Helen "seems almost to have recognized several things that most people missed...that [Faulkner] stood outside the life he lived, jotting things down as he went along...[and]

⁵² Faulkner read avidly in his youth "and reread [these books] throughout his life, dipping into them for the sake of the characters, he used to say, as one would go into a room to visit an old friend" (Blotner 8-9).

⁵³ A few examples are Dickens's penchant for ambulation are: his founding of the "Walking Club" with a handful of his peers around 1847 which facilitated long walks for each weekly meeting, his trips to the Shadwell district accompanied by his American publisher in 1869 in order to research opium dens for his upcoming novel, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (Slater 599) and his own essay publications on the subject, such as "Gone Astray" (*Household Words* 13 Aug 1853).

⁵⁴ Minter 12.

that he deliberately cultivated emotions with the intention of transmuting them [to his writing]" (64). To many Dickens scholars, this personality trait is particularly familiar.⁵⁵

What Faulkner himself had to say about Dickens is recorded in his many interviews, lectures and letters to friends and family. He referenced Dickens multiple times, firstly in a letter to his mother, written during his 1925 trip to England via Paris. In this letter, he highlighted the most memorable places in London that he had visited, including "Dickens' Bloomsbury" (Blotner *Letters* 28).⁵⁶ In various individual interviews and in lectures to graduate students at the University of Virginia and Nagano, Japan, Faulkner mentioned Dickens as being one amongst a handful of authors to whom he often returned for rereading. In his interview for the University of Virginia publication, *College Topics* in 1931, Faulkner praised Dickens's ability to develop characters and plot, saying that Dickens's works were not interesting for their settings or story lines but because of "those people he wrote about and what they did" (Faulkner qtd. in *Lion* 18). In 1955 at Nagano, he cited Sarah Gamp of *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844) as one of his favourite characters, stating that she was "a cruel, ruthless woman, a drunkard, opportunist, unreliable, most of her character was bad, but at least it was character" (Faulkner qtd. in *Lion* 251). This reference to Gamp, a lesser known character, demonstrates that Faulkner did not just read the more popular Dickensian classics, but delved more deeply than most into the works.

There can be no doubt that in Faulkner's opinion, Dickens was one of the great literary achievers of all time. Faulkner's view of authors was that they are at the mercy of the works they themselves have read and are subject to something akin to sensory overload, an affliction that constantly influences them. At Nagano, Faulkner tellingly proclaimed, "a writer is completely rapacious...he is influenced by every word he ever read...and he is so busy writing that he hasn't time to stop and say, 'Now, where did I steal this from?' But he did steal it somewhere" (Faulkner qtd. in *Lion* 128). If Faulkner can be taken at his own word, his work clearly draws on Dickens's. Since his youth, Faulkner had admired Dickens's works and had owned multiple copies of Dickens's narratives. He cited a more obscure Dickensian figure (Sarah Gamp) as a prime example of excellent characterization and admitted that he was inherently driven

⁵⁵ Slater writes, "Dickens [was] aware of what he called his own 'strong perception of character and oddity' and 'natural power' of reproducing in his own person what he observed in others..." (31).

⁵⁶ Faulkner to Mrs. M. C. Falkner, 7 Oct 25, in Blotner's *Selected Letters of William Faulkner*, pg 28.

to “steal” from his literary predecessors. All of these factors demonstrate the extent to which the works of Charles Dickens profoundly impacted Faulkner, one of the first writers of the Southern Gothic literature movement.

In his conclusion to *The Achievement of William Faulkner*, Michael Millgate writes, “Once we accept Faulkner’s awareness of other writers and their innovations...then the experiments he makes in *The Sound and the Fury* take on a double significance” (291). This significance, he further explains, exists not only because Faulkner “broke new ground” with his works, but also because he “took the achievements of others [namely European novelists] as their starting-point” (291). Millgate here focuses on Faulkner’s literary awareness chiefly because of the stories the writer told about himself in numerous interviews. As mentioned earlier, Faulkner propounded to anyone who asked that he was an uneducated cotton farmer, and that he therefore was not aware of anything outside of the Old Testament and Shakespeare, an obvious fallacy, as anyone could tell by examining his library. For Jason Compson, the devil figure of *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), Faulkner borrowed heavily from Dickensian antagonists. Albert Guerard argues, “Jason Compson has no little in common with the Jonas Chuzzlewit we finally come to know...a psychic cruelty that can turn to physical violence...a gross unrelenting vitality...[Jason’s] section in *The Sound and the Fury* is a high triumph of social realism” (52). This “social realism,” Guerard remarks, is generated from the fact that while Jason is most certainly the demonic character of the novel, he also is a “persuasive example of a small-town businessman of his time” (52). I argue that Jason has as well “no little in common” with Scrooge, as can be seen in the third chapter of the novel (Jason’s narration), when the younger Compson has some Malthusian ideas that he wishes to impart to a philanthropist in Jefferson (Guerard 52). Jason hears of a swindler who has made a small fortune “selling rotten goods to niggers” (Faulkner *Fury* 194). Falling ill, the swindler finds God and buys a missionary in China at the price of “five thousand dollars a year” (Faulkner *Fury* 194). Jason says that he often thinks about how mad the philanthropist will be when he finally does die and discovers that heaven is a fiction: “Like I say, he’d better go on and die now and save money” (Faulkner *Fury* 194). This is heavily reminiscent of Scrooge’s advice to the “portly gentlemen” who visit him on Christmas Eve, asking for donations. Without charitable assistance, he is told, many impoverished people will surely die. Scrooge’s reply is: “If they would rather die,...they had better do it, and decrease the surplus population” (Dickens *Carol* 12).

Neither Jason nor Scrooge holds any positive beliefs about what is to come in the afterlife. Both have a similar ability to exist apart from the community, effectively shutting themselves off from others, and both are experiencing this reaction due to disturbing incidents in their childhoods.

The Ghost of Christmas Past takes Scrooge back in time to his boarding school, where he sees, then remembers, the loneliness and isolation of his boyhood. Scrooge thinks of his beloved sister's visit to the school, recalling the joyous day when she arrived to pick him up and transport his younger self home. He reminisces on the feelings her rescue stirred in him, and then he turns to thinking of her death. In his adult life, Scrooge has repressed both of these memories and has shut out his emotions entirely. For Jason, a similar loss of family draws him to become both angry and isolated. In the second chapter of *The Sound and the Fury*, Quentin remembers the death of his grandmother "Dammudy" and the argument his siblings have at the creek. The children have been sent away from the house so that Dammudy's funeral can take place without their knowledge or interference. Though all of the children are experiencing loss and sadness, Jason had been Dammudy's favourite; the chosen one, the one who slept in her bed at night, the one with whom she shared a special bond. For these reasons, he suffers the pain of her death in a devastating way. The loss of Dammudy further cements Jason's separation from the other Compsons. He is not like Quentin, the first-born, sensitive intellectual for whom a pasture of land has been sold off so that he might have a year at Harvard University. Nor is he the mentally deficient Benjy, a child in need of constant maternal care and governing. For vastly different reasons, both brothers are given much attention by their parents as well as by their only sister Caddy, but Jason feels that he does not hold a valuable place within his family, and he therefore chooses to reject his positive attributes and uphold only his negative ones, like Scrooge.

In *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner also uses themes and character traits from *David Copperfield*, particularly in the way that Jason and Mrs Compson are presented. Mr and Miss Murdstone, the unfortunate David's caretakers, are repeatedly described as being "dark;" Jane Murdstone has a "metallic" quality about her, while her brother reminds David of the "wax-work" in a travelling show (Dickens *David* 56, 26). David says of his first encounter with his soon-to-be-stepfather that Murdstone "had that kind of shallow black eye...[that] seems from some peculiarity of light to be disfigured for a moment at a time" (Dickens *David* 26). Jane is "a gloomy-looking lady...dark, like her

brother” who possesses a “jail of a bag which hung upon her arm by a heavy chain” (Dickens *David* 56). In the final chapter of *The Sound and the Fury*, Jason and Mrs Compson sit at the kitchen table “in identical attitudes; the one cold and shrewd, with close-thatched brown hair curled into two stubborn hooks...and hazel eyes with black-ringed irises like marbles, the other cold and querulous...[with] eyes pouched and baffled and so dark as to appear to be all pupil or all iris” (Faulkner *Fury* 237). While the omniscient narrator of this chapter does not literally describe Jason and Mrs Compson as wax-works, there is an ominous stillness to their descriptions, which, when coupled with their pale skin and dark eyes, culminates in a subtle impression of mannequins or statues.

I am not making the statement that the two men are cut from the same cloth. The most menacing factor about Murdstone is his exceeding cleverness and ability to manipulate those around him, whereas Jason sometimes seems to lack forethought. He lashes out at others because of deep-seated negative emotions over his perceived abandonment and status as the “lesser” Compson son. Instead, my interest in comparing these two fictional men on paper is to examine how much of Dickens’s character portrayal has been absorbed by Faulkner. Minter argues that Faulkner’s “betrayed children...recall the deserted and deprived children of Charles Dickens, primarily because their parents are inaccessible, inadequate, or...too soon dead,” and herein lies my argument (18). With Jason Compson, Faulkner demonstrates how the circle of a negative childhood and detrimental relationships with women can play out in adult life. What childhood trauma hardened Murdstone into a cold and dark adult, the reader will never be aware, since we are not privy to Murdstone’s history before he met Clara Copperfield. Jason, however, shows how cruelties are instilled in a child through betrayal, desertion and deprivation. For all of David’s interactions with negative characters, he still manages to develop positive traits, just like Oliver, Esther and Jo. The hearts of these orphans remain effectively pure, embracing the Christian tenets that Dickens felt were fundamental to a well-lived life.⁵⁷ Jason, like Murdstone, Bill Sikes, and Scrooge (prior to his haunting) all share the common trait of self-centeredness. They focus solely upon themselves instead of looking outwardly towards others and thinking of how they might enrich their communities. Guerard concludes that

⁵⁷ Dickens wrote in *The Life of Our Lord*, “Remember!—It is christianity TO DO GOOD always—even to those who do evil to us...It is christianity to be gentle, merciful, and forgiving, and to keep those qualities quiet in our own hearts, and never make a boast of them, or of our prayers or of our love of God, but always to shew [sic] that we love Him by humbly trying to do right in everything” (126-127).

“Dickens’s special gift was for creating ‘evil’ beings—extraordinarily selfish or aggressive—who seem to belong to a different order of humanity from their victims, and who are therefore exempt from ordinary moral judgments” (53).

Despite the characters’ origins in this so-called “different order of humanity,” Dickens still succeeds in eliciting sympathy for them, trapped as they are in lives of angry isolation. Jason draws the reader’s understanding in his thwarted plight to find the runaway Quentin (Caddy’s daughter). Finally giving up, he sits in his car by the side of the road as people in their Easter clothes walk by: “Some looked at him as they passed, at the man sitting quietly behind the wheel of a small car, with his invisible life ravelled out about him like a wornout sock” (Faulkner *Fury* 266). Faulkner is able to stir sympathy also for Thomas Sutpen of *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936). Sutpen is a character whose behaviour is detestable throughout the novel, but the reader cannot help but feel empathy for him on learning of the circumstances which made him. Quentin discovers that Sutpen desperately had been trying to build a dynasty through which the Sutpen name could live on, and that this drive was based on a primal memory that dated to his childhood. Young Thomas Sutpen grew up on a farm, the child of an overseer, and in this place there were “regiments of niggers with white men watching them [plant] and [raise] things that he had never heard of” (Faulkner *Absalom* 227). One day Thomas is sent to the “big house with a message...thinking how at last he was going to see the inside of it” (Faulkner *Absalom* 229). However, instead of viewing the interior of the magnificent plantation house, Thomas is turned away at the door by the negro servant and made to feel that his place is even lower than that of the field workers. Prior to that moment, he had been completely unaware of his status, since “he was still innocent” (Faulkner *Absalom* 229). The “white door with the monkey nigger barring it and looking down at him in his patched made-over jeans clothes and no shoes” turns into a jarring experience that redefines his life and pushes him on a relentless quest to make a legacy for the Sutpen name, proving to himself that he is more than the little boy who was told by a “nigger...to go around to the back” (Faulkner *Absalom* 232). From this point on, Sutpen adheres to the belief that one’s worth is measured in monetary value, and so begins his quest to create a secure dynasty of wealth with a male heir, a white dynasty.

As a younger man in Haiti, his first attempt at starting a family is abandoned once he discerns that his wife (the daughter of a plantation owner for whom Sutpen

works as overseer) is of mixed race. The couple has one son, Charles Bon, who ends up being the undoing of the dynasty. As heretofore stated, one of Dickens's most keen abilities as a writer was to prompt sympathy for the hardened characters he used as his antagonists. In this way, he was able to generate striking character development. If the reader still felt no sympathy for the hard-hearted Scrooge after viewing his lonely childhood at boarding school, the miser's transformation into a philanthropist who changes the life of another small boy, Tiny Tim, would not hold nearly the same power that it does. Faulkner studied Dickens's characterizations quite intensively and strove to create equally believable characters: figures who hover in a grey area between good and bad, an area where their positive attributes are framed by their faults. Albert Guerard remarks, "Faulkner is a great compassionate writer...and set himself extreme rhetorical challenges—to create sympathy for the sombre Joe Christmas and Thomas Sutpen at the very moment we have been exposed to their most unpleasant qualities" (55).

Dickens's female characters also heavily influenced Faulkner's works in numerous ways, and often Faulkner's women are critiqued the most severely.⁵⁸ David Williams writes of the "masculine dilemma" which occurs in many of Faulkner's works and which forms a "cult of cruelty" of men towards women (4). This dilemma can be understood to be the drive to define the self after the trauma of the Oedipal relationship and the need to gain tangible prowess, power and achievement.⁵⁹ This concept of Southern womanhood (in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) and the mid-nineteenth-century British ideal of womanhood share a state of idealized piety, and Diane Roberts examines this twinning of maiden femininity. She writes, "the *essential* white femininity [included] maternal feeling, sexual chastity, [and] adherence to a male economy" (Roberts 3, author's emphasis). She also researches how literature from outside the South had a hand in creating the Southern ideal of femininity: "Ruskin exhorts women to 'be no more housewives but queens' and 'enduringly, incorruptibly good'...the notion of queenship served the South's representation of white ladyhood" (Roberts 4). The women of Ruskin, Roberts argues, along with those of Sir Walter Scott and Dickens, "took firm hold in the South" (5). To fully understand the formula to

⁵⁸ Patricia E. Sweeney, *William Faulkner's Women Characters: An Annotated Bibliography of Criticism, 1930-1983*, Clio Press Ltd., 1985.

⁵⁹ Noel Polk discusses "Oedipal attractions and antagonisms" in Faulkner's *A Fable*, but these ideas easily can be applied to many other Faulkner works (182-185).

which Dickens adhered in order to create his women, fallen or not, one must look to the social upheavals of the mid-nineteenth century.

By the mid-point of the century, the industrialization of England was increasing dramatically. These changes forced the English to redefine themselves in a relatively short amount of time. Two basic questions seem to have been on the minds of the Victorians during this transformative period: what would be the long-term physical effects of industrialization on England's population, and where would a newly industrialized society ultimately take English morality?⁶⁰ The nineteenth-century American South posed these same questions alongside Victorian England. To Southern consciousness, the loss of the Civil War in 1865 cemented the correct and proper form of femininity and all for which it stood.⁶¹ Ricky Floyd Dobbs explored the neurosis of the South and summarized the Lost Cause identity as having “evolved from the antebellum South...[it] upheld social mores [and] provided social unity to Southern whites in a time of political and social upheaval brought on by the demise of the yeomanry and challenges to Democratic dominance” (“Case study in social neuroses”). Thus we can discern that American culture in the mid-1850s had much in common with that of its parent country. By the 1850s, the common workingman sought to redefine himself, and this also included redefining his gender opposite.⁶² The Victorian ideal of the importance of virginity (held by the majority of the middle and upper classes) involved preserving a legacy of purity and Anglican piousness, a legacy which would lay a foundation for future generations of Englishmen and women.⁶³ In his work,

⁶⁰ Matthew Sweet discusses Victorian gender identity in *Inventing the Victorians* (2001). He writes that despite “misogynist medicine” fed to the city masses, “Victorian women were making unparalleled advances, socially and politically” (181). Female etiquette books were popular, but so too were men “invited to consume an analogous literature of control, compiled by the same authors [as the etiquette books for women]” (183). Both sexes were looking towards ways in which to conduct themselves, but often these books went unheeded, with readers possibly “shak[ing] their heads in resentful disbelief” (Sweet 189).

⁶¹ The Civil War “glorified wartime sacrifices and antebellum social mores...A post-war regional identity condensed around ‘Confederate tradition’...[and] the two problems of post-war Southern gender relations [became]: fear of male inadequacy and anxiety over female virtue” (Dobbs “Case study in social neuroses”).

⁶² Dobbs writes about Southern women: “the war exploded gender roles in the South and created tensions the Lost Cause hastened to defuse...the war touched the daily lives of Southern women as had no other conflict; suddenly, some measure of independence came as the men fought [but] with the Confederacy’s fall, Dixie’s white women found themselves again relegated to second-place” (“Case study in social neuroses”). However, there is much evidence that men and women worked side-by-side in British factories, as well as on the street; Henry Mayhew discusses this at length in *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851). So by re-defining the working man’s gender opposite, this was clearly not a static definition.

⁶³ Matthew Sweet discusses how John Ruskin’s “Of Queen’s Gardens” (1865) was utilized as propaganda at the turn of the century to demonstrate the feminine ideal. Sweet writes that “in America, the number of

Dobbs explores this idea as having been prevalent in the South and writes, “The Lost Cause’s practitioners endorsed a deferential society based upon white supremacy, social order, and moral purity” (“Case study in social neuroses”). Certainly, this ideal was not held by every middle and upper class Englishman or man in the American South, but Dickens upheld it (his views on female purity are addressed with his multiple attempts, both fictional and biographical, to rescue “fallen women”), and Faulkner lived with it as “the iconography of the Old South was present everywhere” in the New South of the turn of the century (Roberts 2).⁶⁴

Caddy Compson is the most well-known example of a Faulknerian fallen woman. Although she is the only Compson child who is both courageous and loving (she alone climbs the tree outside of the Compson house on the evening of Dammud’s funeral in order to understand what has occurred at the house), she is left by her would-be lover, Dalton Ames, and this starts her on a downward spiral of illicit behaviour. She becomes pregnant with her daughter Quentin (named after her elder brother) without knowing who the father is, and the Compson family’s response is to try to marry her off, hoping that her husband will not calculate the weeks of Caddy’s pregnancy very carefully and would believe the baby to be his. The marriage is ill-fated, and Caddy leaves the Compsons with her baby Quentin. Quentin (the elder) is deeply troubled by Caddy’s promiscuous behaviour, in part due to his incestuous feelings towards her, and in his chapter of the novel, he remembers a conversation about Caddy that took place between himself and his father. Mr Compson tells Quentin that he is troubled because he’s “a virgin. Women are never virgins. Purity is a negative state and therefore contrary to nature. It’s nature is hurting you not Caddy” (Faulkner *Sound* 97).

[reprint] editions reached thirty-five by 1900, and inspired a sorority organisation called the Queens of Avalon” (178-179).

⁶⁴ Dickens brought the issue of “fallen women” to the attention of his readers through various works. This can be seen with many his characters (for example, Martha and Little Em’ly of *David Copperfield*) and with his work with Urania Cottage, a joint project with the philanthropist Angela Burdett-Coutts. For prospective recruits of Urania Cottage, Dickens wrote “An Appeal to Fallen Women” (1849), a pamphlet to be distributed throughout prisons. In it he is emphatically clear that his efforts on their behalf are not meant to be condescending: “And do not think that I write to you as if I felt myself very much above you, or wished to hurt your feelings by reminding you of the situation in which you are placed. God forbid! I mean nothing but kindness to you, and I write as if you were my sister” (Dickens *Appeal*). He writes the “Appeal” in order to demonstrate the value he believes women to hold and to convince these fallen women of their own worth (this is of course functioning under the notion that a prostitute would not have any self esteem, and there were instances such as the letter in February 1858 to *The Times* that provided a counterargument to that notion). See Jenny Hartley *Charles Dickens and the House of Fallen Women*, 2009.

When asked about Caddy at a lecture in Virginia, Faulkner said, “To me she was the beautiful one, she was my heart’s darling. That’s what I wrote the book about...to try to tell, try to draw the picture of Caddy” (Faulkner qtd. in Gwynn and Blotner 6). Albert Guerard argues that Faulkner saw Caddy and Quentin (the female) “as victims of ‘some concept of Compson honor’ and a myth of southern womanhood” (109). At the root of this “myth of womanhood” was the idea that women should be kept safe from the “sexual urges” of the black slave. Ultimately, this was propaganda that white supremacists used to enforce their logic that the black slave must be kept in a position of subservience. Dobbs explores this ideology in his work as well, stating, “Returning Confederate soldiers received honor and praise as defenders of...Southern womanhood...Woman came to symbolize the virtue of the region, and the Lost Cause mythology established the gray-clad soldier as her defender” against any outside intruder (368). With this adopted mentality of the Confederate soldier as “defender” came the role that must be played by females: a Southern woman must be a virtuous innocent, and therefore, a strict code of conduct ensued.

Sanctuary (1931) revisits Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) with its female lead, Ruby Lamar, who is another example of a woman who has broken the code of Southern femininity. In the novel, Horace Benbow fights a losing battle to defend a poor white man accused of rape and murder. Faulkner was criticized greatly for this novel (after receiving the first draft, his publisher Harrison Smith demanded a rewrite), and he himself called it “a cheap idea” (Faulkner qtd. in Millgate *Achievement* 113). However, there are gems that stand out against the more outrageous and sensational scenes; Ruby Lamar and Horace Benbow are two of these. Ruby is first introduced when Horace happens upon the house (referred to by the townspeople as the Old Frenchman Place) where she and her common-law husband Goodwin live. The couple and their sickly baby reside there with two other men, manufacturing and selling moonshine. The house itself creates an ominous opening setting. It “was a gutted ruin rising gaunt and stark out of a grove of unpruned cedar trees. It was a landmark...[but had] since gone back to jungle,...people of the neighbourhood had been pulling [it] down piecemeal for firewood for fifty years” (Faulkner *Sanctuary* 4). Guerard argues that Dickens and Faulkner shared a love for dramatizing the setting of “crimes or dark secrets in menaced houses, houses eventually gutted by fire or that collapse and suffocate.” This can be referenced easily in Pip’s first impression of Satis House in *Great Expectations* (48) and with the Clennam house of *Little Dorrit* (40). Satis House

“was of old brick, and dismal, and had a great many iron bars to it. Some of the windows had been walled up;...all was empty and disused. The cold wind seemed to blow colder there, than outside the gate” (Dickens *Expectations* 48). Utilizing Guerard’s observations about Dickens’s and Faulkner’s shared penchant for utilizing menacing houses to conceal family secrets, it is apparent that Faulkner’s *The Old Frenchman Place* and Dickens’s *Satis House* also function as precursors of the characters who dwell within the structures. Everyone who occupies these dilapidated mansions (the bootleggers of *Sanctuary*, Miss Havisham and Estella of *Expectations*, and Mrs. Clennam of *Little Dorrit* specifically) seems as if they are returning to the “jungle,” having been psychologically pulled down “piecemeal” (Faulkner *Sanctuary* 4).

In *Sanctuary*, Faulkner echoes a scene from *A Tale of Two Cities* to convey Ruby’s devotion to Goodwin and their child. Although Ruby is a “fallen” woman because she and Goodwin are not married, she sticks to a Southern female code of conduct in relation to her role as partner and mother. Horace passes the jail where Goodwin was taken and where a group of townsmen has gathered. To the side of the group stands Ruby, “in her gray hat with the veil, carrying the child in her arms” (Faulkner *Sanctuary* 201). As Horace sees Ruby, he thinks that she is purposely ““Standing where he can see it through the window”” (Faulkner *Sanctuary* 201). The “he” is the jailed Goodwin and the “it,” their sickly child. In *A Tale of Two Cities*, Lucy Darnay (née Mannette) enacts this same ritual of standing silently outside the Bastille where her husband Charles is being held as an enemy of the French Republic. Her father tells Lucy, “there is an upper window in the prison, to which Charles can sometimes gain access...he might see you in the street...if you stood in a certain place that I can show you” (Dickens *Two Cities* 286). Therefore, Lucy “From that time, in all weathers,...waited there two hours...[and] When it was not too wet or inclement for her child to be with her, they went together” (Dickens *Two Cities* 286). This waiting ritual, besides being a physical manifestation of the two women’s faithfulness, suggests that both are keeping up metaphorically with the accepted notion of proper femininity. Neither novel spends much time examining the psyches of the women. Instead, the foci are the ways in which the personalities of lawyers Horace Benbow and Sydney Carton develop. Chiefly, this development indicates that each is a troubled man in search of peace. Through the influence of these females, Benbow and Carton eventually achieve self-respect and inner harmony.

Another of Faulkner's mysterious female characters is Miss Rosa Coldfield of *Absalom, Absalom!*; although she is not a fallen woman, Miss Rosa is a haunted figure who is tormented by her past, and this is particularly evoking Dickens's tragic women. The text was written after *The Sound and the Fury* and is set during Quentin's first year at Harvard. In it, he recounts the summer before he left Jefferson in 1909, thus it is a novel which is set in the past, and which has the protagonist recount past experiences; this past within the past correlates to the position this thesis takes on intertextuality and the evocation of the past as present. Quentin says that the South is "peopled with garrulous outraged baffled ghosts," and that he must listen to one ghost tell "him about old ghost-times" (Faulkner *Absalom* 9). Quentin feels as if he is a ghost himself because of the invisible ties that bind him to his Southern heritage, and he postulates that it is his *ghostly* duty to listen to the story of the phantom-like hermit, Miss Rosa Coldfield. Long ago, Miss Rosa repudiated her community of Jefferson, shutting herself away in her father's house. Quentin surmises that Miss Rosa had never before "quitted that house after sundown save on Sundays and Wednesdays...in the entire forty-three years probably" (Faulkner *Absalom* 88). When these character traits are coupled with her peculiar dress: mourning wear of "eternal black which she had worn for forty-three years now, whether for sister, father, or nothusband none knew," a strong mirroring of *Great Expectations*'s Miss Havisham becomes apparent (Faulkner *Absalom* 7). The "dim coffin-smelling gloom" of her father's old office is the spot to which Miss Rosa summons Quentin to meet her for the first time, and it is here, over multiple summertime visits, that he learns of her deep hatred for Thomas Sutpen, the devil that "came out of nowhere and without warning upon the land...[,] built a plantation," and married her sister Ellen (Faulkner *Absalom* 9).

In between his summer visits, Quentin gleans more information about Miss Coldfield from talking to his own father, much as Pip learns of Miss Havisham's circumstances and early life from his companionship with Herbert. Mr Compson tells Quentin what he knows of Rosa's move to Sutpen's Hundred after the death of her father had left her both a pauper and an orphan. He relates to Quentin that Miss Rosa, like Miss Havisham, had been raised solely by this man, since her mother had died in childbirth, and he states that "So for the first sixteen years of her life she lived in that grim tight little house with the father whom she hated without knowing it" (Faulkner *Absalom* 60). Here again is another significant similarity between the two novels, since it is discussed briefly in *Great Expectations* that Miss Havisham is haunted by the early

death of her mother. The only maternal figure in her life is her stepmother, formerly the family cook. Mr Compson explains to Quentin that after Rosa's father died, she had moved in with Thomas and Ellen's children on Sutpen's Hundred. Quentin learns that it was Ellen's "dying request" that Rosa guide Judith, Ellen's daughter with Sutpen and Rosa's niece (Faulkner *Absalom* 61). Mr Compson postulates, "perhaps [Rosa] even saw herself as an instrument of retribution: if not in herself an active instrument strong enough to cope with [Sutpen], at least as a kind of passive symbol of inescapable reminding" of all the harm that he did to Ellen by marrying her (Faulkner *Absalom* 61).

In the same way that Satis House functions for Miss Havisham, Miss Rosa's house plays an important role in creating her character. Upon receiving Miss Rosa's initial written invitation, Quentin says it seemed as though it "was actually a summons, out of another world" (Faulkner *Absalom* 10). Miss Rosa's letter, with its "queer archaic sheet of ancient good notepaper written over with the neat faded cramped script," evoked so much of the past and left him no other response except to comply "immediately" (Faulkner *Absalom* 10). However, due to his initial astonishment at this visitation request from a woman he had known all his life without really knowing, Quentin "did not recognize [that the handwriting was] revealing a character cold, implacable, and even ruthless"; a description which a thorough reader of Dickens's works would agree suits Miss Havisham all too well (Faulkner *Absalom* 10). Quentin walks to Miss Rosa's home "which is somehow smaller than its actual size...yet with an air, a quality of grim endurance" (Faulkner *Absalom* 10). This statement easily could be utilized to describe Rosa herself. Thus Quentin's interpretation of Miss Rosa's house serves as an initial introduction to this character. Once inside, Quentin notes that "in the gloom of the shuttered hallway whose air was even hotter than outside, as if there were prisoned in it like a tomb all the suspiration of slow heat-laden time...[and] the small figure in black, the dim face looking at him with an expression speculative, urgent and intent, waited to invite him in" (Faulkner *Absalom* 10-11). In this scene, Faulkner presents the melding of person and environment. Miss Rosa and her house are almost one entity. He then sits with Miss Rosa in her father's office, "a dim hot airless room with the blinds all closed and fastened" to hear how her life was destroyed by a man named Thomas Sutpen (Faulkner *Absalom* 7). Quentin comes to see her several

times in order to hear the whole of her story and also to play a part in her plans involving Sutpen's Hundred.⁶⁵

In requesting Quentin's presence, Miss Rosa seeks to use the puzzled young man for her own purposes, much as Miss Havisham does with Pip. Understandably, Quentin is confused by Miss Rosa's request, though as a Southern gentleman, he feels obligated to accept the invitation and listen to her narrative. Miss Rosa reveals her side—the Coldfield side—of the tale about Sutpen's arrival in Jefferson and the rise and fall of his dynasty. After this visit, Quentin asks his father why Miss Rosa picked him to be her audience: "What is it to me that the land of the earth or whatever it was got tired of him at last and turned and destroyed him?" (Faulkner *Absalom* 12). Mr Compson, continuing his already defined role as a character who sits outside of the action, narrating complex ideas in his previous novel, *The Sound and The Fury*, explains to his son: "Years ago we in the South made our women into ladies. Then the War came and made the ladies into ghosts. So what else can we do, being gentlemen, but listen to them being ghosts?" (Faulkner *Absalom* 12). Although Mr Compson is giving a metaphorical explanation of Quentin's inherent duty to listen to Miss Rosa, as referenced earlier, he also is demonstrating the extent to which women were ostracized in the South during the postbellum period. Women became ghostly because they lacked opportunities to be wives and mothers (due to so many men having been killed in the war), and they also are made into undead figures through their construction as the symbol for the Lost Cause of the South. Miss Rosa is perceived as ghostly, another in the line of undead characters which Faulkner crafts and redevelops from earlier Dickensian ones and redevelops.

In *Great Expectations*, Pip meets Miss Havisham for the first time because she has requested that a boy be brought to humour her "sick fancy...to see some play" (Dickens *Expectations* 51). In later life, however, Pip learns that his job was not really to demonstrate childhood play to an old and lonely woman but to be the *plaything* of Miss Havisham's young protégé Estella. Miss Havisham perpetually wears the white dress and accessories of her unsuccessful wedding day, an opposite in chromatic scale to Miss Rosa's mourning black (both women adhere to social conventions). However, it is the garments themselves, clothing that resists change despite the many years that it is

⁶⁵ As mentioned earlier, Rosa's father, once a successful proprietor of a town store in Jefferson, shut himself away in the attic of their house when news of the Civil War arrived in town, and died there, adding another layer of death to the house's already grim atmosphere and drawing upon *Jane Eyre*'s "mad" Bertha who is kept locked away in Rochester's attic.

worn, which function as an instrument of haunting. Based on their multiple appearances in literature, ghosts frequently are described as wearing exactly the same garments each time they manifest, most often the garments in which they died, and both Dickens and Faulkner drew upon this mythical description by having certain characters, people who have been arrested in a living death, wear a metaphorical shroud. The sameness of the women's attire further aligns both with phantoms. Pip says of Miss Havisham that "not even the withered bridal dress on the collapsed form could have looked so like grave-clothes, or the long veil so like a shroud" (Dickens *Expectations* 52). Quentin's thoughts about Miss Rosa are disturbing: "the wan haggard face watched him above the faint triangle of lace at wrists and throat from the too tall chair in which she resembled a crucified child" (Faulkner *Absalom* 8). As mentioned earlier, Pip learns much of Miss Havisham's life from Herbert, who recounts her sad story to Pip when the latter moves to London. Herbert relates the events of the tragic wedding day on which Miss Havisham was jilted, as handed down to him by his father, Matthew Pocket. This story portrays the full picture of Miss Havisham's true identity, and the reasons for her actions towards Pip are made clear to him. Her history as told by Herbert brings Pip to a deeper understanding and connects these two ghostly women across literature. Due to their personal traumas and losses, both Miss Havisham and Miss Rosa have sought to disconnect from the societies they believe to be responsible for their suffering.

Another correlation between the pair of living dead female characters lies in the fact that both novels close by associating the women with fire and death. Pip confronts Miss Havisham in chapter 10 of the third volume, and she begs for Pip's forgiveness, having realized the extent to which her actions had affected an innocent boy: "If you can ever write under my name, 'I forgive her,' though ever so long after my broken heart is dust—pray do it!" (Dickens *Expectations* 297). Pip does forgive her, partly because he realizes that he too has mistreated others during his time as a gentleman. He wishes for his transgressions to be forgiven, but he also gains a better understanding of the terrible circumstances that moulded Miss Havisham into seeking out such reactionary solutions. Pip leaves Satis House, noting the "mournfulness of the place and time...[and feels] an indescribable awe" upon coming out of the wooden gates (Dickens *Expectations* 299). He briefly looks back up to the window and witnesses the scene of her accidental catching on fire. She is "insensible" and falls into a "nervous shock," and

her actions are attributed to a suicide attempt (Dickens *Expectations* 300). Her bridal dress is burned off her body and is replaced by “white cotton-wool,” another version of her “old ghastly bridal appearance,” but her epiphany is complete, for Pip recognises that “the phantom air of something that had been and was changed, was still upon her” (Dickens *Expectations* 300). The epiphany that Pip witnesses is Miss Havisham’s realization, through the fire and precursory scene with Pip, of her misplaced anger and subsequent maltreatment of others. The physical manifestation of this epiphany is that her decrepit wedding dress is burned off and replaced by healing gauze: her death, not too long after the fire, brings her closer to self-acceptance.

Like Satis House, Sutpen’s Hundred is the site of a fire and a death, but it is not Miss Rosa who dies but Thomas Sutpen’s estranged son, Henry. Faulkner changed the victim from the ghostly spinster/symbol of the Lost Cause to the ghostly man/actual male descendent of the Cause itself. Miss Rosa “refused at last to be a ghost” haunting her own memory, and makes Quentin her companion on a trip from Jefferson to Sutpen’s Hundred in an attempt to “finish what she found she hadn’t quite completed,” namely to find Henry and thereby prove to herself that the Sutpen family line finally has come to an end (Faulkner *Absalom* 362). When Quentin and Miss Coldfield leave together for Sutpen’s Hundred, they both envision the ghost of Thomas Sutpen as they reach the now “rotting shell” of the house which had once been a plantation mansion of the highest splendour (Faulkner *Absalom* 364). As they finally arrive at the gate, they find that Clytie, Sutpen’s illegitimate daughter with a black slave, is guarding the house, “still keeping that secret [of Henry] for the sake of the man who had been her father too as well as for the sake of the family which no longer existed, whose here-to-fore inviolate and rotten mausoleum she still guarded” (Faulkner *Absalom* 350). Albert Guerard discusses this correspondence of rotting houses in Dickens and Faulkner and proposes that both authors purposely utilized “dark secrets in menaced houses [which] eventually [are] gutted by fire or...collapse and suffocate” (40). The dichotic symbolism of fire (ancient Greek literature utilizes fire to symbolise destruction and knowledge, as is chiefly understood from Prometheus’s gift to mankind) is utilized in order to bring the novels to fruition and to move the characters to epiphany.

Both novels employ similar strategies in presenting final revelations that neither the reader nor the protagonists could have foreseen. Just as Pip is made conscious of the extreme trauma that haunted Miss Havisham and bound her to a lifelong search for retribution, Quentin discovers the long-held secret of Sutpen, namely his previous

marriage in Haiti and his son. The son is discovered to be Charles Bon, Judith Sutpen's would-be suitor. For both characters, it is fitting that their secrets are unearthed in the decaying houses.⁶⁶ Quentin and Pip reach their epiphanies and uncover these long-hidden mysteries in buildings which have become "tombs," the only believable end of which is to "collapse...or burn" (Guerard 40). Thus the rotten dwellings, formerly focal points of their respective family confidences, are the settings for Sutpen's and Miss Havisham's deaths.

Yet another of Faulkner's female characters who resembles Dickens's Miss Havisham is Miss Habersham of *Intruder in the Dust* (1948), whose name is a direct reference to the Dickensian character whom she is meant to resemble. This novel centres on the intermingled lives of Gavin Stevens (another lawyer who made a brief but important appearance in *Light in August* as the postulator of Joe Christmas's death scene), his nephew Charles Mallison, known as Chick, and Chick's childhood playmate, Aleck Sander. In the text, Chick is drawn into the plight of Lucas Beauchamp, an African-American who is suspected of having killed a white man. Out of a perceived debt to the elder man, Chick becomes involved with the effort to prove Lucas's innocence. He includes Aleck, a character who is infinitely more intuitive about his surroundings than Chick. Like Quentin Compson, Chick is living mostly within his own mind. The two boys are joined by Miss Habersham. Besides the similarity of her name to that of Miss Havisham, she is similar to her predecessor in physical description as well. Faulkner's Miss Habersham comes from one of the oldest families in Yoknapatawpha County, and she is yet another Faulknerian hermit:

There had been three [Habershams] once:...only Miss Habersham remained: a kinless spinster of seventy living in the columned colonial house on the edge of town which had not been painted since her father died and had neither water nor electricity in it, with two Negro servants...in a cabin in the back yard, who (the wife) did the cooking while Miss Habersham and the man raised chickens and vegetables and peddled them about town from the pickup truck. (Faulkner *Intruder* 74-75).

Again like Dickens's Miss Havisham, the peers of Faulkner's Miss Habersham use only her spinsterhood and her appearance to define her. Chick considers to himself that Miss Habersham "had been wearing [the same cotton stockings and black hat] for at least

⁶⁶ Interestingly, here we see more ties with *Jane Eyre* and the mysterious history of Rochester.

forty years and the clean print dresses which you could see in the Sears Roebuck catalogues for two dollars and ninety-eight cents with the neat small gold watch pinned to the flat unmammary front” (Faulkner *Intruder* 75-76). Chick is startled to find her in his uncle’s office: a “round faintly dusty-looking black [hat] set squarely on the top of her head such as his grandmother had used to wear” (Faulkner *Intruder* 74). This image of the spinster instantly defeminizes her (her appearance reminds Chick of a fencing vest: she is unmammary) and aligns Miss Habersham with the status of town freak: a woman stuck in an endless rotation of routine and appearance, wearing a series of plain cotton dresses, each of which is identical to the next. This inclusion of Miss Habersham’s ghostly appearance (ghostly because of the static nature of her clothes and her uncanny qualities) recalls the concept of the ghostly women of the postbellum period, the idea of which Quentin and Mr Compson discussed in *Absalom, Absalom!*

Alexandre Vashchenko discusses the coupling of the older woman and the young boy as a pairing which functions as an agent for acts of good in an ignorant world. Vashchenko, on examining Faulkner’s short stories, defines this odd coupling as “Faulkner’s favorite pair, a woman and a boy, who, in their sensitivity to truth, attempt to save the world; who understand and perceive so much, while others are not merely blind, but possessed by evil” (212). As has been demonstrated previously, this pair of characters is often utilized in Faulknerian mythos, but it is with *Intruder in the Dust* that Faulkner tweaks the pairing in a way that is reminiscent of Dickensian characters; he creates the female half to be grotesque, purposely reminding the reader of Miss Havisham. At the close of *Great Expectations*, Miss Havisham reaches a sense of self-awareness, but she does so without having contributed to the lives of those around her, a concept which, as has been stated, was very close to the core of both Dickens’s and Faulkner’s belief systems. The concept of felt relationships between Dickens’s characters and his readers will be addressed in more detail in later chapters, but it is worth mentioning here that for some time, there has been an area of study in which scholars have researched the depth of readerly affection for and relationships with Dickens’s characters. For many of Dickens’s readers, his characters have continued to exist for them outside of their respective novels.⁶⁷ My argument with this line of thought is that Faulkner also experienced felt relationships with Dickens’s characters (we can return to his comments about rereading Dickens’s texts and feeling as if he

⁶⁷ Cruse 159.

were having conversations with old friends). With *Intruder in the Dust*, he appropriates Miss Havisham, but revises the character, giving her tools with which to interact with the society around her in order to achieve a positive outcome.

“A Rose for Emily” (1930) narrates the town of Jefferson’s interpretation of Emily, and the tale should be cited due to its importance as Faulkner’s “most famous short story,” as well as for its inclusion in the gothic genre (Skei 151). Miss Emily Grierson is perhaps his most enigmatic Faulknerian female character, since so much of her composition is symbolic of the “Lost Cause” ideology of the South: “of good old days, of a time when women knew their place and had few if any outlets for their frustration and anger” (Skei 154). She is mysterious because she elicits a multitude of reactions from the reader: pity, disgust and fear. She exists frozen in time, seemingly unwilling to progress forward into the present day. At the start of the story, the unnamed narrator introduces Emily as already being dead (much like Marley of *A Christmas Carol*, who “was dead, to begin with”) then moves to describing her status as that of a “fallen monument” from a time long since passed (Dickens *Carol* 5, Faulkner “Rose” 119). The Griersons, the narrator explains, always felt themselves to be above the rest of the Jeffersonian population. Miss Emily’s father successfully drove away any of her prospective suitors and reared her in an environment which demanded her obedience and acquiescence to a male-dominated world. Their home, “set on what had once been [the town’s] most select street,” was decaying into “an eyesore among eyesores” (Faulkner “Rose” 119). After the death of her father, Emily is left a “pauper.” The only provision he makes for his daughter is the decaying house, but the townspeople “were glad...[of this because] At last they could pity Miss Emily...she had become humanized” (Faulkner “Rose” 123). The narrator tells of the special dispensation the mayor allots Miss Emily in 1894, when he allows for the City of Jefferson to pay the annual taxes on her house, knowing of the penniless state in which her father left her. In this fashion, the mayor Colonel Sartoris (himself a relic of the “old South”) merely continues the framework of Miss Emily’s victimization, which originally had been instigated by her father and the “Old South” at large. In creating a way for Miss Emily to get around any responsibility for her house tax, the Colonel

cements an already psychologically troubled outsider into a fictionalized world that is completely internalized.⁶⁸

The next generation of councilmen are of course troubled by the arrangement that has been created for the now-elderly Miss Emily, and they are forced to visit her in her decaying home in an attempt to explain the situation of the unpaid taxes. Through this scene, the reader is introduced to her. By this era, Miss Emily has been secluded for nearly ten years, and “no visitor had passed” through her door in that time (Faulkner “Rose” 120). Her description (which reads like something from *Blackwood’s*) is presented at the start of the story, and it sets the tone well enough for the tale to be categorized as gothic:

a small, fat woman in black, with a thin gold chain descending to her waist and vanishing into her belt, leaning on an ebony cane with a tarnished gold head. Her skeleton was small and spare; perhaps that was why what would have been merely plumpness in another was obesity in her. She looked bloated, like a body long submerged in motionless water, and of that pallid hue. Her eyes, lost in the fatty ridges of her face, looked like two small pieces of coal pressed into a lump of dough as they moved from one face to another while the visitors stated their errand. (Faulkner “Rose” 121).

This recalls to the reader’s mind Pip’s impression of Miss Havisham, which is so shocking to him that in order to make sense of the bizarre sight he witnesses, he utilizes his memories of a traveling waxwork show and also of a human skeleton that had been dug from the pavement of his childhood church; the implied combination is a shrivelled, yellowed woman whose “sunken eyes,” reminiscent of the glass eyes of a waxwork figure, “moved” (Dickens *Expectations* 50). When the town elders meet with Emily, now a complete recluse, the sight of her is so jarring that the narrator is only able to conceptualize her through an association with a body “long submerged” underwater, with coal eyes sunken into her face, like a macabre snowman (Faulkner “Rose” 121). The interpretation of her is not too distant from that of Miss Havisham in that her presentation (that of arrested development) is what defines her. Miss Emily is not literally drowned, but her mental growth has been stagnated much as to give the impression of a dead body. Hans Skei defines “A Rose for Emily” as “a gothic tale in

⁶⁸ Skei further explains how Miss Emily is victimized, “Emily is a victim because she belongs to another time and a different world than that which emerges in her lifetime, and she flatly refuses to give up her internalized ideals and ideas because she has been given nothing in exchange for them” (159).

the sense that it creates a doom-laden atmosphere in which an old spinster...is totally shut out from the teeming outside world” (153). It is precisely her refusal to acknowledge time which creates the ghostly atmosphere in Faulkner’s story and which also can be seen in so many of Dickens’s ghostly characters. The reader is primed to both pity her (and to fear her), much for the same reasons that the narrator tells us the townspeople pity her: because of her isolation and poverty and because of what she stands for, the tragic “Lost Cause” of the South.

The narrator then mentions a secondary reason that Emily deserves the reader’s pity: two years after her father’s death, her property begins to smell. As adept at humorous interludes as Dickens, Faulkner interjects a judge telling one of the complaining townsfolk: ““Damnit, sir,...will you accuse a lady to her face of smelling bad?”” (Faulkner “Rose” 122). The smell fades with the men’s application of lime, and the reader, like the town, forgets about the episode and continues their perception of Miss Emily as a curiosity and a pitiable relic. However, before her complete seclusion, another episode occurs. After her father’s death but before the smell and tax problems with the town, she takes on a suitor, Homer Barron. The town’s pity for her only grows, since now she is not only penniless but has sunk so far below her family’s “*noblesse oblige*” as to be seen publicly with a Yankee day labourer (Faulkner “Rose” 124). Homer, an eternal bachelor, continues his open courtship of Emily until one day—as the town suspected he would—he disappears, leaving Miss Emily to her derelict and fetid house.

So like many other living dead figures (Skei also utilizes this term for Emily, and in the next chapter, I more thoroughly examine its application to literary figures throughout Faulkner’s and Dickens’s works), Miss Emily lives on in arrested development. Her only companion is her African-American gardener and cook Toby, who is given little attention by the narrator. This lack of description implies that while Toby is inconsequential to Miss Emily’s emotional/psychological well being, his presence is necessary to her physical functions. At last Emily dies of old age. Toby lets in a group of ladies who have taken on the task of planning her burial, then he leaves out the back door, never to be seen in Jefferson again. As the town lays her to rest, it mourns the passing of the last relic of a long-vanished age. The town elders know that the top floor of Emily’s house had been shut up for some forty years and “They waited until Miss Emily was decently in the ground before they opened it” (Faulkner “Rose”

129). In creating this scene, Faulkner has the reader become at once privy to what the characters themselves are witnessing first-hand. The effect of this is to bring the reader uncomfortably close to the horror being narrated, as if they too are witnesses. When the city officials open the top level of the house, they see signs of Homer, Emily's suitor some thirty years previous: his clothing folded neatly over a chair, his discarded shoes and socks—and then they see “the man himself [lying] in the bed...the body had apparently once lain in the attitude of embrace” (Faulkner “Rose” 130). It is in this moment that the reader connects the smell lingering on Emily's property soon after Homer's disappearance, her psychological undoing by her father and by society at large, and her slow descent into isolation and madness. The effect of the strange narration of Emily's life (and death) demonstrates the extent of her psychological isolation and creates the picture a freakish figure who is attractive to the reader in his/her “very repulsion,” much like David is compelled to stare at his antagonist Uriah Heep (Dickens *Copperfield* 379). But what then occurs, as Hans Skei describes, is “the extra turn of the screw of horror.” The witnesses find one long gray hair, lying on the pillow next to the decayed Homer Barron. This is where Faulkner ends the story, leaving his readers to grapple with the incongruity of such a life as Emily's and to realize the larger metaphor for which it stood: the doomed “Lost Cause” itself.

The brief examination of Faulkner's biography at the start of this chapter, his understanding of the world around him and his interpretation of literature and art, all combine to demonstrate the way in which he created his literary figures. Admittedly, he took much from authors whom he admired, and he acknowledged his own debts to writers who had come before him. When asked at the University of Virginia whether he had been trying to deliver a coded message in “A Rose for Emily” with Emily's relationship to Homer Barron, a Yankee day labourer, Faulkner replied: “either [an author] is delivering a message or he's trying to create flesh-and-blood, living, suffering, anguishing human beings. And as any man works out of his past, since any man—no man is himself, he's a sum of his past, and in a way, if you can accept the term, of his future, too” (Faulkner qtd. in Gwynn and Blotner 47-48). Faulkner's point here is to explain that he was too busy trying to form “flesh-and-blood” characters to be consumed with arranging a deeper meaning for them. However, I would not altogether agree that this condensed answer for a crowd of undergraduate students, an answer given toward the end of his career, encapsulates his whole opinion on the subject. As

broached before, Faulkner was known for negating the larger unity and meanings behind his works, and he often downplayed the extent to which he researched and read.⁶⁹ A more detailed look at how many of Faulkner's characters mirror figures from Dickens's books has not before been undertaken, and it demonstrates the extent to which Dickens's characters were influential on future fictional creations. What I do concur with in Faulkner's quotation above is that "no man is himself, he's a sum of his past...and of his future, too." In utilizing prototypes of Dickens's characters and reshaping them in light of his own era, Faulkner proved that these figure types are not restricted to Dickens's novels, and that their importance transcends the time and place of their creation. As he himself admits, Faulkner felt that female characters were more difficult to create, largely because of the mystery which he believed females carried. The crone female seems to hold the most mystery for Faulkner (and arguably for Dickens as well), and he comes to this figure time and time again, as demonstrated in this chapter. In many ways, the figure of the crone demonstrates the elusive quality of the South's "Lost Cause," the upheld notion of female purity and chastity that Southern white men (erroneously) felt the need to protect from so-called aggressors. Once more as Quentin Compson's father explains to him in *Absalom, Absalom*: "Years ago we in the South made our women into ladies. Then the War came and made the ladies into ghosts. So what else can we do, being gentlemen, but listen to them being ghosts?" (Faulkner *Absalom* 12).

⁶⁹ Faulkner said he did not do "much reading...except of 'the old books,' to which he goes back regularly...In the last fifteen years he has not read a book by a contemporary" (Hutchens *Lion in the Garden* 59-60). This was a deliberate misleading of his interviewer as can be proven by the books catalogued from his shelves held at Rowan Oak (Blotner *William Faulkner's Library—a Catalogue*).

Chapter Three — Dickens and Faulkner: Saving Joe Christmas

“...he didn't know what he was, and so he was nothing...” (Faulkner *qtd. in Gwynn and Blotner* 72).

In one of the closing chapters of *Light in August* (1932) the Reverend Hightower acts as narrator and describes to himself, and thus the reader, the reasons for his wanting to move to Jefferson, Mississippi as a young man. Throughout the novel, it has seemed that the Reverend had long ago arbitrarily picked the town of Jefferson from a map as a place in which to begin his ministry. In this chapter, however, he explains that he has harboured something akin to an obsession with ministering to the same town where his grandfather, an officer in the Confederate Army during the Civil War, lived and fought. Hightower feels that if he can minister in Jefferson, he will be able to witness, both to physically see and to spiritually envision, the ghosts of his Southern forefathers. He thinks, “But soon, as soon as we can, where we can look out the window and see the street, maybe even the hoofmarks or their shapes in the air, because the same air will be there even if the dust, the mud, is gone—” (Faulkner *August* 363). Hightower's narration of his drive describes succinctly the reasons I feel the work of Charles Dickens can be seen and felt throughout succeeding literature of the American South in the post-Civil War decades. For example, ghosts shape the protagonists' decisions in Dickens's *A Christmas Carol* in which Scrooge witnesses the apparition of Marley who has procured for him a chance of redemption. By witnessing the ghost, which had “sat invisible beside [Scrooge] many and many a day” without being seen; Scrooge is able to change his future and begin spiritually to “walk abroad among his fellow-men” (Dickens *Carol* 24 and 22). Where Scrooge's visitations from apparitions act as a catalyst to move him to change his ways, Hightower's visions (to which the reader is never a witness) do not move him to such change. They instead act as an anchor, keeping him within the past; as Michael Millgate writes, Hightower is “a non-participant, a man withdrawn from life and its sufferings” (*The Achievement* 130).

Like Hightower, many of Dickens's characters are “living dead,” stuck in withdrawn positions which are pre-epiphanic, by which I mean that they are paused in the moments before the inevitable realization of epiphany. Faulkner and Dickens both focused on the pasts and presents of characters who are engaged in a spiritual war with themselves, as well as the world around them. For many of them, their decay and ruin is self-inflicted, a reaction to the heartbreaks of life. These well-known literary figures (more obvious examples include Miss Havisham and Marley and Scrooge of *A*

Christmas Carol) together form a prototype of “living dead” characters that draws upon elements of the Gothic and grotesque traditions for its creations. Michael Hollington asserts in *Dickens and the Grotesque* that Dickens has a complex relationship with the grotesque in his novels. This stems from various sources, but the end result is that Dickens’s understanding of these grotesque traditions led to his creating literary representations of his community, representations that were easily categorized and understood by his readers. Miss Havisham serves as a more obvious example of how Dickens imbues his characters with elements of the grotesque, as she lives her life estranged from her community, hidden away in the dark corners of her rotting estate and actively seeking to be viewed as bizarre. Upon meeting Pip for the first time, Miss Havisham commands him to view her in all her grotesquery: “Look at me...You are not afraid of a woman who has never seen the sun since you were born?” (Dickens *Expectations* 50). Hollington asserts that especially in *Great Expectations*, “a complex of ironies unfolds [and ultimately] Society as a whole...is represented as an *exhibition of freaks*” (217 and 221, author’s emphasis). Although Pip is in all ways a “normal” child, he is surrounded by strange and peculiar characters from the outset, figures that are responsible for his upbringing. This proposed “freak show” starts with Magwitch, the escaped convict who threatens Pip with death by cannibalism if he does not comply with the criminal’s demands. Then Pip’s guardians, Joe and Mrs Joe are introduced, and this couple exhibits two extremes of child rearing. Mr Pumblechook is brought into the mix with his comic yet malevolent, never-ending, dogged questioning of Pip’s mathematical knowledge. All of these humorously exaggerated figures in Pip’s community are the opening act which introduces his visit to the crumbling, ghostly residence, Satis House.

The specific “freaks” on which I focus, those who experience a living death, are particularly compelling grotesque characters because they have chosen to remain psychologically fixed in the past, a type of living effigy of their own personal histories. When examined more closely, one can see that this is essentially the definition of a spectre in a ghost story. Ghost stories have long captivated public interest, as can be seen with the popularity of novels, films and video games which capitalize on such subjects. The lure of this genre can be explained in one way by examining what these apparitions convey: their fascination lies in their ability to stay rooted within the past. Unlike the rest of us, they do not have to change and move into the unforeseeable future. Dickens himself in one of his literary pieces in *All the Year Round* titled “The

Uncommercial Traveller,” (Magazine 72, 8 Sept. 1860) states that he was compelled to listen to his childhood nurse tell him ghostly stories, by which he was both frightened and intrigued. Dickens was a writer of whom Faulkner was well aware, as his mother Maud had introduced a young Faulkner and his brothers to Dickens’s works at home before they began attending school.⁷⁰ When he eventually developed an “indifference to education,” and turned to informal self-education by reading, it was “Shakespeare, Dickens, Balzac and Conrad” on whom he focused heavily (Minter 12).⁷¹ It is my assertion that these compelling Dickensian “living dead” characters are recreated in Faulkner’s texts and re-envisioned for the twentieth century in the aftermath of the destructive and life changing American Civil War.⁷²

Many of Faulkner’s characters have difficulty with the well-known Southern adage “never forget.”⁷³ Gavin Stevens (a character who appears in multiple novels, including the end of *Light in August*) observes in *Requiem for a Nun*, “The past is never dead. It’s not even past” (Faulkner 92). Millgate postulates that this remark is perplexing because it consists of two parts, firstly, that the past is “in a sense, never dead” and is therefore “always sufficiently alive to haunt the present” (“History” 11). Secondly, Millgate notes that the past is not “even past” because the South constantly re-lives it, glorifying its reconstructed history and winning “the irremediable battles” (“History” 8). Quentin Compson (who, like Stevens, also appears in multiple novels) demonstrates this struggle as he works to overcome his Southern legacy and to truly know himself in the present, but ultimately he cannot. At the end of *Absalom*,

⁷⁰ Minter 10 and Blotner *William Faulkner’s Library—a Catalogue*.

⁷¹ As referenced earlier, Joseph Blotner’s catalogue of Faulkner’s libraries shows that Faulkner owned two large volume sets of Dickens (one housed at Rowan Oak and the other at his cottage in Charlottesville, Virginia). Blotner asserts that “Not one of these books contains any comments or interlineations from his hand. [Faulkner’s] special favorites, however, are marked not only by inscriptions by also by duplicates...These were among those books which he read in youth and reread throughout his life, dipping into them for the sake of the characters, he used to say, as one would go into a room to visit an old friend” (8-9).

⁷² According to biographers, Faulkner was an avid reader throughout his youth: “although he never finished high school he read omnivorously...the extent and depth of Faulkner’s reading should never be underestimated” (Millgate “Introduction” 2). Additionally, Millgate asserts “Faulkner’s familiarity with English and European literature has often been ignored or underestimated by American critics, and the result has sometimes been not simply a misunderstanding of the nature and sources of many of his images and allusions but an insufficiently generous conception of the whole scale and direction of his endeavour” (Millgate *The Achievement* 162).

⁷³ This term hails from Abraham Lincoln’s 1863 “Gettysburg Address” in which Lincoln said, “The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here” (abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/gettysburg.htm). However, this term was incorporated into the South’s “Lost Cause” mentality and flipped on its head during the “Jim Crow” era. The idea that Southerners should “never forget” their past was highlighted in D. W. Griffith’s 1915 film, “Birth of a Nation.”

Absalom!, Quentin's college roommate Shreve (who, as Millgate points out is "a man unconcerned with his history" as he is from "the newly settled prairies" of Alberta, Canada) asks the Southerner why he hates the South, to which Quentin replies, "I dont [sic] hate it...*I dont. I dont!*" (Millgate "History" 1, Faulkner 378 author's emphasis). Millgate also writes that Faulkner's novels work to demonstrate "that it is one thing to recognize that the past is not dead...but that it is quite another thing to submit our lives to the control of that past, to insist...upon reminding ourselves and others to never forget" ("History" 13-14). These Faulknerian "living dead" figures, of which Quentin is one example, serve as the personifications of this obsession with remembering, and ultimately their epiphanies serve as tools to demonstrate the dangers of a static life lived in the mind.

When considering these "living dead" figures, it is apparent that *Light in August* and *Bleak House* have strong connections to each other. Both novels are concerned with the line between good and evil, lost souls, hauntings and the search for identity. Millgate recognizes this connection in his study, *The Achievement of William Faulkner*, but focuses on Faulkner's style in the opening of the novel and its narration of Lena Grove: "and even the abrupt transitions to apparently unrelated material in the second and third chapters will not disturb anyone familiar with Dickens—with, say, *Bleak House*, or *Our Mutual Friend*" (124). *Bleak House* is centrally focused on the plight of Esther Summerson, an orphan who has been designated to be the companion of a ward of the Chancery Court, Ada Clare. However, other motifs in the novel include hidden pasts and secret documents. An insidious undercurrent beneath these prevalent themes is the presence of a ghost, both as a legend and later as an actual character within the novel, and this ghost is what I examine here. In the second instalment of *Bleak House* (April 1852), the ending chapter is titled, "The Ghost's Walk." Taking Dickens's already established penchant for ghost stories, it becomes clear that in the early days of this novel's serialization, he was capitalizing on the public's interest in tales of gothic suspense to hook a readership, and he therefore introduces one of the novel's main characters, Lady Dedlock, in a manner similar to the depiction of a Victorian spectre. The Lady has a past that is shrouded in mystery, which is made all the more eerie as she is introduced alongside her country estate, Chesney Wold, and its ghost of the walk, thus paralleling the two by association. Upon discovering that the great love of her youth had been living in London and working as a legal manuscript writer, she secretly

leaves the country, travelling into the slums of London to discern more information about her lover's last days. She finds Jo, an illiterate crossing sweep who happened to know her dead lover Captain Hawdon by way of a shared state of poverty. The Lady disguises herself in her servant's clothing and covers her face so that she may not be recognized, but the outcome of this disguise is that she appears to be a phantom to Jo, whose ignorance makes him susceptible to believing his fears and superstitions. "Her face is veiled,...She never turns her head...Then, she slightly beckons to [Jo], and says, 'Come here!'" (Dickens *Bleak* 200).



Figure 1: **Consecrated Ground.** Etching: Hablot K. Browne, reproduced with permission of the Victorian Web.

Dickens draws on aspects of the Victorian spiritualist movement, as well as his earlier ghostly characters such the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come from *A Christmas Carol*, for his representations of Lady Dedlock.⁷⁴ In *Bleak House*, Dickens brings a phantom to life and creates a living and breathing ghost with Lady Dedlock. As mentioned, the Lady is paralleled with her country house Chesney Wold, which is "wrapped up in too much jeweller's cotton and fine wool, and cannot hear the rushing of the larger worlds...[Chesney Wold] is a deadened world, and its growth is sometimes unhealthy for want of air" (Dickens *Bleak* 11). The Dedlock estate is located in

⁷⁴ I wrote on Dickens's ghostly characters and the ways in which they are represented in my master's thesis, "Dickens, Decay and Doomed Spirits: Ghosts and the Living Dead in the Works of Charles Dickens" for the University of Leicester, 2013.

Lincolnshire, a place described as having “a stagnant river, with melancholy trees for islands in it,” and this does nothing to enliven the atmosphere of the “extremely dreary” country house (Dickens *Bleak* 11). By association, Lady Dedlock becomes a part of the estate’s “mould...cold sweat; and...general smell and taste as of the ancient Dedlocks in their graves” (Dickens *Bleak* 11). Having met and married Sir Leicester (no one quite knows how, because as the narrator states, “she had not even family”), Lady Dedlock then having “conquered *her* world, fell...into the freezing mood” (Dickens *Bleak* 12–13, author’s emphasis). This “freezing mood” is an indicator of the Lady’s choice to remain fixed, cold and cut off from the world around her, much as the Dedlock estate is described; however, the Lady is not a spirit haunting this world because of unfinished business (a common plot motif in Victorian ghost stories); she is alive but has chosen to live her life as spiritually dead and is therefore presented in the same way a spectre would be in order to convey this “living dead” state to the readership.

In her article in *Philological Quarterly*, Holly Furneaux discusses the literary relationship between the social deaths endured by women in the nineteenth century under coverture laws, and the prevalent fear which abounded in the mid-Victorian era of being subjected to an erroneous live burial. Furneaux explains that women who wished to marry suffered an “experience of being dead in life, or existing in a ‘living grave’” under coverture laws, and authors like Mary Braddon (best known for *Lady Audley’s Secret* of 1862) used this fear of being buried alive as a way to further discuss, via metaphor in their novels, the “social death” that women endured when marrying (438). When analysing Lady Dedlock through the lens of this aforementioned “social death,” it is clear that the Lady is suffering a form of this “living death” in her marriage to Sir Leicester as well as in her choice to forsake her earlier life as Miss Barbary. Because she has had a child out of wedlock as Miss Barbary and consequently has worked to cover up that living part of herself (Dickens was likely drawing upon the same metaphor that Furneaux describes), the Lady feels she is outside of the loving and redemptive grace of God. Her sins, as she views them, involve having a sexual relationship outside of wedlock and also actively seeking to hide this past. Covering up one’s secrets is a subject on which Dickens focused heavily, and *Bleak House* is a prime example of how he approached obfuscating the past. However, with Lady Dedlock’s confession to Esther that she is in fact the young woman’s “unhappy mother” followed by the Lady’s death (a self-sacrifice at the pauper’s grave of her lover) she chooses to be saved by a universal God’s love and therefore is redeemed (Dickens *Bleak* 449).

The idea that all humanity is able to gain redemption is a central theme of Dickens's works, as Vincent Newey argues in *The Scriptures of Charles Dickens*. Newey notes that Dickens utilizes a "liberal humanism" in his works, which displaces the older, dogmatic rhetoric of Puritanical Christianity (3, 19). The key idea about this form of humanism, Newey states, is that although Dickens was Christian, "Duty to God and concern for the state of the immortal soul have been succeeded by an insistent interest in healthy feelings and fruitful relationships with the outer world," and that these interactions with one's community are in fact what brings salvation (18). This "liberal [Christian] humanism" is echoed by authors writing in the aftermath of the American Civil War, especially in the South. Joseph Gold's text on Faulkner and humanism mainly focuses on Faulkner's later works, but he argues in his introduction that "Faulkner's humanism rests on a rock foundation of faith, almost of mysticism...[God] is available to all men at all times if they will throw over systems and act out of acceptance and love" (14). Gold quotes from Faulkner's 1955 lecture tour of Japan to demonstrate that Faulkner felt himself most aligned with humanism: "Well, I believe in God. Sometimes Christianity gets pretty debased, but I do believe in God, yes. I believe that man has a soul that aspires towards what we call God...the only school I belong to, that I want to belong to, is the humanist school" (Faulkner qtd. in Gold 7-8).⁷⁵ A feeling of having committed wrongs which need to be accounted for, coupled with people who are stuck in horrors of stagnation, poverty and disease, people who are caught up in their heritage and unable to disassociate themselves from their pasts, culminates in the desire for redemption, and Faulkner in particular is a writer who focuses acutely on this topic. Byron Bunch sums up this culmination of emotions and circumstances when he says,

Yes. A man will talk about how he'd like to escape from living folks. But it's the dead folks that do him the damage. It's the dead ones that lay quiet in one place and dont [sic] try to hold him, that he cant [sic] escape from. (Faulkner *August* 58).

With this statement, Bunch illustrates how the youth of the early twentieth-century fought to distance themselves from Civil War nostalgia. Arguably, the United States was founded on several horrors, the African slave trade and the genocide against the

⁷⁵ This statement is taken from *Faulkner at Nagano* (1956).

American Indians, and Bunch here comments that these atrocities are haunting presences which ultimately “do him the damage.”

In his final chapter in *Light in August*, the Reverend Hightower comments that he “grew to manhood among phantoms, and side by side with a ghost” suggesting that his past and his Southern heritage were inescapable aspects of his childhood, as they were for many who grew up in the generations after the Civil War (356). He further narrates that he was never scared of the stories his family’s negro maid (who helped to raise him) told of his grandfather, who allegedly killed hundreds of men in the war, because he was just a ghost, “never seen in the flesh, heroic, simple, warm” (359).⁷⁶ Hightower continues his narrative by describing the difference between these ghosts and phantoms “which would never die” (Faulkner *August* 359). The ghosts of memory and loss, as well as the presence of evil (as just described by Hightower) hold powerful places in *Light in August*, as in all of Faulkner’s works, and are epitomized in the character Joe Christmas. Although Christmas’s true identity remains a mystery to the various communities through which he moves, the townspeople have decided early on that an aura of evil surrounds him and this idea is based upon his physical appearance and rumours about his “mixed race” parentage. Christmas appears out of nowhere at the planing mill where Byron Bunch works, a stranger in the town with “something definitely rootless about him” (Faulkner *August* 25). There is something contemptuous about the way he looks, to which the other mill workers do not take kindly. He appears at the mill in order to apply for a manual labour position though he is dressed in clothes which denote that he is above such a station: “decent serge, sharply creased...[with] a white shirt...a tie and a stiffbrim [sic] straw hat that was quite new, cocked at an angle arrogant and baleful above his still face” (25). As he goes to the mill office, the other workers in their “faded and workstained overalls looked at his back with a sort of baffled outrage. ‘We ought to run him through the planer,’ the foreman said. ‘Maybe

⁷⁶ Faulkner recycled from his own life the close relationship between a young boy and his nursemaid for his character Hightower. One of Faulkner’s biographers, David Minter, writes that the Falkner’s [original spelling] maid, “Mammy Callie” provided a very real source of familial love and affection to the Falkner boys when they were growing up in Oxford. Caroline Barr was born into slavery and although she was “Unable to read or write, she remembered scores of stories about the old days and the old people: about slavery, the War, the Klan, and the Falkners” (13). Additionally, the nurse/child relationship is one that was also a major source of entertainment in Dickens’s childhood as is recorded both in his many biographies and in the instalment of “The Uncommerical Traveller” mentioned earlier. Harry Stone wrote that the Dickens’s maid, Mary Weller, had a similar impact upon the Dickens children with the occult horror stories she would tell her young wards. Mary had “a baleful imagination that embroidered and personalised everything that she related. Dickens proved an ideal audience, and [she] practised on him endlessly” (Stone qtd. in Haining 4).

that will take that look off his face” (Faulkner *August* 25-26). Christmas remains a mystery to the Jeffersonians at the beginning of the novel: “none of them knew then where Christmas lived and what he was actually doing behind the veil, the screen, of his negro’s job at the mill” (Faulkner *August* 29).

The purpose of the “veil” that Faulkner tells us Christmas puts up is to keep his second job as a bootlegger hidden. However, this web of secrecy extends to Christmas’s own past, and it is only when the narrative moves back into his memory that it becomes clear how harsh beginnings nurtured, or even planted, the evil within him which is the driving force of the novel. Of Christmas’s childhood, the narrator tells us:

Memory believes before knowing remembers...Knows remembers believes a corridor in a big long gabled cold echoing building of dark red brick sootbleakened [sic] by more chimneys than its own, set in a grassless cinderstrewn-packed [sic] compound surrounded by smoking factory purlieus...where in random erratic surges...orphans in identical and uniform blue denim in and out of remembering but in knowing constant as the bleak walls, the bleak windows where in rain soot from the yearly adjacenting [sic] chimneys streaked like black tears. (Faulkner *August* 91).

This passage, an introduction to Christmas’s childhood in an orphanage, has a direct thread of connection to the opening of *Bleak House*. Dickens poetically writes of the fog and mud on the streets of London, which paints an impressionistic picture of rot and pestilence, later to become a metaphor for the Court of Chancery, the cause of many a character’s downfall in the novel. The omniscient narrator tells us that “never can there come fog too thick, never can there come mud and mire too deep, to assort with the groping and floundering condition which this High Court of Chancery, most pestilent of hoary sinners, holds, this day, in the sight of heaven and earth” (50). Faulkner often reused his phrases for certain character-types. He chose to describe one of his most tragic characters, Joe Christmas, in a manner hauntingly similar to that of Dickens’s Chancery Court. The wetness, grime and dirt that are associated with the orphanage building become associated with the children it houses, just as the fog and mud become one and the same with Chancery Court, the essence of evil within *Bleak House*. *Nicholas Nickleby* is also a novel which discusses Yorkshire Schools and focuses acutely on the skeletal imagery of the children housed there. Nicholas’s introduction to

Mr Squeers's establishment, "Dotheboys Hall," is one that shocks and appals him, but he is powerless to do much more than observe the scene:

Pale and haggard faces, lank and bony figures, children with the countenances of old men,...There were little faces which should have been handsome, darkened with the scowl of sullen, dogged suffering; there was childhood with the light of its eye quenched, its beauty gone, and its helplessness alone remaining;...and lonesome even in their loneliness...what an incipient Hell was breeding there! (Dickens *Nickleby* 89).

Hablot K. Browne's illustration (Fig. 2) is another piece of evidence which reiterates the image of the orphans that Dickens wanted his readership to envision. Dressed in matching ragged uniforms, the boys line up for their weekly dose of brimstone, and their gaunt, skeletal bodies are all the more emphasized by this linear formation. One boy's emaciated face flows into the next, and it would appear that they fade into the walls and background of the Hall, forming a ghostly image that is striving to become invisible.



Figure 2: **The Internal Economy of Dotheboys Hall.** Steel engraving: Hablot K. Browne, reproduced with permission of the Victorian Web.

Christmas is also a ghostly child who stands alone and is different from the other orphans. The dietician whom he has accidentally observed in a compromising situation feels this difference more than anyone and seeks a way of having him removed

from the orphanage by citing proof (however tenuous) of Christmas's race: "Of course I knew it didn't mean anything when the other children called him Nigger... They have been calling him that for years. Sometimes I think that children have a way of knowing things that grown people of your and my age dont [sic] see" (Faulkner *August* 102). Once the matron believes Christmas is of mixed race, she admits that he cannot stay at the white orphanage and must be placed with a family. Much like *Oliver Twist*, Christmas is seen to be a threat to his fellow orphans, albeit for different reasons. It is Oliver's caretaker, Mr Bumble who asserts that the orphan is unlovable, and similarly, it is the person who is supposed to care for Christmas, the dietician of the orphanage, who declares that he is a "little nigger bastard" (Faulkner *August* 96). Likewise, Oliver is told by Mr Bumble that he will be sold by the parish as an apprentice at the price of "three pound ten!...all for a naughty orphan which nobody can love" (Dickens *Twist* 16).⁷⁷ Early childhood memories of being turned out from adoptive homes that should be safe places of shelter haunt these orphans and imprint upon them their supposed "differences" from their social peers.

At the orphanage, Christmas fades at will "like a *shadow*...another in the corridor could not have said just when and where he vanished, into what door, what room" (Faulkner *August* 91, my emphasis). Thomas McHaney asserts in *Literary Masterpieces: The Sound and the Fury* that there is an association between ghosts and the reoccurring twilight and shadows in Faulkner's works. Twilight and fading light are particular to certain characters within *The Sound and the Fury*, and McHaney states that through the repetition, twilight becomes a Wagnerian *leitmotif* and is subsequently associated with the consciousness of those characters. That Faulkner actively chooses to align Christmas with shadows in his earliest childhood representations further asserts the child's innate ghostly nature.⁷⁸ The dietician mistakenly thinks Christmas is hiding in her room to spy on her sexual relationship with an orphanage doctor; in actuality he is stealing her toothpaste to eat because of its sweet flavour, finishes the entire tube and becomes ill. The dietician is "stupid enough to believe that a child of five not only could deduce the truth from what he had heard, but that he would want to tell it as an adult would" and it is she who feels threatened by his knowledge of her wrongdoings and is haunted by his "still, grave, inescapable, parchmentcoloured [sic] face, watching

⁷⁷ The Clarendon edition cites that as reading "can't love" but notes that in *Bentley's Miscellany* it read "can love" (Dickens *Twist* 16, footnote 4).

⁷⁸ McHaney *Literary Masterpieces: The Sound and the Fury* 72-73.

her” (94). All of the latter adjectives in the last quote serve as more evidence of Christmas’s perceived ghostliness, as his “grave” and “parchmentcoloured” face both denote a sense of sombre blankness. Christmas remains an enigma throughout the story, for even when the reader learns of his isolated childhood spent in an orphanage and with an abusive adoptive family, his personality seems unknowable.⁷⁹

From his introduction towards the beginning of the novel, an adult Joe Christmas is presented as the antagonist of the story both with the horrible things he does (the list is long and includes murders done with his bare hands) and the way in which he is physically presented. This attention to Christmas’s physicality differentiates Faulkner from other writers of American modernist fiction who actively choose not to focus on their characters’ physical descriptions. With *Light in August*, Faulkner veers from the modernist movement in this respect, and writes this text using techniques more aligned with novels of the realist and naturalist movements, such as describing the characters’ physical attributes and having those descriptions hint at their personalities. Faulkner himself, in a letter to his friend and editor Ben Wasson, wrote that *Light in August* was “a novel: not an anecdote; that’s why it seems topheavy, [sic]” (Faulkner qtd. in Millgate “A Novel” 31). Millgate speculates that the “topheavy” quality originated from Faulkner having packed “the novel with an extraordinary number and range of characters and of main and subsidiary narrative sequences,” a literary quality typically attributed to Dickens’s works and others writing in the mid-Victorian era (“A Novel” 32). *Light in August* then varies from a typical Faulknerian work: in his other novels, Faulkner concentrates acutely on a small number of central characters, their public and private emotions and inner dialogues. It is a distinctive text because Faulkner was attempting to veer from his more “anecdote” based writing, and sincerely put forth his efforts to write what he felt was “a novel.” This endeavour required an attention to the physical presentations of his characters, as well as laying out their personal histories as he measured himself against the achievements of other great novelists.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ In a graduate course on American Fiction at the University of Virginia, Faulkner says that Christmas’s “tragedy” was that “he didn’t know what he was, and so he was nothing...the most tragic condition a man could find himself in [is] not to know what he is and to know that he will never know” (Faulkner qtd. in Gwynn and Blotner 72).

⁸⁰ Millgate theorizes that Faulkner “in writing *Light in August*...set out to lay claim, once and for all, to the status of a major novelist...[it would be] a ‘big’ novel capable of standing alongside the greatest novels of the past” (“A Novel” 41). Millgate comes to this conclusion based on Faulkner’s own recollections of writing this work: “I was deliberately choosing among possibilities and probabilities of

Faulkner presents Christmas as a malevolent stranger who appears in Jefferson without warning. Christmas's demeanour and physical appearance culminate in his being read by Jeffersonians as a person with questionable motives. At the height of Christmas's bootlegging business in Jefferson and before he allegedly murders Joanna Burden, we are given insight into a day of his life which he spends mostly isolated in the woods near Burden's house. In the evening, he walks into town, which by nine o'clock, is mostly deserted. The narrator describes him as looking "*more lonely than a lone telephone pole in the middle of a desert...* he looked like a phantom, a spirit, strayed out of its own world, and lost" (Faulkner *August* 87, my emphasis). This sketch of Christmas is reminiscent of the orphans of Dotheboy's Hall in *Nicholas Nickleby*, boys who are "lonesome even in their loneliness" and who form a group of phantasmal entities with a gloomy presence (Dickens *Nickleby* 89). With this description, Faulkner explains that it is Christmas's loneliness that subsequently causes him to be assigned to the realm of phantoms and the "living dead," much like the orphans of Dotheboy's Hall. Christmas passes a "negro youth...[who] ceased whistling and edged away [from Christmas]...looking back over his shoulder" (Faulkner *August* 87). During Christmas's adolescence, he adopted a way of smoking a cigarette without touching it. He keeps a lit cigarette dangling "in one side of his mouth," from which the smoke billows up and obscures that side of his face (Faulkner *August* 25). Because Christmas's face is almost always half hidden by smoke, the result is that he is hardly ever fully seen, which draws upon the representations of well-known apparitions of Victorian ghost stories such as Marley. When Scrooge first sees Marley it is as a knocker on the former's front door. Scrooge at first sees, and does not see, the ghost: "Marley's face. It was not in impenetrable shadow as the other objects in the yard were, but had a dismal light about it...As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a knocker again" (Dickens *Carol* 16). Marley's hair "curiously stirred, as if by breath or hot air" implying that in order to appear to Scrooge, Marley must be encased in his ("its" is the assigned pronoun) own atmosphere, even though the rest of the scene is motionless and ordinary (Dickens *Carol* 16). Christmas's self-made atmosphere of cigarette smoke coupled with his "inherently vicious" nature culminates in his being

behavior and weighing and measuring each choice by the scale of the Jameses and Conrads and Balzacs" (Faulkner qtd. in Millgate "A Novel" 41). This drive of Faulkner's to have *Light in August* stand next to its literary predecessors explains his choices in examining the details of Christmas's and Hightower's lives more closely.

perceived as ghostly due to literary cues borrowed from Dickens (Millgate *The Achievement* 125).

Several Dickensian phantoms appear in their texts set apart from the natural environment of the everyday. The phantom of *The Haunted Man and the Ghost's Bargain* (1848) and the ghosts that haunt Toby Veck in *The Chimes* (1844) are two additional examples which appear in this manner, although Dickens puts a stronger emphasis on their shadowy natures than he does with Marley. I assert that in his creation of these phantoms, Dickens was drawing on his long-established interest in mesmerism. His belief in and practice of mesmerism spanned several decades of his life, beginning in the late 1830s when he came under the instruction of Dr John Elliotson, a physician and practicing mesmerist at the University College Hospital in London. Much of the science of mesmerism is based on the belief that living beings are surrounded by an invisible fluid and this fluid can be tapped into and manipulated by the mesmerist.⁸¹ Although Dickens was not a spiritualist (he aimed to debunk Spiritualism and ghost rappings in the article, "Well-Authenticated Rappings" *Household Words* 20 February 1858), many of mesmerism's cardinal beliefs have been inculcated into the ever-changing practice, and Harry Boddington writes about his mesmerist predecessors in a 1947 text on spiritualism. He states, "What was called a universal fluid by Mesmer was merely another name for what is now called aura when it is invisible and psychoplasm when solidified" (Boddington 211). Boddington further asserts that "In clairvoyance...the sight of spirits is limited to the plane of consciousness wherein they dwell," meaning that the spiritualist or psychic will only be able to view a spirit in the entity's own "spirit world" or dimension which can certainly account for the idea that a spirit would appear to the living in its own climate (308). Reading Dickensian ghost stories with this aforementioned auric fluid of mesmerism in mind, it becomes clear that the author was utilizing mesmeric terminology in creating his ghostly characters, depicting them encased in their own bubbles of space in order to denote their having come from an unearthly place. Once this relationship between mesmerism and Dickens's ghosts has been established, it is clear that Faulkner picked up on the specific way in which Dickensian phantoms were written, and he depicted Christmas as encased in his own smoky atmosphere, further denoting the character's

⁸¹ Douglas J. Lanska and Joseph T. Lanska. "Franz Anton Mesmer and the Rise and Fall of Animal Magnetism: Dramatic Cures, Controversy, and Ultimately a Triumph for the Scientific Method." Eds. Whitaker, Smith and Finger. *Brain, Mind and Medicine: Essays in Eighteenth-Century Neuroscience*, 2007, pp. 301-320.

presence as phantasmal. At the very least, we comprehend that Christmas is someone to be avoided, which is conveyed with the “negro youth’s” reaction to Christmas’s being ominous and otherworldly. As this youth edges away from Christmas on the street in town, readers familiar with Dickens’s works are again reminded of Jo’s fearful reaction to seeing a veiled Esther Summerson: “I had not lifted my veil...The boy staggered up instantly, and stared at me with a remarkable expression of surprise and terror” (Dickens *Bleak* 381). In the confusion of his fever, he mistakes Esther for Lady Dedlock, whom his mind has turned into a spectre that he must perpetually accompany to “the berryin [sic] ground” (Dickens *Bleak* 381).

After the phantasmal introduction to Christmas in town, the narrative allows access into his memory to see what shaped and grew the perceived evil within him. Despite the innocence of childhood, which is asserted in the New Testament and is emphasized in Christmas’s case by his namesake, Christmas cannot escape the dogmatic rhetoric of Protestant Christianity that dominated the South and focuses on “original sin.”⁸² Dickensian characters that also embody this more Calvinistic approach to Christianity are prevalent throughout his works, and it is worth mentioning that it is Miss Barbary, Lady Dedlock’s sister, who raises Esther in secret and imprints upon her the notion of having been born into sin, and that sin is therefore an inescapable factor of her life. This is the main construction of Esther’s mental prison, from which she works to be released throughout the novel. Christmas too works throughout the novel to escape from this self-made prison, but unlike Esther, he seeks his release through acts of violence (a trait which Flannery O’Connor utilizes in many of her pieces). The janitor of Christmas’s first home, the orphanage (in actuality his biological grandfather, Doc Hines), who spirits him away once his mixed race is discovered, is convinced that Christmas is evil: “I know evil. Aint [sic] I made evil to get up and walk God’s world? A walking pollution to God’s own face I made it. Out of the mouths of little children He never concealed it” (Faulkner *August* 98). Although Hines and Christmas have never exchanged more than “a hundred words...[Christmas] knew that there was something between them that did not need to be spoken” (Faulkner *August* 105). Hines’s attention to Christmas comes out of a sense of having done evil of Biblical proportions, an Old Testament theme that humanity is born into sin, and Christmas’s

⁸² The New Testament speaks of the innocence of children several times, most notably in the gospel of Mark when Christ demonstrates the importance of children by saying: “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God” (King James Bible, Mark 10:14).

mere existence (in Hines's mind) is his punishment. Hines is also drawn to Christmas because of the circumstances of his birth; because Hines's daughter committed a sin in having Christmas with a supposed "black man" out of wedlock, Christmas is assumed to have inherited his mother's and father's sin of lust, as well as being of mixed race, which to Hines equates to an ability to perpetuate evil.

Christmas's troubled childhood continues when he is adopted by the McEachern family who promise that the boy "will grow up to fear God and abhor idleness and vanity despite his origin" (Faulkner *August* 109). His new caregivers further imprint a sense of hopelessness upon a young Christmas, and their belief in humanity's inescapable original sin propels him down a path of negativity sought out of retaliation and despair. It is in the McEachern house, a place where physical and emotional violence takes the place of love, that Christmas's desire to withdraw from humanity is cemented. An adolescence spent in the company of Mr McEachern, a religious bigot similar in character to Esther's aunt Miss Barbary, leaves Joe unable to understand love or to delineate between good and evil. Alexander Welsh writes that Christmas had "two oppressive adoptive fathers...of a peculiarly Calvinist stamp," and being raised by these men resulted in moulding Christmas into "a killer" (128). When Joe is just eight, McEachern beats him for not being able to memorize Biblical verses. The beatings are cold-blooded and to Joe, seem to be more of a ritual than an emotion-filled reaction to what McEachern views as Joe's stubbornness.⁸³ The fact that his adoptive father cannot muster any feelings, positive or negative, while beating his son suggests that there is never any emotion expressed for him by McEachern. Mrs McEachern secretly brings Joe a tray of food after her husband leaves the house that evening. Her clandestine feedings are done out of love and pity for the boy, but they are also performed out of a self-serving need to form a relationship with her adopted son, to build a bridge of connection between herself and someone else apart from her abusive husband. Joe's reaction to the secreted food is to throw it on the floor in the corner, breaking the plates. This refusal is a learned reaction because Joe, who has never experienced a bond with another human being outside of a violent one, is "constituted as to be unable to accept love or pity" and has no other emotional means with which to react to the food offering

⁸³ In *Writers and Critics: William Faulkner*, Millgate also acknowledges McEachern's ceremonial behaviour towards his adopted son, writing that Christmas achieves knowledge of his identity through the "episodes of violence...[which] have an almost ritualistic aspect" (46). Millgate asserts that the outcome of this behaviour is that "Christmas hates McEachern, but at least he acts predictably, according to the code of behaviour that is as clearly defined as it is inflexible" (46).

(Welsh 126). So we see that it is the physical violence inflicted upon Joe while living with the McEacherns that raises him and makes him into “a man” (Faulkner *August* 111).

As Faulkner said in his lectures to graduate students, Christmas is not born “bad” as Hines believes, but is made “tragic” because of the actions of others.⁸⁴ Years later, Joe remembers his private reaction to Mrs McEachern’s spoiled food in the corner of his room after she leaves. It is a Jungian archetypal memory for Joe in that it is one that shapes his consciousness and is one of his founding memories: “he rose from the bed and went and knelt in the corner...and above the outraged food kneeling, with his hands ate, like a savage, a dog” (Faulkner *August* 118). For Christmas, food, sex and women are confusedly tied together in his mind, and he cannot understand one without the other. Food invariably recalls the memory of eating the dietician’s toothpaste at the orphanage. Like a row of toppling dominos, this brings to mind the sexual encounter he accidentally witnessed there. When Mrs McEachern tries to give Christmas food, his adolescent mind relives early childhood experiences of secret eating, witnessing a sexual encounter, then vomiting and being found out. The young Christmas feels that these events caused him to be exiled from the only home he had known, another dark milestone in a long line of traumatic incidents. Never having known and therefore understood what the New Testament tells us is the grace of God’s love, Joe’s concept of Christianity, and arguably his world, is shaped around violence and an Old Testament God who doles out punishments as McEachern does. Christmas’s isolated childhood, coupled with his subsequent physical representation as an adult in Jefferson as described earlier, culminate in his phantom-ness; he exists within our world, but yet outside of it, as he is human, but without humanity.

Like Christmas, Hightower is another of the “living dead,” stuck in the personally constructed prison of his mind. As Christmas was imprinted negatively by the stewards of his childhood, so too Hightower describes an adolescence filled with emotional coldness at the hands of his father. Hightower remembers his father as a lonely figure who “had been a minister without a church and a soldier without an enemy” and therefore “combined the two” and became a doctor (Faulkner *August* 356). In this narration, Hightower decides that his father “had become not defeated and not

⁸⁴ In another University of Virginia lecture, Faulkner further spoke about Christmas, saying that, “his only salvation in order to live with himself was to repudiate man-kind, to live outside the human race. And he tried to do that but nobody would let him, the human race itself wouldn’t let him. And I don’t think he was bad, I think he was tragic” (Faulkner qtd. in Gwynn and Blotner 118).

discouraged [by life in the South], but wiser...As if he came suddenly to believe that Christ had meant that him whose spirit alone required healing, was not worth the having, the saving” (Faulkner *August* 356). We come to learn about Hightower through small glimpses like these, caught here and there between the main action-heavy plot concerning Joe Christmas. Jeffersonians describe him as tangling religion and his own family heritage together in an indecipherable mush; that he was “born about thirty years after the only day he seemed to have ever lived in—that day when his grandfather was shot from the galloping horse—” (Faulkner *August* 48). This tangling of the past and present culminates in forming another type of self-constructed mental imprisonment for Hightower. He constructs this self-punishment similarly to Christmas and Lady Dedlock and Esther of *Bleak House*. The Lady believes in the truth of her sin, and it is this belief structure that creates the frozen life she currently lives. The same can be asserted of Christmas and Esther as their respective upbringings in violent and dogmatic Christian homes formed for them their truths. Hightower constructs his reality through stories of his past heritage as well as a carefully cultivated understanding of the Church: “He had believed in the church too, in all that it ramified and evoked...if ever there was shelter, it would be the church; that if ever truth could walk naked and without shame or fear, it would be in the seminary” (Faulkner *August* 359).

Coupling Hightower’s narrative with Christmas’s death makes the significance of the latter’s demise more clear, in that to gain a greater understanding of Christmas’s death, one must understand Hightower’s story. As mentioned earlier, it is through Lady Dedlock’s confession of her past transgressions to Esther, (namely that she had Esther out of wedlock and then unknowingly abandoned her to live a cold adolescence with her sister, a religious zealot) and her death, that she is able to have a spiritual redemption. This redemption comes to her through the forgiveness offered her by both Esther and her widowed husband, Sir Leicester Dedlock. Although he is “invalided, bent, and almost blind” he rides past the Dedlock mausoleum with his attendant George, then “pulling off his hat, is still for a few moments before they ride away” (Dickens *Bleak* 764). Archbishop Dr Rowan Williams noted that Dickens’s view of forgiveness is seen in the mercy and compassion Sir Leicester exhibits for his deceased wife. In Williams’s bicentenary speech in 2012, he argued that in Sir Leicester, “we hear something of the hope of mercy. Almost silent, powerless, Sir Leicester after his stroke, dying slowly in loneliness, and stubbornly holding open the possibility that there

might be, once again, love and harmony” (“Archbishop of Canterbury’s address at the Wreathlaying Ceremony to mark the bicentenary of the birth of Charles Dickens”). It is the Lady’s death that changes the lives of the characters around her, enabling this compassion to be felt, and it is in this that another correlation between the two works can be identified.

As with Lady Dedlock, Christmas’s death and its aftermath are central to the text. The events leading up to Christmas’s murder are narrated by Gavin Stevens, a district attorney who is from a family “who is old in Jefferson” (Faulkner *August* 333). If for no other purpose, Stevens’s specified heritage lends credence to his speculations on Christmas, because his status as a *real* Jeffersonian provides him with a platform for theorizing an accurate portrayal of the situation. Stevens makes his first appearance as a character in this one chapter, explaining to a visiting friend from Harvard (who, like the reader, is an outsider to this story) why he thinks Christmas fled to Hightower’s house. Some in town explain the odd choice of refuge as, “Like to like,” (again another allusion to Christmas’s and Hightower’s perceived similarities as outsiders) but Stevens, the narrator tells us, “had a different theory” (Faulkner *August* 333). While he acknowledges that he does not think anyone could piece together what truly happened, Stevens opines that what drove Christmas to Hightower was a belief that the minister could offer him “sanctuary...[from] the very irrevocable past...[from] whatever crimes had moulded and shaped him and left him high and dry” (Faulkner *August* 337). Stevens further speculates on the internal argument he believes Christmas’s mixed blood has during his escape, speculating that Christmas’s “black blood drove him first to the negro cabin...[and] his white blood...sent him to the minister...[that it was] his black blood which snatched up the pistol and the white blood which would not let him fire it” (Faulkner *August* 337). While Dickens was not the first to pen racial stereotypes in Western literature, he does describe (via the voice of John Jasper) Neville Landless of Ceylon in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870), who has recently immigrated to England, as having “something of the tiger in his dark blood,” and he demonstrates this internal rage when he fights with Edwin Drood shortly after meeting him (62). Helena Landless, the twin sister of Neville, shares his complexion but is exempt from this wild rage because of her feminine nature and ability to adopt the domestic knowledge imparted to her by Miss Twinkleton’s school and her English friend, Rosa. Although armed, Christmas chooses not to fire his weapon at anyone; instead, Stevens relates “he crouched behind that overturned table and let them shoot him to death, with that loaded

and unfired pistol in his hand” (Faulkner *August* 338). Stevens’s belief is that Christmas wanted to continue to defy the “black blood” within him, which surely (according to Stevens) would have pushed Christmas to use the pistol.

Christmas is the victim of a gruesome death at the hands of town vigilantes who shoot and then castrate him after his escape from the town jail. Like Lady Dedlock, it is through death that Christmas is released from the “cage” that is his “own flesh” (Faulkner *August* 122). Christmas lies dying on the floor of Hightower’s kitchen, where he has sought refuge after his escape. In the following profound scene, his soul is released from the prison of his body, where it was trapped, both enduring and doling out evil throughout his life:

For a long moment he looked up at them with peaceful and unfathomable and unbearable eyes. Then his face, body, all, seemed to collapse, to fall in upon itself, and from out the slashed garments about his hips and loins the pent black blood seemed to rush like a released breath. It seemed to rush out of his pale body like the rush of sparks from a rising rocket; upon that black blast the man seemed to rise soaring into their memories forever and ever...It will be there, musing, quiet, steadfast, not fading and not particularly threatening, [sic] but of itself alone serene, of itself alone triumphant. (Faulkner *August* 349-350).

His eyes are “peaceful” yet “unfathomable and unbearable” as his body collapses inward like a deflating balloon and his blood gushes out of him. His body becomes “pale,” further emphasizing his ghostliness and the release of his spirit. Mark 15:37-15:39 details the death of Christ and narrates that a centurion who stood near Jesus as he died, “saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, [and] he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.” The witnesses of these deaths (Christmas’s and Christ’s) are subconsciously moved to feel a profound awe at these scenes. With this depiction of Christmas’s blood jetting forth while his body collapses, there is another correlation between Christmas and Christ. Christ’s blood is mentioned throughout the New Testament, but John 1:7 particularly details that it is the blood of Jesus Christ that can permanently cleanse us of our sins. By writing that Christmas rose “into their memories” and will continue to remain there “triumphant,” Faulkner makes it clear that Christmas’s larger purpose is to be a sacrifice for the greater salvation of humanity. Christmas’s death scene is rife with metaphorical allusions which point to the imprint his consciousness makes upon the four men in the room and upon the Jeffersonian community as a whole. Christmas, like Christ, does not commit a literal suicide, but is

murdered at the hands of those who wish to repudiate him; however it is through his death that these same citizens are offered salvation.

From his self-sacrifice Christmas gains release from the imprisonment of living death that he has been enduring. Christmas comes to an epiphany while he is in hiding that what he has been searching for in all his “thirty years” was peace, “to become one with loneliness and quiet that has never known fury or despair” (Faulkner *August* 249).⁸⁵ Once again, Christmas and Twist as outsider orphans, share a similar longing for peace. During Oliver’s apprenticeship to the undertaker Sowerberry, “he wished, as he crept into his narrow bed, that that were his coffin; and that he could be laid in a calm and lasting sleep in the churchyard ground: with the tall grass waving gently above his head” (Dickens *Twist* 26). Although Oliver does not die in his novel, he wishes for an end to the constant battle that is his life. Christmas’s struggle for peace in his “thirty years” is the result of a lifetime of ill treatment but is also another shadowing of Christ’s life and Passion. Like Lady Dedlock of *Bleak House*, Christmas is doomed by his past; he feels unable to escape his history and so does not attempt to create a better future. Whereas Lady Dedlock gains a place in society by marrying Sir Leicester, she does so through deceiving him about her illegitimate child and greater past love for Captain Hawdon. While the Lady is certainly not actively evil (as some would claim Christmas is), there is a shared pattern in the loss of hope that drives both to isolated states lived outside of their respective communities. The Lady’s reaction to her perceived estrangement from society is to be “bored to death” by everyone and everything (Dickens *Bleak* 11). She seeks a way to turn away from the world and to become mentally stagnant, thus shutting out her memories of loss. Conversely, Christmas’s detachment culminates in his actively seeking a war with the world around him. These characters’ reactions to tragedy are different but their respective isolated states are eerily similar: neither can escape the turmoil of his/her past and remain trapped, so much so that their histories keep them from living. Although in both style and plot, it is a drastically different novel to any he had written before, *Light in August* is one of Faulkner’s “greatest achievements...and is central to any evaluation or understanding of his career as a whole” (Millgate “Introduction” 12). Arguably by using realist narrative techniques in the novel and being less experimental, Faulkner

⁸⁵ The search for peace is also broached in *Sanctuary* with Horace Benbow who quotes the Percy Shelley poem, “To Jane: The Recollection” (1792-1822). Horace Benbow “began to say something out of a book he had read: ‘Less oft is peace. Less oft is peace’” (Faulkner *Sanctuary* 206-207).

was able to fully convey the greater effect his central characters' story lines had upon their communities. Before *Light in August*, Faulkner focused with an acute clarity on the innermost thoughts of a handful of characters, but with this novel, he broadened his scope to depict eloquently the traumas of being an outsider.⁸⁶

I assert that the interest we have in the plight of the "other" comes from our own desire to be witness to such haunting and grotesque characters; to fully see the spectacle of the "freak." In her introduction to *Freakery*, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson states that "By challenging the boundaries of the...natural world, monstrous bodies [appear] as sublime, merging the terrible with the wonderful, equalizing repulsion with attraction" (*Freakery* 3). Dickens expressed this same odd coupling of emotions through David when he meets the detestable Uriah Heep in *David Copperfield* for the first time. David is both repulsed and fascinated by Uriah, he does not wish to be in his company, but yet he cannot keep away and even goes so far as to invite Uriah into his own home so that he might gain a closer look at Uriah's "freakishness." Dickens has written several times on this equalization of "repulsion with attraction" as Garland-Thomson calls it, and referred to the feeling as "the attraction of repulsion," citing it as being a part of human nature (Dickens "Letters on Social Questions: Capital Punishment" 28 February 1846). Hollington defines the grotesque in just these terms, as "contradictory sensations...the romantic, the fantastic or the gothic com[ing] into collision with the 'real' world...to produce the paradoxically mixed and contradictory art of the grotesque" (24). Garland-Thomson further asserts that mainstream society is drawn to want to view the "freak," so as to feel "comfortably common...by the exchange" (*Freakery* 5). If this discourse on the freak in recent years is applied to the outsider characters in Dickens's and Faulkner's works, it is clear that these figures have purpose in their grotesquery: they help to fulfil "mainstream" society's desire to feel a sense of safety in their own bodies, the view of the "other" rendering them happily "normal" by comparison. These "living dead" characters provide the perfect canvas upon which to paint a grotesquely beautiful depiction of these "others" for the rest of society to gaze upon.

Millgate notes that Faulkner did not only want "to tell the stories of [the characters], but also, and perhaps primarily, to show the impact of these stories upon

⁸⁶ In a *New York Times Book Review* from October 9, 1932, J. Donald Adams wrote of *Light in August*: "That somewhat crude and altogether brutal power which thrust itself through [Faulkner's] previous work is in this book disciplined to a greater effectiveness than one would have believed possible in so short a time" (Adams qtd. in Millgate "A Novel" 13).

the people of Jefferson” (*The Achievement* 126). It is important to note that this theme (the potential impact of one person’s life upon his/her community) is another which is often associated with Dickens. Millgate makes the point several times that the reader, also an outsider to the community, is brought into the story to join the social community of Jefferson which has condemned Christmas “on sight” (*The Achievement* 125). However, Millgate asserts that this verdict of Christmas’s “inherently vicious and worthless” nature must be amended when the reader is given insight into Christmas’s adolescence (125). He summates that the greatest strength of the novel is “the passion of its presentation of Joe Christmas...and the way in which we, like all the characters in the book, are irresistibly swept into the vortex of Christmas’s restless life and agonising death” (137). As the narrative moves to describe Christmas’s troubled past, the reader, the sole witness to these memories, is moved to reassess his/her previously-formed conceptions of Christmas, and is made to empathise with him despite his wrongdoings. Once empathy is successfully felt for Christmas, a tie is formed between him and those who condemned him, and the narrative completes its critique that the “other” may not be so different from the supposed “norm.”

Christmas is aligned with what Garland-Thomson refers to as “the sight of an unexpected body,” especially in his death scene, as he “attracts interest but...also...disgust” (*Staring* 37). Christmas disrupts our expectations of societal normalcy, which “is at once novel and disturbing,” and this disruption “forces us to look and notice” (Garland-Thomson *Staring* 37). Taking what Garland-Thomson asserts in her works, the communities in these texts desire to form a united front before which characters like Christmas and Dedlock are pushed further outward and ostracized, in order to feel a sense of normalcy in their own bodies as was mentioned, and this group formation becomes a force that is an entity and a character unto itself. Welsh remarks that “The community comes alive, just as it does in *Oliver Twist*, when there is a fire to watch and a murderer to be hunted down...Faulkner’s satire of the inhabitants of Jefferson...is acute and reflective” (134). Faulkner creates this social satire, which is purposely contrasted to the phantasmal outsider Christmas, in order to move the reader to see a parallel between his/her previously held judgements and those of the community. The inevitable outcome is that the reader becomes troubled by his/her attitudes and begins to question the previously held opinion of Christmas’s inherent evil nature. Lady Dedlock and Joe Christmas share with Christ the experience of being repudiated by their “normal” communities. The self-sacrifice that both of these

unconventional characters perform in their respective novels provides the catalyst for humanity's growth and perseverance. Faulkner spoke of this drive to persevere in his Nobel Prize acceptance speech in 1950: "[humanity] is immortal...he has a soul, a spirit capable of compassion and sacrifice and endurance. The poet's, the writer's, duty is to write about these things. It is his privilege to help man endure by lifting his heart" (Faulkner qtd. in Welsh 138). This statement is strikingly similar to the opening preface of *Household Words* written by Dickens on 30 March 1850. Dickens writes that the publication's aim is to "tenderly cherish that light of Fancy which is inherent in the human breast; which, according to its nurture, burns with an inspiring flame, or sinks into a sullen glare, but which (or woe betide that day!) can never be extinguished" (Dickens "Preliminary" 1). Both Dickens and Faulkner can be seen to have shared the sense that it was an author's duty to show his/her world what the human spirit could accomplish: "To show to all, that in all familiar things, even in those which are repellent on the surface, there is Romance enough, if we will find it out" (Dickens "Preliminary" 1).

Both authors demonstrate the importance of looking below the "repellent...surface" in their depictions of those who are spiritually entombed. These characters, who, as Faulkner said, are victims of their own minds, or their "fellows, or [their] own nature[s], or [their] environment[s]," are repudiated by their communities but they are still very much a part of those same communities (Faulkner qtd. in Gwynn and Blotner 118). The result of this observation is that there can be no "normal" collective without an "outsider" because as polar opposites, they define each other. Although her flight from Chesney Wold was a continuation of her repudiation, Lady Dedlock is recovered (and consequently redeemed) by Inspector Bucket, Mr Woodcourt and Esther. I argue that she finds peace through dying alongside the grave of her great lost love, Captain Hawdon (Nemo). Esther describes how, "She lay there, with one arm creeping round a bar of the iron gate, and seeming to embrace it...my mother, cold and dead" (Dickens *Bleak* 713–714). Through self-sacrifice (the Lady banishes herself from Sir Leicester and Chesney Wold with all of their upper-class comforts) and a rather gruesome death (which can be seen as suicide), she gains her salvation at the grave of Hawdon. Even more importantly, Esther and the community which had forced the Lady into social exile are able to share in her salvation through witnessing the death. Christmas's death is much more grisly than Lady Dedlock's, but there is a shared state of epiphany and salvation in which the community jointly shares.

Millgate asserts that “What *Light in August* does explore,...is the central Faulknerian theme of the past’s relation to the present,...—[a past] from which society can never hope to free itself but from which the individual must never cease struggling to escape” (“A Novel” 44). Both Dickens and Faulkner were working with a Christian version of Humanism, which states that through a universal love and a belief in the importance of humanity itself, deliverance can be obtained by anyone, no matter how dark their earthly lives. Vincent Newey notes that Dickens’s “plan of salvation can be the more clearly understood against the backcloth of Puritan conversion narrative,” such as *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678), stating further that Dickens’s texts replace “one ideology (old-style religion) with another (humanism)” (19). For his children in 1849, Dickens wrote a chronicle of the life and ministry of Jesus Christ titled *The Life of Our Lord* (published in 1934). It is interesting to note what Dickens chooses to leave out of his children’s education about Christ: the more mystical details such as the Immaculate Conception and Transubstantiation are glossed over. Instead, the foci are Jesus’s adult life: the miracles he performed and his Passion. Dickens tells his children that Jesus chose his disciples:

from among Poor Men, in order that the Poor might know—always after that; in all years to come—that Heaven was made for them as well as for the rich, and that God makes no difference between those who wear good clothes and those who go barefoot and in rags. The most miserable, the most ugly, deformed, wretched creatures that live, will be bright Angels in Heaven if they are good here on earth. (Dickens *Our Lord* 33, author’s capitalization).

The above is crucial to an understanding of Dickens’s concept of the Christian faith. Lady Dedlock and Joe Christmas gain this love despite their pasts, and to Dickens and Faulkner all of humanity is capable of achieving the same. In 1957, a University of Virginia student observed to Faulkner that in *Light in August*, “much of the action seems to stem from almost fanatical Calvinism.” (Gwynn and Blotner 73). The student further asked that if Faulkner favoured an “individual rather than an organized religion,” would it be correct to say that he believed “that man must work out his own salvation from within rather than without?” (Gwynn and Blotner 73). Faulkner’s reply was simply, “I do, yes” (Faulkner qtd. in Gwynn and Blotner 73). Jesus tells his followers that he is “the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (*King James Bible*, John 8:11). Although

Flannery O'Connor's spirituality (Catholicism) differs from that of Faulkner's (Christian Humanism), she too works tirelessly in her texts to demonstrate the importance of salvation, and she brings her most isolated characters to epiphanies of spiritual inclusion so that her reader may also seek the same. The importance of spirituality in Dickens's works is also examined with the texts of O'Connor (accessed through her readings of Poe and Dickens) in the upcoming chapters. Dickens firmly believed that Jesus's purpose as a human man on this Earth was to demonstrate that all people are equal in the eyes of God, and therefore, how one treats others in his/her community, is of the utmost importance: "TO DO GOOD always—even to those who do evil to us...If we do this...we may confidently hope that God will forgive us our sins and mistakes, and enable us to live and die in Peace" (*Our Lord* 122, author's capitalization). Despite the ghosts of their pasts, Lady Dedlock and Joe Christmas find the light of Christ and attain salvation through death, sharing that redemption with the societies which had rejected them, much as the New Testament tells us that Christ died so that mankind might gain salvation.

Chapter Four — Dickens and O'Connor: the Art of Fiction

"Fiction is about everything human and we are made out of dust, and if you scorn getting yourself dusty, then you shouldn't try to write fiction" (O'Connor "The Nature and Aim of Fiction" 68).

In 2009, Flannery O'Connor fans eagerly awaited a new biography of her life.⁸⁷ For the first time, O'Connor's story would be told in a captivating way; it would not read like an encyclopaedia with lists of dates and places.⁸⁸ Brad Gooch's biography was pitched as being the most carefully traced story of O'Connor's life.⁸⁹ It would include personal letters, as well as interviews with those who knew the O'Connor family. Therefore, it was startling to see the first chapter begin with a letter written by O'Connor referencing Charles Dickens. It was a striking name-drop on O'Connor's part (as well as by Gooch), solely because neither of these authors have been studied comparatively before, and O'Connor studies typically view her and her work through a Catholic lens, rarely examining the influence of other authors. Gooch begins his work by referencing O'Connor's more than sixty public readings and presentations which she gave in the decade after the publication of her first novel *Wise Blood* in 1952. He quotes O'Connor's letter to her friend Maryat Lee in 1958, in which O'Connor expresses that she had "a secret desire to rival Charles Dickens upon the stage" (O'Connor qtd. in Gooch 13). This private correspondence reveals that O'Connor had formed an idea of what Dickens's "stage persona" was like, to which she compared her own "element of ham" (13). Additionally, it is interesting that Gooch utilizes this reference in his opening chapter because it demonstrates to his reader that O'Connor aimed to carve a metaphorical place for herself on the stage next to Dickens's reading desk. O'Connor is famously quoted as saying she read nothing but "Slop"⁹⁰ during her early education in Milledgeville, Georgia, but an O'Connor scholar would find this difficult to believe, much as it is equally difficult to swallow the assertion that Faulkner only read

⁸⁷ Gooch's 2009 biography of O'Connor was the "first major biography" of the author, although there had been other endeavors into written accounts of her life prior to Gooch's (Maslin "What Was With the Peacocks and the Gothic Fiction?").

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ *ibid.*

⁹⁰ "I hope nobody ever asks me in public [what I have read]. If so, I intend to look dark and mutter, 'Henry James Henry James'—which will be the veriest lie, but no matter... The only good things I read when I was a child were the Greek and Roman myths which I got out of a set of child's encyclopedia called *The Book of Knowledge*. The rest of what I read was Slop with a Capital S. The Slop period was followed by the Edgar Allan Poe period which lasted for years..." (1-2). Kinney, Arthur F. *Flannery O'Connor's Library: Resources of Being*. University of Georgia Press, 1985.

Shakespeare and the Bible.⁹¹ Gooch examines the O'Connor family's movements from Savannah to Atlanta and then Milledgeville and paints a picture of the O'Connor household as being a fairly happy and stable, middle class Catholic home (aside from the economic hardships which O'Connor's father faced during the Great Depression of the 1930s). This, along with her maternal family's more affluent status, would likely have given a well-stocked library to the young Flannery.⁹²

Regardless of what O'Connor (in her training with and support of New Criticism) wanted her readers to know about her, the portion of her personal library which Georgia College and State University currently holds includes three Dickens novels: *Hard Times*, *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*. Regarding her library, Arthur F. Kinney notes in *Resources of Being*, "What is most startling of all are the fundamental omissions. We find in the library now housed at Georgia College no Chaucer, Shakespeare, or Milton; no Austen, Brontë, Flaubert, or Hardy, and precious little Dickens..." (5). The portion of O'Connor's library which is held at GC&SU which Kinney catalogued contains only two James novels (this is strange considering that O'Connor lists him in the letter footnoted to her friend Hester as an author who affected her writing most profoundly), three Dickens novels and six Faulkners. Consequently, it proves difficult to know *what* titles O'Connor read, but it is fairly easy to prove *whom* she read and how she felt about these works. Alongside James and Poe on her library shelves at Andalusia stood Dickens.

O'Connor gained admittance to the University of Iowa's prestigious MFA Writer's Workshop in 1945. This was directed by Paul Engle with guest instructors that included well-known writers and critics such as Robert Penn Warren. Although Iowa City was (and still remains) quite rural, the influx of more than 11,600 students who enrolled in the fall term of 1945 gave the university its pseudonym, "The Athens of the Midwest" (Gooch 119). Engle "emphasized 'close reading,' [and] Many of the selections [in the main text] were eye-openers for Flannery" (Gooch 123). A critical

⁹¹ John Faulkner recalls in his biography of his brother that William told their mother "he never read anything any more except Shakespeare and the Bible." John reminisces that this was particularly amusing because William had just moments before asked their mother if "she had anything new about Nero Wolf and Archie Goodwin!" This is a reference to the detective fiction series by Rex Stout which ran between 1934-1975 (237).

⁹² Gooch notes in his biography that while at GCSU, O'Connor took English 311 for which the prescribed text was *The Story Survey*. This text is inscribed on the front page with O'Connor's name and address, and as well has tick marks by Faulkner's "That Evening Sun" and Joyce's "A Little Cloud" in the table of contents, thus proving her statement that Iowa made her aware of these iconic writers is somewhat creative.

text of O'Connor's which GCSU holds is Lord David Cecil's *Early Victorian Novelists* (1934), which understandably devotes an entire chapter to Dickens's works.⁹³ Unlike Faulkner, O'Connor did annotate her texts (as is noted in Sister Kathleen Feeley's *Flannery O'Connor: Voice of the Peacock* pg. 10-12), and in blue ballpoint ink in the Cecil text, the following is underlined: "It does not matter that Dickens'[s] world is not lifelike: it is alive" (33).

In his text, Cecil heavily critiques Victorian authors, citing that nineteenth-century novelists often fell into a trap of trying to write "outside their range" (45). However, Cecil noted, and O'Connor subsequently absorbed, that Dickens's limited range (in Cecil's opinion) was also a gift: "With the cockney's crudeness and vulgarity he has his zest for life, his warm heart, and racy wit...[Dickens's crudeness] ha[s] the emotional energy of spontaneous feelings which have never been drilled into restraint" (46). She echoed this understanding of Cecil's critique when she specified that "The writer has to make corruption believable before he can make the grace meaningful" (O'Connor qtd. in Basselin 46). Further, in a letter to her long-time correspondent Betty Hester, O'Connor outlined that her "primary question in writing was, 'Is it believable?'" (O'Connor qtd. in Basselin 44). When one learns what texts O'Connor was introduced to through her MFA in Iowa (as well as from the time spent at Yaddo, the artists' colony in New York), one must accept that what she said of herself was a falsity. O'Connor was very much aware of world authors and was taught in her course to examine their works with the lens of a close reader. From Cecil's text on Victorian writers alone, we see that O'Connor and her contemporaries were learning to take Dickensian characters as shadows of the cockney-character-type, but that despite this limited range (so Cecil would argue), they understood that Dickens achieved a realistic athenaeum of characters. This achievement, Cecil argues, is due to Dickens's stories being grounded in "the most realistic settings, [with] central figures [of] contemporary London": figures of whom his readership were already aware (31). Cecil promotes that Dickens's "peculiar triumph [is] that he has created a world as solid as it is soaked in imagination" (32). This base in character study has consequently led Dickens's readers

⁹³ O'Connor's edition held at GC&SU is a 1948 copy which corresponds to the time she lived and worked at Yaddo, the artists' colony in Saratoga Springs, New York. Mark McGurl's text on creative writing in the United States post WWII, makes no mention of O'Connor having been prescribed the Cecil text while at Iowa, and therefore it can only be assumed that she read Cecil and made her underlining points while living at Yaddo working on *Wise Blood*, or sometime after while back in Milledgeville crafting her short story collection.

to initiate the cultivation of active bonds with these characters based on their outward familiarity: both identifying with the heroes in a fruitful way and engaging in dynamic hating of the antagonists (which can also be just as fulfilling a relationship for the reader). These perceived relationships between the reader and Dickensian characters are formed because of the lifelike qualities with which these characters are imbued by the author. Further, these attributes are bequeathed to the characters themselves because of Dickens's meticulous study of those around him.

The concept of a felt relationship being had with Dickensian characters is not new. Holly Furneaux, in her chapter in *Reflections on / of Dickens* titled "(Re)Writing Dickens Queerly: The Correspondence of Katherine Mansfield," writes that the idea that "Dickens's characters are personal friends is a common, and widely documented one" (124). Both Katherine Mansfield and Emily Dickinson in personal letters mention the relationships they felt they shared with Dickens's characters, but interestingly, the relationships they had with these figures are with those who are female outsiders to the Dickensian Universe's norm of femininity. Examples given by Mansfield and Dickinson are Julia Mills of *David Copperfield*, Mrs Jellyby of *Bleak House* and Mrs Wilfer of *Our Mutual Friend*: all three of whom are the opposite of the "angel in the household," the Dickensian ideal of femininity. Furneaux observes that these two authors, neither of whom fit the prescribed moulds of female "normalcy," chose to align themselves with Dickensian outsiders in order to feel a sense of connection with their respective societies. She writes that there is "a long tradition of emotional intimacy with Dickens, in which his characters are felt to be part of one's own domestic circle. This feeling though isn't always a comfortable one" (6). For Mansfield and Dickinson, the normalised role of femininity, which their upper class Western societies dictated they should have adopted, did not elicit happiness or even comfort for them, and therefore, aligning themselves with these outsider female characters in Dickens's novels helped to explain these awkward feelings of female isolation via another person's experiences (albeit a fictional person) with whom they sympathized.

Cecil remarks that Dickens's "London may be different from actual London, but it is just as real, its streets are of firm brick, its inhabitants genuine flesh and blood. For they have that essential vitality of creative art which is independent of mere

verisimilitude” (32-33).⁹⁴ From this, the conclusion can be drawn that it is the familiarity of Dickens’s characters (their affects, vernacular and states of being) that builds the relationship between reader and fictional figure, despite their “accentuat[ed]... idiosyncrasies” (32). Further, Cecil writes that Dickens’s imagination was “fantastic...[Dickens] was fascinated by the grotesque, by dwarfs and giants, by houses made of boats and bridecakes full of spiders...Any grotesque feature he noticed in the world came as grist to Dickens’ mill” (31-32). Because Dickens’s characters were truly so “alive,” as Cecil points out, then Dickens’s grotesque creations would follow suit. His grotesqueries are grounded in real-to-life studies as much as his more mundane characters are, and this jarring reality would account for so much of their shock-factor for no other reason than they become *too* real. Cecil remarks that this substantiality is one of Dickens’s gifts and is as well the trait which O’Connor aimed to absorb through close readings.

In this first section on Dickens and O’Connor, I will discuss how O’Connor’s early readings of Dickens helped her to mould her authorial style, shaping her style of character development, fractured familial relationships and literary violence. In the subsequent component, I will examine the affinities between these two authors’ senses of humour: how their playful vindictiveness and slap stick comedy narration helps to move their protagonists to a greater understanding of the mysteries of life and the condition of being human. There is much to be said as well about O’Connor’s and Dickens’s use of the “freak” or the disabled bodies which pepper both of their works. I will examine these outsiders in greater detail in the second section alongside humour, as the two are most often aligned in the works of both authors.

There are many obvious differences between the works of Dickens and O’Connor which should be addressed at the outset of this chapter, as I by no means want to imply that O’Connor utilized the same tone, imagery and plot devices of Dickens and was merely “re-vivifying” his characters in her own works. Throughout the canon of Dickens’s texts, there is much violence, neglect and spiritual isolation

⁹⁴ Norman Rockwell illustrated the Christmas covers of *The Saturday Evening Post* with a Charles Dickens London theme for over a decade beginning in 1921. He broached the topic to the then editor of the *Post*, George Horace Lorimer, who was a “huge Dickens fan” (Post Editors “Cover Collection: Norman Rockwell’s Charles Dickens Series”). The cover art illustrated a *felt* London extracted from various Dickens pieces (including *The Pickwick Papers* and *A Christmas Carol*) and further illustrates the idea of a *felt* image of London based on the creation of Dickens (Post Editors, “Cover Collection: Norman Rockwell’s Charles Dickens Series” *The Saturday Evening Post*, December 9, 2015, www.saturdayeveningpost.com/2018/12/cover-collection-norman-rockwells-charles-dickens-series/).

which haunts the characters, but all of these earthly horrors have an end-goal: to prove to Dickens's readers the need for conserving hope and to educate his audience on the importance of maintaining relationships and fostering Christian "brotherly" love. John Bowen best justifies my claim in his text *Other Dickens* when he writes, "Dickens's narrators are not content with merely appreciative audiences; they want their readers to sob, rage, see visions, and then to do things about them...[the narrators are] concerned to make their readers different people from the ones who began the book" (1). On the surface, O'Connor's two novels and collections of short stories appear to lack this hope and call to action: instead they seem to be entertainment for nihilists, spectacles of violence for the entertainment value of the grim, but this was the antithesis of O'Connor's authorial aim. In "The Grotesque in Southern Fiction," O'Connor explains her understanding of the evolution of the *modern* novel:

We have become so flooded with sorry fiction based on unearned liberties, or on the notion that fiction must represent the typical, that in the public mind the deeper kinds of realism are less and less understandable. The writer who writes within what might be called the modern romance tradition may not be writing novels which in all respects partake of a novelistic orthodoxy; but as long as these works have vitality, as long as they present something that is alive, however eccentric its life may seem to the general reader, then they have to be dealt with; and they have to be dealt with on their own terms. (38-39).

Here, O'Connor explains her need to write on such horrifying themes by stating that through violence and death we can experience the mystery of the spiritual world. Thus, "deeper realism" as she says, is not easily "understandable" and cannot be dissected into neat, accessible parts. She expounds on this by explaining that the scientific and nihilistic viewpoints of the early twentieth century (brought on by the scientific advancements of the United States during World War II and the subsequent space age of the 1950s) lacked deeper understandings of the inter-workings of humanity and the mystery of our existence and relationships with God.⁹⁵ James Grimshaw writes in his introduction to *The Flannery O'Connor Companion* that there have been many critiques

⁹⁵ "All novelists are fundamentally seekers and describers of the real, but the realism of each novelist will depend on his view of the ultimate reaches of reality. Since the eighteenth century, the popular spirit of each succeeding age has tended more and more to the view that the ills and mysteries of life will eventually fall before the scientific advances of man" (O'Connor "The Grotesque in Southern Fiction" 41).

of O'Connor's works that have brought to question the "entertainment value of stories that deal with 'freaks'...and with violence", and he makes the assertion that the "entertainment value does not lie in the violence per se, but in the interaction of people caught in the inextricable web of the human condition" (4). Several critics have detailed how Dickens's writing achieves this understanding of a "deeper kind" of realism including, but not limited to, Vincent Newey, John Bowen and John Jordan, all of whom have written on the deeper psychological and spiritual layers within Dickens's characters. Newey notes that Dickensian epiphany is "not a leaping of the spirit in the presence of the Divine...but a becoming of healthy emotional and moral instincts in anthropocentric contexts" (3). Thus deeper realism is at work within Dickens as well as O'Connor, and the epiphany exists in parable form. Dickens outlines in *The Life of Our Lord*, the importance of Jesus's parables: "He taught His Disciples in these stories, because He knew the people liked to hear them, and would remember what He said better, if He said it in that way. They are called Parables—" (63). Thus Dickens broached the telling of the importance of community, love, and a connection with God through parable within his own works.

One of the key differences between Dickens and O'Connor which must also be discussed is his masterly plan for the culmination of his plot lines and his deep display of character development; for lack of a better term, his authorial puppet mastery. On the contrary, O'Connor seems to lack the desire to have either of these clearly presented in her texts. Partly, this is due to her training in New Criticism and the moulding of her creative writing technique she received while at Iowa, but also there was a clear shift in the readerly expectations of novels by the time O'Connor was publishing. Mark McGurl writes that "the 'Technique of the Central Intelligence'" also known as the "'third person limited' narration" were of the utmost importance to the early twentieth-century writer (142). The modernist writers of a generation before O'Connor (Madox Brown, Joyce, Mansfield, Woolf, etc.) had all turned away from their Victorian predecessors (as the Cecil text clearly explained for us), and instead pursued cultivating a new literary expectation: the "third person limited" voice. What is gained from this type of writing is "a disembodied narrator [who] is understood to hover above the focalizing character...[the result of which] is, we see what the character *really* feels, not what he *says* he feels" (McGurl 142, author's emphasis). O'Connor follows this path of the modernist writer but does so in order to further bolster the mystery of grace and

redemption. She “leaves her characters to decide of their own free will and according to her development...She leads her readers with her characters to those moments of decision. Yet her readers often recoil with revulsion because they, too, seem to be confronted with the same choice” (Grimshaw 6). But through all of these changes to the novel during the early twentieth century, O’Connor felt that the constant responsibility of the creative writer was to demonstrate the inner turmoil of his/her characters through an accurate portrayal. In a letter to her friend Betty Hester, she wrote: “‘the modern writer works ‘by showing, not by saying’” (McGurl 142).

One of the first pieces O’Connor wrote for her MFA program was an early draft of “The Coat” which Gooch describes as an “attempt to mimic a selection she admired in her *Understanding Fiction* anthology, ‘The Necklace,’ by Maupassant” (123). She also drafted a piece which was inspired by Caroline Gordon’s “Old Red.”⁹⁶ Gooch writes of O’Connor’s Iowa education: “As important to the young writer as assiduously imitating the masters were her reading courses” (133). O’Connor noted that she avidly “‘read all the Catholic novelists...all the nuts like Djuna Barnes...and Va. Woolfe (unfair to the lady of course)...all the best Southern writers like Faulkner...Eudora Welty [and]...the Russians’” (Gooch 133-134). Towards the end of her MFA, O’Connor began submitting publishing applications, and in her one to Rinehart on behalf of her first novel *Wise Blood*, she “hinted that a starting point, if not blueprint, for Haze’s quest might be found in T. S. Eliot’s shattered epic of modern life, *The Waste Land*” (Gooch 137). From this self-proclaimed comparison, it becomes easier to see the thread of influence which O’Connor pulled from her readings of nineteenth-century (and turn of the century) authors and implanted into her own works.

Gooch’s construction of O’Connor’s time at Iowa displays her ability to absorb and re-work the themes and imagery of those authors who came before her and whose work she admired. She quickly learned her weaker points as a creative writer while in Iowa, and strove to overcome these by undertaking close studies of the works of well-established authors. However, O’Connor’s fiction goes beyond mere mimicry; through close readings of these works, she saw to the core belief systems which these established writers were conveying with their fiction. Her readings brought to her an understanding that these themes ran in tandem with her own personal messages, which she was striving to convey to her readership. With a meticulous study of creative

⁹⁶ Gooch 125.

writing, she was able to re-fashion her raw fiction in a way which paralleled the works of these writers whom she admired. The personal message of O'Connor's of which I speak is best summarized by Jan Lance Bacon in his essay, "A Fondness for Supermarkets." He states, "O'Connor believed in an existential 'framework' other than that of the American way: Christian dogma as 'an instrument for penetrating reality'" (41).

The fall 2010 edition of *The Flannery O'Connor Review* included a special feature titled, "The Stories of Flannery O'Connor and William Faulkner." In his introduction to the special feature, guest editor Timothy P. Caron mused that many essays submitted to this edition of the *Review* appeared to fall into the trap of the "dueling geniuses" approach: pitting O'Connor against Faulkner and vice versa (2). Caron's aim as editor was to construct an edition which would highlight O'Connor's and Faulkner's shared concerns of how "race and gender are intertwined in the American South" (3). He notes that both Mr Head in O'Connor's "The Artificial Nigger" and Faulkner's Abner Snopes shared the concern "that the twentieth century was eroding the [South's] bedrock principles, such as the belief in the white racial superiority and patrilineal passing down of the white male privilege and power" (3). This concern is addressed by both authors in the form of Christian humanism. Without diminishing O'Connor's devout Catholicism, which is a well-explored avenue of criticism in O'Connor studies, Christian humanism does play a valid and important part in her work, as it does as well in Faulkner's and Dickens's works. David Eggenschwiler begins his study of O'Connor's Christian humanism by observing that readers need to engage in anagogical readings of her stories, and to overlook her deeper levels would be to do a disservice to the works themselves: "it would be a basic distortion not to realize that in her work to be estranged from God is necessarily to be estranged from one's essential self, which involves a form of psychological imbalance and neurotic compulsion...thus [causing] some form of anti-social, or more precisely 'anti-communal,' behavior" (13). These neuroses, which O'Connor's estranged characters exhibit, derive from their inability to connect with God and therefore with their communities.

Caron notes that O'Connor and Faulkner were both concerned with the ideas and strands of thought stemming from the past, specifically their shared Southern pasts. Michael Slater notes a similarity with Dickens, particularly relating to his literary "experiment," *Master Humphrey's Clock* (1840-41). In the chapter titled, "The Master

Humphrey Experiment: 1840-1841,” Slater draws out the underlying “tendency [of the] literary project...to be much concerned with the past, either with the personal past of individual characters or with earlier periods of London’s turbulent history” (145). *Master Humphrey’s Clock* was published weekly and contained two of Dickens’s lesser-discussed novels (at least within his modern-day circle of fandom): *The Old Curiosity Shop* and *Barnaby Rudge*. The character of Master Humphrey was the intended conductor of the journal and Dickens tells his readers that Humphrey is a ““mis-shapen, deformed, old man,”” and further that he is somewhat reclusive, although benevolent, specifically to children (Slater 148). Within the face of his beloved clock, Humphrey kept manuscripts of stories, and these are what he shares with his group of friends (all of whom are also older gentlemen), including the literary re-appearance of Mr Pickwick. Humphrey divulges to his audience that he is a recluse because of his disability, and that further: “As a child [he] used often to dream of the terrible moment when he discovered that his deformity set him apart from other children, adding ‘and now my heart aches for that child as if I had never been he, when I think how often he awoke from some fairy change to his old form, and sobbed himself to sleep again’” (Dickens and Slater 148). The nameless disability which crippled Humphrey as a child causes him to be set apart from his family and his community, and he later details (as will be expounded upon in this chapter) how this isolation sparked his search for self, family and community within *Curiosity* in which he appears as a character. As we learn from his narration, Humphrey is unsuccessful at reuniting with his *blood* family (namely Nell’s grandfather) and so must make a family of friends in order to supplant the missing familial bonds which he so desperately seeks. From this vantage point, it becomes evident that it is Humphrey himself who is the centre of this looking backwards to the past which Slater notes is one of the foci of the *Master Humphrey’s Clock* stories.

Wise Blood too is a text which is chiefly concerned with the protagonist’s backward gaze. In an attempt to come to terms with the life he wants for himself and the life which he feels has been spiritually chosen for him, Hazel Motes first seeks out his past by way of visiting his childhood home after his return from Europe during WWII. What he finds is a decrepit “shell,” the family cemetery plot gives the only sign that people ever inhabited the property (O’Connor *Blood* 26). Because Haze’s family and community have abandoned him (Eastrod, Tennessee had become a “ghost town”), the only legacy left him is the “skeleton of a house,” and the only item of furniture it

contained was his mother's chifforobe (O'Connor *Blood* 26). In these last pages of the first chapter of *Wise Blood*, the reader is given this scene rife with metaphor: the "skeleton" of the house is, symbolically speaking, Haze's body which has become a mere shell devoid of spirituality. In his introduction to *New Essays on Wise Blood*, Michael Kreyling remarked that there is "one important grounding for the religious vision of O'Connor: she preferred to see the empirical world—the world of the flesh, of the body—as a set of symbols for the metaphysical" (9). After recognizing this hollow physical shell, Haze must then embark on his search for self, community and spirituality (embodied in the phrase *wise blood*), which brings him to meet the Hawkses and Enoch Emery.

Haze tries to force his way into the community by buying all of the things which he thinks a real man should have (a woman, a car, a room) and tries to force Asa Hawks to attempt to redeem his soul, therefore enabling Haze to be connected to community. He attempts to find his spirituality by saying he does not want it and by trying to prove the spiritual faith of others is a falsity, but in doing this, Haze merely reassures the reader that he surely feels this spiritual lack within himself and longing for connection. The narrator tells us, "the army sent him halfway around the world and forgot him...they remembered him long enough to take the shrapnel out of his chest...[but] he felt it still in there, rusted, and poisoning him—and then they sent him to another desert and forgot him again" (O'Connor *Blood* 24). The shrapnel is both indicative of Haze's poisoning through lack of spiritual faith (specifically nihilism), but as well demonstrates that he too, like Humphrey, is a disabled body cut off from society and spirituality and yearning for connection.

With both Dickens and O'Connor, many times it is the character who is deemed to be a "freak" or outsider, or it is the disabled, who is the closest to God within their respective stories. In an inverted way, these characters' physical lacks, or moral perversions, become avenues for them to obtain grace. Very often in O'Connor's stories the reader is lead to the protagonist's plot climax of receiving this grace, but yet we are not witnesses to it. *The Flannery O'Connor Companion* observes that "Familial love pervades most of O'Connor's stories in a negative way...[namely] the absence of familial love" (Grimshaw 7). Therefore, the families of choice and the kinship which the characters develop with Christ transplant the blood lines which have been less than fruitful in creating atmospheres of love and acceptance for them. After all, Jesus

explains to his disciples in the New Testament that his friendship with his followers is what forms the basis of his deeper relationship with them.⁹⁷ “Alternative families” are also examined in Dickens’s writings when he explores different types of domesticities outside of blood relations (Furneaux “Charles Dickens’s Families of Choice: Elective Affinities, Sibling Substitution, and Homoerotic Desire” 153). Furneaux explains: “Dickens’s early fictions resonate with, and variously anticipate and build upon, these wider literary treatments of elective families” (“Families of Choice” 168). Dickens even takes part in this incorporation of “families of choice” through naming his children after “his literary admirations” (Furneaux “Families of Choice” 191 and 168). Thus Dickens and O’Connor both explored families of choice, and as well, spiritual kinship with others.

For O’Connor, one reaches a state of having *wise blood* through a relationship with Christ. Although Dickens was much more subtle about his views on this than O’Connor was (in her essay “The Fiction Writer & His Country” she explained, “to the hard of hearing you shout”), there is a shared understanding of the real need for a broader spiritual self in the face of a world of nothingness (34). James Grimshaw writes of *Wise Blood*, “The existentialist needs identity which he can gain through self-knowledge; self-knowledge, in turn, can create an openness with others and hence with God, an openness which leads to salvation” (65). It is interesting to note that both Dickens and O’Connor began their respective creative writing careers with different authorial voices: Dickens was a Parliamentary Debate reporter for *Mirror* and *The True Sun*, and O’Connor graduated from Georgia State College for Women (now Georgia College and State University) with a Social Sciences degree and originally gained admittance to the University of Iowa with a declared major in journalism.⁹⁸ Some of her earlier classes in her undergraduate at GSCW had been modules with titles such as, “Current Social Problems.”⁹⁹ It is here where another thread of connection between both authors’ end goals exists, which is to move their readers to act in order to better themselves and their communities, and this goal is based in both of their respective understandings of and backgrounds in dealing with social inequities.

⁹⁷ “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you” (*King James Version* John 15:15).

⁹⁸ Slater 36 and Gooch 117.

⁹⁹ McGurl 138.

Asa and Lily Hawks first appear in *Wise Blood* (1952) in “The Peeler” scene, once a short story of its own. On a crowded street in fictional downtown Taulkingham, Hazel (later referred to by O’Connor as Haze) comes across a potato peeler salesman, who in trying to sell his peeler, has attracted a crowd of onlookers including Enoch Emery, Asa and Lily. Enoch is drawn to the peeler in the hopes of making friends in the town, and awkwardly laughs at the jokes and quips of the salesman, while Haze, drawn to the group as well, focuses not on the humorous object of the crowd’s attention, the salesman, but on “a tall cadaverous man with a black suit and a black hat...[who] had on dark glasses and his cheeks were streaked with lines that looked as if they had been painted on and had faded” (O’Connor *Blood* 39). This man, Asa, is both begging and attempting to preach to the crowd through having his child (later named as Sabbath Lily) hand out religious tracts to the onlookers. Asa tells the crowd, “‘If you won’t repent, give up a nickel. I can use it as good as you...Wouldn’t you rather have me beg than preach?’” (O’Connor *Blood* 40). While Asa works the crowd for nickels, his daughter Lily hands out the religious tracts which have “Jesus Calls You” printed on their fronts. Haze is engrossed with Asa’s and Lily’s movement through the crowd: everyone else is drowned out to make room for his visual absorption. Here his namesake depicts his true personality flaw (in a very Dickensian manner). Haze exists in a figurative haze, he can turn himself off to others but also turns off his insight into his true self. He continues on this foggy path throughout the novel, which is why the phrase on the cover of the religious tract, “Jesus Calls You,” is even more embedded with meaning: O’Connor wants her reader to understand that through the hands of a pair of con artists, as the reader soon discovers, Jesus is loudly calling to Haze to awaken from his psychological slumber and to pursue his true calling as a preacher.

Haze notes that as Asa walks through the crowd, he uses a universal implement of the blind, a white cane, to hit the ground in front of him before he steps. As he comes closer to the old man, Haze sees that the lines he had earlier noticed on the old man’s face are not lines, but in fact are scars. Later, Haze discovers this scarring is from Asa’s failed attempt to blind himself when his “nerve fails” (O’Connor *Blood* 113). The “child” that accompanies Asa is only described at first to be dressed in black with “a long face and a short sharp nose,” and this lack of description in Lily’s introductory chapter leaves the reader with the impression of her plainness (O’Connor *Blood* 39). After Haze follows the pair from the peeler salesman, he describes Lily as being an “ugly child dressed up in woman’s clothes” (O’Connor *Blood* 54-55). The implication

of this observation is that Lily is enacting the role of a woman although she is not fully one yet, much like Dickens's Little Nell. Both young girls have adopted the guise of women possessing older years but in the reverse: Nell adopts an older façade which mirrors the role of matriarch that she plays to her grandfather, whereas Lily, who is around nineteen years old, aims to look as though she is younger and is therefore able to conceal her nymphomania. Nell functions as an allegory of the innocence and purity of childhood, but Lily is of course already corrupted, and as such becomes the allegory of the corrupted child, as her interactions with Haze come to prove. These are two very different central female characters, but they interestingly have several parallels in their transcendence of physical age and in what they demonstrate over all to the other protagonists of their respective novels.

Until her more regular inclusion in the novel, Lily is merely referred to by the narrator as "the child," which further suppresses the impression of her true age, much like Nell, who is "nearly fourteen," an interesting choice of wording as such implies that Nell is both not quite fourteen but at the same time, able to be perceived as such (Dickens *Curiosity* 63).¹⁰⁰ Haze is so engrossed in looking at this pair of old blind man and child that he is oblivious to the goings-on around him, so much so that when the peeler salesman attempts to address him, he does not hear and Enoch punches him twice in order to get Haze to respond. Asa would seem to have Haze in a visual trance, and Haze, in a stupor, follows the pair away from the salesman's crowd to their next site of religious conversion. What Asa has to say to Haze when the latter catches up to him is not at all welcoming: "I can smell the sin on your breath" he says to Haze, which then startles the young man out of his trance-like state (O'Connor *Blood* 49). The narrator comes to explain throughout the duration of the novel that the pair, father and daughter, are in fact a pair of con artists: the father has faked his blind state in order to garner monetary sympathy, and Haze later comes to discover that the daughter is not as innocent as she has led him and everyone to believe (she is in reality plotting to seduce him). Here the influence of Dickens's characters and novels themselves can be seen in O'Connor's writing, as upon further examination it becomes apparent that the pair is based on a reverse sculpting of Little Nell and her grandfather from Dickens's *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1841). While in reality, Asa and Lily are father and daughter, not grandfather and granddaughter as in *Curiosity*, the pair are presented as both having

¹⁰⁰ Lily is referred to as being a "child" several times throughout Chapter 3 of *Wise Blood*, Nell is said to be "nearly fourteen" twice in Chapter 7 in *Old Curiosity Shop* by her brother and Dick Swiveller.

transcended their factual ages. This gives the implication of a much more tender relationship between youth and age upon their introduction. To propitiate the con that Asa is blind, Lily often takes her father's arm when they are walking in public. However, without the audience's knowledge that this tenderness is only a part of their dupe, it presents a false impression of a loving relationship. This falsity joins in the other lies that Asa and Lily spread, namely Asa's supposed blindness and vocation as a preacher.

The narrator of the first chapter of *Curiosity* is later revealed to be Master Humphrey. In a plot device often cited as clumsy, he is revealed to be the younger brother of Nell's grandfather, but as this is not yet known to the reader, he will be referred to here as the narrator.¹⁰¹ He happens upon Little Nell in the streets near Covent Garden wandering alone. Nell, "a pretty little girl" begs of the older stranger to show her the way back to her grandfather's shop because she is lost (Dickens *Curiosity* 7).¹⁰² The narrator feels that there is something about Nell which causes him to be involuntarily captivated by her in their first "fictitious" meeting. The reason for this pull is different than Haze's attraction to Asa and Lily, and is instead due to Nell's implicit innocent beauty. The meeting, and the first three chapters as well, are later told by Master Humphrey to have been fictitious and a mere framing device so that he could tell Nell's story, which further leads to questions asked by the reader about why he is concocting this mental image of viewing Nell and her grandfather, his brother. Whereas Haze feels compelled by the strange nature and ugliness of Asa and Lily, the narrator of *Curiosity* is moved by Nell's innocence. Nell indeed seems to carry some paranormal powers, as she anticipates, or reads, the narrator's thoughts and pre-emptively answers his concern of the nature of her errand out alone. She has such an "unsuspicious frankness that bore the impress of truth" which makes the narrator feel that he must make himself deserving of her "confidence" in him, and he therefore endeavours to have a word with whomever would send a young child out alone at night (Dickens *Curiosity* 8). When the narrator enters the shop with Nell, he is met with "a little old

¹⁰¹ Edgar Allan Poe explained that if narrators "are made to take part in their own stories (as has been the case [in *Curiosity*]) they become injurious by creating confusion. Thus, in "The Curiosity Shop," we feel displeased to find Master Humphrey commencing the tale in the first person, dropping this for the third, and concluding by introducing himself as the 'single gentleman' who figures in the story...All is confusion, and what makes it worse, is that Master Humphrey is painted as a lean and sober personage, while his second self is a fat, bluff and boisterous old bachelor" (Poe "Review of New Books" 249).

¹⁰² Michael Slater notes the "unconvincing" plot device in his chapter, *The Master Humphrey Experiment: 1840-1841 in Charles Dickens* (161).

man with long grey hair, whose face and figure...form something of that delicate mould [of Nell's]" (Dickens *Curiosity* 9). Nell later addresses the old man as her "grandfather" before retiring to her "little bed" which was so small "a fairy might have slept in [it]" (Dickens *Curiosity* 10). Her "fairy-like" size and form, paired with the "haggard," grey old man who "might have groped among old churches and tombs and deserted houses" to gather the wares for his shop, only acts as a catalyst for the strange situation which continues to foster the narrator's inexplicable interest in them (Dickens *Curiosity* 10). The narrator finally leaves the shop when Nell's grandfather mysteriously makes his departure, leaving his granddaughter all alone for the night. Puzzled by this, the narrator walks with the old man but the latter takes his leave of the guest, saying that their two "ways were widely different" (Dickens *Curiosity* 17). However, the old man looks back several times at the narrator standing behind him, "as if to ascertain if [he] were still watching him, or...following at a distance," which anticipates much of the prevalent seeing and secret looking between Haze and the supposedly blind Asa in *Blood* (Dickens *Curiosity* 17). The narrator of *Curiosity* wrestles with his odd encounter for "nearly a week" but finally "yield[s]" to his urge to revisit the shop, this time in the light of day which then enables him to further narrate Nell's story (Dickens *Curiosity* 20).

From this comparison, the O'Connor father/daughter pairing in *Blood* are in many ways an inverted rendering of the delicately decaying Dickensian pair of Little Nell and her grandfather. Nell is, of course, undone by her co-dependent relationship with her grandfather. Although the two share a deep love for each other, the grandfather's feelings for Nell drive him to worsen their meagre monetary state through gambling, and he becomes indebted to the deformed dwarf Quilp. This debt then leads to the necessity of their escape from London and further brings about the grandfather's mental deterioration and Nell's physical illness. Asa and Lily, on the other hand, seem to share contempt for each other. When they meet Haze, Lily fixates on the idea that he is following her out of a sexual desire. She says to her father, "'How come you don't like him, Papa?...because he's after me?'" ...to which her father replies, 'If he was after you, that would be enough to make me welcome him'" (O'Connor *Blood* 109). Finally the pair decides to hustle Haze for their own reasons. Lily proposes a bargain to her father: "'you help me to get him and then you go away and do what you please and I can live with him'" (O'Connor *Blood* 109). The supposed blind man ponders this, "his face was thoughtful and evil" and laughs, finally deciding, "'that might be fine... That

might be the oil on Aaron's beard'" (O'Connor *Blood* 110). A parallel which must be examined between these two novels is the outsider's fascination with the (grand)father/child pair. The narrator of *Curiosity* says that he "could not tear [himself] away" from looking at the old man as he walked away (Dickens *Curiosity* 17).

Likewise, Haze cannot explain his obsession with Asa and Lily, but he feels himself "suddenly" compelled to buy the \$2 peeler from the salesman and run after the pair in order to give the appliance to the child (O'Connor *Blood* 43). He then embarks on a hunt which takes the greater part of several days, as well as necessitating his getting the help of Enoch, whose presence Haze detests, in order to find the pair again, but he does eventually spot them standing on a street corner. Haze inexplicably follows the pair slowly in his car and watches them as they enter their rented rooms, "his face so close to the [car] glass that it looked like a paper face pasted there" (O'Connor *Blood* 103).

In her book *Staring: How We Look*, Rosemarie Garland-Thomson notes that we do not stare at what is familiar, at people we know, but at what is unfamiliar and what is surprising, or rather at what is a spectacle. However Garland-Thomson writes, "things happen when we stare;" therefore, between the starrer and the staree "a brief bond" is made of cause and effect (4). This effect can sometimes be one of empathy but it can just as easily be a reaction which is antagonistic. Jacques Lacan of course has much to say on staring and James Mellard discusses Lacan and O'Connor in his essay, "Framed in the Gaze: Haze, *Wise Blood*, and Lacanian Reading." Mellard cites Lacan's work on "the function of the gaze...hinging on what is not there...[and] is not really either the eye of another person looking...[but] rather, the field constituted by these and within which the subject becomes an 'object'" (52-53). Mellard goes on to reference Lacan's theory on this objectification of the staree having a relationship with absence and the Other: the starrer gazes at the object (the staree), which represents and mirrors back the former's lack and therefore represents desire. Thus, Haze is drawn to stare and to follow Asa and Lily because of the slow and painful realization of his calling to be a preacher. Haze believes that the older "blind" man holds what he lacks: faith. In seeking to avoid his destiny (Haze's own grandfather had been a preacher and his mother had been grooming him for this profession from childhood), Haze enacts a "religious crusade for the Church Without Christ" to preach the "reverse" of his family's religion (Eggenschwiler 106).

Eggenschwiler notes that Haze, when he "first arrives in the city,...decides that he is going to do what people call sin to show that he does not believe in it, which

merely shows how much he does believe in it since he is so compelled to prove that he does not" (107). This same compulsion is what motivates Haze to follow Asa and Lily. He is driven to show them that their religion, and more broadly that all religion, is wrong, and he feels he must prove this to them with his denial of sin. But following what Eggenschwiler pointed out, the compulsion to prove that the Hawkses's Jesus is fake is also proof of Haze's desire to be part of the Christian profession and to fulfil his destiny. Mellard summates: "Haze believes Hawks *has* what Haze desires, the signifier of his redemption—the sign that he is redeemed, that he can be redeemed, that someone believes in the redeemer Haze tries to deny" (61). Much like Joe Christmas in Faulkner's *Light in August*, Haze's perception of his existence becomes enmeshed in one large muddled knot: love, sex, food, spirituality, all become one thing and he feels, at least initially, that Asa and Lily Hawkes hold the key to deciphering all of this.

Alone in his car, Haze decides he will "seduce Hawks's child. He thought that when the blind preacher saw his daughter ruined, he would realize that [Haze] was in earnest when he said he preached The Church Without Christ" (O'Connor *Blood* 110). Haze's desire to try to seduce Lily in order to prove that he is "in earnest" is formed as a result of his further realization that, "He wanted someone he could teach something to and he took it for granted that the blind man's child, since she was so homely, would also be innocent" (O'Connor *Blood* 110). Examining this statement alongside Mellard's and Garland-Thomson's theories on staring and looking, the conclusion can be drawn that Haze's staring at the father/daughter pair occurs both in order to elicit a response (for them to notice that he is "in earnest" about his Church and his atheism) but also is an act which asks for them to take notice of him and to include him in their family unit. It is an attempt to reach out to them for inclusion. With Haze's looking and dogged following of Asa and Lily, he is, on the surface, seeking to thwart their crusade, but underneath this guise, he is desperately seeking their acceptance and approval. But why then is the narrator of *Curiosity* so interested in watching Nell and her grandfather, and if the above holds true for Haze/Asa/Lily, what does that situation explain in regard to *Curiosity*?

To answer this question in part, I will firstly turn to work which has been done on Dickensian outsiders. In her text on Dickens's idiots and mad men, Natalie McKnight delves into examining the code which Dickens uses for his "holy idiots" and "wise fools" and remarks that these characters follow an outline which Dickens borrows

(and expands on) from both the Judeo-Christian tradition and folklore. McKnight references in her chapter titled, “Holy Idiots/Wise Fools” that “holy idiots,” of whom I am most concerned with for this paper, “have mental defects but...also have mystical, visionary natures or at least unusual innocence and selflessness” (35). She notes that these character types possess selected supernatural abilities because of their physical abnormalities or handicaps. Throughout literary history, it would seem as if these supernatural gifts were given as an exchange for bearing the “burden” of disability, and McKnight makes the connection that this need for an exchange of one ability for another disability is perhaps part of our “prevailing human desire to believe in divine justice and mercy,” a combination of ideas on which many O’Connor scholars have researched, including most recently Timothy Basselin (36).¹⁰³ Many of Dickens’s characters fit into this mould, but Nell is particularly conceived in the fashion of McKnight’s description of “unusual innocence and selflessness,” and this is in part what first attracts the narrator of *Curiosity* to her as was mentioned before.

When the narrator becomes a hindrance to the story, Dickens has him quietly fade into the background so that, as the narrator himself says to the reader: “those who have prominent and necessary parts...[can] speak and act for themselves” (Dickens *Curiosity* 33). But even after he leaves the story, the omniscient narrator who takes up the thread of the plot seems to carry on his predecessor’s vision of Nell and her grandfather (this is in part because he *is* still the narrator, as it is later revealed that he is both Master Humphrey and the unnamed Single Gentleman). The narrator notes that after Nell meets with Quilp (and Mrs Quilp), she inadvertently gives away to the pair her secret anxiety, namely that she is aware her grandfather has undergone a change and has become “struck down beneath the pressure of some hidden grief” (Dickens *Curiosity* 78). The narrator then shifts his focus to the grandfather, whose “vision” cannot discern the change which has also taken place in Nell although many others, Kit included, have noted it (Dickens *Curiosity* 78). The grandfather looks at Nell daily but cannot, or will not, spot the changes which have occurred. He cannot “disengage his mind from the phantom that haunted and brooded on it always” in order to see the damage which has been done to Nell (Dickens *Curiosity* 78). The “phantom” of which the narrator speaks is greed, for the reader soon discovers that Nell’s grandfather is deep in debt to the money lender Quilp, and it is to him that they relinquish their shop

¹⁰³ Basselin, Timothy J. *Flannery O’Connor: Writing a Theology of Disabled Humanity*. Baylor University Press, 2013.

when the grandfather cannot pay his debts. The narrator's vision then turns to look into Nell's heart, and he sees her secret fear and topic of morbid obsession: that of her grandfather's death. Specifically, Nell worries that her grandfather will commit suicide because of his secret grief, and further, that this suicide will become personified and come for her in the night much like a bogeyman: "[if] he should kill himself and his blood come creeping, creeping, on the ground to her own bed-room door—" (Dickens *Curiosity* 79). Of course, suicide does revisit *Curiosity* with Quilp's death, and the aftermath of his supposed suicide is that his corpse is mutilated and he is buried at a crossroads. That Nell would be the character who introduces the thought of suicide in the novel is a strange happening for a young girl with "supernatural" innocence, but again this does support the hypothesis that Nell is advanced beyond her years, even in these topics of her anxieties.

McKnight notes that there is a large difference between Dickens's fictional "holy fools/wise idiots" and the nonfictional mentally handicapped or isolated prisoners of which he wrote. She writes that in Dickens's "nonfiction accounts of idiots, [he] often seems to praise the institutions that have segregated them" and very infrequently suggests that perhaps segregation is not the sole answer to the question of what to do with these outsiders (4). However, Dickens's fictional accounts would seem to condemn the prisons and workhouses where these societal "outsiders" were kept, and he often wagged a finger via his novels at the notion that these people should be segregated. Ultimately though when the narrator, like Dickens's contemporary readers, cannot tear himself away from his viewing of Nell and her grandfather, McKnight postulates that in this he is only enacting upon the Victorian norm of watching those who were deemed insane or were prisoners, and perhaps what shocks the narrator so is that a pair who is so outside of the societal norm is not locked away "behind bars or on a scaffold," but is freely available to roam through the city (43).

Just like O'Connor's 1950s Georgia, Dickens's mid-nineteenth-century London is a microcosm of these "Holy Idiots/Wise Fools" who provide the rest of "normal society" a glimpse of, as McKnight would deem it, "an alternate reality, a spiritual level of existence" (37). It is because of Nell's "holy idiocy" that the narrator is compelled to watch her, so that he can gain access to her marginalized world and by doing so, set her free of her isolation. A conclusion that now must inevitably be drawn from the authorial framework referenced earlier is this: it is not a stranger, but a member of

Nell's own family who is seeking to de-marginalize her, although the reader is not made aware of the Single Gentleman's connection to Nell until the end of the novel. Just as Haze is looking to Asa and Lily with a subversive desire to be included in their family unit, the narrator/Single Gentleman is also operating on a desire to be included with his long-lost family. Both enact their desires by looking at the spectacle that is marginalised by society but in which they wish to be included. Garland-Thomson theorizes that staring "is an interpersonal action through which we act out who we imagine ourselves and others to be" (14). This reinvention of the self that both Haze and the narrator/Master Humphrey are enacting through their staring is therefore a hidden attempt to attain acceptance into "sideshow" lifestyles of those whom society marginalizes. Many other examples of this desire for acceptance can be seen with the relationships of both Dickens's and O'Connor's outsider characters to their more mainstream counterparts. Two of the more obvious examples are the Crummles troupe who take in Nicholas and Smike after their escape from Dotheboys Hall and the Squeers family in *Nicholas Nickleby*, and further in O'Connor's short story "A Temple of the Holy Ghost" when the young child envisions an interaction with the side show hermaphrodite whom her cousins had seen at the carnival. Both Nicholas and the little girl in O'Connor's story are moved by their interactions with the societal outsiders, and both are drawn into the world of these "freaks" and come out of the interactions having reinvented themselves for the better. These relationships would fit into what Garland-Thomson has cited as being the more positive outcomes of the exchange between starrer and staree; but what of the negative exchanges which certainly must occur? To turn again to the positive and negative pairing of elder and child in *Curiosity* and *Blood*, there are certainly instances where negative outcomes arise from the staring exchange, specifically those which involve the death of Nell, as well as one particularly jarring scene between Asa and Haze.

Much has been written of the negative perception of Nell's death scene. This is quite possibly, as Amy Cruse puts it in her text, because "Everyone loved Little Nell," and readers were therefore horrified that a character who was an icon for the "ideal of what a child should be" could meet with death at so young an age (164). Cruse further writes, "Dickens' treatment of [Nell] has been condemned as sentimental and unnatural, but the Victorians were sentimental, and were proud rather than ashamed of being so" (164). Oscar Wilde famously critiques this über-sentiment in his heavily cited statement, "One would have to have a heart of stone to read the death of Little Nell and

not to dissolve into tears...of laughter” (Wilde 119)¹⁰⁴ However the death of Little Nell, which Wilde criticises as being rife with melodrama, is not actually included in the novel. Dickens has his narrator (Humphrey) dictate to the reader of Nell’s death through the perceived experiences of those who surround her body. No angels come to rescue Nell’s soul, nor is there a holy light to which she looks up as she sighs her last breath (that the reader is aware of). We are not privy to her deathly experience, but merely are witnesses to the aftermath of her demise upon her community. In Slater’s biography, he writes of Dickens’s “exalted purpose” in writing *Curiosity*, which was that “through his treatment of Nell’s death, he might have softened thoughts of death in young minds” (166). Dickens said that one of his aims in writing of Nell’s death was to help alleviate some of the pain of mourning by helping the grief-stricken learn to substitute “a garland of fresh flowers for the sculptured horrors which disgrace the tomb” (Dickens qtd. in Slater 166). The death of his sister-in-law Mary Hogarth was, as Slater notes, very fresh in Dickens’s mind when penning Nell’s death, and there are several correlations between the perceptions of these dead bodies.¹⁰⁵ For these reasons, Nell’s death does hit the sentimentalist chord as Dickens meticulously drafts his plan for her death, as well as Humphrey’s connection to the Single Gentleman, as he concluded *Curiosity* and began the segue to *Barnaby Rudge*.

In these last chapters of *Curiosity*, the narrator (the Single Gentleman and Master Humphrey himself) has finally found his long-lost brother and Nell in their new established home in the country. It is Mr Garland who brings the Single Gentleman, along with the schoolmaster whom the pair had befriended on their journey, to Nell’s and her grandfather’s new home. The grandfather registers the presence of his long-lost younger brother but is “quite incapable of interest or curiosity” in him (Dickens *Curiosity* 554). The bachelor/brother/narrator nonetheless tries to intercede: “[he] drew a chair towards the old man, and sat down close beside him. After a long silence, he ventured to speak [to his brother]” (Dickens *Curiosity* 554). What the Single Gentleman has to say to his brother, and what the elderly grandfather replies, brings all in the room to tears, as the group slowly comes to the realization that Nell is dead and

¹⁰⁴ This is a widely circulated quote both in Dickens and Wilde studies, although most scholars avoid giving the direct reference to its origin. The quotation appears in *Letters to the Sphinx* (1930), a collection of letters from Wilde to his friend and fellow writer, Ava Levenson.

¹⁰⁵ Slater writes that not only does *Oliver Twist*’s mother have much in common with Mary Hogarth, but so too does Nell which Slater notes is due to Dickens’s recurring dreams of his sister-in-law while writing *Curiosity* (114).

the grandfather has reached a state of dementia. The group “watched him as he rose and stole on tiptoe” to Nell’s deathbed so as not to wake her from the slumber in which he believes her to be (Dickens *Curiosity* 554). While he does so, the group “looked into the faces of each other, and no man’s cheek was free from tears” (Dickens *Curiosity* 554). Here the omniscient narrator, who as I have argued, is still a continuation of the Single Gentleman and Humphrey, tells the reader of the death scene he witnesses. It is a spectacle of jarring grotesque beauty to the narrator, who sums up his six paragraphs describing Nell’s death primarily in short declarative sentences. He says of Nell, “So shall we know the angels in their majesty, after death” (Dickens *Curiosity* 557). It is through this scene of voyeurism where the narrator/Single Gentleman comes to the realization that he will never be able to find his inclusion in his long-lost family. He finally concludes, “Whatever power of thought or memory he retained, was all bound up in her. [The grandfather] never understood, or seemed to care to understand, about his brother” (Dickens *Curiosity* 564). Here then is a prime example of what Garland-Thomson refers to as the “conduit to knowledge” (15). In his narration of his vision of Nell’s dead body, the narrator/Single Gentleman is the starrer on his “quest to know,” and it is the dead body of Nell and the now disabled body and mind of the grandfather who are both the starees, asking “to be known” to the narrator, so that he will finally gain the knowledge that he is truly in a marginalized state (15).

To return to *Blood*, after Haze encounters and repudiates the con-artist and radio preacher, Onnie Jay Holy who tries to recruit him as his prophet, Haze attempts to sleep the night in his car. He sinks into a dream where he was not dead, but buried in a living state, waiting on the Judgment, only he thinks that he is “not waiting on the Judgement because there was no Judgement, he was waiting on nothing” (O’Connor *Blood* 160). Buried alive, he exists in a cage as a spectacle at which the various people in Taulkingham marvel. Finally, he awakens and lets himself into his boarding house, “but instead of going upstairs to his room, he stood in the hall, looking at the blind man’s door” (O’Connor *Blood* 161). Asa once again puts Haze into a trance-like state, but in this instance, it is the *thought* of viewing the blind man which draws Haze. He picked the lock of the door, “stood just inside the room...[then] he moved slowly over to the iron bed and stood there...[staring at Asa] lying across it” (O’Connor *Blood* 161). Squatting down beside Asa’s sleeping form, Haze strikes a match close to the older man’s face. Asa “opened his eyes. The two sets of eyes looked at each other as long as the match lasted; Haze’s expression seemed to open onto a deeper blankness and reflect

something and then close again” (O’Connor *Blood* 162). The reflection of which the narrator speaks is Haze’s realization of his own isolated state; a similar realization to the narrator/Single Gentleman at the deathbed of Nell. Now that Haze knows Asa’s secret, that in fact the supposed “Godly” Hawksees are nothing but con-artists, Haze must face his abandonment and isolation. He cannot prove to Asa that his Jesus is a liar, because this is already what Asa himself believes. In attempting to blind himself for his congregation after having preached to them of Paul’s blindness, Asa reached for the lime but was unable to “let any of it get into his eyes” (O’Connor *Blood* 114). This is what the reader has the knowledge of before Haze: that when the time came, Asa lacked the conviction to perform the task he felt Jesus had called him to do.

Asa remembers that as he was about to blind himself, he “fancied Jesus...standing there [with him], beckoning to him; and he had fled out of the tent into the alley and disappeared” (O’Connor *Blood* 114). In Haze’s instance, he, as the starrer, has learned the reason why he has not been welcomed into the preacher’s home as a soul to be saved. This is because Asa has refuted his belief in a soul that is worth saving. His final words for his starrer Haze are: “‘Now you can get out,’ ... ‘now you can leave me alone’” (O’Connor *Blood* 162). After his final rejection from Asa, Haze goes on to murder his doppelgänger, the new prophet hired by Onnie Jay Holy, and then that evening succumbs to Lily’s seduction. As Garland-Thomson writes, “A staring interchange can tickle or alienate, persist or evolve” (4). Mellard paraphrases Lacanian theory writing, “the field of gaze invokes not control or completion, but impotence, [and] alienation” (55). Both the narrator of *Curiosity* and Haze evolve from their staring exchanges, but the evolution is one which demonstrates to them their own reasons behind their voyeurism at the seemingly marginal and bizarre pairs of grand/fathers and daughters; they evolve an understanding that they are living in a state of lack. The *Curiosity* narrator and Haze both choose their starees because of their innate humanistic need for inclusion in familial units. The starers in these equations choose their starees because the latter can offer the former inclusion in a marginalized state, a state in which the former already have a hidden, perhaps subconscious, knowledge of their place. The narrator/Single Gentleman and Haze look because they want to belong. However, it is when the exchange continues that these starers gain the knowledge that there is no place for them with those who are the marginalized outsiders: the starers are even further displaced outside of mainstream society, finally becoming the ultimate outsiders.

As with many of Dickens's novels, the failed parental figure emerges multiple times within the stories of O'Connor and is not a figure which is limited solely to *Blood*. Her short story "A View of the Woods," published posthumously in the collection *Everything That Rises Must Converge* (1965), centres on the elderly landowner Mr Fortune, and his granddaughter Mary Fortune Pitts. Mary Fortune, as the narrator and her grandfather call her, is the spitting image of her maternal grandfather, a fact in which the old man delights. He believes that she is a "throwback to him" and that despite the "seventy years' difference in their ages, the spiritual distance between them was slight" (O'Connor "A View" 336). In Mary Fortune, the grandfather sees himself: she is "short and broad like himself...[has] *his* wide prominent forehead, *his* steady penetrating scowl...[has] *his* intelligence, *his* strong will, and *his* push and drive" (O'Connor "A View" 336, my emphasis). The story opens by narrating, "Mary Fortune and the old man had spent every morning watching the machine" which is cultivating one of Mr Fortune's land lots for development (O'Connor "A View" 335). Mr Fortune and Mary Fortune share a relationship outside of the bonds which Mr Fortune has (or rather does not have) with the rest of his family, including his own daughter, Mary Fortune's mother for whom "he didn't have any use" (O'Connor "A View" 336). What is most striking about this pair is that because of their physical likenesses, that they share an affinity "on the inside too" (O'Connor "A View" 336). It is because of her difference from the rest of her family, the Pittses, that Mr Fortune pays her any attention at all.

Mr Fortune purposely cultivates a relationship with his granddaughter, not necessarily because he loves her as a caregiver (he has other grandchildren to whom he pays little mind), but because it gives him pleasure to have another version of himself with which to "have frequent verbal tilts...[for] sport like putting a mirror up in front of a rooster and watching him fight his reflection" (O'Connor "A View" 341). There is much watching and reflecting of gazes that occurs in this short story, and as I have displayed in the previous section of this chapter, much of the gazing has to do with the starrer's longing to learn from and gain access to the society which repudiates him. While Mr Fortune does not at first glance appear to be in a state of rejection from his society, we come to learn that he feels that his daughter, Mary Fortune's mother, has rejected him and his house by marrying Pitts, a man so different from himself. There is never a mention made of a Mrs Fortune, but if O'Connor canon serves us well, the reader can infer that the relationship was more than likely an unhealthy one. To return

to Mr Fortune's outsider nature, one can finally determine that he is indeed a social outcast if for nothing else other than his age. In stating why he allows the Pitts family to live on his land with him, Mr Fortune thinks: "Anyone over sixty years of age is in an uneasy position unless he controls the greater interest" (O'Connor "A View" 337). This "uneasy position" of which he speaks is that he knows the Pitts family is not after a loving relationship with him in his waning years, instead "He knew they were waiting impatiently for the day when they could put him in a hole eight feet deep and cover him up with dirt" (O'Connor "A View" 337). Therefore, when Mary Fortune is born and bears his physical likeness, he requests that she be named after his mother and cultivates this bizarre mirroring of selves with her.

However, the reader is led to understand fairly early in the story that Mr Fortune does love Mary Fortune, even if only because he loves himself. In a particularly touching scene, Mr Fortune watches his granddaughter after they have had a verbal argument over the further selling off of the Fortune property to make room for a petrol station, which will subvert the view of the woods for which the story is named and for which Mary Fortune is concerned. Mr Fortune and his granddaughter make a daily pilgrimage to an outer portion of his land in order to observe the on-going construction site of giant grotesque machines gorging themselves on the red Georgia clay. They have a verbal tiff over the selling of "the lawn," and Mary Fortune walks off, bellowing to her grandfather that she refuses "'to ride with the Whore of Babylon'" (O'Connor "A View" 343). Mr Fortune watches his protégé walk away from him, and as she leaves him, he recognizes himself in her, and is consoled: "the small robust figure stalk[ed] across the yellow-dotted field toward the woods, [and] his pride in her, as if it couldn't help itself, returned like the gentle little tide on the new lake" (O'Connor "A View" 343).

Because Mary Fortune is a type of doppelgänger (as in *Blood*) of her grandfather, she is able to have a deeper understanding and recognition of her grandfather's whore-like desire to sell his land, and thus a part of himself, for financial gain with the ultimate goal being that one day his land will become annexed as a city: Fortune, Georgia. However, Mr Fortune does not yet have this insight that his granddaughter possesses and retorts, "'A whore is a woman!...That's how much you know!'" (O'Connor "A View" 343). The only aspect of Mary Fortune which her grandfather does not admire is her acceptance of and cooperation with the beatings given to her by her father, Mr Pitts. Mary Fortune's submission to her father is a

complete mystery to her grandfather (as he would be loath to submit to Pitts), and further, his daughter's choice in husband is bewildering. To Mr Fortune, Pitts "was a man of a nasty temper and of ugly unreasonable resentments," he resists the selling of the Fortune land primarily because he himself lusts after the ownership of it (O'Connor "A View" 340). The Pitts family scapegoat becomes Mary Fortune, and every time the grandfather sells off another piece of land, the Pittses blame their daughter as she mirrors the real perpetrator. This culminates in her being driven away from the house in a scene akin to one of rape, in order to be beaten by her father. Much as Nell is sexualized and traumatized by Quilp, Swiveller, and even her own grandfather, Mary Fortune is violently assaulted by her father (and the Pittses as a whole) and the only witness to these attacks is Mr Fortune.

John Bowen discusses sexual trauma within *Curiosity* in his chapter "Nell's Crypt" held within *Other Dickens*. Of Nell's grandfather's gambling addiction, Bowen writes that it "causes him to break into Nell's room one night to steal money, in a scene that is akin in a child's consciousness to an illicit sexual threat, with his wandering hands and 'breath so near her pillow'" (139). Further, he cites Freud's work on debt, which "can be read as a material manifestation of psychological guilt at a repressed or unacknowledged sexual desire" (139). Quilp sexualizes Nell fairly early in the text and this behaviour only lends itself to the further creation of his sordid character. Quilp remarks to Nell's grandfather that the girl is a "modest little bud,...so small, so compact...with such blue veins and such a transparent skin..." (Dickens *Curiosity* 82). The money lender dwarf says this knowing that he will soon be in possession of the old man's Curiosity Shop, and therefore will have easy access to making Nell his "number two...[his] second...Mrs. Quilp" (Dickens *Curiosity* 52). There has been a reluctance to discuss violence, especially of a sexual nature, within Dickens until fairly recently, and this no doubt is due to the way in which cultural memory wishes to think of Dickens's works.¹⁰⁶ Nell has long been hailed as the essence of purity, "the Allegory of the peace and Innocence of Childhood" and to think that she could be sexualized in a traumatic and violent way is incongruent with how popular (and contemporary nineteenth-century) culture wishes to think of Dickens (Hood qtd. in Slater 158). However, Dickens utilized this "Allegory" as a way of demonstrating her vulnerability

¹⁰⁶ By saying there has been a reluctance to discuss such topics as sexual violence in Dickens studies, I do not mean to imply that no scholar has explored this theme before. Violence has been explored in Dickens studies, but very few scholars have researched violence of a sexual nature until the end of the twentieth century.

at the hands of “all the hateful or hurtful Passions of the world” (Hood qtd. in Slater 158). Thus Nell and Mary Fortune are all depictions of the essence of purity and girlhood that is threatened.

The elderly grandfather remembers the time he decided to follow the two in his own car and watches, hidden behind a rock, as Mary Fortune clung to a pine tree while Pitts “methodically” beat her legs with his belt (O’Connor “A View” 340). Fortune’s disgust with the situation is not necessarily that Mary Fortune is beaten, but that she takes it and then denies its occurrence, saying over and over, “Nobody’s ever beat me in my life and if anybody did, I’d kill him” (O’Connor “A View” 340). His disgust with the situation is largely because he feels Mary Fortune to be an aspect, or as he put it, a “throwback” to himself; therefore, if *he* would not take such treatment from someone for whom he holds so little respect, why should his protégé? Mary Fortune reiterates the aforementioned phrase numerous times and we as readers cannot help but to make an educated guess at the outcome of this story, that indeed she will end up killing her attacker. As with many of O’Connor’s stories, this one, as we projected, ends with a violent encounter between grandfather and granddaughter, which leads to the elder Fortune’s enlightenment, or perhaps, as O’Connor would put it, his grace.

Mary Fortune repeatedly resists her grandfather’s attempts at persuading her that selling off the “lawn” is the right thing to do in the name of “progress,” which he so admires, and this culminates in her murder at the hands of her grandfather (O’Connor “A View” 337). Because she cannot accept the selling of the “lawn” for Tilman’s petrol station (the owner of the general store and also the personification of the Judeo-Christian Devil), she throws a fit while “red-faced and wild-looking” which includes throwing bottles at her grandfather and Tilman after he signs the bill of sale in the latter’s store (O’Connor “A View” 352). On their car ride home, Mr Fortune realizes in a “sudden vision” his mistake with raising the child, the reason why she did not respect him and his will like she did with her father Pitts: he had never beaten her (O’Connor “A View” 353). Thus, it is this that he sets out to do when they return home, but of course the tables of aggressor/aggressee are turned when Mary Fortune enacts her *leitmotif* and does actually aim to “kill him” (O’Connor “A View” 353-354). Mary Fortune’s “pale identical eyes” look down into her grandfather’s from her position atop him and she says, “‘Have you had enough?...You been whipped...by me...and I’m PURE Pitts’” (O’Connor “A View” 355). The idea that his mirror image could look down upon him and verbalize that he himself is “PURE Pitts” releases in the

grandfather “a sudden surge of strength” and he gains the upper hand in the fight, and bludgeons Mary Fortune’s head against a rock (O’Connor “A View” 355). However, not even this satisfies his need to “beat” Pitts as her eyes, which turn upwards in her skull negate his victory: “[they] were set in a fixed glare that did not take him in” (O’Connor “A View” 355).

There are many admirers of Dickens who would not offhand recognize the amount and importance of violence that are incorporated into his works. However, violence, sometimes comical and sometimes not, does appear throughout his body of work and makes its presence known in some way in many of the texts which are most beloved by his fans. In his preface to *Oliver Twist*’s novelized form, Dickens very honestly and succinctly addresses the violence in that work as providing lessons from which one can learn, and in essence, he writes that he believed violence and evil could present one of life’s truths: “I have yet to learn that a lesson of the purest good may not be drawn from the vilest evil” (Dickens *Twist* lixii). Further in this introduction, Dickens attempts to explain Nancy’s love for Sikes by saying it does not matter whether or not her love is comprehensible, “IT IS TRUE...[further,] It is emphatically God’s truth, for it is the truth He leaves in such depraved and miserable breasts; the hope yet lingering behind; the last fair drop of water at the bottom of the dried-up weed-choked well” (Dickens *Twist* lxxv). With this preface, Dickens links his frequent authorial hopefulness and faith with inexplicable evil, and this is what O’Connor does in every one of her works, but most especially with those which contained flawed parental caregivers. To again reference her essay, “The Grotesque in Southern Fiction,” these character dynamics are further evidence of her belief in “tragic naturalism” with which a writer “may transcend the limitations of his narrow vision” (O’Connor 41). Grimshaw asserts in his *Companion* that the “nonreligious readers” will take from O’Connor’s stories very different theses than “believers”: the latter he says “may read sometimes in stark terror and at other times in grateful recognition of the unusual and unexpected ways in which God bestows Grace” (4-5). Ultimately, O’Connor’s authorial aim is to display the continuing hope that humanity has through a relationship with God (specifically in her case through Catholicism), but many readers upon an introduction to O’Connor fail to grasp this undying hope and instead only see violence for the sake of gratuitous entertainment. However, the hope and the humour are there: Grimshaw concludes his introduction by aligning O’Connor’s particular genus of

entertainment with Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor*: "I thinke the best way were, to entertaine him with hope" (Shakespeare qtd. in Grimshaw 5).

It cannot be contested that Asa Hawks, Hazel Motes and Mr Fortune appear to be hopeless characters, who exist in a spiritually devoid world, but when taking into account scholarly work done on O'Connor, one can understand that they are meant to serve as metaphors for a life lived outside of the mystery of faith and religion. Dickens writes of Sikes's brutality, that it is unknown if the "proper chord to strike [to awake his humanity] has rusted [or] is hard to find," and it is this analogy which so appropriately describes these three hero/villains of O'Connor's fiction (*Oliver* xvii). It is easy enough to detect that Asa, Haze and Fortune carry a burden which has hardened their respective "gentler human feeling[s]"; further, that these men are haunted by their lack of spiritual faith is also obvious (Dickens *Oliver* xvii). There is a type of redemption for Asa through his influence upon Haze, or rather his accidental influence upon the latter: through Asa's teachings of false piety, Haze finally is able to understand and accept the mystery of his own faith. When Haze does finally blind himself, he tells his landlady Mrs Flood that he hopes that in death, we become blind because "if there's no bottom in your eyes, they hold more" (O'Connor *Blood* 222). His self-blinding can then be understood as an attempt to receive more sensory input and thus understanding, specifically of Christ whom Haze had tried his whole life to avoid. This further explains why Asa's attempt at self-blinding failed; because he lacked the faith that he would still spiritually see after becoming physically blinded. Thus both men are on a quest for the mystery of grace, God and spirituality; however, there is no answer to this mystery in life, it remains unknowable.

Mr Fortune and Sikes sadly share in similar downfalls and spiritual isolations. Both men commit murder, and the dead eyes of the females whom they had loved and murdered haunt them. Both Mary Fortune and Nancy try to inspire these wayward and evil men to lead "good" lives but fail to do so. Mary Fortune knows that her grandfather is seeking to sell the "lawn" in order to satisfy his love for monetary power, and James Grimshaw observed in his *Companion* that it is Mr Fortune's goal to mould his granddaughter "to be a FORTUNE (materialist) rather than a PITTS (naturalist)" (56). Further, Grimshaw writes that on a deeper level, "A View of the Woods" is about "familial love, which Mr. Fortune cannot give" (56). The mysteries which Mr Fortune simultaneously ignores and tries to come to terms with are Mary Fortune's "flaw" of being loyal to her father Pitts (which is partly why he cannot give familial love), and the

woods across the street from his property for which the Pittses seem to have an inexplicable (to him) love. Thus we come full circle back to the mystery of faith, love and evil, which both O'Connor and Dickens aimed to address in their works. Both authors utilized Cervantes's *Don Quixote* in order to attempt to explain this mystery to their readership. In "The Grotesque in Southern Fiction" O'Connor writes,

...if the writer believes that our life is and will remain essentially mysterious...then what he sees on the surface will be of interest to him only as he can go through it into an experience of mystery itself...Such a writer will be interested in what we don't understand rather than in what we do...He will be interested in characters who are forced out to meet evil and grace and who act on a trust beyond themselves—whether they know very clearly what it is they act upon or not. To the modern mind, this kind of character, and his creator, are typical Don Quixotes, tilting at what is not there. (41-42)

Dickens evokes *Don Quixote* in his preface to *Oliver Twist*, in which he feels obliged to discuss Nancy's occupation as a prostitute and her inexplicable love for her murderer Sikes. He explains that with the character Don Quixote, Cervantes showed how perceived absurdities can hide the clearest representations of truth:

Cervantes laughed Spain's chivalry away, by showing Spain its impossible and wild absurdity. It was my attempt, in my humble and far-distant sphere, to dim the false glitter surrounding something which really did exist, by shewing [sic] it in its unattractive and repulsive truth...It involves the best and worst shades of our common nature; much of its ugliest hues, and something of its most beautiful; it is a contradiction, an anomaly, an apparent impossibility, but it is a truth. (lviv–lxv).

By invoking the well-known image of Don Quixote "tilting at what is not there," both authors demonstrate that their texts are a means of tilting at the inexplicable mysteries of life: mysteries which cannot be seen with the naked eye but which they know are there. The inexplicable and the anomalous are what lie at the core of human existence and are what both Dickens and O'Connor grapple with in their works through the voices of their characters. Humphrey, Haze and Mr Fortune share the unfortunate state of living isolated from their deeper selves: they desperately seek a way to connect with those around them and thus, with their spirituality, from which they feel the ultimate disconnect. Through Humphrey's group of aged, and slightly neurotic, gentlemen with

whom he shares stories around his beloved clock, he gains a community and weathers the storm of familial isolation and social alienation. But this collection of decrepit men ultimately does not heal his metaphorical wound and in his death, the house is shut up, the clock is silent and the group meets no more: Humphrey melds with the spirits which he claims already haunt his house and objects, and whether or not he gains re-entry into a spiritual community remains an unknown. O'Connor's protagonists as well reach their redemption off-screen and away from the reader's eye. What becomes of Haze and Mr Fortune, whether they come to terms with their own lack, we are not privy to know. However, the reader does know that they meet their deaths with the understanding that physical death does not mean the end of their quest for understanding faith: this they must continue to battle in whatever afterlife awaits them.

Chapter Five — Dickens and O'Connor: Dark Humour

"Whenever I'm asked why Southern writers particularly have a penchant for writing about freaks, I say it is because we are still able to recognize one" (O'Connor "Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction" 44).

John Forster referred to Dickens as being one of the "great humourists," and therefore, he says, Dickens readers should forgive his occasional "grotesque imaginings to which great humourists are prone" (726-727). Forster describes these "imaginings" as the exaggerations of characters, a style for which Dickens was heavily critiqued by his contemporaries, but he also cites the author's "wealth of fancy" as being one of his "magnificent successes" (721-722).¹⁰⁷ Dickens's imagination allowed him a perception of the "relations in things which are not apparent generally, [his perception was] one of those exquisite properties of humour by which are discovered the affinities between the high and the low, the attractive and the repulsive...which bring us all upon the level of a common humanity" (Chapter XIV). Flannery O'Connor wrote that "the serious fiction writer always writes about the whole world, no matter how limited his particular scene. For him, the bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima affects life on the Oconee River, and there's not anything he can do about it" (O'Connor "The Nature and Aim of Fiction" 77). These understandings of how the fiction writer works, demonstrates the authorial aim of the purpose and meaning of the texts themselves: which is that the comic grotesque of nineteenth-century London demonstrates the same lessons on human nature that the (equally) comic grotesque of twentieth century middle rural Georgia does. In seeing how far Dickens's authorial reach and "Fresh Vein of Humour" (as Malcolm Andrews calls it) extended via influence, one can see these commonalities which unite our individual stories as one complete examination of the state of being human (Andrews 1).

One such affinity to which I read Forster alluding is Dickens's particular style of humour, a style which I will define as dark humour in this chapter, which allows for his understanding of the attraction of repulsiveness. He utilizes this oxymoronic reaction in many novels, but most memorably in *David Copperfield* concerning Uriah Heep.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Contemporary authors whom Forster mentions are the French writer M. Henri Taine, Lord Lytton and G. H. Lewes. (722-723).

¹⁰⁸ "[Uriah] was so much worse in reality than in my distempered fancy, that afterwards I was attracted to him in very repulsion, and could not help wandering in and out every half hour or so, and taking another look at him" (Dickens *David Copperfield* 379).

Uriah is so comically terrible to David that the latter cannot help but to be attracted to him in a fascination with Uriah's repulsive qualities. Therefore, Dickens's comicality is an integral part of his authorial vision, and he admitted to as much in a letter to Lord Lytton, but why then do readers of the twentieth (and twenty first) century appear to overlook his humour and think of the collective works of Dickens solely as promoting the great moralistic and socialistic ideals of the nineteenth century, a critical comment Fred Kaplan censured in his 1998 biography of the author?¹⁰⁹ The modern reader does not presently see Dickens's power as a humourist and instead views in a greater light his creative talent for imparting the importance of social justice through metaphor, such as the dust heaps in *Our Mutual Friend* and the Circumlocution Office of *Little Dorrit*.¹¹⁰ Margaret Ganz concurs with this idea, writing, "Basically [Dickens's humour] has been eclipsed by... the somber and symbolic aspects of Dickens' art" (101). One of the first texts solely on Dickens and humour is Malcolm Andrews's *Dickensian Laughter* (2013). He remarks that a study of Dickensian humour is necessary for modern readers due to the way in which such readers view the author's works; namely as the products of the writer who brought us the dark social commentaries on education, poverty and religious reform. Andrews hypothesizes: "...perhaps in order to take Dickens seriously attention always needs to be turned away from the comedy, from the farce, the irony and the facetiousness which were part of his identity?" (viii). I argue with Andrews and Ganz in this conjecture: that many modern readers are guilty of looking backwards to nineteenth-century writers (both North American and European) with dark coloured lenses of solemnity.

However, it cannot be denied that Dickens's humour has struck such a chord with modernity. *A Christmas Carol* has been adapted for the screen (both television and film) hundreds of times, the later, more culturally popular versions of the twentieth century fully utilized Dickens's comedic overtones: "Mister Magoo's Christmas Carol" (1962), "The Muppet Christmas Carol" (1992), "Blackadder's Christmas Carol" (1988) and "Scrooged" (1988) starring popular comedian Bill Murray as a 1980s television-network mogul incarnation of Ebenezer Scrooge. Perhaps we as modern readers of Dickens become engaged with his humour through readings (and viewings) of his

¹⁰⁹ "I have such an inexpressible enjoyment of what I see in a droll light, that I dare say I pet it as if it were a spoilt child" (Dickens to Lord Lytton, qtd. in Forster 721).

¹¹⁰ Margaret Ganz writes, "while the Victorians hailed the auspicious beginnings of Dickens' comic talent, celebrated its fulfillment, and mourned its decline, a consideration of his humor is hardly fashionable in our time" (101).

works on social injustices (such as *A Christmas Carol*)? Rather, Dickens's educational and socially driven plots are a gateway for his readership to come to interact with his humour. I would argue that Dickens's sometimes dark and incongruous humour is embedded within all of his works, and further that this humour is one of the reasons why his texts speak to something deeper within the human psyche.

Joss Marsh makes the assertion that it was because of Dickens's "relateability" to his readership that he gained a celebrity status during his lifetime: "He was the ordinary made extraordinary, the special person who was indeed 'like us'" (102). I would connect Dickens's having been "like us," as Marsh wrote, to Dickens's love of conviviality of all types: a love which extended into his works well enough to inspire a conference solely on that topic.¹¹¹ His "relateability" was powerful (as G K Chesterton noted) because Dickens understood what the people "wanted," since he himself wanted the same things (Chesterton qtd. in Marsh 102).

To help promote a modern understanding of Dickens and nineteenth-century popular culture, Paul Schlicke quoted Dickens's early anti-Sabbatarian writing of 1836, where Dickens argued that the English working class should be allowed to pursue their pleasures on Sundays with the hopes that on the Sabbath, "nothing but good humour and hilarity [would] prevail" (Dickens qtd. in Schlicke 95). Schlicke further makes note that "Dickens strongly associated entertainment with childhood, recalling his own youthful delight," which is perhaps explanatory of why so many of the author's more humorous moments relate to children (95). Malcolm Andrews's text concurs with this assertion, and he utilizes the works of Henri Bergson throughout to highlight a theoretical understanding of Dickensian humour, the most important to this reading being: "Bergson made the point that 'a comic character is generally comic in proportion to his ignorance of himself. The comic person is generally unconscious'" (93). The example cited is of David Copperfield's early remembrances of his childhood when he attends church as a boy. Understanding that it is impolite to stare, David does not know where to direct his eyes in church and is rebuked by Peggotty and his mother for not looking at the clergyman during the service. One of the reasons David's memories here are so strong is that they build a connection with the reader.¹¹² The contemporary reader of *DC* undoubtedly shared similar memories of his/her own. Several nineteenth-

¹¹¹ *Dickens Day: Dickens and Conviviality*, Senate House, London, 2014.

¹¹² Andrews asserts that Dickens's narration is so powerful here because it "is both retrospective and immediately present...a very complicated balance to strike" (93).

century “manners” booklets instructed that it was always impolite to “stare about at the congregation” or to remove your eyes from the minister; the fact that this issue needed to be addressed multiple times would signify that it was felt to be an error of social ill breeding (Erbsen 23). But Dickens’s humour does not always take such a light hearted tone in this combination, and it is this “vein of his humour” which I propose to study more carefully here. Forster believed that it was after *Nicholas Nickleby* when Dickens “began to have his place as a writer conceded to him” (722). The melancholy, darker humour of his later, more introspective novels has its seed of beginnings in *Nickleby*. Forster believed that the novel “displayed more than before of his humour on the tragic side,” more than any which preceded it (722). *Nickleby* sparked an interest in displaying, with shades of humour, the inequalities of society that drove so many of his later plots (Chapter XIV).

In “Gone Astray” (1853) Dickens recounts having been lost as a child in London (presumably lost from his father or adult friend of the family), and as he wanders through the city realizing he has only “one and fourpence,” the lost boy surmises that he has no other recourse but to “seek [his] fortune,” a moment which is both touching and humorous at the same time (553). He befriends a young dog who frolics about the young Dickens in play, but when the dog realizes the child has within his pocket a sausage, the animal rebels against his would-be master, growling. Dickens narrates the situation with humour, but it is apparent that the humour is covering the pain of childhood loneliness and fear: “He never came back to help me seek my fortune...I have never seen my faithful Merychance again. I felt very lonely” (“Gone Astray” 554). In this personal anecdote penned for *Household Words*, Dickens again deftly “forges a comic distance between the adult perspective and those early experiences. We laugh while we feel pangs—” (Andrews 94). He infuses a remembrance of his childhood with incongruous serious and light tones and mixes in a dash of violence: all of which create a particular taste of dark humour. This individual combination of tonality creates a specifically Dickensian fingerprint, and we see this combination throughout many of his works. Further examples include Mr Pumblechook’s interactions with Pip, the conversations between the Marchioness and Dick Swiveller, and of course David Copperfield’s many youthful relationships, particularly where Steerforth is concerned.

When David is sent to the Salem House by his step-father, he is not considered to have been “formally received into the school,” until he is presented in front of “J. Steerforth” (Dickens *Copperfield* 83). David narrates that the elder boy “inquired, under a shed in the playground, into the particulars of my punishment, and was pleased to express his opinion that it was ‘a jolly shame;’ for which I became bound to him ever afterwards” (Dickens *Copperfield* 83). David gives all of his allowance to Steerforth at this point for safekeeping, and ends up inadvertently treating his new roommates to currant wine. The incongruous nature of Steerforth’s speech, his adopted self-aggrandizement as the eldest and more powerful member of the Salem House students is humorous, and it is made more so by David’s sad plight as the shunned new outsider particularly labelled with a placard to wear around his neck which reads: “‘*Take care of him. He bites*’” (Dickens *Copperfield* 76, author’s emphasis). We feel the “pangs” of being David at this juncture in his narration, but we enjoy a moment of release from this sympathy pain in being able to laugh at the hierarchy of Steerforth and his gaggle of boys at Salem House. The duality of this situation is perhaps the main reason the reader can enjoy the narration to such an extent. Without these remembrances of the adult David (and it is also for this reason that Peggotty is such an important character), this first portion of the text would be focused on Clara Copperfield’s new marriage to Murdstone, and the emotional and physical abuse which David endures. Both of these are painful points to have to narrate, and they would be perhaps too difficult for the reader to undertake without a distractor of some kind. Thus, Dickens presents painful subjects wrapped within childhood remembrances that function as distractors from the painful memories by making us laugh. This understanding of Dickensian narration, in this instance, is what equates to his dark humour.

This duality of vision (dark humour) in Dickens’s writing is not just restricted to his published works, it also extends into his personal letters. Dickens’s letter to Daniel Maclise on 12 March 1841 recounts the events surrounding his pet raven’s death and overflows with elements of his darker humour. Grip (the first of two pet ravens by that name) died, the family thought, from the after-effects of eating paint, although Dickens does comically point to the possibility of the bird’s having been murdered at the hands of his neighbourhood butcher or a rival author. In this letter, Dickens wraps his pain at losing a beloved pet in his humorous description of the event itself, but it is painfully clear to the reader that Dickens does mourn the loss of his pet even though he is engrossed in a playful description of the aftereffects. Dickens writes:

At half past, or thereabouts, he was heard talking to himself about the horse and Topping's family, and to add some incoherent expressions which are supposed to have been either a foreboding of this approaching dissolution, or some wishes relative to the disposal of his little property—consisting chiefly of halfpence which he had buried in different parts of the garden...I deeply regret that being in ignorance of his danger I did not attend to receive his last instructions...I have directed a post mortem examination, and the body has been removed to Mr. Herring's school of Anatomy for that purpose. (Dickens *Pilgrim Letters* 2: 230-232)

In their biographies of the author, both Forster and Mary Dickens have discussed Dickens's love of animals, and so it is clear that with this letter to his close friend and fellow creative artist Daniel Maclise, that Dickens's humour is not poking fun at the loss of his pet, but is further a way in which the author can approach narrating the emotion of mourning.¹¹³ Andrews also utilizes this letter in his text and explains that Dickens "detaches himself from the pain of rehearsing the loss by finding a register that gives him distance on the event, and that distance lets the humour seep in" (87).¹¹⁴ To sum up the breadth of Dickensian humour for the purposes of this chapter, we can follow assertions already made by Andrews that the success of Dickens's humour lies in his abilities to display "humorous incongruities" in narration style (91). This particular style of mixing seemingly oxymoronic themes together is what enabled Dickens to deftly tackle topics of death, grief, isolation and pain in his works. As he deals with these sorrowful and trying issues with humour, his readership can see these situations in a new light, chiefly with humour, and this particular humourist view is one which O'Connor picks up and continues in her own works which also deal with isolation, grief and physical pain. This new insight creates a connection between the author and his/her readership. All readers of the past, present and future become joined by laughter at parts of being human which are especially difficult.

¹¹³ Forster mentions that Dickens's "dogs were a great enjoyment to him" (657) and Mary "Mamie" Dickens recounts that her father "loved animals, flowers and birds, his fondness for the latter being shown nowhere more strongly than in his devotion to his ravens at Devonshire Terrace" (*My Father as I Recall Him* Chapter IV).

¹¹⁴ Andrews here cites Bergson to reaffirm the validity of the interpretation that Dickens's humour is incongruous, as he mixes vernacular "picturesque speech" with formal "adopted solemnity" and that this trait is particular to the English, partly due to Dickens's practice (89). He quotes Bergson: "'To express in respectable language some disreputable idea [...] some lower-class calling or disgraceful behaviour, and describe them in terms of the utmost "Respectability", is generally comic [...]. The practice itself is characteristically English. Many instances of it may be found in Dickens and Thackeray"' (Bergson qtd. in Andrews 89-90).

Unlike Dickens's modern reception, O'Connor is today considered one of the American South's great humourists, despite her serious undertones of morality and redemption which were fuelled by her devout Catholicism.¹¹⁵ Sister Kathleen Feeley noted that O'Connor's "stories speak of man's alienation from society and from the supernatural world...of his battle with the forces of darkness, of his acceptance or rejection of grace" (6). However, O'Connor approached discussing these themes via "comic grotesquery," and her "predilection for the unusual, the incongruous, [and] the bizarre" began early and lasted throughout her writing career (Feeley 6-7). James A. Grimshaw also mentions O'Connor's humour in his text and parallels it with that of the "old Southwest," and earlier American nineteenth-century authors (89). O'Connor's "strong suits" as a writer, Grimshaw argues, are in "portraying realistic characters...and in identifying the foibles and eccentricities of local customs and manners which make people laughable" (89). This is a trait that she shares with these earlier Southwest humourists, and when taking Andrews's work into account, it becomes apparent that she also shares this trait with Dickens. Of particular note in Grimshaw's chapter is what he has to say about O'Connor's ability to allow the reader to "share an experience in our humanness vicariously through the artist's creation" (89). The grandmother in "A Good Man is Hard to Find" is perhaps the most recognizable example of laughing with an O'Connor character because of our familiarity with her character type; because, as Grimshaw asserts, "she represents typically southern grandmothers" (90). Grimshaw also cites John Wesley Poker Sash of "A Late Encounter with the Enemy," writing that as the boy pushes his wheelchair-bound ancient relation around a university campus, we laugh, "because his action is incongruous with the situation but not untypical of a ten-year-old boy" (90). Again in trying to describe humour (not an easy task), we have the pairing of incongruous actions with a reporter-like account of the descriptions of characters and setting, which accounts for a particular style of narration: one which Dickens and O'Connor shared, albeit with different flavours.

O'Connor penned similar remembrances of isolating incidences of her own childhood to the example of Dickens's noted in "Gone Astray," and two in particular to her friend Betty Hester are worth mentioning here. In a reply to a birthday card she

¹¹⁵ Brainard Cheney explains that O'Connor "was a true humorist...She invented a new form of humor. At least, I have encountered it nowhere else in literature" (557). Sarah Gordon also notes "while the theological approach has dominated O'Connor scholarship, more secular critics...focus on the author's ability to tell a story, citing her debt to the southern storytelling tradition in general and to the southwest humourists in particular (34).

received from Betty when the author turned thirty six, O'Connor wrote: "'When I was a child I used to dread birthdays for fear R. [O'Connor's mother Regina] would throw a surprise party for me. My idea of hell was the door bursting open and a flock of children pouring in yelling SURPRISE! Now I don't mind them. That danger is over'" (Gooch 345). A few years earlier, in 1956 she wrote to Betty, "'When I was twelve I made up my mind absolutely that I would not get any older...I was a very ancient twelve; my views at that age would have done credit to a Civil War veteran. I am much younger now than I was at twelve, or anyway, less burdened. The weight of centuries lies on children, I'm sure of it'" (Gooch 46). Perhaps what is so troubling about the "Gone Astray" essay that Dickens penned, is that his younger self does seem weighted down by his knowledge of what he *should* do for himself now that he feels he has no one to care for him. The young boy knows he must spend his only money sparingly, and so he buys necessary sustenance; he knows also that he needs to secure some kind of permanent income for himself, and so begins to seek out a way of earning his bread. What makes the scene humorous, though, is the fact that it is written from an adult's perspective, looking back upon the seriousness with which his child-self regarded the situation.

An early fragment of a story O'Connor wrote when thirteen years old centres on a young girl named Claudia, whose dog kills her pet chicken and brings it to the girl as a prize in his mouth. Claudia mourns the loss of her beloved bird by asking her mother if she could keep the corpse. Gooch notes the "eerie[ness]" of the passage that follows as the girl's mother, irritated by her daughter's desire to keep a chicken corpse, attempts to scare her daughter by telling her that Death, clothed in white, is coming for the girl. The "frightened little girl confronts the fears raised by this paradoxical image of death in white. 'Will he cut my tongue?' she asks. 'That and more,' her mother said. 'That for yer lyin'" (Gooch and O'Connor 48). Gooch draws parallels to the incarnation of this story with the tumultuous time the O'Connor family were going through in 1938: her father's business was struck hard by the Great Depression and he turned to work for the Federal Housing Administration in Atlanta. Regina and Flannery had to leave Savannah, where they had forged a social network for themselves within the larger Irish-Catholic community which populated Savannah at that time, and they were shuttled for two years between Atlanta and Milledgeville, whereupon they relied on family relations to get by financially. Ruth Richardson draws similar conclusions regarding the larger impact that Dickens's youth in the Norfolk Street area of London

had upon his latter adult novels, chiefly his inclusion of the actual people who lived in that area into *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*.¹¹⁶ What can be surmised from this critical work is that both Dickens and O'Connor, in their individual ways, suffered through particularly difficult childhoods plagued by death, family financial woes and perennial moving, and they dealt with these feelings of loss and isolation through the particular style of humour previously noted.¹¹⁷ Dickens himself dealt with some of his most painful memories through the fictionalized lives of a few of his protagonists, and it is his backwards gaze and genuine descriptions of bringing to the present what it felt like to be a child, which are so moving to many of Dickens's readers.

In his chapter on "Comic Violence," Andrews remarks that in Dickens, we laugh at gross displays of terrible violence because we have a readerly understanding that the perpetrators will receive their comeuppance. These exaggerated antagonists are so "transparent...and are treated from the start by Dickens as a comic grotesque," that we can laugh at the violence they enact upon weaker characters because we take comfort in the knowledge that they will be "crushed eventually" (47-48). Andrews counters Squeers with the other villain of *Nicholas Nickleby*, Ralph Nickleby, who unlike the schoolmaster, displays a "melodramatic villainy, whereas Squeers's is a pantomimic villainy" (48). Due to this "panto" quality, we as readers are comfortable laughing at Squeers's violence, because it is so exaggerated. This, in turn, enables Dickens to create even more humorous scenes involving Squeers with the addition of incongruous plot details; "of juxtaposing such leisurely, superfluous detailing so closely to the violent moment," such as in the scene where Squeers boxes a new student for crying, and the student then dries his eyes "with the Beggar's Petition in printed calico" (Andrews 48, Dickens qtd. in Andrews 47). This paralleling of villains, who are deemed to elicit acceptable laughter with those who are not, enables comic grotesque scenes in Dickens's works to be highlighted and remembered so strongly. From this combination, readers can then engage in those felt relationships with Dickensian

¹¹⁶ Richardson researches these connections in *Dickens and the Workhouse* and particularly details such name borrowings in the chapter, "Works: Contemporaries, Sketches, Spectres, *Oliver Twist*, Names, Echoes" (246-274).

¹¹⁷ O'Connor's father Edward died from complications with lupus in 1941 when Flannery was just sixteen and endured a long and painful "wasting death" from the disease (Gooch 69). Dickens was no stranger to death or financial troubles either, as he lost two siblings, Alfred Allen in 1814 and Harriet Ellen in 1821 when Charles was two and nine respectively. The Dickens family were constantly on the move during Charles's life, relocating from Portsea to many different homes in London in the hopes of evading creditors. Lest we forget about the Warren's Blacking Factory experience of Dickens's twelfth year, which seems to have marred the young Dickens's image of himself as he worked alongside rats "with secret agony of soul" (Slater 284).

characters which can be fruitful in their own ways; we enjoy and even love to hate them. A question which begs to be asked is: are these characters only present for entertainment value, or in our readings of them, do they help us to gain a more in-depth understanding of what it is like to be human? Both Dickens and O'Connor strove to create characters that felt alive upon the page (as previously noted with the citations from David Cecil's work), and strove to make their misfortunes and pitfalls feel real. In order to achieve this feeling of reality, these characters, especially the comic grotesque, had their beginnings in factual people which the authors had come into contact with in their respective lives. Therefore, in order to create characters to which their readers could relate, Dickens and O'Connor utilized a study of actual people from their respective communities, modifying them to exaggerated forms to draw out the inherent humour which the authors both saw.

Reflecting upon Henri Bergson's theories on laughter, which Andrews utilized in his text, it can be understood that characters are comic so far as they are unaware of themselves and their comic situations.¹¹⁸ Their oblivious natures allow for comic scenes to take place. To elaborate on the example already mentioned of the grandmother in O'Connor's "A Good Man is Hard to Find," one of the most humorous scenes in the short story is when the family has the car accident. It is incongruous of course, but this is part of the story's success. The grandmother had been trying to coax her son to divert off the highway on their family holiday drive from Georgia to Florida, with the promise that they will find an old plantation house just off the highway that she had visited in her youth. Her son Bailey is finally convinced to turn off the main road to go looking for the plantation, but as he does so, the grandmother has "a horrible thought" (O'Connor "Good Man" 124). The grandmother then knocks her Siamese cat Pitty Sing's carry basket, which lets the cat out, who then jumps onto Bailey's shoulder, thus, in a outrageous pantomime scene, the car is wrecked on the isolated dirt road off the main highway and the family staggers out. Timed perfectly, O'Connor then allows the reader to learn of what the grandmother had remembered: "The horrible thought she had had before the accident was that the house she had remembered so vividly was not in Georgia but in Tennessee" (O'Connor "Good Man" 125). The reason this is

¹¹⁸ Henri Bergson explains, "Take any other comic character: however unconscious he may be of what he says or does, he cannot be comical unless there be some aspect of his person of which he is unaware, one side of his nature which he overlooks; on that account alone does he make us laugh" (146).

humorous is because the reader is aware the grandmother is a stereotype of Southern grandmothers: the type that brag incessantly on their superiority, what they know and what you, the lesser and younger, do not know. In the opening pages of the story, the grandmother had tried unsuccessfully to move the family vacation from Florida to Tennessee, a place where the children, she says, “would see different parts of the world and be broad” (“Good Man” 117). The joke lies in the grandmother’s concept of broadening her grandchildren to the “worldliness” of Tennessee as opposed to Florida, which she deems as being mundane. Like the Beggar’s Petition printed on the calico handkerchief of the young boy in *Nicholas Nickleby*, it is an inside joke with the audience for whom the story is written. The grandmother is not as villainous as Squeers, but she shares a state of unconsciousness to her situation; she is presented as living her life completely unaware of how comic she actually is. Her death (as well as the rest of the family’s) comes from this mistake of hers, as after the family’s car accident, they meet with the escaped convict who calls himself, “The Misfit.” The grandmother reads about his escape in the newspaper before they leave Atlanta for their trip, and she hopes that his movements towards Florida will provide more ammunition to change the family’s vacation plans. Her death comes about from her disillusionment of self, and she inadvertently leads the whole family to their doom at the hands of “The Misfit.”

Another O’Connor character to be examined for his humour is General Tennessee Flintrock Sash in “A Late Encounter with the Enemy.” “The General” is a Confederate War hero who is paraded around for his middle-aged granddaughter’s graduation from the state teacher’s college. The story begins with Sally Poker Sash praying that her 104-year-old grandfather will live until her graduation so that she can show him off on the stage in his borrowed Confederate uniform.¹¹⁹ This desire for the graduation goes to “see” her grandfather is because “she wanted to show what she stood for, or, as she said, ‘what all was behind her,’ and was not behind them. This *them* was not anybody in particular. It was just all the upstarts who had turned the world on its head and unsettled the ways of decent living” (O’Connor “Encounter” 135). As this short story was published in 1955, a year which saw the South still living in

¹¹⁹ When the General and Sally are invited to attend the premiere of *Gone With the Wind*, the General is given a costume uniform for the performance as part of the spectacle. The implication of this in the story is that although the General is a veteran, he did not have a legitimate uniform for any of these events. Sally does mention to Mr Govisky (the movie presenter) that her grandfather “had only been a major” (O’Connor “Encounter” 137).

segregation and only just beginning the push towards Civil Rights reform, the astute reader can guess at what Sally Poker Sash is insinuating when she says the world had been turned on “its head.” In showing off her grandfather (who turns out to be a sexually driven bigot whose only real memory of the past was the premier of *Gone With the Wind* to which he was invited), Sally wants visual proof of her progression beyond the “backwards” Confederate past, but she has such a limited view of herself and her own emotional lack that she cannot see that she too stands within the past.

General Sash does indeed live to be “seen” on the university stage as Sally Poker Sash receives her diploma in education, a degree that she does not obtain in order to be a better teacher, but to further demonstrate her superiority. The General is unconscious of the humour he incites. At the *Gone With the Wind* premier, he is taken up on stage and the host asks him how old he is, to which the General screams, “Niiiiinntttty-two!” (O’Connor “Encounter” 138). The Southern audience can hear the General saying this in such a particular way as it evokes the collective memory of how we *know* he sounds based on people we have personally encountered, persons upon which his stereotype is based. The past, present and future mingle into one for the General, and he is completely disconnected from anything but the present moment, an interesting juxtaposition to the fact that he is displayed as a Confederate relic. On the day of Sally’s graduation, she dresses her grandfather in his uniform, and he is “as frail as a dried spider” (O’Connor “Encounter” 140). This is a humorous description because it conjures an immediate picture for the reader of a brittle old spider sitting in a wheelchair, cracking from exposure. His delicate description makes his next direction even more incongruous: “‘Put the soward acrost my lap, damn you...where it’ll shine.’...‘God damn it,’ the old man said in a slow monotonous certain tone as if he were saying it to the beating of his heart. ‘God damn every goddam thing to hell’” (O’Connor “Encounter” 140). Sally’s reply to this tirade of obscenity is a glossed over, “‘Now, now’” (O’Connor “Encounter 140). Perhaps many of O’Connor’s readers can relate to dealings we have personally had with ornery, elderly family members, but even without the “relateability,” there is again a certain dark joviality in what the General says to Sally in this last scene, which is funny because it is a valid representation of perennially grumpy old men.

The General makes it to be wheeled onstage for Sally’s graduation, but dies during the ceremony, unbeknownst to the audience. His “Late Encounter with the Enemy” is his own death; he groups the graduation speaker, dressed in a black robe,

with the speech itself and the noise of the audience, as an attack, “coming at him like musket fire” (O’Connor “Encounter” 143). He dies seeing all of his past come before him and clutching his sword in defence “until the blade touched bone” (O’Connor “Encounter” 143). Sally had arranged with her nephew, a boy who carries the family penchant for multiple names, John Wesley Poker Sash, to be in charge of the General’s care after the ceremony. Sally finds the rest of her family after she receives her diploma and waits for John Wesley and the General to arrive from the auditorium: “That crafty scout had bumped him out the back way and rolled him at high speed down a flagstone path and was waiting now, with the corpse, in the long line at the Coca-Cola machine” (O’Connor “Encounter” 144). This is again a humorous scene because of the incongruity, but it is completely believable of what a young boy, bored by his old relations would do in just such a scenario. The grandmother and the General share a state of being unconscious to their own lives. This provides a special element of dark humour for the audience. Both live in a falsified world of recreated truths and are forced by circumstances outside of their control, to accept their deaths and their grace, which was O’Connor’s driving force in her writings. We are not witness to the spiritual choices of these two characters, but we are shown that they are both given the opportunity to receive grace. In death the General has to face all of the people and places of his life that he was happy to have forgotten. The grandmother must conquer her ego and the closed-off world in which she had existed. Both stories end with a heavy atmosphere: the General’s corpse is wheeled to wait in line for a boy to get a Coke, and the grandmother is shot in the chest three times by “The Misfit.” Quizzically, “The Misfit” ends his story’s narration by saying, “‘It’s no real pleasure in life” (O’Connor “Good Man” 133). He has killed her out of what he calls “meanness” but has not derived any pleasure from it. He defines himself as an isolated man, walking through life to try to inflict the most damage so as to equal the scales due to Jesus’s having “thrown everything off balance” (O’Connor “Good Man” 132).

What can be discerned here about both Dickens’s and O’Connor’s styles of humour is that their texts depend on a delicate balance of comedy, violence and freakery. By using the term “freak,” I do not mean to draw the conclusion that disabled bodies are “freakish” or somehow wrong; quite the contrary, since in O’Connor, it is the disabled (the physically/bodily disabled, or emotionally/spiritually disabled) who are the foci of her works in positive ways. Dickens too utilizes characters which could be considered “freakish” in this same manner: as positive characters who drive his plots

forward. In their states of being “outsiders,” or being extraordinary, they embody the human spirit, which is both flawed and full of grace at the same time. As has already been noted with references to McKnight’s work, Dickens often utilizes the isolated, repudiated and bodily “handicapped” in order to create characters that form a bridge between this world and a spiritual one. In Timothy Basselin’s text on O’Connor and disability, he surmises that western society has always been dichotomous in its view of the disabled. We (a general pronoun used here to denote the Westerner of the modern era) fluctuate between feeling pity for those who are disabled, and being fearful at the sight of disabled bodies because of our worry that these people somehow embody “chaos” (22-23). Basselin references a time when O’Connor, shopping at the well-known Atlanta department store Davison’s, was approached by another shopper who was concerned about the author’s crutches. These crutches were needed for O’Connor’s walking difficulties which were brought on by her lupus and the treatments of that era for the disease. The shopper encountered O’Connor in the elevator, “fixed [her] with a moist gleaming eye and said in a loud voice, ‘Bless you, darling!’” (O’Connor qtd. in Basselin 20). To this statement, O’Connor “felt exactly like the Misfit” and gave her “a weakly lethal look” (20). However, the “old lady” (as O’Connor referred to the other shopper) did not seem to grasp this social cue and instead persisted in her observation that O’Connor, because she was disabled, was in need of pity (20). The elderly shopper reminded O’Connor that it is the lame who shall enter the gates of Heaven first, to which O’Connor later quipped that this would occur “because the lame will be able to knock everybody else down with their crutches” (20). Again one of O’Connor’s great gifts appears to be to add precisely timed humour (and some comedic violence) to a scene which would have been disturbing and isolating without such additions. It would seem that the elderly woman who took it upon herself to approach a young lady on crutches in the elevator at Davison’s, was acting out of her dualistic feelings on viewing O’Connor: seeing the disabled body made the old lady tear up with pity, but the sight also brought up questions about the unknown. Basselin summates: “When the able-bodied, or temporarily able-bodied, see a disability, they often become socially uncomfortable with the person, not knowing what other parts of the person do not work” (21). Having had personal experience with disability myself, I have been in many similar situations and can testify to the curiosity which a disabled body elicits from the non-disabled. This same combination of pity/fear to perceived disabled bodies is referenced in many of O’Connor’s works, such as the hermaphrodite

in “A Temple of the Holy Ghost,” Mr Shiflet in “The Life You Save May Be Your Own,” the previously mentioned General Sash in “A Late Encounter with the Enemy” and Joy/Hulga in “Good Country People.” The problem with such a viewpoint, as O’Connor indeed tries to uncover in her works, is that the pity one feels for the disabled is sentimental: it “presumes that brokenness is pitiable, rather than natural” (Basselin 21). This further brings into question at what point does the person’s biologically given body stop and the prosthetic begin? Are the two aspects parts of the whole body, or when coupled, do they become not wholly human but cyborg? Finally, how are both Dickens and O’Connor utilizing their characters who are physically disabled to move their audience to see humour? Is this acceptable laughter which deflates the maudlin evocation of disability in western culture, or is itself just a further sentimentalizing of disability such as O’Connor herself endured from the old lady in Davidson’s?

To respond to the first questions which this chapter has posed, I turn to Donna Haraway’s *A Cyborg Manifesto* which discusses the “leaky distinction” between “animal-human (organism) and machine” (4). She theorizes that the boundary between physical and non-physical entities is “imprecise for us” and she utilizes the Ridley Scott film *Bladerunner* as standing “as the image of a cyborg culture’s fear, love, and confusion” (27). These same questions regarding inorganic versus organic parts comprising the whole body come up in Dickens studies, and have been addressed by, amongst others, Sussman and Joseph in “Prefiguring the Posthuman: Dickens and Prosthesis.” In this article, they argue that there is an “oscillation in Dickens’s work between representing characters as self-acting ‘things’ and as ‘people,’ ... His novels record the puzzlement he shared with his time about the distinction between the animate and the inanimate” (617). The authors chiefly use *Dombey and Son* as a work which “exemplif[ies] his concern with prosthesis” (618). However, these characters appear throughout the body of Dickens’s work and the authors do briefly mention *Our Mutual Friend*, but do not have enough time to examine the two strong disabled bodies therein.¹²⁰ These two cyborgs, considered to be so because of their use of prosthetic devices in *Friend*, are Jenny Wren, a crippled dwarf who is also a doll maker and thus

¹²⁰ Examples of Dickensian disabled characters can be found in almost every work and they are diverse in character types. A few examples to mention of physically and/or mentally disabled characters in Dickens are: Smike of *Nicholas Nickleby*, Nell’s grandfather and Master Humphrey in *The Old Curiosity Shop*, Tiny Tim of *A Christmas Carol*, Mister Dick of *David Copperfield*, Maggy Plornish and Mrs Clennam of *Little Dorrit*, Miss Havisham of *Great Expectations* and Dr Manette of *A Tale of Two Cities* just to name a few from his more well-known works.

is engaged in creating copies of bodies out of textiles, and Silas Wegg, an amputee with a wooden leg who is consumed with his desire to gain back his amputated biological appendage. These two are compelling figures because of the extent to which Dickens explored their character development: both are strong willed and express their inner desires (for good or for ill) regardless of the reception of their audiences.

Jenny Wren and Barnaby Rudge embody what Natalie McKnight refers to as “holy idiots,” beings who in their otherness and disability are on a spiritually higher plane than those around them. O’Connor’s hermaphrodite from “A Temple of the Holy Ghost” stands alongside these two in his/her understanding of the relationship his/her disability has with his/her spirituality: “God made me thisaway and if you laugh He may strike you the same way” (O’Connor “Temple” 245). The narrator’s two teenage cousins, having travelled to the county fair, come back telling of their night’s adventures. They had “enjoyed it all but the you-know-what,” the hermaphrodite, which elicits in the girls feelings of disgust, curiosity and fear (O’Connor “Temple” 244). Their younger cousin, once told about the sighting of the hermaphrodite, obsesses on the idea him/her: “The child felt every muscle strained as if she were hearing the answer to a riddle that was more puzzling than the riddle itself. ‘You mean it had two heads?’” (O’Connor “Temple” 245). The doubling of a human, humorously enough, can only be imagined by the child as a sort of Cerebus, albeit minus one head. This question posed by the young girl is genuine; because she has no mental picture of a hermaphrodite, she can only picture him/her as having both a female and male head. The conclusion is humorous in its simplicity, again much like the humour Dickens utilizes in “Gone Astray.” The candidness of the question allows for the reader to partake in feeling jovial where a hermaphrodite is concerned: because we are not laughing *at* the hermaphrodite him/herself, it is more acceptable for us to laugh at all.

An O’Connor cyborg amputee to be discussed is Mr Shiflet, whose name is synonymous with his character type: he is a “shifty” drifter who wanders through small country towns looking for work. Additionally, the term “shiftless” was a Southern colloquialism of the nineteenth and early twentieth century which was used to describe a lazy, untrustworthy ne’er-do-well. When he approaches the two Lucynell Craters (mother and daughter), the mother could tell “from a distance, that he was a tramp and no one to be afraid of” (O’Connor “The Life” 145). His empty left coat sleeve is folded up on itself, displaying that no arm lies inside of it, which is why, when he tells the Lucynells that he “fought and bled in the Arm Service of his country,” the reader cannot

help but giggle at the vernacular phrasing (O'Connor "The Life" 148). Thus his societal place and his handicap denote his harmlessness. Again, this giggling comes from not laughing *at* a disabled war veteran (although he is that), but at his unconscious state of self, as Bergson discussed. Tom T Shiftlet and the elder Lucynell both concoct a plan to take advantage of the other, the drifter wants to fix and then steal the Craters' car, and the mother wants to bribe Shiftlet to stay and take care of the house by making her mentally disabled daughter his gifted bride. Haraway declares in her *Manifesto* that "the cyborg does not dream of community on the model of the organic family... They are wary of holism, but needy for connection" (3). This definition of one of the main traits of cyborgism is central to the issues which Shiftlet faces. He seeks connection with the Lucynells and more largely humanity and society, but yet baulks at the idea that he could be included in their nuclear family and ends up using this integration against them.

Shiftlet agrees to stay at first out a curious need to prove himself as a man (perhaps because he lacks a prosthetic device to take the visual place of his arm): "‘Lady,’ he said, jerking his short arm up as if he could point with it to her house and yard and pump, ‘there ain’t a broken thing on this plantation that I couldn’t fix for you, one-arm jackleg or not. I’m a man,’ he said with a sullen dignity, ‘even if I ain’t a whole one’" (O'Connor "The Life" 149). In this story, it is the disabled would-be cyborg who takes advantage of the "able-bodied:" Lucynell and the mentally disabled daughter. He does agree to marry the younger Lucynell and takes her on their honeymoon, only to abandon her sleeping in a roadside diner. The younger Lucynell in this story is one of the "holy idiots" who brings about this cyborg's grace. The counter boy at the diner describes the sleeping Lucynell as "an angel of Gawd," a phrase which is repeated later by Shiftlet himself to a hitchhiker when the former describes his mother, whom he left behind years ago (O'Connor "The Life" 154). Shiftlet experiences a bizarre retribution for his actions at the diner when the hitchhiker turns on him angrily in the car and says, "‘You go to the devil!... My old woman is a flea bag and yours is a stinking pole cat!’" (O'Connor "The Life" 156). Again, a shocking dialogue makes for the element of humour in this story and we feel safe laughing at Shiftlet for having had this said to him because it is so exaggerated and pantomimed, and its purpose is to shock the audience with an incongruous event. Shiftlet is bodily disabled but he is not harmless, as the elder Lucynell had thought. Because she had sentimentalized his disability, more so because Shiftlet lacked a prosthetic and was

visually seen as incomplete, she lacked the foresight to see that he was indeed, as he said, “a man,” and capable of deceiving her.

The amputee of *Friend*, Silas Wegg, is a character of interest concerning the distinction between man and machine, and he can provide a lens through which Joy/Hulga of “Good Country People” can be more thoroughly examined. Joy/Hulga Hopewell has a wooden leg due to having her birth leg “blasted off” in a hunting accident, as her mother is fond of narrating (O’Connor “Good Country” 275). I refer to her with both names as she was born Joy but renamed herself Hulga “on the basis of its ugly sound” (O’Connor “Good Country” 275). She is preternaturally in a foul mood with a scowl on her face, but this is due to her nihilism, learned through her exposure to the city and obtaining her PhD in philosophy. Her graduate degree left her mother “at a complete loss,” as the mother feels she cannot describe to others her daughter’s career. Philosophy, Mrs Hopewell believes, “was something that ended with the Greeks and Romans” (O’Connor “Good Country” 276). Joy/Hulga’s wooden leg is as much a part of her as if she had been born with it, “No one ever touched it but her. She took care of it as someone else would his soul, in private and almost with her own eyes turned away” (O’Connor “Good Country” 288). In this description Joy/Hulga embodies Haraway’s description of the complex coupling of disabled bodies with their ability devices. Haraway notes, “Perhaps paraplegics and other severely handicapped people can (and sometimes do) have the most intense experiences of complex hybridization with other communication devices” (28). “Good Country People” dissects this “intense experience” with what occurs when the prosthetic leg is removed.

Joy/Hulga also has several interesting parallels to Silas Wegg of *Friend* in the ways in which they view their prosthetic parts (Silas is also one of Haraway’s complex cyborgs who experience a “coupling” relationship with their prosthetic devices), but also in the way in which they view themselves and are depicted as both a protagonist and an antagonist. Early on in the novel, Silas is given the *leitmotif* of being “a literary man—with a wooden leg” (Dickens *Friend* 49). Because of this *leitmotif*, it is made clear that the prosthetic leg is hovering over an “imprecise boundary between physical and non-physical” (Haraway 4). It is physically a part of Silas, but yet it is often described as being a separate entity, much like the way Joy/Hulga’s wooden leg is described. Mr Boffin asks if he likes his wooden leg, to which Silas responds “tartly” by means of humorous deflection, “Well! I haven’t got to keep it warm” (Dickens

Friend 47). Silas deflects the line of questioning which concerns his prosthetic leg, largely because it comes too close in trying to detect where his biological body ends and the prosthetic begins, a subject which Haraway details as vague: “It is not clear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine” (27). Because this line is “not clear,” Silas feels he must spend much of his time and energy in an attempt to gain back his amputated leg from the taxidermist Mr Venus, so that Silas can be buried whole (biologically speaking), with the explanation that he wishes to “collect [him]self like a genteel person,” conforming to the idea of a morally upright, Christian and respectable burial (Dickens *Friend* 82).¹²¹ Both Silas and Joy/Hulga are given the verb “stump” to describe their particular way of walking with a wooden prosthetic (O’Connor “Good Country” 275, Dickens *Friend* 77 and 191). Joy/Hulga’s mother thinks that she “stumps” on purpose, “because it was ugly-sounding” (O’Connor “Good Country” 275). Silas “stumps along” to Mr Venus’s articulation shop, “stumping and meditating” on how to gain back his leg from the taxidermist (Dickens *Friend* 77). When his bid for the leg is unsuccessful due to lack of funds, Silas leaves the shop and goes “stumping under the gaslights and through the mud” (Dickens *Friend* 85). The action of “stumps” gives both of these cyborg figures a humorous tinge as it conjures images of heavy, awkward, chunky legged figures loping through their narratives. The phrasing also points out that both Silas and Joy/Hulga rely heavily upon their prostheses, and the sound of their wooden legs work to remind the reader of their biological lacks and further, their perfunctory inner “wooden” states.

Pam Morris writes that Silas’s wooden leg is a metaphor for his soul, as he spends the novel “evolving into insensate woodenness,” and this is certainly a valid argument based on his actions (201). Silas attempts to blackmail Mr Boffin with the found copy of John Harmon’s will in the dust heaps (Silas obsesses over the heaps throughout), and he also misrepresents himself to Mr Boffin as having enough literary knowledge to teach him to read. These actions (blackmailing and lying) define him as

¹²¹ The cultural importance of being buried whole has an initial basis in pre-Christian beliefs but was indoctrinated into Christianity, bringing along with it pagan burial rituals. As Christianity grew in popularity, it began to dictate that the body would need to remain whole in the grave so that it could arise for the last trumpet on Judgement Day. Prior to 1832, only criminals’ bodies could be donated to science for dissection, but after the Anatomy Act of 1832, not only could these bodies be given to anatomy schools, but paupers’ bodies collected from workhouses could be donated for this purpose as well. Understandably from 1832 onwards, the notion that one should be buried whole, with all of one’s biological parts, began to carry more class and moral connotations as only a pauper or a murderer would be buried incomplete. Ruth Richardson details that after 1832, “What had for generations been a feared and hated punishment for murder became one for poverty” (*Death, Dissection and the Destitute* xv).

fairly villainous, however, there is something likeable in his humorous speech throughout the text. Although he does approach others in the novel with the intention of extortion, it can be theorized that Silas is surviving. In discussing “cyborg writing,” Haraway notes that it is “about the power to survive, not on the basis of original innocence, but on the basis of seizing the tools to mark the world that marked them as other” (25). Thus, Silas himself is an example of “cyborg writing” and spends the novel teetering on the line between comically humorous villain and outright “evil genius” as John Carey calls him (111). Simon Tappertit of *Barnaby Rudge*, is another Dickens antagonist who loses his legs and gains wooden ones as retribution for his exaggerated villainy. However, Dickens treats him in an altogether different way from Silas Wegg. Wegg is also unlikeable but is treated humorously, much like Squeers of *Nickleby*. Although Joy/Hulga does not participate in an attempted blackmail on anyone, she perceives her intelligence (of which her wooden appendage is a totem) as proving her to be of superior status. Wegg attempts to aggrandize himself in this same way by promoting his supposed literary skills, and by hoping to buy back his leg from Venus in order to be seen as whole and a complete person by those he feels oppress him.

Joy/Hulga obtained her PhD with the hope that she would be able to leave “these red hills and good country people,” the people from whom her mother hails (O’Connor “Good Country” 276). Joy/Hulga’s mother is her chief antagonist; a typical interaction between the two consists of Mrs Hopewell saying, “‘If you can’t come pleasantly, I don’t want you at all,’ to which the girl, standing square and rigid-shouldered with her neck thrust slightly forward, would reply, ‘If you want me, here I am—LIKE I AM’” (O’Connor “Good Country” 274). When a traveling Bible salesman happens upon their farmhouse, he attempts to seduce Joy/Hulga (in fairness, she attempts to seduce him as well, thinking him just “good country people” and therefore naïve), and she goes along with the seduction in order to have a chance to prove his religion false. The Bible salesman, though, is after Joy/Hulga’s leg and convinces her to show him how the wooden leg connects to the biological leg, which is again an attempt by a non-disabled body to define the un-definable “leaky distinction between [human]...and machine” (Haraway 4). She reluctantly shows him how to disconnect it and “surrender[s] to him completely. It was like losing her own life and finding it again, miraculously, in his” (O’Connor “Good Country” 289). However, in a bizarre and entertaining turn, the salesman takes Joy/Hulga’s leg and leaves her, one legged in the

barn. Aghast, Joy/Hulga cries, ““You’re a Christian!”” to which the salesman laughs and says, ““I hope you don’t think...that I believe in that crap! I may sell Bibles but I know which end is up and I wasn’t born yesterday and I know where I’m going!”” (O’Connor “Good Country” 290). Thus, Joy/Hulga is left alone, having been stripped of her wooden leg, a totem for her knowledge and inner wooden soul, by the duplicitous traveling Bible salesman.

We are not witness to what, if anything, Joy/Hulga will do with this newfound knowledge about herself from her interaction with the salesman and the theft. Neither are we witness to how Silas Wegg evolves from his encounter with John Harmon and Sloppy at the end of *Friend* and his expulsion from the story into the dust cart. We assume he is carried away with the rest of the filth of *Friend*, but to what end, Dickens does not elaborate. Both of these near wooden characters play with the lines between hero and villain through their disabilities and prosthetic parts, and they achieve this balance through their unconscious state of selves, which explains (as Bergson detailed), why their scenes are humorous. Respectively, they are both stuck within the “leaky distinction” category inflicted upon them by their communities, they both engage in battles to accept themselves and their cyborg parts, and they try to gain this acceptance through self-aggrandizement which proves to be unsuccessful. To the eyes of those around them, the extraneous limbs make Silas and Joy/Hulga different, and these cyborgs feel they must prove their normalcy. They try to achieve this through usually defensive and antagonistic means, which prove unsuccessful to both; the underlying statement being that these characters did not truly accept their own disabilities in the first place, and that they themselves subscribed to negative ideologies of the disabled. This lack of complete self-acceptance and self-love is their downfall.

Jenny Wren of *Friend* makes an interesting counterargument about the acceptance of disability, and O’Connor’s hermaphrodite of “A Temple of the Holy Ghost” follows suit. McKnight points to both Sloppy and Jenny Wren as being “holy idiots distinguished by physical deformities that function as complex metaphors” (39). The focus is more specifically on Jenny than Sloppy in McKnight’s chapter, as Jenny’s disabilities are “more debilitating,” leading her “condensed and twisted frame” to suggest “a complexity and compactedness that mirror the complexity of her psyche” (40). Instead of being “transparent” or “attenuated,” such as Sloppy and Smike, Jenny is heavily packed with a multitude of meaning, which appears to perplex every character in the novel except for Lizzie Hexam (40). Jenny is not unattractive in her deformities,

as McKnight notes that Dickens calls her face “queer...but not ugly,” and McKnight surmises that this is part of the author’s reluctance to make females “too grotesque” (Dickens qtd. in McKnight 40 and McKnight 40). Jenny is a doll maker; she watches the affluent as they walk by on the street and then proceeds to make dolls based on the voyeurism she has undertaken. Additionally, she is also a caretaker of her continually drunk father, and she has a reversed and fairly fractured parental/child relationship with him much like that of Nell and her grandfather. However, she does not self-aggrandize and she is not overly serious about herself and her station in life; she is humble (but not in the same way as Uriah Heep who famously used the term throughout *David Copperfield*), but she also exhibits self-love.

Sara D. Schotland argued in her essay on Jenny Wren and disability theory that the doll maker “escapes the binary categories of pitiable or contemptible, innocent or evil” given to many disabled literary figures (“Who’s That in Charge: It’s Jenny Wren, ‘The Person of the House’”). Schotland supports this claim by citing how Dickens created Jenny to be self-sufficient in her work, to care for her father in a “dire reversal of the places of parent and child,” and because she is given sexuality with her abundance of hair and her beginnings of a romantic relationship with Sloppy (Dickens *Friend* 241). Not only does she care for her father, but she also cares for Lizzie Hexam, Riah and Eugene Wrayburn after Bradley Headstone attacks the latter. Schotland notes that one could not find a better literary example “of the potential for one impaired in body to assist a ‘normal,’ than Jenny’s life-saving rescue of Eugene...It is Jenny, not his beloved Lizzie, who has the competence to bind Eugene’s wounds” (“Who’s That in Charge: It’s Jenny Wren, ‘The Person of the House’”). Like Joy who changes her name to Hulga to rid herself of the “joyfulness” her mother had tried to bestow upon her, Jenny Wren also takes on a new name from her given-name of Fanny Cleaver to distance herself from her alcoholic father. This name change is another part of Jenny’s positive self-love in spite of, and because of, her disability. Aware of her positive attributes (which her disability does not diminish), Jenny aims to change her name in order to highlight “her beautiful voice but also her potential to be a sweetheart...[as] Jenny Wren is the sweetheart of Robin Redbreast” (“Who’s That in Charge: It’s Jenny Wren, ‘The Person of the House’”). Where Joy/Hulga fails in her attempt to awaken her own sexuality, which could prove a catalyst to move her to a more emotionally awakened state, Jenny succeeds and demonstrates through the novel that she is self-aware and self-actualized despite her disability. To some, Jenny’s disabilities may read

as being a hurdle to overcome, but from everything Dickens gives us, it would appear that Jenny accepts her physical state; although she lives a life troubled by poverty and pain, she is not afraid to enjoy life and laugh. Dickens leaves his readers with more than a hint that she and Sloppy have set out on the road to a romantic relationship. To the sight of Jenny's hair, Sloppy utters a "Oh!...What a lot, and what a colour!" (Dickens *Friend* 809). After which he questions Jenny on her living arrangements, inquires as to if she already has a suitor, and then gives Jenny his hands, promising to "soon come back again" (Dickens *Friend* 811). All of these cues point towards Jenny's positive relationship with her "disabled" body and her sexuality, thus she and the hermaphrodite of O'Connor's "A Temple of the Holy Ghost" have complex understandings of their bodies and their relationships to the others in their communities.

Throughout the canon of Dickens literature, he can be seen to have been building a connection with the audience through representing memories of childhood to which readers could relate. Over a hundred and fifty years later, these novels still succeed in creating "felt relationships" with their protagonists. As Andrews wrote, "Dickens's genius as a humourist was the result of his skilful and strenuous cultivation of a community of readers who would laugh with him, and who would come to relish his particular idiosyncratic humour" (1). O'Connor utilized this understanding of audience-development and created a character pool of people at whom she knew her Southern readers would enjoy laughing, chiefly because they could relate to them. Andrews concludes his text by citing a letter that Dickens wrote in 1868 as he was traveling to America for the second time. It narrates a sermon which was to occur on deck of the ship and the subsequent actions of what took place due to the turbulent ocean. Dickens writes,

The officiating minister, an extremely modest young man, was brought in between two stewards exactly as if he were coming up to scratch in a prize fight. The ship was rolling and pitching so, that the two big stewards had to stop and watch their opportunity of making a dart at the reading desk with their reverend charge...All this time the congregation were breaking up into sects and sliding away. (Dickens qtd. in Andrews 177).

Dickens summarizes that he was forced to leave the sermon before it even began in order to quell his laughing; it would seem that Dickens fell into the social failing of

having had poor manners in church as outlined by Thomas Edie Hill's booklet.¹²² Andrews's choice of this letter is because it displays Dickensian humour at its finest: "the pantomimic and the farcical breaking through the polished surface; the hilarious incongruity of exemplary gravity riding the bucking anarchy" (178). In this account, we see Dickens's ability to recreate scenes vividly, highlighting the stoic in order to add pantomimed comedy. It is humour which would be considered "dark" because we know we are not supposed to laugh at the minister: he is attempting to perform a serious mission, but we cannot help but to break the rule concerning improper situations at which to laugh. Dark humour with O'Connor and Dickens also centres on topics that are traditionally treated with solemnity, such as death, illness and disability. To laugh at these situations would be to break the "code" of polite society, and we as the audience know that we should not do so, but because of the comic timing, the pantomimed violence and the incongruous events created by the authors, we cannot but help ourselves.

When Sister Kathleen Feeley travelled to Milledgeville, Georgia to research her biography of O'Connor, she met with a woman who knew the family. This Milledgevellian told Feeley that she knew Flannery well but added, "I never went near her because I didn't want her to put me in one of those stories" (Feeley 8). Feeley summarizes that to this woman, "only the grotesque was visible; its significance was not" (8). This reaction on the part of the woman in Milledgeville is reminiscent of Leigh Hunt's criticism of Dickens when he saw himself unceremoniously transported into *Bleak House* by way of Harold Skimpole. Dickens famously utilized the affectations of others he knew in life as the basis for his fictional characters: Micawber was, in part, based on his own father, Boythorn on Walter Landor and Flora Finching on his early love Maria Winter, née Beadnell to name a few.¹²³ Clearly both Dickens and O'Connor shared an understanding of the humour that surrounded them by way of their community, and utilized this to create grotesque comedy whose authorial purpose was to move the readership to have a more complex understanding of the "fulness of life" (Feeley 6). Carol Shloss also utilizes Feeley's field research with this

¹²² "While in church avoid making a noise, staring around the building, whispering, laughing or nodding to others. All greetings, recognitions and conversation should be conducted in the vestibule after the service" (Hill qtd. in Erbsen 21).

¹²³ Michael Slater discusses these character originations in his biography of Dickens and specifically notes of Hunt that the author was "deeply hurt" by Dickens's portrait of him as a "hypocritical villain" (343, other references occurring on 403).

Milledgeville woman and notes that most of O'Connor's fellow Milledgevillians saw the grotesque in her writing, but were unable to see the usefulness of it. Shloss notes, that this is a foreseeable consequence as "grotesque writing elicits response through a complicated and often uneasy balance of comedy and terror" (38). To O'Connor, using grotesque comedy was a way to see the natural or supernatural reality in a new way. Utilizing what others in society often ignore (namely the "maimed and misshapen" as Shloss notes), she was able to create a new way in which to view the human spirit (38). What I have hoped to prove with this chapter is that both authors utilized scenes of dark humour in a similar fashion. Through their incongruous humour, they have allowed their readers to laugh at situations at which "normal and polite" society has dictated laughter would be inappropriate. This particular taste of humour reveals the quirky and troublesome aspects of human nature which all of us, even those of us in "normal" bodies, share.

Chapter Six — Dickens and McCullers

“After the first establishment of identity there comes the imperative need to lose this new-found sense of separateness and to belong to something larger and more powerful than the weak, lonely self. The sense of moral isolation is intolerable to us” (Carson McCullers qtd. in Carr 14).

In this chapter, I will examine Carson McCullers’s novels, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (1940), *The Member of the Wedding* (1946) and *Clock Without Hands* (1961), and I will demonstrate how the mores set by Dickens in *Great Expectations* (well-established by McCullers’s time) created a ground upon which to explore the often-overlooked young Southern female. I argue that McCullers’s goal was to draw out the hidden underbelly of Southern American life: spiritual isolation and the inherent cruelty that could be found even in the most kind-hearted people of the region, black and white alike. McCullers shares several traits with Flannery O’Connor; both were born in rural Georgia towns, and both faced the difficult task of navigating race and gender in a time and place which held fast to outdated historical notions. Additionally, both were selected to spend time writing at Yaddo, the elite artists’ colony in New York. McCullers’s first novel, originally titled *The Mute*, was renamed *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and was published in 1940. After the publication of *Heart*, McCullers left Georgia permanently for New York, vowing never again to live in the South.¹²⁴ Her childhood had been spent in the segregated, army base town of Columbus, and this had moulded her author’s eye. Throughout her writing, a commonality depicting isolation from the community for those who do not conform to gender roles or by virtue of economic status or race can be observed. Another similarity between McCullers and O’Connor would be the penchant of both authors for “freaks,” a similarity which I argue originates in a shared cultural upbringing as independent females in a society that disparaged such individuality. McCullers’s biographer Virginia Spencer Carr notes that in McCullers’s youth, the young girl frequented the popular carnival “freak shows” which travelled the United States:

[she] craved eye contact with these strange withdrawn creatures who sometimes stared at her sullenly or smiled and crooked a finger beckoningly. Yet she dared only to steal oblique glances, fearful of a mesmeric union. [Carson] knew intuitively their abject loneliness and felt a kinship through some mysterious connection (Carr 1).

¹²⁴ Virginia Spencer Carr, *The Lonely Hunter*, The University of Georgia Press, 2003, p. 570.

Gaze is a topic that McCullers explores many times in her work (as will be referenced), most notably with her young protagonists, characters who act as the gazers. The object of gaze in McCullers is the outsider who is universally proclaimed as such by the community: the circus or midway freak, the homeless or the dejected. The act of looking is utilized as a vehicle which conducts the characters to deeper understanding. In these moments of visual connection, the freak (the gazee) understands that the gazer is the same as him/herself. Following Dickens's legacy of the orphaned child, McCullers uses an established set of conventions of the *Bildungsroman* to craft her narratives about young girls in the rural South during the early twentieth century. Kristen B. Proehl explains that to ground her protagonists in "set conventions," McCullers uses "popular, sentimental coming-of-age narratives or *Bildungsromane* of the mid-nineteenth century" (90, author's italics). I concur with this idea and argue that McCullers' "set conventions" of the *Bildungsroman* (as Proehl described) are ones that Dickens utilized for *David Copperfield* and *Great Expectations*. He adapted these conventions, which were set in popular eighteenth century texts of the genre, added his own flair for observation narratives, and documented the plight of the outsider child. These novels were especially popular and were widely read in twentieth century America (as already has been established), and McCullers utilized these standards as a basis for which to write her narratives of isolated children in the South.

Utilizing queer theory and film studies, Kathryn Bond Stockton discusses the birth of the queer child in the twentieth century. Her work on the motivations of the queer child is relatable to both McCullers's and Dickens's outsider child characters. Stockton defines the outsider status of children as having a basis in the historical definition of a child: "Nineteenth century rules of criminal responsibility for children made them notably different from adults...Indeed, the child was not even a 'person' in the sense established by the Fourteenth Amendment [of the United States], until...1967" (16). She segues this definition of a non-person into what makes a nonnormative child and utilizes the term "ghostly gay child" to describe how the queer child (queer defining not only gay or lesbian children but also nonnormative in other ways) hovers as a shadow self/binary opposite self of the socially normal child "with clear-cut same-sex preference" (Stockton 17). It becomes evident that Dickens utilizes this type of child in his works as well, especially in *Great Expectations*, a *Bildungsroman* of the ghostly, nonnormative child, Pip.

To begin this examination of McCullers, some explanation of her place within the canon of the Southern Gothic genre is necessary. Faulkner, O'Connor and McCullers were all writing during the same approximate time period (circa 1920-1940) and in the same approximate geographical location, and while this is not necessarily a standard for how authors' texts can collectively work together, for this slice of time in the South, it very much demonstrates such a standard. Sarah Gleeson-White named Faulkner, O'Connor and McCullers as writers working within the genre of the "southern grotesque...[who] conjure up the strange worlds of freakish outsiders placed in lovelorn barren landscapes, penetrating heat, and closed spaces" (57). A unifying factor in the works of these authors is their acute focus on the effects of poverty. After the upheaval of the 1860s, the South remained stuck in the economic slump created by the Civil War. Georgia Governor Ellis Arnall (in office from 1943-1947) wrote on the hardships of life in the South in *The Shore Dimly Seen* (1946). More often than not during the early part of the twentieth century, the rest of the United States overlooked the struggles of extreme poverty that the Southerner suffered, struggles that affected white and black alike. Arnall succinctly explains how the legacy of the war (which had been both economically and racially motivated) was evident in the poverty Southerners still faced even eighty years later. Both black and white Southerners had been forced to abandon their agrarian lifestyle, the only one that many past generations had known. Arnall cites how the soil, subjected to years of erosion from crop farming, had become so depleted that agrarian work was no longer possible: "I do not know where they went...Some of them came to the cities and were successful and became skilled workers or joined the white-collar class" (Arnall 67). Others, he says, wandered the country trying to find work, but ultimately this rootless life only caused further disenfranchisement. He describes the economic setting in which Carson McCullers herself had been raised and in which she based her fiction. *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (published in 1940 and therefore reflective of Arnall's Georgia), is contextualized by the downturn in the Southern economy which Arnall describes, but it also responds to contemporary anxieties about Europe, engrossed at that time in a swiftly widening war. McCullers's works are shaped by fears about a world war looming on the horizon, and they demonstrate a sense of displacement and isolation. This was intensified by the downturn the Southern agrarian economy continued to experience in the 1930s, as described by Arnall. The drifter in *Heart*, Jake Blount, represents this disenfranchised group as he moves between Southern towns looking for

work. The poverty that he has seen and from which he has suffered places upon his psyche a terrible scar, one he is unable to reconcile. Thus he seeks relief from John Singer, the saviour of the four lost souls on whom the novel focuses.

As the introduction to this thesis argues, although separated by cultural differences and ninety years in time, there are concurrencies between industrialized Britain in the 1850s and the dying agrarian American South of the 1930s. A schism existed in the psyches of people whose lives had been changed by such intense economic upheavals as the South experienced in the postbellum period (late 1860s to early twentieth century) and those that Britain endured throughout the nineteenth century. Prior to the midpoint of the nineteenth century, both economies had been largely agrarian-based, and both underwent economic changes that forced populations accustomed to a farming lifestyle into the cities to look for work in the new mechanized age. The South's loss of the Civil War halted the advancements that took place in the North after the war's end, and it stunted the South economically for generations to come. Even today, the Southern states rank as the poorest in the United States.¹²⁵ These concurrencies allowed early twentieth century Southern literature and mid-nineteenth-century British literature to express analogous concepts despite the difference in time period. The American authors on whom I focus read the works of Charles Dickens (Poe and Faulkner read him widely, and I have argued that O'Connor was very much aware of Dickens despite her statements that she read little). As has been evidenced in my earlier chapters, all were familiar with Dickensian themes and character types. McCullers cites Dickens's works specifically in *Clock Without Hands*. As a child brought up during the 1920s by an upper-middle class, bohemian family with a well-stocked library, it is highly likely that she knew Dickens's works well. For that matter, any young reader of her time would have been familiar with Dickens's best-known novels. I will examine how McCullers depicts children in a Dickensian fashion in order to broach the spiritual isolation felt by those whom society seems to have forgotten.

I begin with *Heart*, McCullers's first novel, which tells the story of four social outcasts in Columbus, Georgia. These four become united in their mutual love for a deaf mute, John Singer. In this work, McCullers is able to put a narrative to the struggle of the outsider and his/her drive to find inclusion and love. Many biographers

¹²⁵ Rawes, Erika, "6 States and D.C. with the Most People in Poverty." <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/2015/02/15/cheat-sheet-states-poverty/23325629/>

have felt that the young protagonist Mick Kelly was drawn from McCullers's own experiences while growing up in Columbus.¹²⁶ With the early aim of becoming a professional pianist, she struggled with her own sense of feminine identity.¹²⁷ While perhaps incidental, this correlation between author and protagonist does give rise to the understanding that to mould her main characters, McCullers utilized her own personal battles about life as an outsider and the vulnerability this state of being engenders. Mick longs to express the love which she feels when hearing the music of Mozart and Beethoven, but she is unable to find the words for the special "inside room" of her mind (McCullers *Heart* 181). On the outside, she is a coarse tomboy, forced to care for her two younger brothers and play with the neighbourhood boys who can climb trees, curse and fight should the need arise. She is introduced at the beginning of the text as she climbs on a precarious ladder to the roof of a newly-constructed house and scrawls "PUSSY" on the wall with her initials under it (McCullers *Heart* 37). On the inside, however, Mick has a myriad of complicated feelings about beauty and love. She finally is able to begin to come to terms with these feelings when she meets her family's new boarder, the deaf mute John Singer.

¹²⁶ Constance Perry explains that *Heart* "is a subtly autobiographical rendition of McCullers's youthful failures in love and art...biographers have identified correspondences between the novelist and her character...a fictional double of McCullers's willowy adolescent self" (37).

¹²⁷ *ibid.*

Part One: Seeking the We of Me

*"Life is nothing if you're not obsessed"*¹²⁸

Heart begins by describing the isolation that results from the trauma its characters undergo, and this is chiefly why a close comparison with the works of Dickens is important to the larger academic study of literary estrangement. John Singer struggles with his loneliness after his only friend and fellow deaf mute Spiros Antonapoulous is sent to a state asylum. This loss triggers Singer to move to the boarding house run by the Kellys. Because of his new living quarters, Singer meets the other four main characters: Mick Kelly, Biff Brannon, the owner of a 24 hour café, Jake Blount, a drifter, and Dr Copeland, an African-American medical doctor. These five figures are vastly different, but all are estranged from their communities and all share the commonality of intense loneliness. For this work on McCullers, I will focus on Mick Kelly, the adolescent daughter of the Kelly family in *Heart*, and I will also examine Frankie Addams from McCullers's later novel *The Member of the Wedding* (1946). The focus of *Wedding*, like *Heart*, is on the perceived estrangement of its protagonist, Frankie Addams, the daughter of a widowed jeweller in Columbus, Georgia during the early 1940s. Frankie's father is absent most of the day, and she spends her summer with the family maid and cook, Berenice, plus her cousin John Henry. Frankie desperately wants to belong to a unit, and when she discovers that her older brother Jarvis is engaged to be married, she begins fantasizing about how she too can join in the nuptials. The novel begins, "This was the summer when for a long time she had not been a member. She belonged to no club and was a member of nothing in the world. Frankie had become an unjoined person who hung around in doorways, and she was afraid" (McCullers *Wedding* 1). The narrative is steeped in discourse on gender, as Frankie, like Mick, has a masculine sense of self and is learning how to accept this identity while still being seen as a young woman. She is unable to force her male and female aspects to coexist, and she oscillates between acceptance and rejection of both these identities. Stockton attempts to give a framework to the predicament of growing up queer: a "kind of ghostliness [surrounds these children]...Such a child, with no established forms to hold itself in public, ...has been a child remarkably, intensely unavailable to itself in the present tense...The effect for the child who already feels queer [or outside of the status quo]...is an asynchronous self-relation" (6). Through

¹²⁸ Pecker. Directed by John Waters, Polar Entertainment, 1998.

this outline mapped by Stockton, it becomes evident that Mick and Frankie are in the process of coming to know themselves, but they are doing so through defining themselves by what they are not. Both feel they are abnormal, in some way lacking what it takes to be an ordinary young girl.

The connection between these two texts by McCullers shows the protagonists looking for a place to belong, coupled with a feeling of estrangement from their homes. Both Mick and Frankie are adolescent girls who have double identities (male and female), identities they struggle to accept. Both have a complicated dynamic triad relationship with younger brother figures (Mick's brother Bubber and Frankie's cousin John Henry) and family maids Portia and Berenice, respectively. Both girls experience a close bond with the two others, a bond which is not romantic and which transcends the immediate parent/child relationship. McCullers terms this non-romantic belonging the "we of me," and she explains it in *Wedding*:

All other people had a *we* to claim, all other except her... The *we* of her father was the store. All members of clubs have a *we* to belong to and talk about... But the old Frankie had had no *we* to claim, unless it would be the terrible summer *we* of her and John Henry and Berenice... Now all this was suddenly over with and changed. There was her brother and the bride, and it was as though when first she saw them something she had known inside of her: *They are the we of me.* (McCullers *Wedding* 39-40, author's italics).

Despite this felt deep connection with brothers (Bubber/John Henry) and caregivers (Portia/Berenice), both young women seek to dismantle these relationships and create a new "we of me" for themselves, one involving an escape from their lives in Georgia, which they find to be limiting. This sought relationship, the need to belong with seemingly more exciting people of a higher education and/or economic class, stems from the girls' withdrawal from community and their subsequent isolation. I aim to explore the extent to which these two girls from McCullers's texts intersect with characters who deal with similar issues in Dickens's *Great Expectations*. Examining this linkage will further develop the understanding of how very influential Dickens's texts were to readers (and subsequently to writers) of the twentieth century, especially in the American South, and of how his characters became archetypes which transcended culturally defined concepts of gender and class.

The Heart is a Lonely Hunter begins with the "we of me" already having been formed, and the novel narrates its breaking up. This foundation is crucial to

understanding the felt isolation of Mick, as it is her “we of me” who truly accept her. When she loses this, she endures the trauma of a perceived orphaning. This orphaning is another link to Dickens’s *Bildungsromane*, since his characters in this genre endure literal orphaning, an event that imprints terrible scars upon their psyches. Throughout the narrative, they must work to heal these scars. The breakup in *Heart* begins when Bubber accidentally shoots a young neighbourhood girl named Baby. Shocking as this event may be to Mick and her family, the discovery that Bubber has run away because he fears that he killed the girl delivers an equally stunning blow. Trauma over Bubber’s behaviour brings Mick to realize the depth of love she feels for her brother: “She wanted to kiss him and bite him because she loved him so much” (McCullers *Heart* 172). A sign of internal change that McCullers often employs is character name changing. This occurs most often in *Member of the Wedding* with Frankie (F. Jasmine/Frances), but once Bubber is found after the Baby shooting, he is no longer referred to by this name and instead is called George, his given name. At first Mick feels the name change is difficult to accept, but then “after about a week she just naturally called him George...But he was a different kid—George—going around by himself always like a person much older and with nobody, not even her, knowing what was really in his mind” (McCullers *Heart* 180). This stands out as the pivotal point in the novel. Until then, Mick had felt a sense of familiarity with Bubber; he always had been someone she could count on to be where she had left him. But after his recovery, Mick sleeps in his bed with him though he will not allow her to touch him, a sign that he has rejected the old connection and a sign as well of his subsequent inner change. When he falls asleep, Mick “held him very close...The love she felt was so hard that she had to squeeze him to her until her arms were tired. In her mind, she thought about Bubber and music together” (McCullers *Heart* 179). But the next morning, Mick awakens alone; Bubber is gone. It is only after the loss of her beloved brother that Mick realizes how much she truly had loved him, how much she had appreciated her relationship with him and his place in the “we of me.” He is referred to for the remainder of the novel as George since after this ordeal, the child Bubber is no more. His request to be referred to as George cements the psychological death of Bubber, which in turn changes the triad relationship, the “we of me.” Mick has realized the importance of that relationship too late. Bubber’s “demise” is one of the traumas which drive Mick to feel isolated and to seek solace in Singer, a figure who seems just as

much of an outsider as she herself: “Singer, who was like some kind of a great teacher, only because he was a mute he did not teach” (McCullers *Heart* 243).

Trauma theory is an important aspect of McCullers works, and Ganteau and Onega explain this aspect of theory in Freudian terms: “Unable to narrativise the traumatic experience in logical terms, the subject gives expression to his or her trauma by means of sensorial images instead of words. Unlike words, sensorial images are emotionally charged and symbolic, [and when they emerge]...they are experienced by the subject as overwhelming and incomprehensible” (3). For Mick, her trauma lies in her poverty, in being ostracized from her society of Southern female counterparts for being a tomboy and in her realisation of her spirituality (the last is positive but traumatic in its sublime nature). Mick cannot express these experiences in words, and so they are deferred (Freud gave this relationship between trauma and time the name *Nachträglichkeit*, meaning deferred action).¹²⁹ When Bubber metamorphoses into George and leaves Mick’s “we of me” triad, the traumas she formerly had repressed rise to the surface. Marc Amfreville explains this phenomenon in trauma theory: “it takes a second trauma to reveal the first one” (163). Mick’s resolution is to try to form new relationships (most importantly with John Singer) in order to supplant the traumatic loss of the old ones.

In *Member of the Wedding*, Frankie feels a dissatisfaction with her familial relationships, one that is comparable to Pip’s felt sense of alienation at home. Like Frankie and Mick, Pip is given a family grouping (Joe and Biddy) who unconditionally love him, but with whom he is unhappy. Frankie’s “we of me” is made up of the family’s maid Berenice and her cousin John Henry, neither of whom are glamorous or worldly, like Frankie imagines her brother and his fiancée to be. It is after her rejection at her brother’s wedding that the “we of me” begins to dismantle: Frances and her father move to a different part of town with her aunt and uncle; Berenice, no longer being needed, acquiesces to marry her suitor T. T., and John Henry becomes ill and dies unexpectedly. Frances is not permitted to see John Henry during his illness (he has developed meningitis), but Berenice helps his nurse daily, telling Frances she does not know why he has “to suffer so” (McCullers *Wedding* 152). Frances thinks of him but cannot make the term “suffer” and John Henry go together and so does not believe “for a serious minute that he could die [for] It was the time of golden weather and Shasta

¹²⁹ Ganteau and Onega 162-163.

daisies and the butterflies” (McCullers *Wedding* 152). By this, McCullers is drawing an alliance between John Henry and the idea of innocence, which is outside death, much like daisies and butterflies. Instead of giving time and energy to thinking about John Henry (largely due to the psychological trauma this would inflict), Frances develops a friendship with a new person, Mary Littlejohn. Together the two visit the Chattahoochee Exposition, the travelling fall fair that John Henry had loved. John Henry dies screaming, blind, and in constant pain “the Tuesday after the Fair was gone, a golden morning of the most butterflies, the clearest sky” (McCullers *Wedding* 152). Now, John Henry, the Fair, the daisies, and the butterflies become synonymous with her lost innocence in Frances’s mind. Only when she sees the coffin does the reality of John Henry’s death become solid for her, and this seems to coincide with the knowledge that she is leaving all of her “we of me” behind: the old house, John Henry Berenice, and her child self.

Trauma theory has also been explored in the works of Dickens, most notably with Jill L. Matus’s work with Dickens’s “The Signalman” (1866). Matus argues that although Freud is the usual starting point for examining the delayed effect of psychic trauma, railway accidents previously had brought the idea to the forefront of medical discourse in the mid-1860s: “To place the railway more squarely within the history of trauma, we may say that the railway accident was to Victorian psychology what World War I and shell shock were to Freudian” (417). Matus applies “the phenomenon of accident shock” to Dickens’s works by exploring how he utilizes his interest in and practice of mesmerism to understand memory as well as his own traumatic experience with the Staplehurst railway accident (417). Dickens held the belief that an unseen fluid surrounds the body, and that this fluid can be manipulated by a mesmeric practitioner in order to heal the patient of physical ailments (this particular practitioner included himself). Matus states (and I concur) that Dickens utilized his belief in magnetism to explore the “relation between conscious and unconscious selves,” in his works and to ultimately conquer “the inability to know the past as past” (427 and 430).¹³⁰ This phrasing harkens back to William Faulkner’s famous line: “the past is never dead. It’s not even past” in *Requiem for a Nun*, and it encapsulates Faulkner’s reoccurring theme about the inability to break from what has come before (92). She

¹³⁰ “Dickens seemed to understand that the mesmerized state offered the prospect of finding out what it is we know, but do not know that we know. What later trauma theory would propose was that the traumatized subject, though not somnambulist or mesmerized, was in a state akin to these ‘altered states’” (Matus 427).

explores “The Signalman” with this theory, but Dickens’s use of mesmerism to understand both the conscious and the unconscious mind can be seen in all of his novels. As I argued in my master’s thesis of 2013, it was crucial to his understanding of human suffering.¹³¹ *Great Expectations* utilizes Dickens’s perception of trauma and consciousness, most especially with Pip. Pip is already struggling with exclusion at home when he is introduced, but his traumatic meeting with Abel Magwitch becomes the seed for the boy’s *Nachträglichkeit*. Though he buries the disturbing encounter deeply in his subconscious in order to move forward and become a gentleman with the aid of a mysterious benefactor, he is unable to establish himself fully in present time. His subconscious mind is still a small boy on the marshes, a boy tormented by a convict in chains. Subconscious fear becomes conscious reality when Pip discovers the true identity of his benefactor and then is forced to deal with the ramifications of his past, including how he has mistreated others.

Nachträglichkeit is explored in *Wedding* with Frances’s “we of me.” She states several times that she is aware of three ghostly presences in her house, and she describes this to John Henry and Berenice. Frances feels that one of the three ghosts wears a silver ring, and her thoughts on them are brought to fruition in moments of clarity following the breakup of the “we of me” unit, when she thinks of John Henry after his death. She sees him in two forms: as a grotesque dead body who comes upon her in nightmares, waxen-like and moving from the joints of his legs only, but also as the boy in her memories, the child that once he was: “She remembered [him] more as he used to be, and it was seldom now that she felt his presence—solemn, hovering, and ghost-gray” (McCullers *Wedding* 153). The ghosts who have haunted Frances since the start of the novel have been the “we of me” which she now has lost: Berenice, John Henry and herself. In “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” T. S. Eliot discusses how the past and present meld and influence each other: “historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence” (49). The end of *The Member of the Wedding* illustrates Eliot’s idea with Frances’s transformation into her adult self and her search for inclusion and unconditional love.

Amfreville’s writing on trauma theory expands on this understanding of the relationship between the past and the present and uses it to lay a framework for how the present affects the past. Referencing Freud’s essay “From the History of an Infantile

¹³¹ “Dickens, Decay and Doomed Spirits: Ghosts and the Living Dead in the Works of Charles Dickens” for the University of Leicester in 2013.

Neurosis (the Wolfman case history)” (1918), Amfreville writes, “what happens afterwards transforms what occurred earlier, and this consideration bears an impact on the study of all accounts of traumas, be they autobiographical or fictional” (163). Having suffered the original trauma of feeling freakish and unconnected, Frankie seeks to throw off her ties to that lifetime (Berenice and John Henry) in favour of a more normalized family (her brother Jarvis and his fiancée Janis). Being rejected from this new, socially acceptable grouping leaves Frances with nowhere to turn but home again. However, her experiences in getting ready for the wedding have changed her, and returning to her original “we of me” is no longer a possibility. After his London life and the prospects of being a gentleman have faded and he becomes ill, Pip mirrors this rejection of, then longing for, his original home with Joe and Biddy. The knowledge that he cannot return to how life used to be presents the possibility for Pip to integrate the traumas of his youth into a current understanding of himself. In other words, it is the *Nachträglichkeit*—and for Pip and Frances, this means the trauma of realizing that they cannot go home again—which allows them to understand all that they have suppressed. Only at this point can they begin to comprehend their earlier selves.

In her house for one final evening, Frances senses “the special hush” of John Henry’s ghost presence in the kitchen, but this too is “shattered” when the bell rings to announce her new friend Mary Littlejohn’s arrival (McCullers *Wedding* 153). For Frances, the memories of John Henry have become synonymous with her childhood. With her perception of his ghost presence in the room, she also perceives that her childhood and its traumas still remain in the background of her life. Just as a ghost haunts a physical space, these traumas are not present to the naked eye, but they can be felt on a deeper, more intuitive level. Ganteau and Onega argue that “trauma is essentially dialogic [which]...suggests an affinity...with the I–you relationship of narrator–narratee in autobiographical and testimonial writings” (3). In *Bildungsromane*, the narratee (or the reader in the case of novels) comes to represent the analyst for the narrator/analysand; we as reader/narratee infer Frankie’s traumas through the omniscient narrator’s rendering of them. The narrators of McCullers’s books are not the protagonists themselves (such as in classic realist novels), but they present the memories and feelings of the protagonist so that the reader can be the other half of this dialogue. The narratee comes to the realisation of what Berenice predicted earlier in the novel: Frances is locked within a cycle of endless repetition, constantly

searching for the person/people who will make her feel the inclusion for which she longs. Her secondary traumas have opened the way for her healing, but she rejects this, only to have the memories seep through to her consciousness as ghosts.

Now that the “we of me” has been defined, one can perceive its appearance easily in *Great Expectations*, and we also can notice how a shared economic status forms its bonds. Pip, his brother-in-law/surrogate father Joe, and finally Biddy form Pip’s “we of me” in *Expectations*. When Pip meets Miss Havisham and Estella, he is aware of his lowly status as a member of the labouring class for the first time in his life. His discomfort sparks a desire to seek a higher ranking, and the boy dreams of an escape from his homely existence on the marshes with his abusive sister and her husband Joe. In that isolated place, Pip feels a deadening sense of normalcy, largely because he believes he is different from his community. Confessing his inner turmoil to Biddy, Pip declares, “I never shall or can be comfortable—or anything but miserable—...unless I can lead a very different sort of life from the life I lead now...what would it signify to me, being coarse and common, if nobody had told me so!” (Dickens 149-150). Pip’s desire to be a gentleman and his desire for Estella become melded into one driving force, and this coupled with his repressed trauma about Magwitch cause him to abandon his life as an apprentice blacksmith to his father-figure Joe. When Pip finally does achieve a way out of his old existence, he finds that those he has left behind (Joe and Biddy) are the ones who truly loved him. He comes to this realisation only after rejecting them for a fantasized version of the family of whom he had dreamt (at times nebulously incorporating Jaggers, Miss Havisham and Estella). Pip leaves his old environment in the marshlands and is transplanted to London as a gentleman. The aspect of trauma theory utilized in this chapter incorporates an initial traumatic event that is repressed. The victim of the trauma either is haunted by flashes of horrific memory or has blanked out the event altogether. It is only when a second traumatic event happens to the victim that the first one can be understood, in other words, Freud’s *Nachträglichkeit*. Pip’s traumatic events: his meeting with Magwitch as a young boy and his abuse at the hands of his sister, are not fully understood by him. It takes the time he spends with Miss Havisham and Estella, plus the days he passes with his friend Herbert, to enable him to conceptualize the traumas of his youth and incorporate them into his understanding of self. Through this understanding and self-

actualization, Pip finally is able to meld his two selves: the gentleman and the boy from the marshes.

Much like Mick and Frances, Pip is brought to a point where he must accept himself for what he has become, but the reader is not privy to the choices he makes with this knowledge. Here again we find more concurrencies between McCullers's and Dickens's protagonists by utilizing trauma theory and *Bildungsromane*. Jerome Buckley demonstrates how most English *Bildungsromane* adhere to a conclusion which is uncertain, "with an open question about the hero's final choice," whereas only a few conclude with "a recognizably happy ending" (*David Copperfield* is one) (23). *Heart* concludes with Mick having come to the realisation that she is no longer a child, but a woman who must work at Woolworth's to earn her meagre living. As well, Frances sees her ostracism from her brother's wedding, and she slowly begins to integrate this knowledge into her understanding of herself and her place in the world. It could also be interpreted that she has experienced emotional growth from her ostracization and that she begins to create healthy connections with those around her instead of engaging in childish fantasies. However, I argue that the novels leave us with no clear understanding of how either Frances or Mick will continue.

Berenice senses that Frances has thrown herself into yet another infatuation (with her new friend Mary Littlejohn), and that she will at some future time be cast aside. She points out Mary's "lumpy and marshmallow-white" body and her Catholicism as reasons why Mary should be avoided, but her Catholicism "was a final touch of strangeness, silent terror, that completed the wonder of her love" (McCullers *Wedding* 150-151). As well, McCullers hints at Mary's inability to fulfil Frankie's desires for friendship and belonging: Mary is a *Little-john*, in that she is a diminutive version of John Henry. John Henry understood Frankie, and although he was not glamorous or exotic, he offered her the unconditional love she so desired. Because Mary is a *Little-john*, the inference is that she will not provide the same kind of love as John Henry. Mick and Frances's future selves are unknown: we are not privy to what decisions they will make someday in regard to their sense of self. At his story's conclusion, Pip is reconciled with the multiple facets of himself, but this novel also ends with an uncertainty as to his fate and to his relationship with Estella. The depths of isolation and loneliness to which these characters sink during their adolescence unites them. Choosing *Great Expectations* as the model for a text about the ostracised child leads the reader to finish *Heart* and *Wedding* with an understanding that although

Mick's and Frances's futures are uncertain, there is hope in the final pages of the novels; hope that both characters finally will integrate their traumas and experience growth.

Pip's sensitivity and empathy isolate him from the others in his early community and make him long for recognition and acceptance elsewhere. This is how he comes to build such a strong, affectionate friendship with Herbert Pocket in London, and indeed it is also why Estella's taunts hurt him so deeply. The extent to which Pip feels emotions is his redeeming trait, but it is also the trait that leads his life astray. Had he not been so wounded by the insults of Miss Havisham, Estella and his sister, he would not be pushed toward choosing a path beyond his childhood town. Indeed, he would not be compelled to try and save Magwitch, but through Pip's discovery of who Magwitch truly is (his secret benefactor and Estella's father), the youth cannot help but feel connected to him and consequently to love him.

Buckley also makes the assertion that the loss of the father figure weighs heavily on the *Bildungsroman*: "The loss of the father, either by death or alienation, usually symbolizes or parallels a loss of faith in the values of the hero's home and family and leads inevitably to the search for substitute parents or creed" (19). This is another correlation between the novels examined here. Mick's father fails his family financially and sets up a sad mockery of a watch repair shop in their living room. Prior to this time, he has been non-existent in Mick's daily life, since he has spent most of his hours downtown in his jewellery shop. Frances's mother is dead and Pip's parents also die before his novel begins. All three characters are searching for a replacement, but as Buckley explains, this absence of the father unites *Bildungsromane* with romance novels and folklore. The protagonists must make their way through the world by encountering adventures.¹³² This correlation is also what helps readers accept the heroes/heroines of *Bildungsromane* so easily: they are sensitive youths in vulnerable positions, and the general reader sympathizes with them because of their lower-class status. Through witnessing their depth of feeling and innocence, the reader welcomes these protagonists within the first few chapters. Indeed, the humorous childhood memories that are included by both McCullers and Dickens help to give the novels a less formal tone, and they also put the reader at ease. Within the initial chapters of character development in a *Bildungsroman*, one clearly sees that the crux of the main

¹³² Jerome Hamilton Buckley, *Season of Youth*, Harvard University Press, 1974, p. 20.

problem in each novel lies within the protagonist him/herself. The main issues examined here are the following: Pip confusedly misplaces his affections, Mick longs to be an artist but is afraid of her own success, and Frances feels that she is too different to ever be accepted by others. The protagonists' fears of insufficiency are what shape the plots of the *Bildungsromane*, and the protagonists must conquer these fears in order to reach the end of their adventures and achieve full maturity.

Buckley theorizes that "Dickens was aware of the particular conventions of the Bildungsroman, though unfamiliar with that label" and proposes this from Dickens's own admission that he re-read *David Copperfield* prior to drafting *Great Expectations* so that he would not repeat plot motifs and character types but would instead create a new narrative of a young, fatherless boy searching for his identity and place in the world (48). Pip's primary agent of corruption is money. This comes about because he lacks a clear patron to help him navigate the pitfalls of adolescence. He must contend constantly with poverty, since even when he lives the gentleman's life in London, it looms over him with daily reminders that he is donning the guise of a gentleman but is not truly one at heart. Pip's actions toward those of lower status are not those of a gentleman, and as he tells his story to the reader (a behaviour of the traumatized, as referenced in this chapter), Pip must relive the story of his misguided youth, remembering those he repudiated and admitting his faults.

Part Two: "Money Can't Buy Me Love"¹³³

An examination of when money supplants love.

To understand fully what draws the members of a "we of me" together, a study of money and class must be undertaken in these texts. McCullers's use of socioeconomic status as a cause of isolation is quite similar to Dickens's, and indeed there are many prevalent threads of connection, particularly in both authors' treatments of social outsiders (who typically suffer from poverty and social disadvantages). Mick's first chapter in *Heart* begins by describing how she spends a Sunday morning: taking Bubber and her youngest brother Ralph around the neighbourhood in an old wagon. She explores a newly built, unoccupied house and writes on its walls the names of people that she considers important: Edison, Dick Tracy, Mussolini and Mozart. To Mick, these men are significant adults who have made their marks in the world. In the 1930s, they are household names (even the fictional one), and she holds the same aspiration for herself. Her melding of the fictional Dick Tracy with Mussolini and Mozart demonstrates how the world Mick has created to live in is a reality for her, despite the comic strip detective genre that Tracy inhabits. On the way home, Mick speaks to her brothers of these complicated feelings and talks about her place in the community, although she notes, "it is more like saying things to herself" (McCullers *Heart* 39). She muses, "'This is a funny thing—the dreams I've been having lately. It's like I'm swimming. But instead of water I'm pushing out my arms and swimming through great big crowds of people... The biggest crowd in the world'" (McCullers *Heart* 39). This comment underscores why she feels the urge to write the names of famous figures on the wall of the empty house; she feels as if she is drowning in a sea of "normal" people, unnoticed, striving to escape and to be recognized.

Mick's family is discernably lower middle class. They do well enough to have a cook and a maid, but they rent out rooms in their house to keep afloat financially. An early scene in the novel shows Mick trying to make a guitar out of a box because of her deep desire to play music. The family owns no musical instruments, and they do not even have the funds to buy their own radio. Her isolation increases when she tries to find a way by which to listen to more music and to learn how to play it herself. McCullers creates a haunting scene of self-introspection during which Mick sneaks out

¹³³ The Beatles. "Money Can't Buy Me Love." *A Hard Day's Night*, Capitol, 1964.

of her house in the late summer evening to sit in a neighbour's yard and listen to their radio through an open window. Mick thinks about her emptiness while she sits alone in the strangers' yard, hidden underneath shrubbery: "It was like she was so empty there wasn't even a feeling or thought in her" (McCullers *Heart* 117). She longs to express the wonder that listening to this music makes her feel, but this becomes entangled in her loneliness and her desire for emotional connection. She describes it as "Like God strutting in the night...[and further, that] wonderful music like this was the worst hurt there could be" (McCullers *Heart* 118). It is interesting to note Mick's blending of beauty and pain as she struggles to come to terms with what is in essence the sublime, made even more so by the fact that her connection to this spirituality can only be reached through objects she cannot afford to possess. She puts her fist "to her throat" when the piece begins, and it becomes "hot inside her heart" (McCullers *Heart* 118). She concludes finally that the music does not "have anything to do with God...[but] was her, Mick Kelly...This music was her—the real plain her" (McCullers *Heart* 118). At first, the sublime is so awesome (in the truest sense of the word) that she equates it with something larger than herself: an understanding of spirituality and of God. Through the duration of the piece, she comes to an understanding that in fact this music is her gateway to a (nonreligious) spirituality. It allows her to have a relationship with something larger than herself, and it gives her a sense of faith, again spiritual, but without religious dogma. Mick in this moment feels herself aligning with her personal spirituality, and this underscores the theme of many McCullers texts: the isolation of an individual from his or her innate sense of higher being. Like the majority of spiritual epiphanies, the experience is fleeting. Soon after this chapter, Mick returns to her youthful insecurities, but the definition of her loneliness and, most importantly, of a way in which she can come to terms with it has at last been defined for her and by her. This marks a first step on her journey of self-discovery.

Stockton discusses the relationship between "queer" children and money and defines money as being "the child's queer ride...money queers children as much as sex does. It can make them vulnerable and dangerous by turns, never mind make their motives...cloudy and complex" (222). Mick's first connection to spirituality originates from the radio in a wealthier family's home. It is indicative of the separation that Mick feels from those with whom she wants to be included and of her subsequent failure to achieve acceptance by such a group. Her own family's poverty nurtures her perceived

oddness and creates in her the drive to seek inclusion elsewhere, outside of her hometown, at least until she comes to know Singer. McCullers frames Mick in this instance as a young person who believes that her family cannot provide her an environment which possesses this music and hence cannot hold the same connection to spirituality. She must sever ties and seek them from strangers, much as the orphaned child must seek family and connection outside the home he or she has lost. Mick's realization is short lived; suddenly the radio stops and all the lights in the house turn off. This sparks in her a sense of further separation from others, and she becomes angry. Then these feelings also fade. Mick begins to think of God. She finds herself automatically stating aloud, "Lord forgiveth me, for I knoweth not what I do" (McCullers *Heart* 119). Originating from Luke 23:24, Mick changes the pronouns in "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" and casts herself as the "them" to whom Jesus was referring (*King James Version* Luke 23:24). She asks to be forgiven for her anger. Though she has felt as though she were a part of the music and therefore of a universal concept of God, when the music stops, she is immersed again in her isolation, and it is for this that she seeks forgiveness. Just as suddenly, she questions having come to that conclusion. Thinking it frivolous, she asserts to herself, "Everybody in the past few years knew there wasn't any real God. When she thought of what she used to imagine was God she could only see Mister Singer with a long, white sheet around him. God was silent—maybe that was why she was reminded" (McCullers *Heart* 119-120). Earlier in the book, Mick also speaks of thoughts on the shifting existence of God. Such concepts seem to be a recurring theme with which she has to contend. She longs to feel part of a spiritual community, but she cannot believe in the validity of such an ideal while she remains isolated. She states to Portia, "I don't believe in God any more than I do Santa Claus" (McCullers *Heart* 50).

Peter Ackroyd points out in his biography of Dickens that there are well-fed children in Dickens's works, but they "are merely players. *His* children are somehow separated from the world, forced to keep their distance" (99, author's emphasis). This point is crucial to the central argument of this chapter on McCullers and Dickens: both utilize this forced distance to demonstrate the dissimilarities in socioeconomic status which form a barrier between those who have and those who have not, in nineteenth century England as well as in twentieth century America. Like McCullers's child characters, Dickens's children endure the trauma of isolation, and many critics have

pointed to Dickens's own felt isolation as a child for the source of this concept.¹³⁴ The film *The Man Who Invented Christmas*, released in November 2017, focuses on the biographical link between Dickens's life and his works. Ackroyd writes "that everything in [Dickens's] mature life became a kind of flight from his childhood," but that if looked at in a positive light, the perils from which he ran also created in him a "huge appetite for success" (98). Further, the trials Dickens underwent as a youth gave him an understanding of how it feels to be literally without sustenance. Ackroyd includes Dickens's statement about his childhood in which the author noted that he had to "win" his food (99). He observes that this brought about in the novelist an "equation of food with protection...To be fed and to be loved" (98-99). In the cases of Frances and Mick, there are people whom they see as the "haves," but both young women view themselves as the "have nots." For Frances, these "haves" chiefly consist of girls in the neighbourhood, girls with whom she would like to share a connection, but from whom she is separated by her "freakish" stature and meditative nature. Mick is a "have not" because of her family's lower economic status and her felt isolation from God. Because the Kelly family rents out rooms to lodgers, Mick has no space for her own quiet thoughts, no "inside room." The "haves" for Mick are those who can afford a piano and the luxury of solitude. Mr. Singer draws Mick's attention because he is able to subvert this delineation; he lives in the overcrowded Kelly household but is able to find peace (Mick believes) due to his being both deaf and mute.

Pip also lives in a world of "have nots," and as mentioned, he is psychologically and physically abused by his sister. Buckley writes, "The chief agent of [Pip's] corruption is money...Money seems to be the central objective of most of the Londoners Pip meets" (50). The reason that money holds so much power for Pip is because of the extent to which his home life has oppressed him; money becomes the escape. The reader is introduced to Pip's domestic situation when his sister comes looking for him "'on a Ram-page [with] Tickler,'" an incongruously-named piece of cane used by Mrs Joe to administer beatings (Dickens *Expectations* 13). Joe, Pip's uncle and father-figure, is Pip's only source of comfort in his early years, and he is just as abused by Mrs Joe as Pip is: she "knock[s] his head...against the wall" and refers to him as a "'staring great stuck pig'" when Joe doesn't answer her fast enough (Dickens *Expectations* 15). From this mutual abuse, and also because of Joe's kind-hearted

¹³⁴ Ackroyd 99 and Kaplan 95, 434.

nature, the two males form a bond. During Christmas dinner whilst Pip is being tormented by his extended family, Joe attempts to demonstrate to Pip that there is a camaraderie between them: “Joe’s station and influence were something feebler (if possible) when there was company, than when there was none. But he always aided and comforted me when he could, in some way of his own, and he always did so at dinner-time by giving me gravy, if there were any” (Dickens *Expectations* 26). Joe and Pip form a bond through which, at this stage of Pip’s life, the boy feels a sense of belonging in a world which tells him uniformly that he is not wanted.

Biddy forms the third piece of the “we of me” triad of *Great Expectations*. She is introduced as being an “orphan” like Pip, and she is “most noticeable,...in respect of her extremities; for, her hair always wanted brushing, her hands always wanted washing, and her shoes always wanted mending and pulling up at the heel” (Dickens *Expectations* 39). She joins the Gargery household when Mrs. Joe falls ill and needs a nurse; she becomes both confidante and maternal figure to Pip and Joe during this time. Pip’s “we of me” aligns with these two, for they are also outsiders in the community where he has grown up; they do not come from the collected mass of socially “normal” and conformist people such as Mrs Joe, Mr Pumblechook or the Hubbles. Like Joe, Biddy is an outsider in her appearance (Pip notices that Biddy is different due to the fact that she is unkempt), in her kind nature and because she accepts Pip, demonstrating a “deep concern in everything [he] told her” about his early experiences with Miss Havisham and Estella (Dickens *Expectations* 78). Biddy also appeals to Pip during this time because Estella is Biddy’s Jungian shadow-self, an orphaned girl with financial advantages, whereas Biddy has none.¹³⁵ Estella also lacks the empathy that Biddy has developed through taking care of others.

As mentioned, Biddy comes to live with Pip and Joe to help care for Mrs Joe during her illness (which thankfully results in the loss of her violent personality, though it also takes away her ability to speak). When the two go out on a walk, Pip tells Biddy that he secretly wishes to be a gentleman, and she empathetically understands that this desire is caused by his need to measure up to Estella in some way. Pip tries to convince

¹³⁵ Ursula K. Le Guin identifies the Jungian shadow self in literature as being: “the other side of our psyche, the dark brother of the conscious mind. It is Cain, Caliban, Frankenstein’s monster, Mr. Hyde...Frodo’s enemy Gollum. It is the Doppelgänger...It is all we don’t want to, can’t, admit into our conscious self, all the qualities and tendencies within us which have been repressed, denied, or not used” (143). Thus when we examine via close reading both Estella and Biddy, we can see that they are the archetypal female for Pip: attractive, intelligent, young. Estella deflects Pip’s admirations and is unattainable while Biddy welcomes the possibility of Pip’s love and is within his social reach.

himself of the value of his blue-collar life with Joe and Biddy, but already it has become tarnished by comparison with the gentleman's life he could have if Miss Havisham were his benefactor:

...Biddy was immeasurably better than Estella, and...the plain honest working life to which I was born, had nothing in it to be ashamed of,...[and] offered me sufficient means of self-respect and happiness...I would decide conclusively that my disaffection to dear old Joe and the forge was gone, and that I was growing...to keep company with Biddy—when all in a moment some confounding remembrance of the Havisham days would fall upon me, like a destructive missile, and scatter my wits again (Dickens *Expectations* 105).

When the lawyer Jaggers comes to remove Pip from the country to London in order to be educated “in accordance with [his] altered position,” Pip, eager to quit his life as a blacksmith's apprentice, jumps at the chance (Dickens *Expectations* 110). Jaggers repeats that he is “paid for undertaking” Pip's affairs, leaving no doubt whatsoever that Pip is not to confuse Jaggers's help with affection (Dickens *Expectations* 112). Dickens underscores this statement to emphasize still more pointedly that Jaggers is *paid* to care for Pip, whereas by comparison, Pip is given unconditional and *free* love from Joe and Biddy. Despite Pip's own reservations about the pair, both have accepted him sincerely. Buckley points out that when Pip later meets Herbert Pocket, Herbert tries to teach Pip that “a true gentleman in manner must be ‘a true gentleman at heart’”[...] Herbert himself, with his nonchalance and charm...provides an immediate gentlemanly example Pip might well emulate” (I will discuss Herbert in more detail in the third section of this chapter) (51-52). However, as Buckley also mentions, the need for money has made too deep an emotional impact on Pip as a child. In his adulthood, it paves the way for him to learn the lesson of choosing money over love. His choice eventually leads him to a state of higher self-awareness, but long before that time, the trauma of his early negative relationship with money forces Pip to face a daunting psychological hurdle.

Part Three: Queer Behaviour

*"I'm a stranger in a strange land" (McCullers *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* 23)*¹³⁶

Clock Without Hands (1961) is Carson McCullers's last novel. Written nearly twenty years after her other, longer works, it focuses on the profound gravity of homoerotic friendships. Here is another correlation between *Great Expectations* and McCullers's fiction, since *Expectations* broaches this type of relationship between Pip and Herbert. *Clock* is set in a small Georgia town in 1953. It opens with a definition of death, and this accordingly sets the tone for the rest of the novel. The narrator explains that death is the same for everyone, "but each man dies in his own way" (1). McCullers then presents the life and impending death of J. T. Malone, a pharmacist in the fictional town of Milan, Georgia. One critic described this opening as an invitation to "witness a small-town American version" of Leo Tolstoy's *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886), adding that after the introduction, the novel "runs erratically" (Howe 54). Upon its release, critics in general seemed divided about *Clock*, and indeed its plot is very tangled. The book presents a myriad of characters whose lives intermingle in mysterious ways, including some whose motives change without any explanation from the narrator.

The novel introduces a pair of young men: Jester Clane and Sherman Pew, the two characters most relevant to my discussion. Jester is the only grandson of a wealthy, semi-retired Southern Judge, and the youth is the sole outlet for the Judge's love. Early in the novel, Clane is defined as "a sentimental old politician who dreams of reviving Southern glory," and this description indicates that the Judge is aligned with the thinking of the "New South" (Howe 54). Jester is raised with only his grandfather to function as guardian and guide. However, during the summer before his senior year of high school, the boy begins to realize that he no longer sees the world through the Judge's eyes. He cannot share the older man's views on segregation and Civil Rights. Jester is described as "a slight limber boy...with auburn hair and a complexion so fair that the freckles on his upturned nose were like cinnamon sprinkled over cream" (McCullers *Clock* 19). The youth's appearance is important to his place in the novel, as he occupies a space that is queer and nonnormative by comparison with most of the other young male characters who share his age, race and education. Jester is introduced

¹³⁶ McCullers is referencing Exodus 2:22.

as being “delicate,” and Malone hates him for his differences: “[Jester] had never been like a Milan boy. He was arrogant and at the same time over polite. There was something hidden about the boy and his softness...” (McCullers *Clock* 20). Because Jester is “feminine” (soft, delicate and overly polite) and now holds ideals contrary to those of the “New South,” Malone feels that Jester is an ideological threat to what he deems as the “right” way to be a Southern male.

Sherman Pew, the second young outsider of the story, is an orphaned African American. White townspeople recognize him by his looks, but they do not know his name. Like Jester, Sherman is noticeable because of his “unnatural appearance” (McCullers *Clock* 10). On first glance, he has a typical young man’s body: “medium-sized [and] muscular” (McCullers *Clock* 10). However, it is the second look that makes the viewer realize at once that Sherman is not “like any other colored boy” (McCullers *Clock* 10). Sherman has blue eyes, indicating his mixed race heritage, and this marks him as a threat to the “New South” mentality as upheld by J. T. Malone and Judge Clane. “New South” philosophy during the early stages of the Civil Rights movement (circa 1920) consisted of an ideology held by certain groups of white Americans, most notably those aligned with Conservative political agendas. The narrator of *Clock* defines the crux of this ideology as “the passion of the Southerner who defends his womankind against the black and alien invader” (McCullers *Clock* 164). A primal fear reaching far beyond the realm of politics formed the centre of this backlash against the Civil Rights movement. As adopted by some white Americans, it outlined an abject horror at the notion of a white female choosing to have children with a non-Caucasian man, with someone who is “other.” In the novel, Sherman is seen first by Malone, who describes the incongruity of Sherman’s blue eyes in a dark face. To him they appear “bleak [and] violent” (McCullers *Clock* 10). At first glance, Malone has taken Sherman to be a “normal” “colored” boy, but it is the second look and the impact of Sherman’s blue eyes that create a sense of the uncanny: “Once those eyes were seen, the rest of the body seemed also unusual and out of proportion” (McCullers *Clock* 10). No longer a “harmless *colored boy*,” Sherman is viewed by Malone as a “*bad nigger*,” someone who has upturned Malone’s New South beliefs because he is a product of a mixed race relationship (McCullers *Clock* 10, author’s emphasis). To Malone, Sherman’s body appears disfigured because he has negated the core of the “New South” mindset: namely that the races should stay separate. Malone’s first encounter with Sherman makes him feel as though “something momentous and terrible had been accomplished”

(McCullers *Clock* 10). The narrator leaves this seed planted until the end of the novel, when Malone, finally facing his own death and his entire life, comes to change his views on race and segregation.

On the surface, Jester and Sherman are connected only because Sherman is employed by Judge Clane as a sort of secretary. Due to his struggle with loneliness, the Judge requires Sherman's presence mostly for company. But since the position boosts his own self-esteem and allows him to enjoy the elegance of the Judge's house, Sherman is more than happy to oblige. Quite interested in fine objects, Sherman likes to display such objects to others. This suggests his desire to transcend poverty and likewise to prove that he has been accepted into upper class society.

Through their respective relationships with the Judge, Jester and Sherman eventually align. Though not exactly friends, they find themselves drawn together by virtue of their dual status as freaks. They are first identified as a pair by Malone: he views both as threats to the Southland, to his personal way of life and to what he judges right or wrong. Since neither Jester nor Sherman fits the mould of a "normal" young man (whether white or black), the threat remains veiled, but their apparent revolt against normalcy still brands the two as outsiders. Malone imbues Sherman's eyes with an "eerie understanding" (McCullers *Clock* 10). The black youth seems to know a secret the older man wishes to hide: namely, his own inner freakery. In her article on McCullers and Queer Fiction, Rachel Adams discusses the parallels between Frances's (*Wedding*) and Malone's experiences with looking and being looked at: "Both Frankie and Malone, accustomed to experiencing the Other as a distant spectacle, are disturbed by having their stare returned. They respond by imparting a mysterious and improbable knowledge to the freaks' impassive look" (33). Sherman himself is aware that his gaze is at best "peculiar" and at worst "creepy" (McCullers *Clock* 159, 155). Having been turned into aberrations by Malone and the other townspeople, the youths also have been endowed by the citizens' imaginations with sinister hidden knowledge (Sherman) or power (Jester). Due to Jester's femininity and "arrogan[ce]" and Sherman's "unnatural appearance" and "peculiar" gaze, these two young men share the state of otherness with Frances and Mick (McCullers *Clock* 20, 10, 159). Sherman's obsessive lust for possessions is akin to a sexual attraction, while Jester's delicate appearance and apparent bisexuality (he describes being romantically attracted to both genders) relegate him to otherness as well. Additionally, both question the "normal" state of race relations in the South, and both would have segregation and the idea of "separate but

equal” overturned. Not truly bonded, still Jester and Sherman form an intense relationship due to their status as outsiders. Eventually the two become intertwined, though Sherman is cruel to Jester much of the time, even going so far as to kill Jester’s dog while overcome with anger.

When Jester first meets Sherman face to face, he is surprised by an “overwhelming feeling” which he cannot discern (McCullers *Clock* 40). I argue that this feeling is belonging. He recognizes through the music Sherman plays that here at last is someone with whom he can commune. (Again McCullers utilizes piano music to demonstrate a spiritual experience, and she gives Sherman the ability to play piano and sing beautifully). Throughout their time together, Jester and Sherman come to discover a sense of belonging with each other, though they remain emotionally cloaked to other characters. Their respective queer appearances and behaviours draw them into this bond. Although Sherman finally repudiates it (much as Faulkner’s character Joe Christmas rejects his relationship with Joanna Burden), the feeling of belonging has been mutually acknowledged by both.¹³⁷

Since it is filled with abuse and concludes with Sherman’s death, one could argue that Jester’s and Sherman’s relationship is unsuccessful. However, I contend that the relationship nevertheless brings the two participants to a higher level of self-awareness and understanding. This is mirrored by the (also homoerotic) relationship of Pip and Herbert Pocket in *Great Expectations*. As established in the other sections on McCullers, Pip is an outsider child who must cope with feelings of isolation throughout his life on the Kentish marshes with his sister and her husband Joe. His apprenticeship to Joe and a life of uneducated, blue-collar work as a blacksmith ends suddenly with the appearance of Mr. Jaggers. The lawyer, previously encountered at Miss Havisham’s house, tells Pip that he is now the sole beneficiary of someone who wishes to remain nameless, a person who wants to see him brought up as a “gentleman” (Dickens *Expectations* 109). Thus begins Pip’s life under the tutelage of Herbert’s father, both of whom he has met before at Miss Havisham’s. At that time, Pip dubbed Herbert “the pale young gentleman” (Dickens *Expectations* 73).

¹³⁷ Sherman tells Jester he does not want any friends, but “Sherman lied, because next to a mother, he wanted a friend the most” (McCullers 150). When Sherman falls ill, Jester visits, bringing him flowers and caviar (although he is too shy to give the caviar). Sherman hurls all kinds of verbal abuse upon Jester, one imagines because it makes him feel powerful. He knows the abuse will drive Jester away, “and [Sherman] wanted Jester to stay but he did not know how to ask him” (McCullers 127).

When Pip and Herbert first make each other's acquaintance, they engage in an awkward fight, during which Herbert head-butts Pip's stomach in a manner that is "bull-like" (Dickens *Expectations* 74). Holly Furneaux explains in *Queer Dickens: Erotics, Families, Masculinities* (2009) how this fight between Herbert and Pip is an expression of homoerotic longing. She writes:

scenes of intimate physical contact orchestrated through fighting offer moments when sublimated same-sex desires can be simultaneously expressed and repressed; at the moment that the bodies suggestively touch, that contact is recouped as a more socially acceptable form of same-sex interaction, most often heterosexual rivalry (cvi).

However, Furneaux goes on to explain, "In *Great Expectations* fisticuffs are immediately displaced by Herbert's particular predilection for nursing Pip. Even in their initial pugilistic encounter Herbert is more concerned with healing than harming his adversary" (*Queer* cvi). Despite his often-torn psyche and disrupted self-image, this "healing" of Pip at the hands of Herbert enables the former to grow emotionally. Eventually, it helps him to reach a state of self-acceptance and self-reliance. After Pip's benefactor is uncovered as Magwitch and his life as a gentleman ends, "Pip, Herbert, and Clara [Herbert's fiancée] finally settle in a triangular cohabitation in Cairo, forming a trio in which Pip's participation is unsanctioned by familial bonds" (Furneaux *Queer* lxx). Therefore, at the close of the novel, Pip's "we of me" is fulfilled in a fruitful way, since it is a "we of me" which is wanted. Still more importantly in this instance, Pip's relationship with Herbert matures, and they are able to love each other in a socially acceptable fashion. Pip becomes the bachelor friend whose (homo)sexuality is nullified because he accompanies the married couple of Herbert and Clara. Even though as Furneaux explains, the fighting which began their acquaintance was also a way of expressing homoeroticism, their continued cohabitation into manhood and Herbert's preoccupation with caring for Pip's physical body would not have been as easily accepted by mainstream London upper-class society were it to continue without the presence of a female third party. Pip has begun his autobiography by expressing how lonely, isolated and unloved he felt as a child. He explains how these feelings were magnified by his low sense of self-esteem upon meeting Miss Havisham and Estella. But during his time with Herbert, Pip finally finds another who cares for both his body and his emotions. Joe and Biddy had attempted to do the same for Pip, but because of their lowly station in life, the boy rejected their love. In his narration, Pip paints a

picture of the many ways in which Joe provided fatherly love, but due to the parent/child dynamic and the very clear presence of Mrs Joe, this relationship was devoid of sexuality. As a result, the role of emotional support, teacher and protector is assumed easily by Herbert, whom Pip calls the most gentle of men, in fact, “it is impossible to be gentler” (Dickens *Expectations* 302).

Jester Clane and Sherman Pew are not as lucky in the outcome of their relationship as Pip and Herbert. McCullers writes of Jester’s attraction to Sherman and of his hidden physical desire for him, though she makes it clear that Sherman does not reciprocate. In fact, Sherman appears incapable of loving other human beings; he longs for their company (as explained), but he cannot bring himself to care for them, although he does feel love for objects. This trait can be understood as a manifestation of his desire for consistency. Jester first meets Sherman in the latter’s home. Sherman lovingly pets his high quality bedspread, displaying its finery to Jester. Jester watches Sherman “stroking the bedspread and the Negro-colored hand against the rose gave Jester an inexplicable creepy thrill” (McCullers *Clock* 66). Jester himself is afraid to touch the bedspread for fear he will receive “a shock like an electric eel” (McCullers *Clock* 66). This scene is rife with sexuality, demonstrating Jester’s attraction to Sherman and his subsequent fear of this attraction. It also reveals Sherman’s appreciation (perhaps even lust) for refined objects. The two express unconventional love in this scene, and while their relationship is not ultimately successful, it does result in greater self-understanding on Jester’s part. Through his knowledge of Sherman, he discovers a goal for which he can feel passion: namely, pursuing a career as a lawyer in order to help disenfranchised people in the South.

In both novels, queer behaviour (homoerotic in this case) results in a positive outcome for the protagonists Jester and Pip when they learn to love fully at last. Jester’s dealings with Sherman are more sexually confusing than Pip’s interactions with Herbert, since Sherman expresses object sexuality (an attraction to items, not people) over hetero or homosexuality. In the novel, we are led to believe that the most likely cause for Sherman’s behaviour is the fact that he was sexually abused as a young child. This is one reason why it is difficult for the reader to tell whether or not Jester’s affection for him ever becomes fulfilling. I argue that it does, though not necessarily in a sexual manner. Several times throughout the novel, the narrator mentions that Sherman wishes he could express his longing for friendship to Jester, but he lacks the ability to do so. He is haunted by his childhood memories of being molested by his

stepfather, and this deep trauma renders him unable to show love for other humans, though again, he is keen to do so with objects. This trait underscores his ongoing fear of rejection. Despite all this, Jester is never swayed in his quest for Sherman's friendship. Later in the story, in order to glean information that could save the youth, he even infiltrates a white mob bent on murdering Sherman. Jester repeatedly questions his own feelings for Sherman, but he cannot discern why he cares for him. He finally decides it is unknowable by his conscious mind; the answer lies too deep to reach. At last he surmises, "I guess it's just a matter of cockles" (McCullers *Clock* 204). But in fact, Jester's feelings for Sherman rest at the very core of who he is as a person. In time, his search of this unexplained emotional depth enables Jester to understand and love himself more. Pip's journey to self-discovery is shaped by his love of Herbert in much the same way. Through these men's queer behaviours (their socially unacceptable love for other men), both are able to overcome their damaged psyches and reach states of self-acceptance. As with many other *Bildungsromane*, it is not obvious to the reader what the later choices of the protagonists will be, and we are not privy as to whether or not they will accept their queer natures completely. However, it is apparent from the queer experiences of both Pip and Jester that they come to terms with certain aspects of themselves, aspects which at the beginning of the narratives they consider less than desirable.¹³⁸

Queer behaviour is also seen in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* with Mick and Mr Singer, and it can be paralleled with the relationship between Pip and Herbert. The chapters which narrate Mick's isolation also describe how Bubber and Portia form a close familial relationship with her, something that brings her a sense of place in her loneliness. It is Portia who tells the girl that she understands her, since the maid recognizes the fact that Mick and her father Dr Copeland share the "shape and color [of their] souls" (McCullers *Heart* 50). With this statement, Portia is commenting on the similarities she perceives in the searches of both father and daughter for truth and belonging. It is Portia and Bubber with whom Mick is relegated to eat when the household boarders have guests and there is no room for her at the dinner table. An allusion is made to the fact that when she was younger, Mick had experienced a closer

¹³⁸ Pip's queer experiences range from his own felt isolation at home with Joe and his sister, his traumatic meeting with Magwitch that becomes his *Nachträglichkeit*, his love/hate relationship with Estella and his love for Herbert (Furneaux would describe this as homoerotic). Jester's queer experiences mainly revolve around his love for Sherman, but he too experiences a felt isolation at home, and in his community, as he is too feminine to fit in with other popular Southern males.

bond with her father and her eldest brother Bill. This has dissipated with time, largely because her maturing gender role relegates her to spending her days with other women or younger male siblings, not with the men. Thus, she communes in the kitchen with the youngest son (not counting the baby Ralph, whom she must tend) and the hired maid, all of whom are the family outcasts.

Both Singer and Mick feel an emotional wounding and are drawn to each other through a perceived understanding of pain. Mick's trauma has been explained earlier in this chapter, but Singer's emotional pain chiefly surrounds the loss of his friend Antonapoulos. In the past, his bond with Antonapoulos, who was also a deaf mute, has given Singer a sense of purpose. Antonapoulos was a kindred spirit with whom Singer could share his innermost thoughts and secrets, and this in turn allowed him to experience a sense of belonging, as though he were finding his way back to himself. Because of this strong bond, when Singer loses Antonapoulos to mental illness, he feels as though he has lost himself as well. Since Singer is both deaf and mute, the nondisabled characters perceive him as being metaphorically deaf to suffering. To them, he seems shut away in an "inside room." (Mick refers to her own private thoughts in this fashion.) The others infer that because of his life in this "inside room," Singer knows a peace which they cannot grasp. However, in reality, Singer suffers just as acutely as the rest of the characters, and he is searching for himself and his place in the world just as they are. Ultimately, this search leads to his suicide at the end of the novel and the breakup of his followers, none of whom appear to have come any closer to finding peace and acceptance for themselves. The story closes with all four living the life society dictates they should. Mick has to leave school in order to help bring in money for the family, and she works as a shop girl at Woolworth's. She still hears the music in her head, the music she so loves, but she is unable to devote time to sorting it out: her days are an endless repetition of eat, work and sleep. Portia departs the Kellys and returns home to nurse her ailing father. Mick's thoughts are now boiled down to two, and both seem incomprehensible to her: "Mister Singer had killed himself and was dead. And...she was grown and had to work at Woolworth's" (McCullers *Heart* 351). She is alone and changed; her child self, like Bubber's, has ceased to be, and in its place is a strange young woman whom she does not know. Her search for herself has only caused her to feel more isolated in a world that seeks to separate people based on gender, race and class. Mick is now viewed by that world as a lower income, working class white female, not as her true self which transcends all classifiers. Her real persona

must remain hidden under the surface so that she can adhere to social norms. To function, Mick perceives that she must sever the connection to her creative side and all aspects of her queerness/maleness. Formerly she had believed that Singer would show her to herself, but to Mick's surprise, he had been as lost as she. The only difference between them was his lack of a voice with which to explain this to her.

Pip has a similar epiphany about Miss Havisham when he finally realizes that she is not his mysterious benefactor and that in fact she has suffered as much as he: "in shutting out the light of day, she had shut out infinitely more;...her mind, brooding solitary, had grown diseased,...And could I look upon her without compassion, seeing her punishment in the ruin she was...?" (Dickens *Expectations* 297). Pip's conversation with the elderly recluse just prior to her self-immolation leaves him with the concrete understanding that she is just as lost as he has ever been. Indeed, even as Pip forgives her for the years of psychological manipulation and abuse she has inflicted on him, he comes to a melancholy insight that Joe and Biddy were the only people in his childhood who truly cared about his welfare. Like Pip, Mick also comes to know, albeit too late, that only Bubber and Portia have really seen her for herself. And in the time it takes for her to arrive at this conclusion, the lives of the other members of Mick's early "we of me" have progressed beyond her reach. They have moved on, leaving Mick to face an invisible prison: her job at Woolworth's. With this comparison, I do not mean to imply that Miss Havisham and Mr Singer are similar characters, but they do serve a similar function in their respective novels. Both are upheld by the child protagonists as adults who know the "secret" of living a life of plenty, an existence in which they are respected by society despite their status as outsiders. Of course this is far from true. Mick and Pip falsely believe that an endorsement from these particular adults equates to an endorsement by the entire community, and that furthermore, such an accolade will lead to a way out from what the children perceive as their own queerness. But the two discover, to their chagrin, that the compelling adults they have encountered are just as queer (nonnormative) as they themselves. What has drawn these characters to the children in the first place is only a recognition of the queerness which lies within them all.

Conclusion to McCullers: Disjecta Membra

I have always found it interesting when an author writes another's work into the plot of his or her own. It is fascinating to see what books fictional characters read, and it makes these characters more relatable if there is such a touchstone of mutual knowledge between the fictional world and the *real* one. Since McCullers inserts Dickens's texts into *Clock Without Hands*, the ways in which the narrator discusses Dickens may reflect McCullers's own personal impression of his novels. When Sherman is employed as Judge Clane's secretary, one of his duties is to transcribe dictated letters. But when he discovers the topic of the letters (the Judge is proposing the revaluation of Confederate money), Sherman refuses this duty altogether. In spite of this, the two continue to have a "reading hour" during which Sherman reads aloud to the Judge from classical texts pulled from the Judge's well-stocked library. Of these books, McCullers specifically mentions Longfellow and Dickens. The Judge explains Sherman's purpose to Malone: "'that boy is a golden skein in my old age. Writes my letters with the calligraphy of an angel, gives me my injections [for diabetes] and makes me toe the line on the diet... Sherman reads Dickens with such pathos. Sometimes I cry and cry.' 'Does that boy ever cry?' 'No, but often he smiles at the humorous places'" (McCullers *Clock* 113). I wrote extensively on Dickens's humour in the Flannery O'Connor chapter concerning dark humour, but it is worth reiterating that John Forster referred to Dickens as one of the "great humourists" and explained that it is inevitable for the humourist to write of things which are grotesque, since "great humourists are prone" to do so (727). The Judge's comment that Sherman does not cry "'but smiles at the humorous places'" gives credence to McCullers's own understanding of Dickensian humour. The narrator of *Clock* explains that Sherman actually dislikes reading Dickens because:

there were so many orphans in Dickens, and Sherman loathed books about orphans, feeling in them a reflection on himself. So when the Judge sobbed aloud over orphans, chimney sweeps, stepfathers, and all such horrors, Sherman read in a cold, inflexible voice, and glanced with cool superiority when the old fool acted up. The Judge, obtuse to the feelings of others, noticed none of this and was as pleased as pie. Laughing, drinking, sobbing at Dickens, writing whole mailsacks of letters, and never an instant bored. (McCullers *Clock* 120).

So the reader is told that the Judge sees what he wants to in Sherman: he chooses to believe that although Sherman does not cry at the appropriate places in Dickens, this is not a sign of his lack of understanding of the depths of the books. After all, he smiles in spite of himself at the humour. In reality, the narrator tells us, Sherman understands Dickens's books all too well, and they come too close to "the horrors" the young man himself has witnessed (McCullers *Clock* 120). This is why Sherman refuses to react when scenes of orphans, starvation and loneliness are narrated in Dickens's texts. From this we can question as well whether McCullers is hinting that the Judge also sees beneath the surface of the "humourist Dickens" to the underlying societal evils he portrays. Despite any conclusions at which readers may arrive, this small inclusion of Dickens's works into *Clock* is reflective of the *felt relationship* McCullers held toward Dickensian characters.¹³⁹ With this scene, McCullers shows that she does indeed recognize the disturbing social issues on which Dickens writes; she sees them through the humour in which they are incongruously wrapped, and she displays this understanding through her own socially repudiated character, Sherman Pew.

While all of these texts can be viewed as dark, psychological novels (indeed *Great Expectations* is often cited as Dickens's darkest work), they end with a glimmer of hope for the protagonists.¹⁴⁰ Jester has stated his intention to become a lawyer and follow in his father's footsteps. Although Sherman has died in an act of defiance against segregation, Jester combines this tragedy with knowledge that has been uncovered about his own father's role in Civil Rights legislation, and he uses both as catalysts to make a firm decision on his vocation. Mick's final chapter shows her grieving for her child self and trying to come to terms with the metaphorical death of this aspect of herself, the part that could go to the "inside room" and be creative (McCullers *Heart* 353). She grieves as well for the literal death of Mr Singer and laments that she feels "cheated [...] Only nobody had cheated her. So there was nobody to take it out on" (McCullers *Heart* 354). What has been taken away from her is time, time to appreciate creativity, time in which to create. Despite this, McCullers demonstrates that grief is not the end of Mick's story even though her part of the narrative ends with this chapter. Mick has kept Mr Singer's radio and has assumed the

¹³⁹ See page 14 and 44 for further explanation of *felt relationships*.

¹⁴⁰ George Bernard Shaw wrote of *Great Expectations*: "It is too serious a book to be a trivially happy one. Its beginning is unhappy; its middle is unhappy; and the conventional happy ending is an outrage on it" (567). For *Expectations* being one of Dickens's darker works, see Julian Moynahan, "The Hero's Guilt: The Case of 'Great Expectations'." *Essays in Criticism*, 1960, p 60.

payment instalments. This leaves an important avenue down which she can continue to explore the world of music. The radio also allows her to enjoy a relationship with the outside world, the vast realm that lies outside her own small town. She fantasizes about putting money down weekly from her Woolworth's pay to purchase a piano. Mick has come to understand at last that no one outside of herself can come to her aid and rescue her from the depths of her isolation and "otherness." She must do this for herself, and she hypothesizes about the most likely route to this goal: a continued relationship with music. Though she has suffered, she postulates that some good must come of the suffering: "maybe it...would turn out O.K. Maybe she would get a chance soon. Else what the hell good had it all been...It had to be some good if anything made sense" (McCullers *Heart* 354).

Frances also arrives at an epiphany which, though painful, leaves an opening for a hopeful future. She knows that her "we of me" with her brother and his wife will not come to fruition, and that the ones who were her true "we of me" (Berenice and John Henry) have disbanded. John Henry has died a painful and terrifying death, and the other two must make their way alone. Nowadays, Frances remembers John Henry "more as he used to be" (McCullers *Wedding* 153). The nightmares in which he comes to her as a grotesque wax form of himself (referencing the Freak Exposition which holds a central place in the novel) have all but faded. While preparing for Mary Littlejohn's visit, Frances makes small talk with Berenice on their last night together. And though Frances mentions her brother's travels, she is not marred by her exclusion from them. Instead, she daydreams that she will travel with Mary Littlejohn. Even if losing herself in a new person (Mary) can be viewed as just another example of her ever-present search for an updated, more exotic "we of me," McCullers makes it clear that Frances still retains a connection to her deeper, introspective side. She looks out the window while the house is hushed: "...the geranium glow had faded from the sky. The last pale colors were crushed and cold on the horizon" (McCullers *Wedding* 153). Although distracted by the arrival of Mary, Frances remains firmly linked to this private and profound part of herself, the part that has been the lifelong source of her relegation to the status of outsider. In some ways, the hidden level has proved advantageous. Frances possesses an ability to dip into deep pathos, a rare skill in her community. In the past, the scarcity of such a depth of feeling in those she meets, coupled with her own concepts about her "freakish" body have caused Frances to view herself as different and ostracised. But Berenice and John Henry have understood Frances's

introspection in an intuitive way, and I would argue that they have shared it as well. At the outset, this caused their group to bond, and it created a safe space for all three. Berenice tells F. Jasmine (Frances prior to the wedding): “The point is that we all caught. And we try in one way or another to widen ourself free...When I was with Ludie, I didn’t feel so caught. But then Ludie died. We go around trying one thing or another, but we caught anyhow” (McCullers *Wedding* 114). By this, Berenice is referring to the time she spent with her first husband, a man with whom she shared a profound relationship, and to the floundering of her sense of self after his death. She has struggled with this (and she narrates to Frances that she lived through several unhealthy relationships afterwards) in order to find herself eventually and feel happy once more. Her personal knowledge allows her to understand Frances’s plight: the feeling of being lost, the sense of being caught in a life she does not want to live. Both John Henry and Berenice offer Frankie the lesson of self-acceptance, and while she does not appear to have learned it by the culmination of the novel, McCullers does hint that the relationship Frankie once experienced with these two will impact her future development. The book ends by reminding the reader that Frances still possesses the gift of introspection and empathy. Although currently distracted by Mary, she will always return to this depth of feeling. It is inherent to her nature, and it is something Berenice and John Henry were able to help her acknowledge.

Peter Ackroyd writes in *Dickens*, “The theme of *disjecta membra* and eventual wholeness, of death and resurrection, is so powerful and permanent an aspect of storytelling that it may well have emerged without any conscious direction or purpose on the novelist’s part” (966). Ackroyd is referencing the theoretical literary concept that explains how lines from a poet’s work can be torn from the original page, and through *disjecta membra*, the reader can still identify the poet from the fragments. He utilizes this concept to explore how authors write on psychological traumas. Even though novelists can come from different cultural hegemonies, they are driven continually to approach topics of the shattering and eventual rebuilding of the psyche. This succinctly explains the inner plights of the protagonists from the works of both Dickens and McCullers: the alienated other, the forgotten child and the poor. All are on a quest to heal themselves through a search for love and reconciliation, and ultimately, it is a reconciliation with the self that Dickens’s and McCullers’s protagonists seek. They do not wish for normalcy but rather for a sense of belonging and acceptance of what they are. Reading Dickens and McCullers together, it soon becomes evident that

both authors strive to discuss the fact that a significant part of the human story involves feelings of isolation. The isolation their characters experience eventually generates a fuller understanding of what it means to be loved and to give love. Negative events that initially isolate these protagonists serve as bridges of connection later in their stories, as both Dickens and McCullers eloquently demonstrate how these types of traumas can be utilized to gain a greater sense of self; to unite rather than to separate.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate the influence Dickens's works have had during the twentieth century, and still hold today. Examining Dickens's oeuvre alongside those of the twentieth century with the discipline of comparative literature, it becomes evident that his works cast metaphoric waves outward, and that these waves cannot help but to influence the works of other writers. It is crucial that the cultural power of Dickens's work is understood, because it is now no longer necessary for modern audiences to have read Dickens's texts; we become aware of him through a passive absorption of culture. Part of Dickens's inclusion in modern "pop" culture is that he is an established "Victorian" personality. Dickens's work began to be re-envisioned by the generation after his death, who were aiming to establish a distance between themselves and the new century, from their Victorian predecessors. The famous *fin-de-siecle* British artist Aubrey Beardsley even did a set of plate illustrations of Dickensian characters when only age twelve, a set of illustrations for which Beardsley is little known.¹⁴¹ Dickens began to be included in film and television during the mid-twentieth century when Hollywood aimed to develop a Victorian atmosphere (most surprisingly, Dickens is even included in an episode of the western drama "Bonanza," (1963) played by Jonathan Harris, famous for his role of Dr Smith in "Lost in Space"). Dickens's inclusion in television, both his characters and as a character himself (more recently, Dickens has appeared as a character of himself in the television series, *Doctor Who* (2005 and 2011)), serve to act as a connecting touchstone between new Hollywood-made fictional characters and their would-be audiences. His lines have been inserted in television and movies since the early 1940s, and the purpose for this inclusion is again, to form bridges. When a television viewer hears Dickens's lines inserted into the scene (or sees a representation of him), it forms a connection for that audience, as he/she would immediately recognize the popular lines and scenes from which they came. The recognition of and familiarity with Dickens's works has become universal for most Western twentieth, and now twenty-first century, audiences. The characters themselves have become "lifelike" in the audience's understanding, for example, the often used term "a Scrooge" now means someone who embodies miserly conduct. This is just one often-used example, but the correlations flow deeper than this.

¹⁴¹ Stanley Weintraub, *Aubrey Beardsley: The Imp of the Perverse*, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1976, pp. 5-6.

The felt-relationship that readers (or viewers) have with Dickens, his work and the “character” of himself, is one that has been addressed in this thesis as a way of understanding how reading works. Comparative literature explains that how character-types, plots and themes are re-envisioned from one author to another has much to do with how the latter author reads the primary one. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, T. H. White’s reading of Arthurian legend differed from those of his Victorian predecessors Alfred, Lord Tennyson and William Morris, and this had much to do with the specific time in which these authors lived and worked. Tennyson and Morris infused their interpretations of Arthurian legend with many of the desires and phobias present in their generation, whereas White’s reading was indicative of his own time in the tumultuous aftermath of World War II. The characters and main plot expositions are present in all three renditions of the story, but how the authors chose to tell, or not to tell, their respective works demonstrates how they individually read the original texts.

All of the American authors researched in this thesis engage in re-readings and re-imaginings of the works of Dickens. The extent of these re-imaginings becomes clearer by using the discipline of comparative literature to examine these works alongside each other. Through reading backwards from the twentieth to the nineteenth century, we can see the extent to which Dickens has been influential to the authors examined here. Poe, Faulkner, O’Connor and McCullers all engage with Dickens through their writing. This engagement is done both at two levels. Firstly, on a subconscious level, with writerly impulses which stem from their western upbringings pulling them to link back to the western giants of literature (having been exposed to things such as the King James Bible, Shakespeare and of course, Dickens). Secondly, on a more conscious level, with an idea of wanting their writing to link backwards to these predecessors. This is said with the full awareness of the trap of comparative literature that Susan Bassnett explains tends to categorize literature into primary and secondary: “the binary approach never did work; all it succeeded in doing was to restrict the projects comparative literature scholars were allowed to undertake, creating obstacles where none had existed previously” (29). A less limited understanding of comparative literature and re-reading (in the Barthesian sense) are evoked for this thesis. My research employs the concept of comparative literature which emphasizes the “study of literature beyond the confines of one particular country, and the study of the relationships between literature...and other areas of knowledge” (Remak 3). This

lack of boundaries enables limitless possibilities in the comparison of literature, culture, art and philosophy. Whereas comparative literature has been utilized in times before as a way in which to exert the power of a primary (and greater) culture, and the subsequent, secondary nature of those alien to the primary culture, the more recent understanding of the discipline (as explained by Bassnett and Remak), demonstrates that much can be learned from reading texts alongside each other without falling into these types of categorization traps. The new knowledge which is gained from comparing texts, explains much about how the act of reading works, and as well, enables a richer understanding of influence.

In all of the Faulkner novels explored in this thesis, it becomes clear he was an obvious borrower of Dickensian plot and characters in his own works. The character of Miss Habersham is one of the most obvious examples of re-reading and borrowing in which Faulkner engaged, as she is only a few letters away from Miss Havisham of *Great Expectations*. Even more than her name, she is another manifestation of Miss Havisham in her character type, as Habersham is stuck in time, wearing the same outfit from the Sears catalogue of times gone by, just as Havisham wears the relics of her wedding day that never happened. Habersham's role in *Intruder in the Dust* is to help the young boys save the wrongfully accused man, Lucas Beauchamp, and she is able to move the plot forward because of her being out of her place in this endeavour with the two teenagers. No one believes the young protagonist of the novel, Chick, when he says that Lucas Beauchamp has been wrongfully accused, and the town is all too eager to allow Beauchamp to take the blame, due to his being a black man who does not bow down to the whites of Yoknapatawpha County. It is Miss Habersham who drives Chick and his friend out to the grave of the murdered man in order to exhume his body, proving that the gun which killed him was not that of Lucas Beauchamp. It is only Miss Habersham and the teens who believe Lucas to be innocent. As Alexandre Vashchenko discussed, "Faulkner's favorite pair, [is] a woman and a boy, who, in their sensitivity to truth, attempt to save the world" (212). Faulkner intentionally repurposes the character (even down to the name) of Dickens's Miss Havisham in his novel. He does this to draw upon both his readers' established knowledge of Dickensian characters, and as well to create an "alternate ending" to the story of Miss Havisham. In *Intruder in the Dust*, Faulkner repurposes Miss Havisham in the twentieth century American south as Miss Habersham, but gives her the tools with which to interact with her community. In a way, Faulkner's Miss Habersham is a reimagining to the story of Miss Havisham. He

gives her an alternate ending where she has the coping mechanisms enabling her to connect with, instead of hide away from, her community. Her allegiance with Chick allows for Miss Habersham to save Lucas from the horrible fate of being lynched. So too does Jasper Fford's reimagining of Miss Havisham mentioned in the introduction to this thesis thwart a murder, although his version has her operating within her own book, which has a life of its own after the reader has finished the page.

While Faulkner's early life does not parallel Dickens's exactly, there are correlations between the two authors' biographies which culminate in creating in them a particular view of the world. The problems with which Dickens grappled as a young man (poverty, loneliness and the embarrassment of having to work at such a young age) haunted him throughout his adult life.¹⁴² His father's incarceration in the Marshalsea made a deep impression on the young author, and he often came back to this trauma throughout his authorial experience. Faulkner too was brought up by a father who was less successful than the family needed him to be, and the Faulkner family were often travelling back and forth in Mississippi to take the patriarch to alcohol detox programs. Faulkner, like Dickens, did not continue on with formal education into adulthood. He dropped out of high school and became essentially self-educated, growing his knowledge of literature informally and spending time listening to the stories told outside his father's office as the men took whiskey breaks. Listening to courthouse step banter and the stories of the old south from his family's African American maid, Mamie Callie, instilled in the young Faulkner a love of story-telling and aided his ability to craft characters and plot details. So too did Faulkner's literary predecessor Dickens, hone his ability to take in a person's story (and their traits) during his time working as a court reporter. Both Faulkner and Dickens had early loves which were halted by disapproving parents (Estelle Oldham and Maria Beadnell respectively). The loss of these loves also haunted the young men throughout their adult lives, and the theme of love lost is another which both authors grapple in their works. Through similarities in biography (and even in appearance, as both were slight men who inclined towards

¹⁴² Dickens did not speak of his time at Warren's to anyone but Forster, and it was not common knowledge that he had spent time labouring there as a youth until after his death (see Slater, 619), but Dickens hinted at the turmoil he underwent in both *David Copperfield* and *Hard Times*. The congruencies between David's and Dickens's adolescence has already been discussed, but Kaplan also notes that in *Hard Times* there appear veiled renditions of his parents: "the unredeemed father who put him to work in the blacking factory appears in aspects of Mr. Bounderby, the mother who insisted on his remaining there in the portrait of Mrs. Sparsit" (309). Clearly Dickens was dealing with the trauma of his adolescence via the fictional worlds he created.

dandyism in their youths), both of these authors have affinities by which they can be connected and their literature compared in order to learn more about the themes with which they contend.

Flannery O'Connor is a notoriously difficult writer to pen down as far as what authors were of an influence to her. As referenced in the first chapter devoted to her, O'Connor explained her reading history to a friend: "The only good things I read when I was a child were the Greek and Roman myths which I got out of a set of child's encyclopedia called *The Book of Knowledge*. The rest of what I read was Slop with a Capital S. The Slop period was followed by the Edgar Allan Poe period which lasted for years..." (Kinney 2). However, it is interesting to the Dickensian that O'Connor specifically references Dickens when she began doing reading tours. O'Connor wrote to her friend, Maryat Lee in 1958, that she had "a secret desire to rival Charles Dickens upon the stage" (Gooch 13). While it is difficult to prove what exact versions of texts O'Connor read, as her library was divided up after her death, it is easy enough to prove who she read, and of whom she was aware, and how she felt about these authors.

Timothy P. Caron, guest edited an edition of *The Flannery O'Connor Review* in 2010, which aimed to highlight O'Connor's and Faulkner's authorial affinities. Caron edited the *Review* to demonstrate how both O'Connor and Faulkner shared the understanding that race and gender are intertwined in the South. He noted that many of O'Connor's and Faulkner's characters were concerned about the erosion of the "bedrock principles" which made up the South (3). The main concern of this erosion being that the traditional male dominated society was slowly "eroding" away and O'Connor's and Faulkner's characters are wrapped up in the fear of the unknown future (3). My point in introducing these themes in the chapters devoted to O'Connor was to demonstrate that this concern is addressed and answered by her (as well as Faulkner and Dickens) in the form of Christian humanism. O'Connor's Catholicism has been a well-explored avenue of research in studies devoted to her, but Christian humanism does play a key role in her work, the main tenant of which is that being "estranged from God is necessarily to be estranged from one's essential self" (Eggenschwiler 13). This estrangement is what causes the neuroses in O'Connor's characters and further disallows them from forming deeper connections with their communities. This thesis demonstrated how Dickens is also working with themes of social isolation caused by the estrangement from spirituality, and his response to this is to set up his characters with an encounter that presents them with a chance for spiritual redemption. Examples

of this which are presented in this thesis are Scrooge's hauntings by Marley and the three subsequent ghosts in *A Christmas Carol*, Lady Dedlock and her abandoned daughter Esther coming to know each other in *Bleak House*, Pip's encounters with Magwitch and Miss Havisham in *Great Expectations*, and as well, those who grow from meeting with the "holy idiots" (Natalie McKnight's term) of Nell from *The Old Curiosity Shop* and Smike of *Nicholas Nickleby* (35).

Both authors began their study of the creative writing process in journalism: Dickens was a Parliamentary Debate reporter for *Mirror* and *The True Sun*, and O'Connor graduated from Georgia State College for Women with a Social Sciences degree and originally gained admittance to the University of Iowa for a MA in journalism. This early study of the human condition in the particular style of a reporter, undoubtedly led to both authors being able to utilize the type of distanced, fly-on-the-wall narrative that involved describing microscopic details of a person's physical appearance and mannerisms. This journalistic approach to descriptive writing enabled both Dickens and O'Connor to develop a particular type of narrative voice that brought the reader into the text by allowing them to completely visualize the protagonists. This path was successful with these authors because both Dickens and O'Connor undertook close studies of the people around whom they lived. They utilized this close study of the people in their communities to create characters with whom the reader can connect because they have a basis in reality. These characters are exaggerated versions of the people who surrounded Dickens and O'Connor, but they are exaggerated to highlight the humour that these authors saw in them. These figures continue to be so entertaining to readers because they are unaware of the humour in themselves. As I demonstrated with the works of Malcolm Andrews and Henri Bergson, situations can become comic when the protagonist has a self-view that is disassociated from what is seen of them. Additionally, the situations become humorous when the unknowing characters are inserted into scenes of incongruity, but the characters stay unconscious as to how comic they truly are. The disillusionment of self is what drives the comedy in darker humour and it is what both Dickens and O'Connor excelled in with their narrative pieces.

Timothy Basselin discusses how it is the disabled figures who are the foci of O'Connor's works because she creates them as characters who are the vehicles for grace and redemption. Basselin summarizes that the disabled bodies present in O'Connor's work (and I argue these are also present in Dickens's work) elicit a combination of pity and fear in the characters who come into contact with them, and to

some extent, this combination of complicated feelings is also present within the reader. What Basselin says is the problem with this perception of the disabled bodied characters is that it “presumes that brokenness is pitiable, rather than natural” (Basselin 21). O’Connor’s works have many such characters: the hermaphrodite in “A Temple of the Holy Ghost,” Mr Shiflet in “The Life You Save May Be Your Own,” General Sash in “A Late Encounter with the Enemy” and Joy/Hulga in “Good Country People.” The problem with such a viewpoint, as O’Connor indeed tries to uncover in her works, is that the pity one feels for the disabled is sentimental. I proposed that this sentimentality, combined with pity and fear, brings the non-disabled figures to question at what point does the person’s biologically given body stop and the prosthetic which they use, begin? Dickens questions this line of prostheses connectivity in his works many times over. Utilizing Donna Haraway’s *A Cyborg Manifesto* which discusses the “leaky distinction” between “animal-human (organism) and machine”, I was able to connect these same questions regarding inorganic/organic parts to Dickens studies (4). As noted, Sussman and Joseph in “Prefiguring the Posthuman: Dickens and Prosthesis” also address this line of thought and effectively show how Dickens’s “novels record the puzzlement he shared with his time about the distinction between the animate and the inanimate” (617). The authors chiefly use *Dombey and Son* but, these inorganic/organic disabled bodies appear throughout Dickens’s works. Two of Dickens’s cyborgs (the term Haraway utilizes) that I examined closely in this thesis are Jenny Wren and Silas Wegg of *Our Mutual Friend*. These two are compelling figures because of the extent to which Dickens explored their character development: both are strong willed and express their inner desires (for good or for ill) regardless of the reception of their audiences. My argument in the chapters devoted to O’Connor was to demonstrate how this idea of the self-aware cyborg was brought into mainstream consciousness through Dickens’s writing, and was later given more fine attention in O’Connor’s short stories. Furthermore, through examining O’Connor’s characters, of which Joy/Hulga of “Good Country People” is one prominent example, readers can come to learn more about the inner psychology of Dickensian cyborg characters. I address this intertextual overlapping with Joy/Hulga and Silas Wegg, both of which are amputees with wooden legs. Analysing these characters along side the theoretical works of Sussman, Joseph and Haraway, it becomes evident that both Joy/Hulga and Silas Wegg are actively defining the line between the parts of a cyborg, answering the question about which parts are inorganic and organic. Through reading these characters

together, the reader can also see how both authors utilize these “disabled” bodies to push the boundaries of comedy. It is troubling for a reader to laugh at the misfortunes of a disabled character, but through analysing why and when we laugh at these cyborgs, we can also see that these figures have attained a significant power in their texts. We laugh at them because they have self-confidence in the face of misfortune (this is humorous because it is incongruous), and this confidence is something which other able-bodied figures in their respective texts lack. Although ultimately the cyborg characters mentioned succumb to downfalls in their novels, I demonstrated that these are due to their having subscribed to negative ideologies of the disabled predicated by the abled bodied majority. Ultimately, these ideologies are what culminate in their questioning the validity of their disabled bodies. Dickens and O’Connor were both analysing the troublesome aspects of humanity, the aspects which make those of us in “normal bodies” uncomfortable. Neither author was afraid to tackle utilizing disabled figures as characters unable of receiving our pity. Instead of using disabled characters as tropes for readerly sympathy, Dickens and O’Connor avidly sought to create characters who brought up questions on the boundaries of the body, self-awareness and self-love. Through creating characters that were not physically “normal,” both authors were able to reveal the quirky and uncomfortable aspects of being human that all bodies, disabled or not, share.

Lastly, the works of the Georgia author Carson McCullers were examined alongside those of Dickens, the most prominent example utilized was *Great Expectations*. I endeavoured to establish in the chapters on McCullers, that Dickens’s texts were well-known in the South during the early twentieth century when McCullers, an avid reader, was being educated. This, coupled with the McCullers family’s decent earnings and literary affinities, ensured that McCullers was well aware of Dickens’s popular works. Also addressed in this thesis was the fact that McCullers shared several interesting traits with Flannery O’Connor. These allow for their works to have a value of parallelism. Both grew up in rural Georgia towns feeling “different” from the norm, and as such, faced navigating race and gender in a time and place which held fast to well-defined boundaries on these issues. Additionally, both spent time working on their craft at the elite artists’ colony, Yaddo. Another similarity between these two would be their love for “freaks.” The freak show makes appearances in both McCullers’s and O’Connor’s works, and is used as a larger metaphor for the plight of being “other” in a world of strict norms. Kaplan remarks that as a child, Dickens “was noticeably slight in

build and he sometimes experienced attacks of severe pain in his left side...[as well] he had the sense of being frighteningly alone. Through much of his life, at times of emotional stress, the [painful] attacks would return” (42). Similarly, McCullers was thought to be “eccentric” by her classmates in school (Carr 29). Carr notes that McCullers “usually stood out in a crowd because she dared to be different” wearing more masculine clothing than was popular at the time (29). She was labelled “‘weird,’ ‘freakish-looking,’ and ‘queer’” and she remained in ill health from her adolescence to her adult life suffering from rheumatic fever, heart difficulties and strokes (Carr 29-30). McCullers was well known to be “sustained largely by coffee and cigarettes...[to] chain-smoke... almost three packs a day,” and to be continually suffer from fevers and breathing problems (Carr 64). Although both authors practiced different regimens, there are shared experiences of loneliness due to felt states of being “outsiders.” Dickens and McCullers deal with these feelings differently, but they both address these experiences through their creative works, and in some ways, deal with their difficult adolescences through their fictional story lines.

McCullers does write masterful short stories, the genre in which O'Connor excelled, but McCullers's success is with something more akin to Dickens's writing: following the conventions of the *Bildungsroman*. With *Great Expectations* and *David Copperfield*, Dickens adapted these conventions (set in popular eighteenth century texts of the genre), and added in his powerful observation narratives, to document the life of outsider, “nonnormative” children. Kathryn Bond Stockton's work on children who are deemed “nonnormative” is applicable to both McCullers's and Dickens's fictional children, and she termed this type of figure the “ghostly gay child” (17). This phrase works for Dickens's adolescent figures because it is not limited to homosexual characters, but includes an adolescent who functions as the shadow self of a socially normal child. When seen through this vantage, Pip is the most prominent of “ghostly gay child[ren]” in the oeuvre of Dickens, most apparently because he is the victim of traumas with which he has no way to process, and these lead him to feel displaced. Pip responds to this displacement by leaving his home and apprenticeship to be educated in London (with the help of a mysterious benefactor). Ultimately though, Pip is able to find happiness and self-love through his relationship with others. He oscillates between being a part of a group of three with Joe and Biddy and Herbert Pocket and his wife, Clara. McCullers's “ghostly gay child[ren]” Mick and Frankie also experience a close, non-romantic bond with two other characters. McCullers terms this non-romantic

belonging the “we of me” (*Wedding* 40). Through understanding McCullers’s use of the “we of me” with her displaced children characters, it becomes easily visible in *Great Expectations*.

Jill L. Matus’s work with Dickens and trauma helps to provide an explanation for seeing McCullers’s “we of me” in *Great Expectations*. Matus examines trauma theory throughout “The Signalman” and frameworks her ideas with Sigmund Freud’s theories of the action of deferring trauma, *Nachträglichkeit*. She demonstrates that through the repressed original trauma (for Dickens, she cites it as being the Staplehurst rail accident), Dickens became more interested in exploring the past and conquering “the inability to know the past as past” in his works (Matus 430). *Great Expectations* utilizes Dickens’s perception of trauma and consciousness, most especially with Pip. When Pip is introduced, he is already struggling with being an outsider in his own home, but it is his traumatic meeting with Abel Magwitch, who threatens more bodily harm to Pip, as well as cannibalism (Magwitch says he has a friend who will eat Pip if he does not comply with what Magwitch wants) that becomes the boy’s *Nachträglichkeit*. Pip buries the disturbing encounter deeply in his subconscious in order to move forward, but as we see, the encounter does not stay buried. He returns to it throughout his adolescence and melds it with the other disturbing adult of his life, Miss Havisham.

McCullers’s outsider children, Frankie and Mick, also experience a repressed trauma (*Nachträglichkeit*) and seek to form bonds to others in the hopes of finding acceptance. Frankie of *Member of the Wedding* suffers the original trauma of feeling horribly ugly and freakish in an awkward body amid the southern beauties of her town, and she wants to throw off her ties to this “freakish” life (the “we of me” of her, Berenice and John Henry) in favour of a more romanticized family ideal (her brother Jarvis and his new fiancée Janis). She is rejected from this socially acceptable “we of me,” and this leaves Frankie with nowhere to turn but back to her original “freakish” group. However, that “we of me” disbands, and Frankie is left trying to navigate her place in life without those who loved her for who she was. Mick of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* encounters a similar trauma, that of being a tomboy who is made to feel ugly and unwanted. She is attracted to form a friendship with the deaf mute, John Singer, because she feels he (also an outsider) has a secret knowledge of how to find acceptance and love. Mick’s “we of me” is made up Portia and Bubber, and like *Member of the Wedding*, this “we of me” is already established at the beginning of the

novel, and the narrative demonstrates the breaking up of the original group. Like Frankie, Mick is unable to go back to her original “we of me” which loved her for her true self, and has sought to displace this group with something more romanticised. Both female protagonists seek a way to find self-love and acceptance in a world which classifies them as “other.”

Although Pip is plucked from his humble beginnings and is transplanted to London in order to be raised as a gentleman, his subconscious mind is still a small boy on the marshes, a boy tormented by a convict in chains and mocked by a woman who personifies the living dead. This *Nachträglichkeit* (his buried traumatic episode with Magwitch) becomes reality when Pip discovers that it is in fact Magwitch who has paid for Pip’s education. This forces Pip to deal with the ramifications of his past, including how he has mistreated others who truly loved him (chiefly Joe and Biddy). Pip utilizes the “we of me” in order to feel a sense of belonging while trying to deal with repressed feelings of “otherness” and trauma. After experiencing his life in London and learning the truths about Magwitch and Miss Havisham, Pip longs for, but also rejects, his original home with Joe and Biddy. The knowledge that he cannot return to how life used to be presents the possibility for Pip to integrate the traumas of his youth into a current understanding of himself. He finds comfort in the relationship he has with Herbert and his wife Clara, and for eleven years lives with them in Egypt while continuing to work on clearing his debts incurred in London and repaying those he owes to Joe and Biddy. Pip also utilizes his time in Egypt to forge a closer relationship to Joe and Biddy via letter writing, and when he returns to England, he is able to continue a positive relationship with both of them. Although the reader is not aware of how McCullers’s protagonists grow after having come to terms with their traumas, we can see that they have reached an understanding of themselves at the close of their texts. Mick and Frankie both leave the reader with questions as to how they will adapt in their adult lives, but we do see that they have accepted their repressed traumas (*Nachträglichkeit*). The action of discovering the repressed trauma can lead to self-acceptance (as we see it does with Pip), and this hints to McCullers’s audience that perhaps her characters, like Pip, can learn self-love.

The aim of this thesis was to demonstrate that the felt familiarity audiences have with Dickens’s characters also becomes a transference of character types for writers who have been exposed to Dickens (either through reading or through cultural absorption). My research has proven that Faulkner, O’Connor and McCullers all read

Dickens and/or admired aspects of his writing, most notably his ability to create realistic characters. By the early twentieth century, Dickens's characters had become archetypes of the human experience. These examples drew the attention of those working in the "New South" of the 1920s–1940s: Faulkner, O'Connor and McCullers. These authors were working to create fiction about the often overlooked Southern community: those living in poverty, and sometimes ignorance, for whom there seemed little hope of redemption. The authors examined in this thesis are working with the complex concept of epiphany; they created protagonists who are in search of their own souls, and this search mirrored that of the Southern man/woman. I argue that is why Dickensian characters hold such power: they present those in search of what is lost or hidden, those searching for themselves.

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