

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v5i6.2615>

‘I Ain’t A-Going to Be Sivilized:’ Huck’s Idiolect in Twain’s the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

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Abstract

Recent research has highlighted the significance of written dialects and idiolects in shaping literary voices, a phenomenon particularly evident in Mark Twain’s The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (HF). This study examines Twain’s intentional use of idiolect to characterize Huck, portraying his self-made social class and nomadic lifestyle. Huck’s first-person narrative emphasizes a humanized stylistic register marked by nonstandard vernacular. Employing a deconstructionist approach, the study explores Huck’s inconsistent idiolect, linking it to themes of deterritorialization and nomadology, and positioning it as a deliberately destabilizing force within established linguistic conventions. By foregrounding Huck’s idiolect, the study contributes to broader discussions on literary representation and dialectology.

Keywords: Nomadology, Deterritorialization, Dialectology, Idiolect, Linguistic Conventions, Nineteenth Century.

Introduction

In structural linguistics, language is often analyzed in terms of its internal structure, focusing on elements such as phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. It further seeks to uncover the underlying rules and principles that govern a linguistic system. However, while structural linguistics provide valuable insights into the internal mechanics of a language, it may fall short in capturing the full richness of linguistic diversity and variation represented by dialects, as the concept of ‘dialects’ introduces complexities that go beyond the realm of structural analysis. Dialects can vary in numerous ways; they can be close or detached geographically, contemporary or noncontemporary in their usage, and may hold varying levels of prestige within a given society (Alen and Linn 2014: 21). That is, the presence of dialects highlights the dynamic nature of language and its close connection to human culture and society. In this sense, dialects evolve over time, influenced by historical, social, and geographical factors and they reflect the diverse ways in which language is used by different communities and groups. These attributes challenge the traditional structural view of linguistic systems, which tends to categorize languages as either identical or different based on their structural features.

One primary role of dialects is communicating voice. The concept ‘voice’ is complex as it extends beyond mere sound, and exists within and beyond the body, representing various forms of meaning breakdown into tangible or intangible forms. Despite its immediacy, voice is consistently administered (Smith 2019). Recent research highlights the effectiveness of dialect or the spoken form as a written representation in creating a distinct sense of voice (Hodson 2018). Some scholars emphasize the dialect’s role as a regional variation of language, marked

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by unique vocabulary, syntax, grammar and pronunciation (Akmajian et al. 2017). In this sense, dialects are inherently diverse, encompassing a range of linguistic variations within a specific community, region, or social group. Others maintain that the spoken form serves as the direct expression of the brain's linguistic aptitude, whereas written language is perceived as a means of embodying and conserving speech. Such speech, whether standard or non-standard is often represented by literary dialect, defined as a device that involves the use of written techniques, such as unconventional spellings, contractions, elisions, apostrophes, shifts in syntax, and other signals, to represent the unique way of speaking associated with particular ethnic, regional, or racial groups (Messner 2021).

Given these definitions, literary dialect aims to epitomize the distinctive speech patterns and linguistic characteristics of these groups, adding authenticity and depth to characters and settings in a work of literature (Zanger 1975). More than that, literary dialect has been used as a means of 'linguistic mediation designed to appear unmediated' (Overfelt 2017: 17). That is, authors decisively use dialects in order to convey specific linguistic and cultural elements, while simultaneously striving to create a natural and uncontrived feel in the text. Hence, the use of dialect is intentional but designed to seem spontaneous and reflective of genuine expression. In HF, Twain's choice of the first-person point of view narrated by Huck, eliminates any intermediary between the author and the reader, allowing an authentic pure impact of the words, while giving the reader the authority of interpretation. Nonetheless, some linguists have regarded the literary dialect with dubiety as a reliable source of linguistic data. This dubiety stems from the difficulties in validating its accuracy when contrasted with genuine spoken language. Skeptic linguists hold the belief that 'the written language is the 'real' language and speech is a corruption of it' (Ferguson 1996: 43), underlining the shortcomings of the literary dialect claiming that, by nature, it falls short as a complete transcription, unable to capture the precise vocal tonality and insinuated phonetics that often lie beyond the scope of the cultural hearing' (Jones 1999: 46). In this regard, the written form that mimics the oral language form, lacks the aural one. Against this background, to investigate even deeper the intricacies of language variations, some linguists have introduced the concept of the 'idiolect' (Wardhaugh 2009:151). It must be clarified that the term 'idiolect,' as used in this article, was coined only in 1948, sixty-four years after HF was published. Unlike dialect, which functions as a marker of a group's social class, racial identity, and locale, idiolect pertains to the linguistic peculiarities of a specific individual. Nevertheless, when idiolects and dialects are employed in written form, they both contribute to the authenticity and distinct voices of the characters. Bloch (1948) was the first to coin the term 'idiolect' defining it as 'the totality of the possible utterances of one speaker at one time in using a language to interact with one other speaker' (7). He adds that idiolect is 'a variant of the language used by one person, the distinctive speech of an individual, considered as a linguistic pattern unique among speakers of his or her language or dialect' (6). In this context, idiolect is an interesting linguistic construct that zooms in on the individual level of speech and reflects one's socialization practice. While the majority of scholars tend to characterize Huck's speech pattern as a dialect, only a limited number of scholars, such as David Sewell (1954), Diana Ackerman (1977), Leonard Ashley (2014), and Harold Beaver (2017), have specifically addressed it as an idiolect.

Unlike dialects, which incorporate variations shared by a group, idiolects are unique to individual speakers. Each person possesses their idiolect, which represents their distinct way of using language. The idiolect concept acknowledges that even within a specific dialect, there can be considerable variation from one person to another. Factors such as personal experiences,

upbringing, education, and social interactions shape an individual's idiolect (Ingram et al. 2019). Furthermore, idiolect encompasses not only the vocabulary and pronunciation employed by an individual but also extends to their specific grammatical choices and stylistic inclinations. Such choices and inclinations are evident in Huck's idiolect, which exhibits occasional inconsistencies or idiolectal innovations that lack structure and appear random, indicating that the linguistic individual lacks a stable and established language system. Instead, they manifest as a free, chaotic, and innovative linguistic system, responding to the influences of their particular linguistic surroundings (Kuhl 2003). It is evident that Huck's distinct linguistic characteristics are peerless as they are integrated into the narrative text, canonizing the regional language by granting an authority and literary legitimacy it had not previously enjoyed (Overfelt 2017). In addition, his individualized perspective allows for multiple interpretations, enabling readers to decisively respond to the impact of his genuine, unpolished, and unrefined spoken words. This elevation of what some might label Twain's book as one that is characterized by a 'systemic use of bad grammar' and Twain a 'bad writer,' seemingly set a controversial precedent (Bird 2007: 135; Wonham and Howe 2017:109). That is, HF garnered the disapproval of a wide range of libraries, leading to decisions not to shelve and even ban it, especially by members of the Concord, Massachusetts, and Public Library committee. Fearing the potential proliferation of such language, they described the book as 'trash of the veriest sort' and its language as 'rough, coarse, and inelegant.' The St. Louis Globe-Democrat even denounced it as 'more profitable for the slums' (Sullivan 2022: 185). Despite these allegations, the fact that Twain employs a multidialect language in the dialogue of his characters to vividly portray rural individuals living in the 1840s invites this study.

One justification for not comparing other characters' linguistic features, such as phonology, lexicon, and grammar in this study is the concern for fairness across different dialects. While Huck may share some phonological rules with other characters, the emphasis is on examining Huck's idiolect instead of making comparisons with the linguistic features of other dialects. While it might be tempting to assume that Huck and his father share similar speech patterns due to their common socio-economic status, the subtle distinctions in their pronunciation affirm the opposite: Huck says 'get' and Pap says 'git', alongside other characters such as Jim and Old Mrs. Hotchkiss.

Literary Review

While some scholars assert that Mark Twain employed seven dialects in his literary work, others engage in a debate over the accuracy of this claim, questioning whether he used seven, possibly more, or even fewer dialects (Fishkin 1993). At the onset of the novel, and under the humorous guise of 'Explanatory,' Twain outlines his use of seven various dialects, including the Missouri negro dialect (spoken by Jim and his peers), the extreme backwoods Southwestern dialect (spoken by Arkansas Gossips), and the ordinary 'Pike County' dialect (spoken by white characters with slight variations). Moreover, he incorporates four modified varieties of the Pike County dialect (spoken by thieves on the Sir Walter Scott, King, Bricksville Loafers, and Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas Phelps). Not only do these distinct dialects feature effective representations of the linguistic diversity characterizing America's past, but they also contribute to the novel's complexity, making it a more challenging yet immersive read. In the 'Notice' preceding the 'Explanatory,' the author frivolously issues a clear statement warning readers from seeking hidden messages within the text. Yet, Twain's bold embrace of dialects, despite his own forewarning, is palpable as he adeptly pens a captivating narrative that celebrates the diversity and authenticity of language. Therefore, as he engages a diverse array of dialects that complexly

shape the speech patterns underscoring the features of language as it is spoken by different social groups, regions, and classes, he adds depth and realism to his characters. Perhaps Twain's explicit forewarning is what piques readers' curiosity to go against his advice, as the author's intentional decision generates a dynamic abstraction of linguistic diversity.

Along these lines, dialects and idiolects in written form pose an intriguing challenge when viewed through the monochromatic lens of structural linguistics, pushing against its narrow boundaries and introducing spatial and temporal attributes. This expands our understanding of language as a dynamic and culturally embedded phenomenon that extends beyond the purview of a purely structural approach. Despite such a challenge, Twain employs a writing style that mimics spoken language, a style tailored to convey the illusion of spoken discourse. The author himself acknowledges the deliberate transformation of written expressions into conversational forms, stating that 'written things have to be limbered up, broken up, colloquialized, and turned into the common form of unpremeditated talk' (Blair 1979: 3).

Dialectology, Deterritorialization, and Nomadology

Even though Mark Twain has faced criticism, being labeled a 'bad writer,' a 'divine amateur,' and having his recognition eschewed as 'an appeal to rudimentary minds' (Brooks 2023: 15), Twain is typically regarded as an authority on language usage in writing (Hoben 1956). He has been even hailed for familiarizing himself with countless vernaculars and jargons, acquiring deftness in his lexis through extensive reading and interactions with myriad people from diverse social backgrounds. This skill is evident in his adeptness at portraying individuals without overtly tying them to their backgrounds, establishing him as an innovative and 'talented' figure in the 'art of fiction' (Gibson 1976:13/28). The reason for these denunciations may be attributed to his deviation from the established literary canon by employing dialects in written form. However, this written form can be classified under the umbrella term of dialectology, a subfield of linguistics that was still developing during Twain's time. That is, Twain composed the novel during a period when literary dialects were at the height of their popularity in American literature. Undoubtedly, like many writers of his time, Twain sought to stage his own abilities, particularly through the use of the 'Pike County' dialect:

For our novelist to try to write Americanly, from any motive would be a dismal error, but being born Americans, we would have them use 'Americanisms' whenever these serve their turn; and when their characters speak, we should like to hear them speak true American, with all the varying Tennessean, Philadelphian, Bostonian, and New York accents' (Howells 1891: 137).

Probably this is why some scholars attribute the advancement of dialectology in America to Twain (Southard and Muller 1993). Although Twain utilized dialects many years earlier in various works other than HF, such as 'The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County' (1865), *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), and *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), the establishment of dialectology is credited to the Italian Graziadio Isaia Ascoli in 1873 (Boberg et al. 2018), only because in America, The American Dialect Society was formed later, in 1889. In fact, the utilization of dialects in American literature dates back to the eighteenth century, notably evident in the First American Novel, *Father Bombo's Pilgrimage to Mecca*, written in 1770 and published in its entirety in 1775. An illustration that closely resembles Jim's dialect involves an imitation of an immigrant's speech pattern: 'de wife of Neal McCoobory de Cook; now in Trut, I (...) what we do wid him' (77).

Dialectology intersects with phonetics, historical linguistics, and sociolinguistics, demonstrating

its interdisciplinary nature and contributing to the comprehension of language evolution and the societal influences on linguistic diversity (Chambers and Trudgill 1998). This diversity, encompassing deterritorialization and nomadology, terms introduced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their 1972 book *Capitalisme et schizophrénie. L'anti-Œdipe* (Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia), is applicable across various domains - social, theoretical, emotional, or linguistic- signifying the process of breaking free from established structures and limitations, dismantling rigid boundaries, and opening up spaces for creative and transformative potentials (Houtum 2010). In the book, the term 'nomad' is scrutinized together with the 'despot,' an intermediary between stateless primitive communities and cultured absolute states.

Similar to the nomad, the despot embodies a natural inclination toward deterritorialization present in all phenomena. Deleuze and Guattari enhance this inclination, distinguishing between absolute and nomadic science, recognizing the transient nature of structures designed by nomadic science and hailing its ability to spark a creative trajectory of escape (Buchanan 2010: 345). Nomadology in thought reflects a liberated style associated with the refusal of absolutes and engagement with an interconnected complex experience, termed rhizomatic reality. Deviating from the common structuralist understanding of the signifier-signified relationship, their theory centers on the concept of 'order-words,' defining language as the conveyance of the word as an 'mot d'ordre' (order-word) rather than the 'communication d'un signe comme information' (communication of the sign as information) (Deleuze and Guattari 1980: 97). Order-words are not limited to a specific category of blatant statements but indicate the relationship of every word or statement to latent presumptions. Huck's nomadology aligns with this departure from absolute orthodox conformist language and thought. Thus, the juxtaposition of nomadology, deterritorialization, despotism, idiolectology, and order-word versus conformity, localization, self-determination, dialect, and structuralism becomes evident. Idiolect, distinct from dialects, denotes the unique linguistic patterns characteristic of an individual, adhering to linguistic rules and forming an idiosyncratic linguistic profile: 'variation in idiolects is often distinctive yet consistent' (Zhu and Jurgens 2021: 297).

It is crucial to acknowledge the cumulative nature of intellectual ideas, recognizing that significant contributions often build upon earlier concepts. While Deleuze and Guattari made significant contributions to the concepts of deterritorialization and nomadology, and the duo is credited with popularizing and elaborating on both terms, they were not the first to explore the idea of breaking free from fixed territories and structures. In fact, these two concepts have historical antecedents in the works of other scholars and philosophers. For instance, Friedrich Nietzsche's lasting impact on Deleuze is evident in how the interpretation put forth in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* (1962) informs Deleuze's subsequent collaboration with Guattari (Mollison 2022: 428). Indeed, Nietzsche's exploration of overcoming fixed structures and boundaries, as seen in the concept of the 'overman' or 'Übermensch,' aligns with the idea of deterritorialization.

Moreover, his discussions of the eternal return and the will to power, along with his characterization of the free spirit bear affinities to the nomadic themes. Another influential figure on Deleuze and Guattari is Michel Foucault, particularly through his work *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966). While Foucault did not explicitly use the terms 'deterritorialization' or nomadology, his ideas on power, knowledge, and the destabilization of established norms and deconstruction of societal structures and institutions contribute conceptually. In addition, his concepts of 'heterotopias' and his analyses of spaces resisting fixed structures and identities could be deemed as promoting to the broader intellectual context in which the nomadology of Deleuze and Guattari emerged. Deleuze and Guattari's subsequent

work, Mille Plateaux (1980), reinterprets the concept of nomadism, initially pejorative in Immanuel Kant's writings. Contrary to idealizations of authentic nomadic peoples, 'nomade,' (nomad) as per Deleuze and Guattari, encapsulates notions of social dislocation, loss of meaning, and a pervasive sense of unreality in the contemporary world. Simultaneously, their philosophy posits that a dominant majority, wielding significant power, establishes and upholds a rigid and homogenous structure through language or discourse, perpetuating resistance to diversity, dissent, or alternative perspectives within the mainstream framework.

Deterritorialization can manifest in both tangible and intangible forms, revealing itself through a dual course of emancipation. The initial tangible path unfolds through Jim's resistance against the established rules of slavery. In contrast, the intangible route materializes in Huck's systematic defiance of the established linguistic rules and the predefined boundaries of language. Frustrated with the constraints of his former life, Huck explores ways to maintain the same sense of freedom he experienced in different occasions during his journey: in the woods, on the raft, and in the Territory. He unconditionally and utterly detaches himself from conventional society and is already plotting his next escape. Tangibility is mainly detected in the utilization of the word 'woods' representing a space where these nomadic themes come to life. They represent a space of deterritorialization for Huck, offering a departure from the confines of society, rules, and norms. It is a place where Huck can temporarily shed the expectations imposed by civilization. Deterritorialization is evident as Huck submerges himself in the natural environment, finding solace and freedom away from the territorialized spaces of towns. They symbolize a withdrawal from the constraints of civilization. Huck chooses the freedom of the woods over the societal norms and expectations that he finds oppressive. Since nomadology involves a rejection of fixed structures, Huck's journey through the woods reflects his desire to escape the restrictions imposed by society. The woods further provide an environment where Huck can experiment with different roles and identities. There, he encounters various characters, such as Jim, and his interactions with them allow for a fluidity in relationships and roles that contrasts with the more rigid social roles found in the town. To add, Huck's nomadic life offers him a close connection with nature. In this sense, nomadology challenges established moralities, and Huck's ethical decisions in the woods reflect a personal, autonomous morality that differs from societal norms. In addition, nomadology imparts on Huck a non-linear sense of time that becomes less structured as Huck navigates the river and wilderness.

Huck's connection with nature represents a deterritorialized humanistic journey that contrasts with the structured and territorialized spaces of civilization. The concepts of deterritorialization and reterritorialization are also reflected in Huck's experiences in his recurring desire to return to 'The Territory,' particularly represented by the Mississippi River 'The Territory,' mainly associated with the words Injun/Indian, refers to the sparsely populated western United States. It presents an enticing opportunity for Huck to rediscover his true self in a world that has not yet been fully 'civilized,' a landscape filled with potential and possibility. The Mississippi River serves as a symbolic territory for Huck, providing a sense of belonging, freedom, and adventure. It becomes a fluid and dynamic space that contrasts with the fixed territories of towns and plantations. Huck's desire to return to the river reflects a form of reterritorialization, a longing for the familiar, liberating territory he finds on the water.

The natural landscapes, including the woods and the river, serve as deterritorialized spaces where Huck can escape societal constraints. Nature becomes a realm where traditional boundaries are blurred. Huck's desire to return to 'The Territory' can be seen as a quest for reterritorialization, an attempt to establish a stable identity and find a sense of purpose. The river and the woods offer

a space where Huck can redefine himself, away from the societal roles imposed by his upbringing. Huck's journey involves a dynamic interplay between deterritorialization and reterritorialization. He moves back and forth between the woods, the river, and various towns, navigating the tensions between freedom and societal constraints. The ebb and flow of deterritorialization and reterritorialization mirror Huck's evolving understanding of autonomy and the complexities of identity.

In this vein, Twain's deployment of idiosyncratic terms, it is evident that 'flapdoodle' is used by Huck to characterize the King's speech, replete with tears and nonsensical content about alleged hardships, unveils a linguistic instrument imbued with historical intricacies. The term, with roots tracing back to the late 17th to 18th centuries where it colloquially denoted *membrum virile*, took on another meaning in the early 19th century. Notably, between 1830-1860, it evolved to signify 'nonsense,' 'rubbish,' and colloquially, 'the stuff they feed fools on.' Twain's resurrection of this expression in HF suggests a deliberate selection to infuse the narrative with both historical continuity and contemporary critique (Ayto and Simpson, 2010, p. 94). Another term that singularizes Huck is 'sivilize/d.' Twain's intentional misspelling of 'civilize' in the local dialect is a means of emphasizing Huck's social class as an uneducated individual and a form of resistance against the refined, conventional language. Moreover, the author's decision to prioritize local vernacularized spelling that challenges established linguistic norms, underscores the aforesaid deterritorialization and nomadology.

Although mentioned only three times in the novel its placement in the first, sixth, and last chapters carries significant thematic weight. In the sixth chapter, when Huck is kidnapped by Pap, the word gains particular significance. It represents a critical moment when Huck seeks to free himself from the society that has caused him so much harm by attempting to 'sivilize,' or civilize, him. The addition followed by the word 'as they called it,' further underscores the stark dichotomy and polarization between the first-person point-of-view of Huck and the third-person point-of-view encompassing all other white, civilized characters in the story. Moreover, it highlights the division between Huck's 'I' and society's 'they.' The word further serves to accentuate Huck's relentless quest for freedom from a hypocritical society. In the first chapter, the word 'sivilize' is followed by 'but,' emphasizing Huck's rejection of this idea. The third mention in the last chapter is particularly forceful, as Huck declares, 'and I can't stand it.' This suggests that while he may have entertained the notion of civilization in the past, he has now definitively chosen to return to the wilderness, the 'Territory', as he has 'been there before' and has learned from his experiences, solidifying his ultimate decision. In the episode involving Joanna and Susan, the two sisters are skeptical of Huck's story about Mary Jane being required to leave to visit an ill acquaintance. Huck, attempting to maintain the credibility of his narrative, explains that the acquaintance is suffering from the Mumps. However, the sisters find Huck's explanation illogical, pointing out that the Mumps aren't a deadly or serious illness. Huck, recognizing that his story is unraveling, resorts to his skill in wordplay and quick thinking to extricate himself from trouble. His idiolect expressed by 'the dreadful pluribus-unum mumps,' and the word 'Obleegd,' is another example of deterritorialization, emphasizing his linguistic idiosyncrasy.

When Huck is asked to define what that is he claims, 'I couldn't think of anything reasonable, right off that way, so I says: Mumps.' Then defining what he means by Mumps he cojoins many fatal diseases of the time into one phrase: 'Well, measles, and whooping-cough, and erysipelas (Erysipelas), and consumption (Tuberculosis), and yaller janders (Jaundice), and brain-fever, and I don't know what all.' Such impairment within the linguistic realm can equally be traced in

political realms primarily rooted in the appropriation of expressions like ‘nation,’ ‘land,’ and ‘laws,’ used expletives, as interjections, or forceful change of expressions. This linguistic maneuver creates a political thematic thread, giving meaning to the recontextualization of the Latin motto ‘e pluribus unum,’ originally signifying national unity, to now refer to a multitude of diseases, particularly the ‘dreadful pluribus-unum mumps.’ This linguistic transformation subtly implicates a diseased political body within the narrative. Moreover, the irreverent treatment of grammar and spelling, as well as the coexistence of various dialects throughout the text, introduces a fundamentally subversive dimension. These elements are at odds with the linguistic principles upon which the republican structure was initially built, challenging established norms and authority (Louis-Dimitrov 2013: 52). Along these lines, Huck proves his ability to adapt on the spot, using language creatively to steer social expectations and potential conflicts. Moreover, he creates a convoluted and fictional excuse, reinforcing the absurdity of his lie using his wit and resourcefulness to navigate a tricky situation. That is, the use of ‘pluribus-unum’ adds an extra layer of complexity and makes the excuse sound more official, despite its nonsensical nature.

This linguistic subversion can be also linked to the breakdown of the so-called values such as ‘equality,’ especially in the parallel contexts of slavery and segregation. The literary works of nineteenth-century writers attempted a formal reconciliation of the profound disconnect between the theoretical concept of social order, represented by the Declaration’s principle of equality, and its real-world application. Huck’s linguistic innovation accentuates the extent of this disconnection, or, to be philosophical, deterritorialization, by graphically portraying the discrepancy between the ideal of equality and the harsh realities of racial inequality during the era (Louis-Dimitrov 2013: 58). This deterritorialization is further illustrated in Huck’s dialectic choices, exploring the delicate balance between two worlds he experiences and having to choose between them are all expressed in his voice. Such voice conveys a profound internal struggle, encapsulated in his words: ‘because I’d got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it.’ The delicate balance he endeavors to strike between nature and civilization, unruliness and order, freedom and subjugation (both of societal and linguistic rules) proves to be a complex challenge. Ultimately, despite the substantial disquietude this decision involves, Huck opts for nature, unruliness, and freedom—the first pan of the scales—over the second highlighting the complexity inherent in his dialectic choices. Therefore, the set of atomic rules which govern his idiolect is more available and could be employed as a source for comparison.

Inconsistencies in Huck’s idiolect

Several scholars have examined the inconsistencies in Mark Twain’s use of dialect in HF, particularly in his portrayal of Huck’s speech. Susan Tamasi, in her article ‘Huck Doesn’t Sound Like Himself: Consistency in the Literary Dialect of Mark Twain,’ uses linguistic analysis to demonstrate that while some features of Huck’s dialect are stable, there are measurable variations in his speech (Tamasi 270–87). Earlier still, Katherine Buxbaum argued in 1927 that Twain’s ambition to authentically represent American vernacular inevitably led to compromises in accuracy and internal consistency (Buxbaum 233–36). Similarly, in his ‘The Dialects in Huckleberry Finn,’ (1979), David Carkeet studies such inconsistencies extensively.

Now, let us take a closer look at the last example, where, interestingly, the author presents a full-fledged account of Twain’s treatment of dialects, showing that although Twain himself claimed the novel included seven, they ultimately amount to ten: ‘We have nine distinct dialects spoken by white characters’ alongside Jim’s Missouri negro dialect (321). A few pages later, he reduces

the number of dialects to eight: 'Huck, Pap, Judith Loftus, Sir Walter Scott, Raftsmen, King, Bricksville Loafers, and Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas' (324). He further maintains that Twain's combination of earnestness and error created a curious blend of order and disorder, often leaving scholars either bewildered or discouraged from the outset. He argues that the actual differentiation of dialects falls somewhat short of the bold announcement regarding Twain's claim in the explanatory concerning the significant level of dialect diversity. Carkeet believes that this diversity becomes most evident in the different versions of the 'Pike County' dialect, where the shades are so subtle that one might wonder about Twain's intentions in using them elucidating the challenge in pinpointing the six specific dialects Twain had in mind, highlighting the difficulty in reconciling Twain's categorization with his own.

According to Carkeet, the assessment's elusive principles, particularly the significance of asterisked forms, play a crucial role. These forms, marked with asterisks, suggest the existence of additional dialects beyond Twain's initial list in the preface. The assessment proposes several principles for identifying these dialects, including prioritizing phonological features over lexical ones, emphasizing rules affecting a class, considering the degree of deviation from Huck's dialect, and factoring in the sheer number of differences or distinct words. Carkeet concludes that the exclusion of the lexical element in Huck's dialect is more likely to be unintentional than the absence of the phonological one. More, because lexical choices frequently mirror a personality rather than a dialect, they hold a greater significance in conveying individual characteristics. Therefore, he recognizes that characters who speak more may have greater occasion to demonstrate dialectal features, and a formula expressing the 'density' of features could be devised, implying that such rigor might not be practical given the subjective nature of the analysis.

Within this framework, trying to understand Twain's categorization of the seven dialects, increasing them and reducing them, Carkeet ultimately reranks them into seven (330). Though his retraction from nine to seven dialects trying to align with Twain's original categorization may appear to weaken his stance, it does not diminish the value or insightfulness of his research. However, his evaluation faces a serious challenge as he not only relies on Mark Twain's original work but also incorporates interpretations by other critics, like John Seelye, who replicates Huck's storytelling style in his work *The True Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1970). For instance, the word 'terbacker,' not explicitly mentioned in Twain's HF – but instead referred to as 'tobacker' – is positioned by Carkeet within the framework of distinguishing 'Huck's dialect' who states that: "Simon Wheeler and Huck Finn would have little trouble understanding each other. They share nonstandard pronunciations like (...) terbacker for 'tobacco'" (326). This blend of HF's dialects of both Twain's and Seelye's works may explain the discrepancy in the number of dialects identified by Carkeet and Twain.

Carkeet underlines the mismatch between Twain's distinction of different dialects and the linguistic details in the novel that has perplexed critics for a considerable time, making it challenging to determine precisely which character used which dialect. Moreover, he attributes the inconsistencies of Huck's 'dialect' to the novel's divided composition, with three-fifths written in the summer of 1883 and the remaining two-fifths in 1884. By this claim, he suggests that Twain's imperfect recollection of dialect details between these two periods posed a challenge in harmonizing the text, resulting in linguistic inconsistencies. Carkeet's observation about the inconsistencies is accurate, and the fact that these inconsistencies persist underscores the complexity of the revision process and the difficulty of maintaining linguistic coherence throughout the novel. However, while his arguments hold merit and raise valid points, the

reasons behind them may be more complex than just the temporal division of the novel's composition. Therefore, it is essential to scrutinize the specific examples provided to evaluate the inconsistencies of Huck's presumed 'dialect.' Consequently, Carkeet's valuable assessment of Huck's idiolect may require revisions, as further examination or consideration of specific aspects reveals inaccuracies in his work.

Upon revisiting Huck's idiolect, given all the instances of the particularity of Huck's speech patterns (not just one pattern), it becomes evident that the temporal division theory may not hold true as some linguistic inconsistencies persist within the same chapter, page, or even the same line. Considering two pairs (out of many examples) such as 'this wasn't one of them kind' (19) and 'that warn't going to keep' (19) 'but it wasn't where' (215) and 'it warn't in no' (217), it becomes obvious that the temporal gap in writing cannot be deemed a compelling justification for the observed inconsistencies. I would even say that these inconsistencies were intentional and yet align with the previously discussed themes of deterritorialization, reterritorialization, and nomadology. In this context, it is not the temporal divide that rationalizes these consistencies, but rather the deliberate intention of the author to underscore and emphasize them.

As for the spatial dimension, additional instances of inconsistency in Huck's idiolect can be traced in his frequent use of the verb 'waked' (16 times) compared to the correct tense 'woke up,' which appears only in chapters 7 and 20. This examination reveals inconsistencies within the same spatial dimension of the story (chapters 2 to 41), regardless of temporal divisions. Another notable inconsistency is the use of 'nuther' and 'neither.' It is interesting to note that Huck consistently avoids using 'goin' or 'gwyne' like other characters, instead opting for 'going to.' Similarly, there is a variation in his use of both marked and unmarked plural forms within the same page. Mark Twain's statement, 'I make this explanation for the reason that without it many readers would suppose that all these characters were trying to talk alike and not succeeding,' commands impressive weight in the context of this study on Huck's idiolect. It accentuates instances where Huck imitates Jim's speech patterns, as seen in expressions like 'Git up' or 'Looky,' and his use of 'I hain't,' echoing Jim and other characters.

Examining additional instances in HF, we find distinctive use of the perfect tense, as exemplified in 'I seen' (Chaps. 4, 18, 21, 27), in contrast to the correct form 'I've seen' (Chaps. 19, 33). The employment of the adjusted modal auxiliary verb 'druther' (Chaps. 5-37) and the almost correct form of 'would rather' (Chaps. 8-28) within the same sphere effectively refutes the temporal divide theory. Similarly, the divergent use of the adverb 'anywhere' (Chaps. 2, 15, 18, 19, 27) and 'anywhar' (Chaps. 7, 16) aligns with this statement. The semantic error of using 'learn' (Chaps. 1-38) to refer to teaching somebody and 'learn' to refer to teaching something to somebody (Chap. 21) is consistent with the invalidity of the temporal divide. Examining other action verbs, many examples contradict Carkeet's theory, such as 'I says/hears/thinks' (Chaps. 3-43), 'I say' (Chaps. 7, 23), and 'I hear' (Chaps. 8, 32). Following verbs in the past tense, like 'waked' (Chaps. 2-41) versus 'woke up' (Chaps. 36, 134); 'brung' (Chaps. 8-34) versus 'brought' (Chap. 11); and 'catched' (Chaps. 6-43) and 'ketchd' (Chaps. 8, 20) versus 'caught' (Chap. 28), all debunk the temporal divide theory.

Along these lines, Carkeet's valuable assessment of Huck's idiolect may require revisions, as further examination or consideration of specific aspects reveals inaccuracies in his work. Twain did manage to maintain certain consistent elements in Huck's idiolect within the text, and, simultaneously, he maintained several inconsistencies in some adjacent phrases. In this case, it is crucial to accept that linguistic consistency can coexist with variability, as dialects often

incorporate a range of linguistic characteristics and may exhibit both stable and variable patterns. Twain's ability to sustain linguistic consistency within specific passages emphasizes the inconstant nature of dialect representation in the novel.

Conclusion

Critics have engaged in extensive debates over the precise motivation behind Twain's utilization of dialects. Some have argued that it serves to illuminate the cultural and social backgrounds of his characters, while others have emphasized its role in highlighting the incongruity between Huck's unpolished yet morally sound speech and the often hypocritical discourse of the adult world. Either way, Twain's use of dialects undoubtedly enhances the narrative, offering an exceptional linguistic portrayal of the antebellum South. It also provides a window into the distinct voices and perspectives of the characters, fostering a deeper understanding of their identities and the society they inhabit.

Echoing the enquiry posed in the abstract, we can conclude that although Twain's strategic use of regional language in HF challenges conventions and raises controversy, it nevertheless contributes to the novel's long-lasting appeal. That is, the inconsistency may contribute to the portrayal of authentic and complex characters, reflecting the diverse ways individuals express themselves linguistically. This can enhance the richness and depth of character development, providing a detailed representation of the human experience. Ultimately, the impact of inconsistent idiolect on the authenticity and accuracy of literary work depends on the author's skill in employing linguistic variations purposefully, aligning them with the narrative's objectives, and ensuring that the expressive richness does not compromise the overall coherence of the literary piece. By infusing Huck's speech with authenticity and a sense of the 'real,' the author deftly navigates the equilibrium between literary representation and the skill of storytelling. However, it is important to acknowledge that this linguistic diversity also imparts complexity to the novel. The author's dedication to authenticity in language demands a more attentive and deliberate reading process. The broad variety of dialects present in the text renders the reading experience both rewarding and intellectually demanding.

Twain's approach at the time, while not necessarily perceived as heroic, was met with opposition. Some contemporaries, concerned with maintaining the status quo and adhering to uniform standardized linguistic rules, battered and even lashed him for perceived violations of language conventions. Given the contemporary global landscape, I suggest we find inspiration in Huck. In times of adversity or when confronted with antiquated language, Huck demonstrated the ability to coin new terminology. Similarly, as our world becomes increasingly precarious and foreboding, we ought to emulate his inventive linguistic approach. Just as Huck repurposed the term 'mumps,' originally associated with a contagious illness; to symbolize a diseased or problematic facet of the social or political body, we too may have the capacity to evolve language to articulate the challenges we face in the domains of selective freedom of speech, politicized democracy, and restricted expression.

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