

العلمي والبحث العالي التعليم وزارة

MINISTRY OF HIGHER EDUCATION & SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH

MOULOUD MAMMERI UNIVERSITY OF
TIZI-OUZOU
FACULTY OF ARTS & LANGUAGES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH



جامعة مولود معمري – تيزي وزو
كلية الآداب و اللغات
قسم اللغة الانجليزية

DOMAIN: Letters and Foreign Languages.

SUBJECT: English.

Specialty: Comparative literature.

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master in English**

Title:

***Corruption and Hypocrisy in Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist (1837) and
Mark Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884).***

Presented by:

Abed Kamel

Bouriah Nacer

Supervised by:

Mrs. Aziz Rabea

Board of Examiners:

Khelifa Arezki, M.C.B a l'UMMTO, Chair.

Seddiki Sadia, M.M.A a l'UMMTO, Examiner.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank our teacher and supervisor Mrs Aziz Rabea for her guidance, help and assistance to achieve this humble dissertation. We would like also to express our sincere gratitude for all those who have contributed in a way or another in the achievement of this work. Our thanks also go to the teachers who have accepted to examine our work.

Dedications

To

My dear family

My friends and classmates

My beloved Milou

Kamel Abed

To

My dear family

My friends and classmates

BouriahNacer

Abstract

Based on Dickens' Oliver Twist and Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, this dissertation intends to study some central themes which the two novels share. This dissertation is concerned with the study of the portrayal of corrupt adult world in the above mentioned novels. We have examined from a New Historicist aspect, the broader evaluation that the two authors made of the mid nineteenth century England and America. This research paper has been divided into three chapters. The first one encompasses the time and life of the two authors. The second chapter entitled Corruption and Hypocrisy in Oliver Twist deals with Dickens depiction of the Victorian corrupt society. The last chapter puts emphasis on Twains' realistic portrayal of the hypocrisy of the post Civil War American society. Throughout our work, we have shown that, the two authors, despite their different environments, share similar features, mainly in their ethical and political potential of literature, and their social novels in particular, since they both treated their fictions as a springboard for debates about moral and social reforms.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	III
Acknowledgements.....	IV
Abstract.....	V
I. Introduction.....	01
Review of the literature.....	04
Issue and Working Hypothesis.....	07
II. Methods and Materials	
Methods: New Historicism.....	12
Materials.....	14
Summaries.....	14
1. <i>Oliver Twist</i>	14
2. <i>The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i>	15
III. Results.....	19
IV. Discussion	
Chapter one:Chapter One: Time and Life of Charles Dickens and Mark Twain	
1. Historical Background	21
2. The Life of Charles Dickens and Mark Twain.....	26

Chapter two: Corruption and Hypocrisy in *Oliver Twist*:

1. Poverty in a Corrupt Society.....	33
2. Religious Hypocrisy	39

Chapter three: Corruption and Hypocrisy in *The Adventures of Huckleberry*:

1. Corruption of an American Civilized Society.....	48
2. Religious Hypocrisy	52

IV. Conclusion.....	58
----------------------------	-----------

Bibliography	60
---------------------------	-----------

I) Introduction:

Apart from being a product of art, literature is a prominent device for painting vivid pictures of a given society's social, political and ideological issues. Besides, "*The subject matter of literature must be comprehensive, embracing every facet of human experience*"¹. Literary works are used as instruments for expressing different political opinions and exposing social defects and injustices which a society endures.

In fact, numerous writers, especially social commentators and critics, developed their artistry to realize different literary works and social novels that picture unjust economic and social conditions from which the oppressed population suffer. Indeed, authors, throughout literary masterpieces, and by mixing historical circumstances with fiction, depict and paint pictures of a damaged population victimized by social corruption and hypocrisy. These writers engage in sharp and intense critiques to denounce the various abuses of the ruling powers, by exposing the miserable conditions of people living under corrupt and hypocritical systems. It is worth mentioning that early examples of these kinds of literary works emerged in late 18th Century England, and then spread to Europe and America at the beginning of the 19th Century. Among those writers, we may mention two major literary figures: Charles Dickens, a British novelist who is the most influential and representative writer of the Victorian era, and Mark Twain; one of America's best known writers of the post-Civil War period.

Thus, the main purpose of this dissertation is to shed light on the way Dickens and Twain criticize the social systems and political institutions of both 19th Century Victorian and southern American society. We will, indeed, put emphasis on the authors' realistic portrayal of their corrupt and hypocritical societies by presenting numerous issues through their literary

works and fiction. Furthermore, to highlight the broader evaluation that the two authors jointly made of the evils of the mid-nineteenth Century British and American social systems, our study will mainly focus on Charles Dickens' masterpiece *Oliver twist* (1837) and Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). These two pieces of art, which have enriched the universal library, share many themes, especially that of corruption and hypocrisy which the two authors perfectly exposed through the stories of their characters. They point out the problems of social abuse, including exploitation, discrimination and class division. In fact, the two novels draw the reader's attention to the flaws and ills that ensue from a great social and economic transformation that England and America witnessed in the first half of the 19th Century mainly resulted from the Industrial Revolution.

In other words, the two novels provide great insights about the contemporary social picture of both 19th Century industrial England and America. Dickens and Twain succeed in disclosing the effects of the Industrial Revolution which transformed the British and American economic and social structure respectively. Yet, the corrupt world which Charles Dickens realistically describes in *Oliver Twist* differs from the one that the American writer portrays in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The main reason behind this divergence lie in the different historical backgrounds of the two novels, the political systems that the two literary figures criticize and the way the Industrial Revolution influenced the authors' distinct geographical areas.

In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens exposes the dangerous consequences which the Industrial Revolution engendered in England. He sharply criticizes the Victorian corrupt system that favors the victimization of poor and the massive exploitation of children by picturing the darker side of industrial England. The obvious target of *Oliver Twist*, as John Peck believes, is the New Poor Law of 1834 which, according to him, worsens the working class's bad

conditions. Peck claims that “*Dickens, in his characteristically populist way, challenges the inhumanity of aspects of the new legislation*”². In fact, Dickens, via his novel, gives a vivid picture of the serious powers that threatened the Victorian poor society, by exposing the multiple abuses of the New Poor Law system. Additionally, the English writer shows his discontent at the social diseases that dominate his society, mainly the hypocrisy of the parochial institutions, which totally ignore the problems and harsh conditions of the poor lower class.

On the other hand, the major issues that Mark Twain explores in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) are slavery and racism. In fact, the American moralist intensely criticizes the process of exploitation and manipulation exercised by the white American people over the black ones. Twain’s masterpiece is often considered as an anti-racist novel, since it denounces the dehumanization of the black people by the so-called “Good Whites”. In the novel, the author shows how the black slaves are inhumanly exploited and abused by the white slaveholders who believed that the black race is forbidden to live together with the white one in terms of social and economic equality. Although the novel is set in the antebellum South, the years from 1876 to 1883, during which *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was written, witnessed a radical progress as the Industrial Revolution started to take roots in the South-West. So, despite the abolition of slavery after the Emancipation Proclamation, the American hypocritical system Twain clearly criticized, still divided humanity into two sub-groups; the “civilized” whites who are considered as the superior race, and the “savage” blacks who are largely discriminated and exploited by the formers’ authoritarian figures.

As has been noted, Dickens and Twain’s concerns with the corrupt world they portrayed are as different as the historical and cultural background in which they wrote their

fictions. However, these specific differences are of secondary importance by comparison with the wider evaluation the two authors made of their industrial societies, similarly dominated by the spirit of materialism and characterized by religious hypocrisy. Hence, Charles Dickens' representation of the Victorian society's issues, and Mark Twain's portrayal of the Post-Civil War America's evil world coincide in *Oliver Twist* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, since both of them deal with the negative outcomes of the Industrial Revolution and its serious impacts on England and America as well.

Review of the literature:

Oliver Twist and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* are among the best known novels and they are recognized as classics in literature. The content of the two books and the important elements they carry about the portrayal of corruption and hypocrisy in mid-nineteenth Century England and America were the points of interest for many writers. In fact, they have been the subject of many critics who studied them from different perspectives and even compared them to a large number of other literary works. Many, literary researches tackled the two novels under the historical approach, regarding the corrupt adult world they both portray.

Beginning with Dickens' book *Oliver Twist*, Andrzej Diniejko is one of those who studied the novel in relation to the nineteenth Century English Poor Laws which, according to him, were the main reason that pushed Dickens to write his novel. In his article: "*Charles Dickens as Social Commentator and Critic*", Diniejko believes that the most predominant theme in *Oliver Twist* is the abuses of the new Poor Law system. He states that:

The critique of the Poor Law of 1834 and the administration of the workhouse is presented in the opening chapters of *Oliver Twist*. Dickens gives the most uncompromising critique of the Victorian workhouse, which was run according to a regime of prolonged hunger, physical punishment, humiliation and hypocrisy.³

Accordingly, Ruth Richardson joined Diniejko's criticism through examining "*Dickens' own experience of poverty and the social and political context in which he was writing*"⁴. In fact, by pointing out the important political reforms that the Victorian England witnessed, Richardson affirms that "*the government's intention was to slash expenditure on poverty by setting up a cruelly deterrent regime*"⁵. Hence, she continues arguing that Dickens wrote his novel to show the corrupt system's harsh treatment of the working class and the victimization of the children, by introducing them into workhouses where they were largely exploited. Indeed, Richardson is convinced that *Oliver Twist* is nothing but Dickens' denouncement of the disadvantages of the 19th Century English Poor Laws. In this sense, she asserts:

Most people nowadays know about the Poor Law and its workhouses from *Oliver Twist* - whether from the book, film or the musical. The image of the skinny neglected little boy asking for more has become a classic. For Charles Dickens, writing a novel about the Poor Law was a thoughtful intervention in a contemporary national debate. You can hear in his tone of voice - occasionally heavy with satire or irony - that he regarded the Poor Law as profoundly un-Christian. Dickens intended *Oliver Twist*, first published in monthly installments between February 1837 and April 1839, to show the system's treatment of an innocent child born and raised in the workhouse system, where no 'fault' could be ascribed to the child.⁶

Here Richardson shows how the Victorian author satirizes the New Poor Law and considers it as un-Christian. Additionally, Allegra Hayes tackles another issue which is prominent in Dickens' novel: the hypocrisy of the parish institutions. In fact, she notes that after the Industrial Revolution took its roots in the Victorian society, the Christian institutions, established by the Poor Law, were frequently acting by distorted Christian values. To Hayes, the author, In *Oliver twist*, exposes "*the masked and scheming hypocrisy of the Anglican Church in the 1800s*"⁷ and the corrupt workhouse directors who disregard the biblical testaments and injunctions. The above mentioned critic argues: "*Dickens' satirical novel paints the hypocrisy of the 19th century Anglican Church in vivid colors, and artfully*

*demonstrates the corruption that results from the secularization of an originally religious institution.”*⁸

Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has also been a prolific subject of criticism. It has grabbed the attention of many critics who have examined and explored different standpoints of the novel. While some scholars believe that the book is carrying racial stereotypes, since the author uses the word “Nigger”, which is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as “a very offensive word for a black person”⁹, most of modern critics agree that Twain’s main purpose in writing *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is to evaluate the pre-Civil War American society in order to criticize the industrial one, mainly dominated by a corrupt and hypocritical world, notably characterized by racial discrimination and extreme bigotry.

Shelley Fisher Fishkin claims that the novel is a sharp critique on the so called “civilized” society. She supposes that Mark Twain realistically portrays a society full of hypocrisy, since the white men, who consider themselves good and civilized, are the most corrupt and hypocrite. Fishkin in his book, *A Historical Guide to Mark Twain* writes:

When Twain took up the subject of racism in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the time, the place and the race would be different. But the central question would be the same: how can a society that debases human lives on a mass scale can consider itself civilized? in *Huckleberry Finn*, as in earlier works, Twain used irony to shame his countrymen into recognizing the gap between their images of themselves and reality, as he portrays a racist society through the eyes of a boy too innocent to challenge that society’s norms.¹⁰

Fishkin explains that Twain, through his novel, has shown that even after the end of the Civil War, American society has changed little, and that it is still dominated by its white men’s racist and uncivilized nature.

Despite the novel's perpetual state of controversy, Twain's supporters constantly argued that the American humorist intends to report what Stephen Railton calls "*the repeated evidence of the cruelty, violence and hypocrisy of white society*"¹¹. It is important to mention that, even after the book's publication, black Americans suffered more from racism and discrimination. This correlation is best illustrated by the American novelist Toni Morrison who, by analyzing *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in relation to its context, believes that "*The 1880s saw the collapse of civil rights for blacks as well as the publication of Huckleberry Finn*"¹² This collapse, according to her, "*was an effort to bury the combustible issues twain raised in his novel*"¹³

Issue and Working Hypothesis:

From our review of the literature, one can notice that both *Oliver Twist* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* have been the centre of many critics, due to the global issues they encompass. Concerning *Oliver Twist*, many scholars seem to have focused mainly on Dickens' portrayal of the social injustices of the corrupt and hypocritical Victorian society which witnessed the emergence of social class division due to an overwhelming urban development that resulted from the Industrial Revolution. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* also appears to have attracted many critics who approached the novel in terms of Twain's allegorical depiction of the hypocrisy of the post Civil War American society. Moreover, as said before, the two novels are compared to a considerable list of literary works but, to our knowledge, no comparative study has yet implied them together.

No doubt, comparing Dickens' literary works to those of Twain may seem surprising, considering the geographical distances that may set their works apart. Indeed, while Charles Dickens is a Victorian social novelist whose masterpiece is viewed as the most "*important manifestation of the Victorian social conscience*"¹⁴, Mark twain is an American humorist and

playwright whom William Faulkner considers “*the father of the American literature*”¹⁵. It is true that this factor among many others; such as historical background and style seem to set both authors apart and reject that their literary works could be studied jointly. However, a deep study of both fictions may be productive in terms of drawing undeniable similarities and common points as they are set in fictitious spheres where corruption and hypocrisy dominate. The aim of this dissertation then, is to study the historical context of Dickens and Twain’s respective fictions, in relation to their dealing with the major issues that were prevalent in their societies.

In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens focuses on the presentation of the social injustices that prevailed in the Victorian society. In fact, the author highlights the socio-economic problems which the poor suffer from. Besides, Dickens shows throughout his characters, how corrupt the English political and social systems are, especially by attacking the New Poor Law of 1834, which, instead of improving the horrible conditions of the poor, it sets them, mainly children, into workhouses, where they were ill-treated and abused. Like Dickens, Twain, through *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, examines the American society, which is not only immoral and decayed, but completely “*filled with arrogant racial hypocrisy*”¹⁶. The American author, indeed, expresses his disenchantment with the corrupt system that divided humanity into white superiors and black savages, relying mainly on the complicity of religion and politics in strengthening the irrational racial beliefs.

Thus, the aim of this research paper is to show that although both authors derive from two distinct settings, their works share similar features and comparable perceptions about their societies. It consists of observing the way in which *Oliver Twist* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* expose the corrupt adult world in both British and American societies of the mid-nineteenth Century. Our analysis then, will take into consideration the historical context

in which Dickens and Twain's novels were set, in order to show how both authors were influenced by the historical incidents in writing *Oliver Twist* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* respectively.

Methodological Outline:

To reach the aimed purpose our work will follow the IMRAD method: we have started our research with an introduction that highlighted our issue. Then in our review of the literature, we have provided an insight into the wide criticism that the two novels received in relation to the theme of corruption and hypocrisy. In the section of method and materials we shall present the theory of New Historicism to support our work with a theoretical basis. We shall also provide summaries of the two novels *Oliver Twist* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. In the Results section, we shall present the results reached in our comparative study of Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* portrayal of Corruption and Hypocrisy in Victorian England and Post Civil war America. Finally, in the discussion section, we will handle three chapters: the first one will be devoted to the times and lives of Charles Dickens and Mark Twain. This part also embodies the historical background of *Oliver Twist* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The second part entitled Corruption and Hypocrisy in *Oliver Twist*; will deal with the Victorian society's unfairness and abuses as portrayed in Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. In this section, we are going to show the author's evaluation of the Victorian society and his attacks on the parochial institutions that repressed the working class and harshly exploited children. The last section will explore Mark Twains' criticism of mid nineteenth century American Social and political standards at most characterized by materialism and racial oppressions even after the abolition of slavery. The conclusion will include the whole ideas exposed throughout the research work.

Endnotes

¹ A.O Aldridge, “The Universal in Literature” in *World Literature*, Theo D’haen, César Dominguez and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen (Rotledge, 2012), 132.

² John Peck and Martin Coyle, *A Brief History of English Literature* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 170.

³ Andrzej Diniejko, Charles Dickens as Social Commentator and Critic, (Warsaw University, February 2012)

⁴ Ruth Richardson, *Olver Twist* and the Workhouse, (British LibRARY, May 2014)

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Allegra Hayes, Religion and Hypocrisy in *Oliver Twist*; (Massachusetts, 2003)

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English, S. Wehmeier, (Oxford University Press, 2005)

¹⁰ Shelley Fisher Fishkin, *A Historical Guide to Mark Twain* writes, (Oxford University Press, 2002), 136.

¹¹ Stephen Railton, Jim and Mark Twain: What Do Dey Stan’ For, (VQR, December, 2003)

¹² Stephen K. George, *Ethics, Literature, and Theory: An Introductory Reader*, (Sheed & Ward, Juil, 2005), 283.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Kanna Muthiah, The Societal reflections in Dicken's Plays, (Sadakathullah Appa College, December, 2012)

¹⁵ Wendy Martin Ph and Cecelia Tichi, *The Gilded Age and Progressive Era: A Historical Exploration of Literature*, (ABC-CLIO, February, 2016), 15.

¹⁶ Fredrik Kallin, Racial and Religious Hypocrisy in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, (Kristianstad University, 2007)

Method and Materials

I. Methods

New Historicism

Our work is based, as we have already seen, on Dickens's *Oliver Twist* and Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Since our approach in studying the two books will be historicist and comparative at the same time, our analysis will be based on the theory of New Historicism. New historicism is a literary theory that emerged in the 1980s which aims to understand and interpret literature through its historical context. Stephen Greenblatt is considered as its main corroborator as far as Bakhtin, Marx and Foucault who were of significant influence in expanding the primary principles of the theory. New historicism claims that a literary work must be considered a "*product of time, place and historical circumstances of its composition rather than as an isolated work of art or text.*"¹ To be more specific, instead of studying a text in separation from its historical context, "*new historicists attend primarily to the historical and cultural conditions of its production, its meaning, its effects, and also of its later critical interpretations and evaluations.*"² Furthermore, Aram Veesser introduces New Historicism as an attempt "*to explain facts by reference to earlier facts ... he meant the attempts to find explanation and relevant material in social sciences other than the one which is primarily under investigation.*"³ This means that a literary work is not just the result of its author's fiction and conception, but rather the social circumstances of its origination which Hyppolyte Taine called "*race, milieu, and moment.*"⁴ Those aspects represent the key materials with which literature is produced, as the American literary critic M.H. Abrams illustrates by declaring that "*new historicists conceive of a literary text as 'situated' within the totality of the institutions, social practices, and discourses that constitute*

the culture of a particular time and place, and with which the literary text interacts as both a product and a producer of cultural energies and codes”⁵

Another important point, in which New Historicism is concerned with, is the interpretation of history via literary texts and thus recreating it. In fact, they believe that history is not a collection of fixed facts but it is conceived as a text which itself needs to be interpreted. Cynthia Burkhead best explains this idea in the following quotation:

[...] Actual truths are entirely historical creatures, directed at history and grown in a historical chain, as interpretation refers to interpretation throughout history ... we use our imagination to decompose old worlds and to compose new worlds, through weighting, ordering, supplementing, deleting and ‘deforming’, i.e., correcting or distorting.⁶

As we have already mentioned, *Oliver Twist* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* are two novels that were constantly shaped by their historical context. So the application of the aforementioned theory is pertinent, as it interprets and links literature in relevance to the social, economic, cultural and political circumstances that constitute a particular society. In *Oliver Twist*, we will focus our analysis on Dickens’s vivid portrayal of the corrupt Victorian society and his attack on the institution’s injustice of which the author was the subject, mainly during his childhood. Similarly, the major concern in studying *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is to examine Twain’s realistic depiction of the social evils that characterized the Nineteenth Century industrial America, and to show how the American humorist criticizes the ills he witnessed in his discriminating, hypocritical and racist society. As far as New Historicism is widely concerned in our research, characterization and style will be briefly approached in analyzing Dickens and Twain’s fictions. In fact, in order to go into the depth of the two author’s fictionalized worlds, we will firstly discuss how their characters serve as mirror through which the issues of their living societies are reflected, and then we will explore

the two writers' use of satire and irony to mock at the industrial English and American corrupt and hypocritical institutions and values.

II Materials

Summaries of the two novels:

Oliver Twist

The story is about an orphan named Oliver, who is born in a workhouse, in a small English town. His mother died during his birth, leaving him to spend his first nine years with Mrs. Corney in an orphanage. In his ninth birthday, Oliver is removed from the baby farm by Mr Bumble, who puts him in a workhouse for adults, where he submitted six months of ill treatment and starvation. One evening, after the so called "dinner", the other boys convinced Oliver to ask for more food. Consequently, he was sold to a chimney sweep, from which he escaped and then becomes an apprentice and works for a local undertaker, Mr. Sowerbery, in whose house Oliver has to sleep between the coffins. During his apprenticeship, he meets Noah Claypole, a parish boy and Sowerbery's other apprentice. Noah abuses him and qualifies his dead mother as a criminal, which lead Oliver to react and attack him. Hence, Oliver is arrested by Mrs. Sowerbery and they made to beat him and lock him up. Later on, he manages to run away to London before he is beaten and starved to death.

On the long road to London, the orphan encounters Jack Dawkins, also known as the Artful Dodger, who tells Oliver that he can work for his nice boss named Fagin. However, the latter is an elderly Jewish criminal, who is leading a gang of young thieves and burglars including Bill Sikes and Nancy, his companion. Oliver is sent out on the street for the first time together with Jack and another young colleague. When he sees them steal a handkerchief

from a nice elderly gentleman, Oliver runs away, and the old man thinks that he was the thief. Oliver is arrested and put before a judge, who gives short shrift to him and then punished for three months hard labor. But the stolen elderly gentleman says that he is not sure it was him, so Oliver gets released and Mr. Brownlow takes him to his home.

There, Oliver falls severely ill, but is being rapidly supported by the good caring lady, who takes custody of the poor orphan. Mr Brownlow's friend, Mr Grimwig did not trust Oliver, and believes he is a pickpocket. When Mr. Brownlow sent the boy to pay for some books in the bookseller, he is caught again by Nancy and Sikes, who take him to Fagin. After a while, he has to assist Sikes on a burglary; they are to break into a manner house in the country. The robbery goes wrong and Oliver receives a gunshot wound. Early in the next morning, he was found by Rose, lying on the doorstep of the manner and then she nurses him back to life. After a time, Nancy witnesses a secret conversation between Fagin and a mysterious man named Monks, in which they planned to kill Oliver. Nancy meets Rose and informs her that Monks is knowing of Oliver's parentage and wants to kill him. Fagin is hardly heard of Nancy's treason and Sikes to kill her. When trying to escape, Sikes accidentally hangs himself. Fagin is executed and Monks confesses that he is the half brother of Oliver and wanted to kill him in order to acquire the whole of his father's heritage. Monks moves to America and Oliver is adopted by Mr Brownlow with whom he lives in happiness.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn:

The novel, which is a sequel to Twain's *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; takes place in the American South around the 1840, a few decades before the Civil War. The story begins in the fictional town of St Petersburg where Huck Finn, a young boy about thirteen years old who comes from a lower social class of the American society, is adopted by the Widow Douglas and her sister Miss Watson. While both of them attempt to educate and civilize him

in the ways of school and the teachings of the bible, Huck rejects this way of life and decides to elaborate a plan to escape from this boring life. At the mean time, Pap, Huck's father, hears about a huge amount of money that his son found in his previous adventures with his friend Tom, and which the bank kept for him in confidence. He then comes and asks for his sons' money. The widow Douglas and a judge named Thatcher attempt to take care of Huck's money, but another judge claims that his natural father has the right to get a part of his son's money. Later on, Pap kidnaps Huck and puts him in a shack, but the boy escapes after having faked his death and then finds his way to Jackson's Island, where he meets Jim, Miss Watson's runaway slave.

Jim escapes after hearing Miss Watson talking about selling him to a distant plantation far from his family, where he will be harshly exploited and ill treated. Huck befriends Jim and pledges him that he will keep him out of slavery. They team up and flow downstream trying to reach Ohio, where slavery has been abolished. After a big storm flooding the Mississippi, Jim and Huck find an abandoned raft and a house floating on the river. They go inside to explore the house and find a dead man that Jim knows is Huck's father but would not let the boy see. Later, Huck dresses up as a girl to get some information from people in a nearby town. However, a woman notices that he acts like a boy. She tells Huck that her husband has planned to capture the runaway slave on the island that night. Huck runs away quickly to tell Jim that they need to leave. After finding a steamboat with murderers on it, Huck and Jim get separated. They get lost in the fog and don't find each other until the next morning.

Once met, they want to go to Cairo, where Jim could be freed, but they accidentally passed it in the fog. Soon, they get hit with a boat and lose each other again. Huck goes ashore and, after avoiding guard dogs, stays with a wealthy family, the Grangerfords. He befriends their son. The Grangerfords are in a feud with the Shepherdsons and Huck watches a battle

that buck is killed in. One of the Grangerford's slaves tells Huck to go to the river. There, he finds Jim and they escape again. Shortly after, two thieves beg to be let onto their raft. Huck lets them, but they only cause trouble. The Duke and The King put on shows in town, but it is actually a hoax. They also try to steal money, pretending to be relatives to a man who just passed away. When they come ashore in one town, Jim is captured and Huck learns that the King has sold him for some dollars. Huck goes to the Phelps farm where Jim is kept. He finds Tom sawyer's aunt and uncle, and pretends to be Tom. The latter eventually arrives and pretends to be Sid, his own younger brother. The boys want to free Jim, but Tom insists on doing so in an adventurous manner. They run away one night and tom is shot in the leg.

Later, Tom and Huck's identities are discovered. Jim tells Huck that the dead man they found in the floating house some months before was his father. Finally, with his father dead, Huck doesn't want to return to civilization again, he and his two friends decide to travel west on the raft and have adventures with the Indian.

Endnotes

¹ New World Encyclopedia, New Historicism, accessed on 29-October-2017, 21:41

http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/New_Historicism

² Literary theory and Criticism, New Historicism, accessed on 30-October-2017, 12:17

<https://sites.google.com/site/nimeshdaveeporfolio/home/assignments/semester-2/literary-theory-and-criticism>

³ Aram Veaser, *The New Historicism Reader*, (New York, Penguin books, 1994), 10.

⁴ Anders Pettersson, Gunilla Lindberg-Wada, Margareta Petersson, Stefan Helgesson, *Literary History: Towards a Global Perspective*, (Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 124.

⁵ M.H. Abrams, Geoffrey Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, (Cengage Learning). 244.

⁶ Cynthia Burkhead, *Student Companion to John Steinbeck*, Westport, (Greenwood Press, 2002), 43.

Results

The comparative study that we have carried out on Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* has allowed us to explore two preeminent literary figures that influenced the literary field and even political one. The former is considered one of the most influential authors of the Victorian era whose works were of major importance in raising public opinions which influenced the decisions of the British authorities. The latter is viewed as the father of the American literature, whose literary fictions, mainly the *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, reflected and portrayed an American civilized society full of hypocrisy and corruption.

In this dissertation, we have tried to show that the above mentioned writers share similar, if not to say, identical themes despite the elements that may put them apart. Indeed, the two literary figures, who came from different geographical areas and from distinct historical backgrounds, share the same undertones of criticism and produced similar genres such as social novels in which they denounce the major ills that afflict their societies.

We have developed this analysis by taking into consideration the historical background in which the two books were set. The study has shown that the two writers mirrored the historical events that characterized their periods of time. Thus, to carry on our analysis, we made an appeal to the theory of New Historicism which attempts to study literary works in relation to the major historical events that preceded them.

Throughout the research paper, we have presented the two authors' evaluation of their societies by studying the two novels in relation to the theme of corruption and hypocrisy. We came to the result that although Dickens and Twain similarly criticized their corrupt and hypocritical world, they differ in the success that these two writers achieved in their criticism.

Discussion:

This section intends to examine the theme of corruption and hypocrisy in Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. We will put emphasis first; on the historical background of both novels and the life and time of both authors. Then we will move to the study of Dickens' realistic depiction of the issues that dominated the mid-nineteenth century English society, mainly characterized by social stratification and child labor, and then the hypocrisy of the parochial institutions which subdued the working class instead of delivering them from their enduring horrible conditions. We will also analyze Twain's scathing criticism of the Post-Civil War American greed and hypocritical society and how *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* mirrors the ugly nature of post-Civil War American whites. All these concepts will be studied by appealing to the theory of New Historicism.

Chapter One: Time and Life of Charles Dickens and Mark Twain

A New Historicist reading of *Oliver Twist* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is concerned with the social and political circumstances that shaped the epoch in which the two novels were produced. It is also interested in showing the ideological and social standards that characterized the environment in which they were produced. For, New Historicism is a project of reading literature in relation to history, society and politics.¹ *Oliver Twist* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, as we have already explained in the previous chapter, were written in a period which witnessed a far-reaching social and political metamorphose. The former was written in a crucial period characterized by a rapid industrial growth and the big increase of the Victorian population which created various social issues including social stratification, poverty and crime. Correspondingly, the epoch in which the latter was

produced, was marked by a colossal economic development which had not only positive but also negative impacts on the American society.

Historical Background:

Oliver Twist

Oliver Twist was written as an attack on the abuses of the British institutions in early nineteenth century. Charles Dickens was about to produce a work which would have a great impact not only on literary criticism but in the political field as well. The author's personal experience, mainly his childhood, and the radical shift, started from the Industrial Revolution that Britain witnessed in mid-nineteenth century, served as a plot of *Oliver Twist*.

In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens expresses his great flounce at the evils of the Victorian society. The novel was published in 1837 at a time when serious social, political and economic transformations took place in England due to the industrial and urban rapid growth known as the Industrial Revolution. The nation witnessed a great development and prosperity, but its façade stashed various contemporary social issues including extreme poverty, child laboring, the victimization of women and the rise of criminality.

The Victorian era is one of Britain's most crucial periods which is marked by Queen Victoria's reign from (1837 to 1901). The epoch is considered the apex of the Industrial Revolution considering; the great and rapid expansions that trade and industry witnessed, the colossal advances which technology and science attended and the government's introduction of numerous important reforms. Yet, this great development goes with a huge growth in population which widens the gap between the rich and poor, and then leads to a highly stratified society divided into three main distinct classes: the upper class, the middle class and

the lower class, also known as the working class. People belonging to the working class were ruthlessly exploited by the bourgeois. In fact, the industrial boom needed such huge manpower that even children were victims of a harsh industrial and social slavery.

In the period during which Dickens planned and wrote *Oliver Twist*, new laws were just starting to be proceeded over the country. Among the most influential legislations was the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, also known as the New Poor Law. The latter initiated the workhouse system which confined sick and poor people into places where they are supposed to be supported and provided with food and clothes. However, instead of serving as refuges for this category of needy suffering people, the workhouses exploited, mistreated and punished them severely. Children were the most exploited in these workhouses, they have to work more than ten hours a day in a horrible and atrocious conditions.

Dickens was a witness of the defects that afflicted his society. He was aware of the materialist and greedy regime, which introduces the poor, mainly children, to the workhouses' barbarities and inhuman exploitations. As Roger Ebert recently put it:

Dickens grew up in a world of workhouses for children, child prostitution, "charity" institutions run with cruelty and greed, schools that taught nothing and were run for profit, and people, who preyed on children, starved and mistreated them, and praised themselves for their benevolence.²

In this society, poor had no voice whether political or economic; the only mirror through which their harsh living conditions could be reflected is that of social criticism. Genres such as social novel known as social protest or social problem are the most used when tempting to have an undertone of social criticism³. Dickens is one of the fierce critics of the Victorian corrupt and hypocritical society. He gives voice, through his fictions, to those who have no voice, by exposing their poverty and cruel living conditions via his social novels. In fact, Dickens wanted to show how the British institutions, through new legislations, oppressed the laboring class, and this is shown by depicting the daily routine of the poor, who were

enslaved, dehumanized and considered like machines, serving for the benefit and profit of the middle class' Greed manufactory leaders.

Oliver twist is considered Dickens' first novel to convey a social commentary. Its success assured Dickens' strong determination to write on social topics⁴. The novel was written as a critic to the common Victorian philosophy about the poor, which believed that poverty is just a person's own guilt and not the government's responsibility. The English social commentator completely opposed this philosophy by exposing the government's corrupt and hypocritical system mainly described as greedy and materialist. Moreover, *Oliver Twist* contributed highly to the birth of public opinion that influenced the government's social reforms. The novel made the Victorian public opinion more conscious of the poor life and the authorities' demonic strategies in exploiting the working class. It is seen as a direct manifestation of the Victorian public conscience.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

American literature has been marked for a long time by the dominance of the social and political themes engendered first by the end of the Civil War (1861-1865) then the negative impacts of the Industrial Revolution on the American society. The authors who wrote about those periods have had recourse to literary expression as a way of social criticism. Mark Twain is one of the most representative social critics of the post Civil War era, who provided an insight into the American society and the major issues and conflict that the nation was facing during this period of time. In order to comprehend his literary productions, a careful look to the historical context in which they were written is needed so as to afford some historical facts.

After the end of the American Civil war, the country witnessed a boundless economic expansion, and rapid transformation from an agricultural and mercantile economy to a highly organized industrial one; based mainly on capitalism and the principles of the Laissez-faire policy on the one hand, and the tenets of Social Darwinism on the other hand. Yet, this latter was of great importance in shaping the American social philosophy, paving the way to the spirit of materialism that was the most prevailing at that time. Additionally, slavery and racism were still the most prominent issues that divided the nation into abolitionist northerners and pro-slavery southerners. At the beginning of the Reconstruction Era (1865-1877), slavery and race relations appeared to have been moving in a favorable direction. In fact, the approval of the 13th Amendment in 1865 had abolished slavery, and permits to the blacks to be in a similar social rank as that of the whites. These important changes favored the African American to go through their first attempt to become free American citizens. However, the political and social freedom gained by the blacks was instantly withhold by some new laws and ideologies imposed by the white southerners and supported by the nation as a whole. The enactment of the Jim Crow Laws (1876) applied racial segregation and limited the authority of the blacks mainly in the confederate states. These racist policies were hypocritically enforced under a motive of self-defense against newly freed blacks⁵.

Mark Twain was a careful observer of this hypocritical society, filled with racial issues and corrupt ideologies. As an anti-racist critic, he produced many literary works, in which he criticizes the immorality of the white society and how degraded this latter was. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is one of Twain's greatest novels where he satirizes the ugly nature of slavery, racism and bigotry. Although the novel was set in the pre-Civil War antebellum south, some fifty years prior to its publication, Twain succeeded to show his predominantly white audience how hypocritical they were by condoning slavery and

discrimination. The American author took it as a duty to make the people aware of their inhuman social attitudes in considering the blacks as second degree citizens.

Furthermore, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* presents a visual look at the time in which the author lived. He uses his knowledge of the Mississippi river to write about the ways of life in the Antebellum society. Twain was born in Missouri and then moved to Hannibal not far from the Mississippi river. His life on the river provided him with material for many of his books including *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in which he focused increasingly on the institution of slavery and the corrupt southern society marked by cowardice, a lack of logic and profound selfishness⁶. Besides, the main aim of the novel is not only narrowed in the realistic description of the daily lives of the Southern society in the Pre-Civil War period, but it goes beyond this. In fact, the author wanted to insist on the fact that although slavery was abolished, the roughness of the white race prejudice is still rampant. He compares the slave holders' society of the pre-Civil War period to that of the Reconstruction to show that nothing is really changed for the black race even after the abolition of slavery.

Apart from the major historical events that ended up shaping the structure of the novel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was published at a time when American literature is characterized by the domination of realism as a literary movement which came as a reaction to the older school of romanticism. In addition, the end of the Civil War gave birth to a new genre of fiction called the Local Color Regionalism which gained popularity in the mid to late nineteenth century. In this genre of writing, both poetry and prose are set in specific American regions underlying its particular traits such as dialect, culture, customs and landscape. Twain was influenced by, and manage to blend two major ways of perceiving a world into his narrative style: point of view and treatment of a subject. The period was also marked by the use of humor in literary works. This writing style became the foundation of the majority of

American fiction. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is an outstanding example, where humor and satire are not only used for entertainment but rather for a serious purpose. Indeed, Twain, in a very artistic and complex way, put his humor a good use in a service of satire to spotlight the American society's hypocrisy in all its aspects. This is why he was referred to as the best American humorist of all time, as the preeminent man of letters in late nineteenth century William Dean Howells pronounced him the "Abe Lincoln of literature"⁷.

The Lives of Charles Dickens and Mark Twain:

Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens is an eminent English author, novelist, journalist and social critic whose fiction and non-fiction writings have engendered a lot of criticism. His literary works have been influenced by his personal experiences; this is why we should return to the time and circumstances that molded his life and fiction so as to discern that influence.

Charles John Huffam Dickens was born in the great English sea port of Portsmouth on the 7th of February, 1812, to John and Elisabeth Dickens. He was the second of their eight children, but six of them only survived to the adulthood. The family moved to London in 1822, where Dickens spent most of his childhood, which served as setting for many of his novels. The great chance of being sent to school at an early age will not last more than two years, since Dickens found himself forced to work eleven hours a day in a blacking factory in order to support his family. As this latter's finances deteriorated, his father was sent to debtors' prison and joined later by his wife and their siblings. Dickens worked in the factory for several months under terrible conditions, a period when, according to him, he lost his childhood innocence declaring that "how [he] could be easily cast away at such a young age"⁸. He discovered the misery and the suffering of the working class, and began a new

horrible childhood which will influence him later in the writing of his novels, mainly the autobiographical ones.

After, receiving a family inheritance, Dickens' father paid off his debts and got out of prison. Later on, Charles returned back to school, but, again, it was not for a long time. In 1827, he left school and started to work as clerk, and then four years later, he began his career as a journalist, reporting for two major London newspapers under the pseudonym of "Boz".

Dickens' job as a journalist kept him in close contact with the darker social conditions of the Industrial Revolution; he grew disappointed with the institutions' attempt to relieve those conditions⁹. In 1833, He wrote 'A Dinner at Poplar Work', his first story, which preceded the publication of his collection of semi-fictional sketches in 1836, entitled *Sketches by Boz*. The latter gained him acknowledgement as a writer. From the following year, Dickens saw his career, as a novelist, propelled when he published his first novel, *The Pickwick Papers* which allowed him to achieve enormous fame and become a literary celebrity. A month after the success of his first novel, Dickens married Catherine Hogarth, and had ten children, before the couple got separated in 1858. The Victorian author became extremely productive in the years following his marriage. Around this time, he started publishing *Bentley's Miscellany* magazine, in which he started writing a serials of his most influential novels, *Oliver Twist*, also known as *The Parish Boy's Progress*, which was edited and published in 1838. The book was welcomed in England and even exported to America. It tells a story of a young orphan who suffers from the horrors of the Victorian society, a life which Dickens has experienced during his childhood.

In 1842, Dickens made a trip to America, where he discovered a society which is not different from his own one. He wrote *American Notes for General circulation* that was an evaluation of the American society, criticizing the Americans as being materialistic and

immoral. After returning to England, he published a *Christmas Carol* in 1843 before moving to Italy. From 1844 to 1870 the Victorian novelist published many works including *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1844), *Dombey and Son* (1848), *David Copperfield* (1850), *Bleak House* (1853), *Hard Times* (1854), *Little Dorrit* (1857), *A tale of Two Cities* (1859), *Great Expectations* (1861), *Our Mutual friend* (1865), *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) and many other short fictions and non-fiction works. Dickens' writings made him famous since he dealt with the evils of the Victorian industrial society, by presenting a nightmarish picture of a hypocritical society and a dehumanized world where the ideology of materialism prevails. He died suffering from a fatal stroke on June 9, 1870, leaving an enormous legacy which bear witness of his importance as social critic and one of the most influential literary and political figure. Even, Karl Marx believed that Dickens "*issued to the world more political and social truths than have been uttered by all the professional politicians, publicists and moralists put together*"¹⁰

Mark Twain

Mark Twain is one of the most preeminent novelists of nineteenth century America, often considered the "first truly American writer"¹¹ and the father of the American literature¹². He is a great performer whose lectures drew huge audiences all around the world. Writing of his death, the New York Times said he was the greatest humorist this country has produced¹³. Today, there is a national prize in his name to recognize those who create humor from there uniquely American experiences.

The Great literary figure we know as Mark Twain was born in 1835 as Samuel Langhorne Clemens, in the small town of Florida, Missouri. When he was four years old, the family moved to Hannibal, a growing port town on the banks of the Mississippi river. Hannibal and the Mississippi would have a profound influence on his life, his writings and his

legacy. Before Sam was twelve, his father died of pneumonia, leaving the family in poor financial circumstances. Sam had to leave school and find a work. His first job was as an apprentice typesetter for local newspapers like *The Hannibal Journal* and *The Missouri Courier*. After two years, he went to work at the *Hannibal Journal*, a newspaper owned by his oldest brother Orion, where he was a printer and editorial assistant. Sam discovered at this early age that he like to write. His first known published work was a sketch called, “The Gallant Fireman”, which appeared in his brother’s paper. Seeking a wider audience, he sent a short piece called a “The Dandy Frightening the Squatter” to the *Carpet Bag*, a Boston humor magazine. After almost three years of working for his brother, Sam left Hannibal and travelled to New York, Saint Louis, Philadelphia and Cincinnati, Supported himself by working as a journey man typesetter. Later on, in 1857, Clemens was to be attracted by a new experience. He left his printing career to begin training to become a steamboat pilot, a license he got after eight months of apprenticeship. His experience as a steamboat pilot on the Mississippi river would be so influential since it was the source of inspiration for the author’s literary career. Even his pen name was chosen in the riverboat, where he used to hear the workers crying “Mark Twain” which means that the water is so deep enough to sail.

In 1861, when the civil war broke out, the steamboat trade absolutely came to an end and he was out of his job. Twain very briefly served in the confederate military, and then made his way to San Francisco and again began his career as a journalist. Twains first big literary work came in 1865, with the publication of *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*, which was a huge success and was printed and reprinted all over the country. Then, came his first best seller, *The Innocents Abroad* published in 1869, and is still very much one of the most successful and widely very known travel narratives of American literature. After that, he published *Roughing It* in 1872 and *Old Times on the Mississippi* two years later. Twain’s best known and best loved books, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, published respectively in 1876 and 1885, are probably the reason that Earnest Hemingway famously said in 1935 that American literature comes from Mark Twain¹⁴. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* shows the possibility of making genuine moral changes in a world dominated by racism and other forms of human folly. The book was also able to capture the vernacular speech of different classes along the Mississippi, and Twain was the first person to put this kind of vocabulary into American writings.

Mark Twain was a prolific writer; he wrote twenty eight books including, *The Gilded Age* (1837), *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), *The Prince and the Pauper* (1881), *Pudd'nhead Wilson* (1894) and a vast number of stories, lectures and essays. In his last fifteen years, Twain was probably the most celebrated American around the world; he received honorary degrees from Yale and Oxford, and from 1895 to 1896 he did a lecture tour around the world which drew huge crowds. At the age of seventy four, Mark Twain died of angina pectoris, at his Connecticut home, on April 21st, 1910. Yet, he is considered one of the towering figures in American literature, and his influence is still apparent in writing today. "*I believe that Mark Twain had a clearer vision of life, that he came nearer to its elementals and was less deceived by its false appearances than any other American*"¹⁵ declared H.L. Mencken. He adds: "*I believe that he was the true father of our national literature*"¹⁶

Endnotes

- ¹ N. Anderson, Felix Just, Tom Thatcher, *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 1: Critical Appraisals of Critical Views*, (Society of Biblical Lit, 2009), 200.
- ² Roger Ebert, *Roger Ebert's Movie Yearbook 2007*, (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2006), 518.
- ³ Sara Petersson, *The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins: Entertainment or Social Criticism?* (Lund University, 2011)
- ⁴ Andrzej Diniejko, *Charles Dickens as Social Commentator and Critic*, (Warsaw University, February 2012)
- ⁵ Fredrik Kallin, *Racial and Religious Hypocrisy in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, (Kristianstad University, 2007)
- ⁶ SparkNote on *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, (SparkNotes Editors, 2002), Accessed November 17, 2017 <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/huckfinn/>
- ⁷ Vernon Parrington, *The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America: Main Currents in American Thought*, (Routledge, 2017), 248.
- ⁸ Lynn Cain, *Dickens, Family, Authorship*, (Routledge, 2017), 52.
- ⁹ SparkNote on *Oliver Twist*, (SparkNotes Editors, 2002), Accessed November 21, 2017, from <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/huckfinn/>
- ¹⁰ Kucich John "Charles Dickens", in Kastan, David Scott. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature*, vol 1, (Oxford University Press, 2006.), 155.

¹¹ Catherine H. Zuckert, *Natural Right and the American Imagination: Political Philosophy in Novel Form*, (Rowman & Littlefield, 1990), 155.

¹² Henry Claridge, *William Faulkner: Critical Assessments*, (Henry Claridge Taylor & Francis, 2000), 275.

¹³ New York Times, *The New York Times Book Review*, (New York Times Company, 1993),120.

¹⁴ R. Kent Rasmussen, *Critical Companion to Mark Twain*, (Infobase Publishing, 2014), 725.

¹⁵ Gale Research, *Twentieth-century Literary Criticism*, (Gale Research Company, 1984),429.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Chapter two: Corruption and Hypocrisy in *Oliver Twist*:

Of the social novels of all nineteenth century English authors who commented on the social issues of the Victorian society, few may attend the same degree of fluency as Dickens' *Oliver Twist*. In this book, Charles Dickens criticizes the British institutions with a ferocity that had never since been approached¹. He was qualified by many critics as a reformer and even a rebel. *Oliver Twist* is one of Dickens' most influential novels in the Victorian era, considering its great success to develop a unique criticism in which the author genuinely contributed to the rise of a public opinion which influenced the English institutions in enacting some reforms.²

As far as New Historicist approach is concerned in our analysis, it becomes important to explore the relation between Dickens' criticism and the context in which it was produced, so as to understand more the author's intentions in writing his novel, and the prevailing issues which led him to compose this literary work. It was mentioned in the previous chapter that Dickens experienced hard times during his childhood. Indeed, at the age of twelve, following his father's imprisonment, he was obliged to work in a blacking factory where he was exploited and exposed to horrific conditions which haunted him forever. Moreover, the several political reforms that the Victorian society witnessed at that time affected much of Dickens writings. Recent historical research asserted that the workhouses which were set by the New Poor Law, and which Dickens vigorously criticized, resembles the workhouse of Cleveland Street where the Dickens family lived and saw many sorrow things in this parish.³

Poverty in a Corrupt Society

In a decaying society, art, if it is truthful, must also reflect decay⁴. Yet, *Oliver Twist* is viewed as not only art, but a mirror which reflects the social and economic issues that

dominated the Victorian society. In fact, in this novel, Dickens paints a bleak picture of an England governed by a Capitalist government which resorts to frightening techniques to subject the laboring class's citizens⁵. He divulges the systems' devilish strategies in exploiting poor and its hypocritical ideologies which justify its corrupt legislations. *Oliver Twist* plunges us into a terrifying world where cruelty and profiteering policies are exerted. Through the novel, Dickens shows his discontent with the hypocrisy of the British politicians of the upper class and their failure to solve the wide spread problems of poverty through new laws which they presume to be the solution to the growing serious issues.

Among all these Victorian social issues, Dickens' main target in *Oliver Twist* is the New Poor Law of 1834 which he attacked vehemently by exposing the harsh living conditions of the poor in the administrated workhouses. This is done through Oliver, the protagonist of the novel, whom Dickens uses to explore and expose the abuses of this new legislation. Suzanne Brown, in her *Charles Dickens Oliver Twist*, claims that Oliver is Dickens' strongest argument against workhouses as any substitute for individuals care for the poor⁶. She notes that the intimacy a boy has with his mother is replaced in *Oliver Twist* by the institutions which neglect all human compassion⁷. In fact, the workhouse system and its horrible daily routine are presented from the very beginning of the novel. In the opening of the second chapter, the author shows how Oliver, an orphan child, is caught by the Victorian harsh system, and the inevitable misery of the parish house into which he had born and immediately introduced to:

For the next eight or ten months, Oliver was the victim of a systematic course of treachery and deception. (...) Upon this, the parish authorities magnanimously and humanely resolved, that Oliver should be 'farmed,' or, in other words, that he should be dispatched to a branch-workhouse some three miles off, where twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor-laws, rolled about the floor all day, without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing, under the parental superintendence of an elderly female (...) ⁸

At the age of nine, Oliver is transfused from the church and brought up in a workhouse which is run by an elderly corrupt woman called Mrs. Mann. The latter is described first, as wise enough to take care of children. Dickens says that the elderly female was a woman of wisdom and experience; she knew what was good for children⁹. However, her greedy nature is immediately revealed by the author when she appropriated the greater part of the weekly stipend to her own use, and consigned the rising parochial generation to even a shorter allowance than was originally provided for them¹⁰. Consequently, under this system of neglect, and the care of such hypocritical and materialist leaders, the children were constantly victimized and abused as demonstrated by Dickens in portraying Oliver's first experience ending up in a workhouse, and how he had to endure the cruelest treatments including physical hunger and emotional starvation. The following quotation describes how the parish boys suffered from an enduring hunger:

The bowls never wanted washing. The boys polished them with their spoons till they shone again; and when they had performed this operation, they would sit staring at the copper, with such eager eyes, as if they could have devoured the very bricks of which it was composed(...) Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation for three months: at last they got so voracious and wild with hunger, that one boy, who was tall for his age, and hadn't been used to that sort of thing (for his father had kept a small cook-shop), hinted darkly to his companions, that unless he had another basin of gruel per diem, he was afraid he might some night happen to eat the boy who slept next him, who happened to be a weakly youth of tender age(...)¹¹

In addition to this permanent starvation which is ironically depicted in this quotation, Dickens presents the masters of these parochial houses as fat and healthy men. This big contrast between the living skeletons boys and the fleshy well fed masters is carefully reported by Dickens to reveal the hypocrisy of the workhouse system. For instance, Mr Bumble is a fat and well-dressed gentleman who pretends to be interested in the paupers comfort and care, but he treats them cruelly and mercilessly.¹² Moreover, as Q.Q. Leavis and F.R. Leavis believed, *Oliver Twist* is a mean to mock on the poor laws.¹³ In fact, in the novel,

Dickens satirizes the Poor Law administration by portraying the members of the board as very sage, deep philosophical men and wise enough to establish rules in which hunger is imposed¹⁴. In this way, the author mocks these corrupt men and provides the contrary of what they really are by showing their inhuman treatment of the poor inmates. Yet, under this harsh regime imposed by the workhouse, which Dickens sometimes compares to a prison, the child paupers became extremely hungry. This unbearable starvation pushed Oliver, no matter how fear is devouring him, to ask for more food. One evening, after a limited portion of gruel was given to parish boys, Oliver, desperate with hunger, and reckless with misery rose from the table; and advancing to the master, basin and spoon in hand, said: somewhat alarmed at his own temerity: 'Please, sir, I want some more'¹⁵ The atrocity which Oliver suffered from after this daring act is empathically described by Dickens. The latter's description of Oliver's punishment for his request is best illustrated by Ruth Richardson who says:

The sheer brutality of the system is exposed. Oliver is maligned, threatened with being hanged, drawn and quartered; he is starved, caned, and flogged before an audience of paupers, solitarily confined in the dark for days, kicked and cursed, hauled up before a magistrate and sent to work in an undertaker's, fed on animal scraps, taunted, and forced to sleep with coffins.¹⁶

In the following days, Oliver will be introduced to a new system of exploitation where his childhood and his innocence will be confiscated. This is how Dickens proceeded to depict the phenomenon of child labor, one of the main issues of the English industrial society. In fact, he shows how the British corrupt system forced young children of the poor class to work in a factories and mines under cruel and inhumane conditions.

The history of child labor in England goes back to the early seventeenth century. When children are forced to work under harsh circumstances. This kind of exploitation was also common during the British industrial growth. This industrial development needed an

extensive number of human labors regardless of the age and gender. To clarify this idea, Gregg Paulin in her book *A social and Economic History of Britain (1760-1980)* argues:

Children and adult of both sexes were employed in factories; six or seven being the admitted age of starting work, though children sometimes began at three or four years old. Parents were frequently compelled by economic pressure to send their children to the mill; in some cases they were refused parish relief if they had children with them. The consequences were reflected not only on unfortunate child labor, but on the parents, who forced their own children.¹⁷

To be more explicit, the factory owners employed children under the age of seven, and made them work for about eleven hours per a day. Additionally, the manufacturers allowed mistreatments of children believing that this will urge them to be more productive, and to work as actively as possible.¹⁸

To understand more Dickens denunciation of this cruel system of child exploitation, we have to look back to the author's childhood and his acquisition of an intimate knowledge of poverty and destitution; particularly of exploited children, from which he took inspiration in order to write *Oliver Twist*, according to what happened in the society at that time.¹⁹ Indeed, Dickens was greatly influenced by his private life; particularly his childhood. This idea may be illustrated by the quotation said by the author, himself, reported by his biographer Forster, where he declared that:

My whole nature was so penetrated with the grief and humiliation of such considerations, that even now, famous and caressed and happy, I often forgot in my dreams that I have a dear wife and children; even that I am a man; and wander desolately back to that time of my life.²⁰

So, from this brief picture that Dickens presented of his cruel infancy which influenced even his adult life, we can say that Oliver's childhood as portrayed in the novel resembles that lived

by the author. This is why Dickens provides a very accurate portrait of the issue of child labor, since he precised that the events took place in England; more precisely in London.²¹

In *Oliver Twist*, Dickens, through different characters, paints vivid pictures and provides numerous examples of capitalist system which is run under the principles of the survival of the fittest. Oliver a victim of child labor is sold to Mr. Gamfield, a chimney owner, who is described by Dickens as a spiteful cold-hearted man, since he killed many of his apprentices by being smothered in the chimney. The board member of the workhouse qualifies Oliver as the right boy for this job (chimney) when he was negotiating with Mr. Gamfield to sell the young orphan without the assistance of this latter. Here, Dickens wants to point out that Oliver's destiny is between the hands of these two greedy men; the gentlemen who wants to send him of the workhouse since he dared asking for more food, and Mr. Gamfield a materialist undertaker who saw Oliver as an opportunity for his business considering the small amount of money he paid for him, Dickens narrates:

“He'd be cheap with nothing at all, as a premium. Take him, you silly fellow! He's just the boy for you. He wants the stick, now and then: it'll do him good; and his board needn't come very expensive, for he hasn't been over-fed since he was born. Ha! Ha!ha!”(...) 'This here boy, sir, wot the parish wants to 'prentis,' said Mr. Gamfield. 'Ay, my man,' said the gentleman in the white waistcoat, with a condescending smile. 'What of him?' 'If the parish would like him to learn a right pleasant trade, in a good 'spectable chimbley-sweepin' bisness,' said Mr. Gamfield, 'I wants a 'prentis, and I am ready to take him.'²²

The passage above demonstrates that the undertakers like Mr Gamfield, often need their chimney sweep, so, they required small kids who were able to squeeze themselves into narrow chimneys to clean them. It also reveals the hypocrisy of the board members who knew that Oliver will be sent to death if he goes with him, because Mr Gamfield has already bruised three or four boys to death.²³ In addition to the British corrupt system's materialist ideologies, strategies of manipulation and political reforms that Dickens' severely criticized, the

hypocrisy of the parochial institutions were also targeted in *Oliver Twist*. The author explores the manifestation of the Christian doctrines in the Victorian society. In fact, he applies Christian sentiments and language to the workhouse to test the ability of these parishes to uphold Christian values.²⁴

Religious Hypocrisy

From its formal outset, in the early 16th century, the Anglican Church had been an important political force, mainly in the administration of a considerable laws aiming to reduce poverty and improve the society's social and economic conditions.²⁵ Since ages, almsgiving was viewed as a religious and social duty. Good Christians were asked to 'not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; but you shall (...) generously lend him sufficient for his needs in whatever he lacks.'²⁶ However, with the emergence of the Industrial revolution along with the birth of new ideologies, these exemplary standards witnessed a radical change. Yet, the Victorians, mainly the upper and the middle class, viewed poverty as a result of personal washout and the poor were blamed for being poor.

Dickens was a witness of these new hypocritical ideologies, which, for him, were just a mean to justify the utilitarian regime and its exploitation of the laboring class. Christianity was just superficial; it was replaced by political institutions which run under capitalism. For many critics, *Oliver Twist* is viewed as an exposé of the masked and scheming hypocrisy of the Christian parish institutions.²⁷ In the last sentences of the first chapter, Dickens reports the first days of Oliver in the parish house:

What an excellent example of the power of dress, young Oliver Twist was! Wrapped in the blanket which had hitherto formed his only covering, he might have been the child of a nobleman or a beggar; it would have been hard for the haughtiest stranger to have assigned him his proper station in society. But now that he was enveloped in the

old calico robes which had grown yellow in the same service, he was badged and ticketed, and fell into his place at once—a parish child—the orphan of a workhouse—the humble, half-starved drudge—to be cuffed and buffeted through the world—despised by all, and pitied by none. Oliver cried lustily. If he could have known that he was an orphan, left to the tender mercies of church-wardens and overseers, perhaps he would have cried the louder.²⁸

The passage let us consider Oliver unlucky for being born into this workhouse which is operated by corrupt parochial leaders who pretends to take care of the poor children. Dickens shows the opposite by alluding to the terrifying world waiting Oliver.

As we mentioned before, Oliver asked for more food due to a lack of sufficient food to support the parish boys, consequently, a member of the workhouse board repeatedly affirms that the boy will be hung. This demonstrates the hypocrisy of the workhouse directors who neglect the principles of the bible which ordered Christians “You shall not murder”.²⁹ In the same fashion, the board is “very much amused” at the dangerous chimney-sweep profession, at the “young boys smothered in chimneys ... before”, and Mr. Gamfield's gloomy depiction of boys “roasting their feet” in a “struggle to extricate themselves.”³⁰ Oliver escaped hanging not because the boards sympathized with him, but for the reason that they did not want to bloody their hands so they tried to attain their aim in an indirect manner by selling Oliver to a cruelly cold hearted man who have already killed three or four children in the chimney.

The biblical injunctions are totally ignored if not to say distorted by the Anglican establishment. For instance Mrs Mann’s devilish strategies are completely opposing the seventh commandment “You shall not steal”, since she appropriates the money distributed to support the children and providing sufficient food. By this immoral act, Dickens demonstrates the hypocrisy of this greedy woman, who is described as selfish and materialist.³¹ Mr Bumble was also portrayed as an opportunist whose own will is to satisfy his greedy nature without any evident care of the suffering parish boys. Dickens set him as an example of how the

parish exploits the children and pickpockets them by preventing the inmates of some basic necessities of life for his own financial gain.³² He was shown as a fat man with a leather pocket-book: which, like himself, was very corpulent.³³

Another biblical decree, which was also neglected by the parochial officials, advises to 'freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land'³⁴ This latter recommends Christians to be helpful and to take care of the needy poor. However, the workhouse leaders seem to have neglected this kind of virtue. The idea is shown through Mr. Bumble's attitude towards the Childs:

He despises them so much that the death of a woman in the parish is nothing more than an irritation to the insensitive beadle. He condemns the ingratitude of the paupers and criticizes the rudeness of the dead woman's husband who has refused to take an improper medicine sent to his wife by the parish. He fails to recognize that the parish actually contributed to the poor woman's death. He overlooks the fact that the woman has died of hungry and neglect.³⁵

Mr Bumble does not assume his role as it is supposed to be, he keeps the poor dying of hunger and starvation. This immorality of these hypocritical leaders who were supposed to take care of the parish inmates is also depicted through the character of Mrs. Corney who considers the paupers to be worthless:

While a lot of the work house's paupers are left to starving in the very cold weather, Mrs. Corney sits before a cheerful fire in her room having her own favourite meal. This shows that the officials are provided with sufficient meals and comfortable warm places while the paupers lead a very hard life. When Bumble visits her, they discuss the ill-manner of the pauper. He shows her the principle of parish work house. He tells her that the parish principle believes in giving the paupers what they actually do not want. In this way, they get tired of coming.³⁶

This ignorance of the religious virtues and the Christian beliefs is a result of a secularization of the ancient Christian institution, paving the way to a capitalist system which distorted totally the biblical injunctions and replaced it with materialist ideologies.

To sum up, we can say that *Oliver Twist* deals with two predominant issues that prevailed the Victorian era. Dickens attacks first the capitalist system which establishes new laws to deprive the poor from their basic rights and raise their financial gain. Additionally, the author reveals how Christian virtues were neglected by the parochial institutions themselves.

Endnotes

¹ George Orwell, *Essays*, (Penguin UK, 2000), 89.

² Andrzej Diniejko, Charles Dickens as Social Commentator and Critic, (Warsaw University, February 2012)

³ Ruth Richardson, *Oliver Twist* and the Workhouse, (British Library, May 2014)

⁴ Mario Fenyo, *Literature and Political Change*, (American Philosophical Society, 2007), 31.

⁵ Sally Ledger, Holly Furneaux, *Charles Dickens in Context*, (Cambridge University Press, 2011), 241.

⁶ Brown Susanne, Charles Dickens Oliver Twist, (Essex Longman York Press, 1995), 62.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (1837), (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 7.

⁹ Ibid, 8.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Mohamed Khamis, Charles Dickens's Oliver Twist: Hypocrisy, (Educationcing, 2012)

¹³ F. R Levis and Q. Q Levis, Dickens the Novelist, (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 153.

¹⁴ James Wisner Jr. Dickens's Satire of the New Poor Law in Oliver Twist, (Bradwell Institute, 2006)

- ¹⁵ Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (1837), (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 20.
- ¹⁶ Ruth Richardson, *Oliver Twist and the Workhouse*, (British Library, May 2014)
- ¹⁷ Gregg Pauline, *A Social and Economic History of Britain*, (London: Penguin Books, 1992), 232.
- ¹⁸ Engels Friedrich, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, (London: Penguin Classics, 1987), 172.
- ¹⁹ Ruth Richardson, *Dickens and the Workhouse: Oliver Twist and the London Poor*, (Oxford University press, 2012), 41.
- ²⁰ Dennis Wood, *Benjamin Constant: A Biography*, (Routledge, 2002), 20.
- ²¹ Ruth Richardson, *Dickens and the Workhouse: Oliver Twist and the London Poor*, (Oxford University press, 2012), 79.
- ²² Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (1837), (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 28.
- ²³ Ibid, 27.
- ²⁴ Allegra Hayes, *Religion and Hypocrisy in Oliver Twist*, (Massachusetts, 2003)
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Exodus 15:7-8.
- ²⁷ SparkNote on *Oliver Twist*, (SparkNotes Editors, 2002), Accessed November 21, 2017, from <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/huckfinn/>
- ²⁸ Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (1837), (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 6.

²⁹ Exodus 20:13

³⁰ Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (1837), (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 26.

³¹ Ibid,8.

³² Mohamed Khamis, Charles Dickens's Oliver Twist: Hypocrisy, (Educationcing, 2012)

³³ Charles Dickens, *Oliver Twist* (1837), (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 12.

³⁴ Deuteronomy 15:11

³⁵ Mohamed Khamis, Charles Dickens's Oliver Twist: Hypocrisy, (Educationcing, 2012)

³⁶ Ibid.

Chapter three: Corruption and Hypocrisy in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*:

Like *Oliver Twist*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is also considered one of the most influential social novels, since it deals with the enduring issues that dominated the American society during the antebellum period and even after the end of the Civil War. However, the context in which the novel was written and its setting makes Twain's masterpiece more complex than that of Dickens. Therefore, a recur to a New Historicist analysis is needed in order to figure out the complex relationship between the novel and the historical circumstances that preceded its publication, so as to understand more the books' major themes. To study this complexity we will attempt to, as Aram Veesser says, explain facts by reference to earlier facts.¹

Before we discuss this great writer and book, it is helpful to put him and his novel in its context and times. 1800s America was profoundly shaped by the Civil War, both negatively in the fastening tensions and conflicts between the North and the South, but also positively in the impetus the war gave to a reconstruction, and a renewed drive toward industrial and entrepreneurial invention and progress. America was emerging as a world power; fueled by the Industrial Revolution, mass production, big business and science. The consequent rise of the middle class paradoxically reinforced the idea of social Darwinism, posited by Herbert Spencer who based his theories on Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species* (1859). It was a dog eats dog; survival of the fittest world, a deterministic natural selection process governs the Nineteenth century American society.

In addition to these important political and economic changes, the issue of race and slavery divided the American society even after the Civil War. To explain more, although the Emancipation Proclamation, an executive order issued by President Abraham Lincoln, and the

ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865 together legally freed slaves, by the 1800s Reconstruction, the American government plan to reunite the nation after the Civil War and integrate freed slaves into society, severely had been pretty much a failure. Soon the Jim Crow laws were passed in the South, severely limiting the power of African Americans once again. Also, the number of lynching of black people increased dramatically, and the white supremacy movement with hate groups such as the Klu Klux Klan (1865) gained tremendous support.

Twain was a careful observer of these major transformations mainly the Industrial Revolution. He was a fierce critic of the dark side of this latter, mainly the fusion of Darwinism with the laissez-faire capitalism which gave birth to a corrupt world determined by materialism and moral decay. Since his father traded in slaves during his childhood, Twain was also a witness of the inhumanity of the white men who owned black slaves and treated them as objects, he was disgusted of these inhuman practices. Thus, in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the author seems critical of the stubborn persistence of the spirit of slavery and the racist ideology in his days. Although the novel was published in 1884, Twain had been writing it for many years, and it was set in the pre-Civil War 1830's. So what we have here is a story set forty years prior to its author writing it. But Twain's novel was meant to expose his late Nineteenth Century audience to its own hypocrisy and intolerance. As Brandon Burnett says in his *Huckleberry Finn as a Picaresque American Satire*, that Twain allows us to see the hypocrisy that existed not only in his time, but in our present time as well.² In this sense, Galy Scharnhorst affirms that in the life and writing of Mark Twain, we may discern, some lessons for our own time; we should ridicule greed and hypocrisy, and resist racial stereotypes.³ In fact, Twain's masterpiece is informed by, and injected with a hindsight's wisdom about the enduring corruption and hypocrisy which the American society is facing.

The novel is viewed by many critics as an allegorical representation of the American corrupt and hypocritical society.

Corruption of an American Civilized Society

Like Dickens, Twain was a fierce critic of the post-Civil war American society. He criticizes the white Americans by exposing their greed and hypocrisy. Yet, as Dickens uses the main character to portray the Victorian corrupt society in *Oliver Twist*, Twain in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, uses the protagonist Huck Finn to depict the society that surrounds him. Indeed, in the novel Huck encounters many rascals and morally lacking, selfish, corrupt and hypocritical individuals such as the widow Douglas and Miss Watson who are supposed to be good Christian woman and yet have no problem with tearing apart Jim's family by selling him down river. He also meets the King and the Duke, two con artists who rip off every innocent victim they can find along the shores of the Mississippi river. Two families who were in feud, The Grangerfords and the Sheferdsons, who murder each other's children immediately after sitting through a sermon on loving one's neighbors, were also discovered by the protagonist. Twain's use of these hypocritical characters goes along with the injection of many honest and pure figures as in the case of Jim. Huck, being idealized by the author, and Jim whom Twain humanized are shown to be the two least respected and lowest members of their society, and yet they have the most developed sense of morality in the entire novel. This distinctive characterization is carefully used by the author in order to show how the American decayed society is far from the ideal one.

For instance, the greedy nature and the capitalist ideology are clearly depicted through the King and Duke whom Huck and Jim meet during their adventures along the river. Their hypocrisy is exposed first when they changed their identities; one claims that he is the son of King Louis XVI and the other pretends to be the usurped Duke of Bridgewater. Later on, they

tried to steal money by pretending to be the brothers of the dead men from the Wilks family. The two swindlers allege to be the Wilks' relatives and try to corrupt Mary Jane and her sister by showing how they were so sad for losing such a beloved brother:

Well, by and by the king he gets up and comes forward a little, and works himself up and slobbers out a speech, all full of tears and flapdoodle about its being a sore trial for him and his poor brother to lose the deceased, and to miss seeing deceased alive after the long journey of four thousand mile, but it's a trial that's sweetened and sanctified to us by this dear sympathy and these holy tears, and so he thanks them out of his heart and out of his brother's heart, because out of their mouths they can't, words being too weak and cold, and all that kind of rot and slush, till it was just sickening; and then he blubbers out a pious goody-goody Amen, and turns himself loose and goes to crying fit to bust.⁴

This was a kind of theatre the two thieves used in order to convince the family heirs to have their part of their brother's heritage. Furthermore, the King once told the people of Arkansas that he was a pirate for thirty years in the Indian Ocean, and that he was robbed by some other pirates, but he will be a good man now and will try to turn the pirates into the right path.⁵ Thus, the King collected eighty seven dollars and seventy five cents from people who helped him since they believed his sad story and then sympathized with him. Moreover, concerning their perception of the blacks, the Duke affirms that all niggers are thieves and they can always steal money if they are given the opportunity to do it:

So they got ready to go down stairs again. The duke says: "I don't think we put that money in a good place." That cheered me up. I'd begun to think I warn't going to get a hint of no kind to help me. The king says: "Why?" Because Mary Jane 'll be in mourning from this out; and first you know the nigger that does up the rooms will get an order to box these duds up and put 'em away; and do you reckon a nigger can run across money and not borrow some of it?⁶

In this passage, Twain exposes ironically the hypocrisy of the Duke who said that all black men are thieves whereas he neglects his rascality and roguery. The most despicable inhuman

practice of the two con men is shown when they sell Jim back into slavery for forty two dollars. Twain shows how sad and astonished Huck is :

I thought till I wore my head sore, but I couldn't see no way out of the trouble. After all this long journey, and after all we'd done for them scoundrels, here it was all come to nothing, everything all busted up and ruined, because they could have the heart to serve Jim such a trick as that, and make him a slave again all his life, and amongst strangers, too, for forty dirty dollars.⁷

Huck is presented as completely stupefied by this immoral and materialist act, he wonders how these two swindlers could do such a rapacious act. Their actions are in Huck's words enough to make a body ashamed of human race.⁸ Through these two characters, Twain represents all the worse aspects of a capitalist society, just like the King and the Duke who exploit other people for a capital gain.

Huck's father, Pap, is also one of the most outstanding examples of selfishness and hypocrisy. After hearing about Huck's fortune, pap came to force his son to give him the money saying: I heard about it away down the river, too. That's why I come. You get me that money tomorrow I want it.⁹ Pap Finn saw in his son a source of wealth rather than a human being.¹⁰ He mistreated his son by beating and locking, Huck says that he used to always whale him when he was sober.¹¹ However, Pap behaves differently in front of the judge and says he will be a good father for Huck. This good image he made of himself is just a mean to reach Huck's money. So Pap's greedy nature reflects the American society where people were incurably undermined by the fever of money.¹² And this is asserted by Twain who says that the lack of money is the root of all evil.¹³

Racial hypocrisy is also one of the recurring themes in the novel. In fact, Mark Twain reveals that although slavery was abolished, the blacks are still considered as subhuman and inferior.¹⁴ In fact, even after the end of the Civil War, a stereotypical black person was

generally considered as large child who is immature, irresponsible, unintelligent and physically strong. The racial hypocrisy of the 'good whites' is shown through many characters in the novel including the Widow Douglass, Miss Watson, the King, the Duke and even Huck's father. The latter, in chapter six, shows his disappointment about a black professor. Pap says:

And what do you think? They said he was a p'fessor in a college, and could talk all kinds of languages, and knowed everything. And that ain't the wust. They said he could vote when he was at home. Well, that let me out. Thinks I, what is the country a-coming to? It was 'lection day, and I was just about to go and vote myself if I warn't too drunk to get there; but when they told me there was a State in this country where they'd let that nigger vote, I drawed out. I says I'll never vote agin.¹⁵

Huck's father is raving about this black college professor and because of the color of his skin, he considers himself superior to this well instructed black. To mock at the hypocrisy of the white men and their racial attitudes towards the blacks, Twain draw parallels between Jim and Pap to show how the former replaced the latter's role in taking care of his son which is almost his own duty. In fact, in chapter nine, Jim assumes the role of a father to Huck when he did not let him to see a dead man's face, who was his own father, Huck says that: I didn't look at him at all. Jim throwed some old rags over him.¹⁶ This is the way how Twain humanizes Jim to counter the white's racial prejudices who consider blacks as savage and primitive. In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Jim is shown as protective and caring as a father would be. Daniel Hoffman in his essay *From Black Magic and White in Huckleberry Finn* says that Jim is free to take the place that Pap was never worthy to hold as Huck's spiritual father. Jim can act as Huck's father and Huck's first act is to protect him, a son might do.¹⁷ In this sense, although society told Huck from birth that it is true, right and natural for black to be slaves, Jim, his friendship with Jim, and his growing moral sense tells him that it is true, right and natural for Jim to be just as he is free. It is Jim's 'openness' and 'unashamed dignity' that facilitates Huck's own struggle with morals.¹⁸

Religious Hypocrisy

As it was exposed and denounced by Charles Dickens in *Oliver Twist*, religious hypocrisy and its depiction in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, also implicates Twain's greatest accusation of American society. The author used the novel as an instrument to show to contemporary Americans how, few decades after the abolition of slavery, America is still filled with religious hypocrisy. This is best illustrated by Fredrik Kallin who argues:

This was a society which for Twain was shrouded in a veil of self-deception and where its practitioners preached hypocritical and absurd religious values (...) These people are all well-intentioned Christians, but their religion has deceived them into thinking that slavery is perfectly acceptable, and that slaves are something less than people¹⁹

Kallin continues explaining how the world depicted in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* closely resembles the period of the novel, a period some forty years before its date of publication.²⁰ The hypocrisy of the American Christian society is exemplified through many characters in the novel. For instance, Widow Douglass and her sister Miss Watson are the first characters who displayed as Christian hypocrites. In the first chapter, the two sisters are described as strict educated women who try to civilize Huck. In fact, while Widow Douglas teaches the latter religious values and Biblical injunctions, Miss Watson tells him how to make prayers. Huck says that:

Sometimes the widow would take me one side and talk about Providence in a way to make a body's mouth water; but maybe next day Miss Watson would take hold and knock it all down again. I judged I could see that there was two Providences, and a poor chap would stand considerable show with the widow's Providence, but if Miss Watson's got him there warn't no help for him any more.²¹

In the last sentence, Huck notices that the two sisters have two different perceptions of heaven which shows the uncertainty of the religion they are practicing. Additionally, Widow Douglas

and Miss Watson are portrayed as hypocritical in their teaching. To illustrate more, while Widow Douglas forbids Huck to smoke for it is a mean practice, she does not find any worry in taking snuff, which is nastier but considered normal and right to do it since she, Widow Douglas, does it. Another example is Miss Watson's illogic, when telling Huck that if he prays for something, he will get it, whereas she never receives her wishes every time she prays. Huck experiences this theory but he finds it useless:

Then Miss Watson she took me in the closet and prayed, but nothing come of it. She told me to pray every day, and whatever I asked for I would get it. But it warn't so. I tried it. Once I got a fish-line, but no hooks. It warn't any good to me without hooks. I tried for the hooks three or four times, but somehow I couldn't make it work. By and by, one day, I asked Miss Watson to try for me, but she said I was a fool. She never told me why, and I couldn't make it out no way.²²

Furthermore, Miss Watson, who is described as a good Christian practicing the biblical institutions, sees no wrong in possessing slaves. Even when she hears about the slave trade show, she decides to sell Jim so she could make eight hundred dollars as Jim claims:

“Well, you see, it ‘uz dis way. Ole missus—dat’s Miss Watson—shepecks on me all de time, en treats me pooty rough, but she awluz said she wouldn’ sell me down to Orleans. But I noticed dey wuz a nigger trader roun’ de place considerable lately, en I begin to git oneasy. Well, one night I creeps to de do’ pooty late, en de do’ warn’t quite shet, en I hear old missus tell de widder she gwyne to sell me down to Orleans, but she didn’ want to, but she could git eight hund’d dollars for me.”²³

From the above quotation, it becomes clear that there is a kind of ambivalence between Miss Watson's position as a religious woman, and her state of slave-owner, which could be seen as a carelessness of Biblical injunctions. Miss Watson's actions show no mercy for Jim's family separating, even though they would probably never see each other again.

During Huck and Jim's journey down the Mississippi, they get hit with a boat and lose each other again. Huck goes ashore and, after avoiding guard dogs, stays with a wealthy family, the Grangerfords. Later, he discovers that the latter is engaged in a bloody feud with

another family, the Shepherdsons. These two families seem to be religious since they believed in religious patterns and go to church to attend sermons promoting brotherly love, but their hypocrisy was soon revealed by their constant fights and their barbarian acts. Twain witnessed this kind of cruelty and excessive tragic killings in his childhood. Justin Kaplan explains more these barbarities Twain may have seen in his boyhood:

He witnessed other killings: a slave struck down with a lump of slag for some trivial offence...; a young California emigrant who was stabbed with a bowie knife by a drunken comrade- I saw the red life gush from his breast; a stranger from Illinois...who threatened a widow and was killed by her with a musket...²⁴

Twain was so haunted by these savageries and expresses his reluctance and disgust towards this cruel society where humanity does not exist. In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the author satirizes the ugly nature of the ‘civilized’ whites through the Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons exterminating each other. Huck reports their double-tongued conduct in the church, he says:

Next Sunday we all went to church, about three mile, everybody ahorseback. The men took their guns along, so did Buck, and kept them between their knees or stood them handy against the wall. The Shepherdsons done the same. It was pretty ornery preaching—all about brotherly love, and such-like tiresomeness; but everybody said it was a good sermon, and they all talked it over going home... 25

Huck affirms that it would make him ‘sick’ again if he was to do that, he even wishes he never came to see these immoral behaviors. Yet, we can say that these two families represent the North and the South enduring conflict which may echoes the American Civil War. Twain wanted to show how ridiculous and wrong the American society was in engaging in such a tragic war, and how it still remains hypocritical and corrupt even after the end of the Civil War.

From everything that has been previously said in this chapter, it emerges that Twain, similarly to Dickens, satirizes the materialist ideology that dominated the American society after the end of the Civil War. In fact, although the novel was set in the Antebellum period, it functions as an allegory in portraying the Industrial American Post-Civil War society full of racial and religious hypocrisy, and governed by a ‘dog-eat-dog’ capitalism.

Endnotes

¹ Aram Veesser, *The New Historicism Reader*, (New York, Penguin books, 1994), 10.

² Brandon, Burnett, *Huckleberry finn as a Picaresque American satire*, (Association of Young Journalists And Writers, 2006)

³ Galy Scharnhorst, *Mark Twain relevance Today*, (University of Alabama press, 2009)

⁴ Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, (Penguin Popular Classics, New York, 1994), 147.

⁵ Ibid, 148.

⁶ Ibid, 180.

⁷ Ibid, 214.

⁸ Ibid, 165.

⁹ Ibid, 22.

¹⁰ Olivier Nyirubugaram, *Mark Twain's Satirical Approach to Mid 19th Century American Society*, (University of Bangui, 2001)

¹¹ Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, (Penguin Popular Classics, New York, 1994), 147.

¹² Edwin Gordon, *Les Aventures de Mark Twain* (Paris: Nouveaux Horizons, 1970), 52.

¹³ Andrew Leckey, *Twain's Timeless Advice on Money and Wealth for Today's Investor*, (Prentice Hall Press, 2001), 133.

¹⁴ Fredrik Kallin, Racial and Religious Hypocrisy in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, (Kristianstad University,2007)

¹⁵ Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, (Penguin Popular Classics, New York,1994), 29.

¹⁶ Ibid, 52.

¹⁷ Daniel Hoffman, From Black magic and White in Huckleberry Finn, (New York: Norton)

¹⁸ The Adventures Of Huckleberry Finn By Mark Twain Researchomatic .accessed 22-November2017 <http://www.researchomatic.com/The-Adventures-Of-Huckleberry-Finn-By-Mark-Twain-63518.html>

¹⁹ Fredrik Kallin, Racial and Religious Hypocrisy in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, (Kristianstad University,2007)

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, (Penguin Popular Classics, New York,1994), 12.

²² Ibid, 11.

²³ Ibid, 45.

²⁴ Everett M. Emerson, *Authentic Mark Twain: Literary Biography of Samuel L.Clemen*, (University of Pennsylvania Press,1984), 69.

²⁵ Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, (Penguin Popular Classics, New York,1994), 112.

General Conclusion:

Oliver Twist and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* are two outstanding social novels that convey a vehement criticism of the Victorian corrupt system and the American hypocritical society respectively. Both of them have portrayed a world of cruelty, deprivation, mechanistic materialism and extreme individualism which is ruled by capitalist regimes. The latter are sharply attacked by both authors who have informed against its fateful and serious reflections.

The comparative study that we have carried out has studied the aforementioned issue in Dicken's *Oliver Twist* and Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. It has allowed us to identify the common points between the two novels concerning the ruling powers' various abuses and the different flaws that afflict these decaying societies. It has also shown that both authors have similarly revealed the seamy side of their societies. In fact, Dickens, through *Oliver Twist*, pictures the real life of an orphan, and the cruel treatments he undergone from the Victorian society prevailed by corruption and religious hypocrisy. Similarly, in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Twain has expressed his scathing criticisms on the post Civil War American white society dominated by corruption, racial discrimination, hypocritical ideologies and the spirit of materialism. Additionally, the two author's awareness of their world's social evils came from their personal experience. Indeed, both writers had begun their career as journalists, reporting the major social, economic and political issues, before engaging in a literary career in which they criticized the same corrupt and hypocritical world despite geographical distances.

Throughout our dissertation, and departing from a New Historicist study, we came to the conclusion that the world depicted by Dickens in *Oliver Twist* closely resembles the one that Twain portrayed in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. We have shown that, though the

two writers come from different environments, they share common features, since they wrote social novels mainly shaped by their socio-political context.

All in all, Dickens' open criticism is characterized by direct attacks on the British institutions and the corrupt system' strategies in exploiting the laboring class, especially children. He succeeded in an indirect way to make the Victorian deprived society aware of the evils of the capitalist regimes. Thus, we can say that Dickens contributed to a series of legal reforms which improved at least the enduring sordid conditions from which the lower class enormously suffered. In a similar way, Twain, in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* compared the American society from two distinct periods, the antebellum and the industrial one. In fact, although the novel was set in the pre-Civil War 1830's, which was mainly characterized by slavery and racism, the American writer has shown that the world depicted in his novel resembles that of the date of its publication 1884, since the spirit of slavery and the racial beliefs are still common at that time. However, unlike Dickens, Twain's evaluation of the American society is seen as objective rather than subjective since the novel itself is set in a constant state of controversy. To make it clear, while some critics consider the book as a social novel which deals with the combustible issues of the American society during the post Civil War era, some scholars, believe that the book is carrying racial stereotypes especially in using the word 'Nigger' which is totally offensive. Thus, we can say that Twain's success in disclosing the major issues of his society is limited if we compare it to that of Dickens, since the novel itself is not considered as an open criticism. This opens a window to enlarge the research and to deal with Dickens and Twain's other literary works so as to find out to what extent the two preeminent authors succeed in their social criticism.

Bibliography

- **The primary sources**

- Dickens, C. *Oliver Twist* (1837), (London: Penguin Books, 1994)
- Twain, M. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, (Penguin Popular Classics, New York, 1994)

- **Secondary sources**

- Abrams M.H. Geoffrey Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, (Cengage Learning)
- Aldridge, A.O. "The Universal in Literature" in *World Literature*, Theo D'haen, César Dominguez and Mads Rosendahl Thomsen (Routledge, 2012), 132.
- Burkhead, C. *Student Companion to John Steinbeck*, Westport, (Greenwood Press, 2002)
- Cain, Lynn. *Dickens, Family, Authorship*, (Routledge, 2017)
- Claridge H. *William Faulkner: Critical Assessments*, (Henry Claridge Taylor & Francis, 2000)
- Diniejko, A. Charles Dickens as Social Commentator and Critic, (Warsaw University, February 2012)
- Ebert, R. *Roger Ebert's Movie Yearbook 2007*, (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 2006)
- Felix J. Tom T. *John, Jesus, and History, Volume 1: Critical Appraisals of Critical Views*, (Society of Biblical Lit, 2009)
- Exodus 15:7-8
- Exodus 20:13
- Fishkin, S, F. *A Historical Guide to Mark Twain* writes, (Oxford University Press, 2002)
- Gale Research, *Twentieth-century Literary Criticism*, (Gale Research Company, 1984)

- George S. K. *Ethics, Literature, and Theory: An Introductory Reader*, (Sheed & Ward, Jul, 2005)
- Hayes, A. Religion and Hypocrisy in *Oliver Twist*; (Massachusetts, 2003)
- John K. "Charles Dickens", in Kastan, David Scott. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature*, vol 1, (Oxford University Press, 2006,)
- Kallin, F. Racial and Religious Hypocrisy in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, (Kristianstad University, 2007)
- Khamis, M. Charles Dickens's *Oliver Twist*: Hypocrisy, (Educationing, 2012)
- Literary theory and Criticism, New Historicism,
<https://sites.google.com/site/nimeshdaveeporfolio/home/assignments/semester-2/literary-theory-and-criticism>.
- Martin, W. and Tichi, C. *The Gilded Age and Progressive Era: A Historical Exploration of Literature*, (ABC-CLIO, February, 2016)
- Muthiah, K. The Societal reflections in Dicken's Plays, (Sadakathullah Appa College, December, 2012)
- New World Encyclopedia, New Historicism, (October 2017)
http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/New_Historicism
- New York Times, *The New York Times Book Review*, (New York Times Company, 1993)
- Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English, S. Wehmeier, (Oxford University Press, 2005)
- Parrington, V. *The Beginnings of Critical Realism in America: Main Currents in American Thought*, (Routledge, 2017)

- Peck, J and Coyle, M. *A Brief History of English Literature* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)
- Petersson, S. *The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins: Entertainment or Social Criticism?* (Lund University, 2011)
- Pettersson, A. Gunilla L. Wada, Petersson, Stefan, H. *Literary History: Towards a Global Perspective*, (Walter de Gruyter, 2006)
- Railton, S. Jim and Mark Twain: What Do Dey Stan' For, (VQR, December, 2003)
- Richardson, R. *Oliver Twist and the Workhouse*, (British Library, May 2014)
- Rasmussen R. K. *Critical Companion to Mark Twain*, (Infobase Publishing, 2014)
- SparkNote on *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, (SparkNotes Editors, 2002),
<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/huckfinn/>
- Veaser, A. *The New Historicism Reader*, (New York, Penguin books, 1994)
- Zuckert, C. H. *Natural Right and the American Imagination: Political Philosophy in Novel Form*, (Rowman & Littlefield, 1990)

