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First Steps toward a History of the Mid-Victorian Novel in Colonial Australia

CERTAIN stories in the history of Australian reading, some of them apocryphal, reflect ironically on one of the governing narratives of print culture studies and postcolonial studies: the narrative of print's 'mastery over the whole world' (Febvre and Martin 11). One such story goes that an iron box full of books sank to the bottom of the Port River near Adelaide in 1836 – a victim of the notorious 'Port Misery', which had no proper wharf in the early days of South Australian settlement.¹ Another story, much better known, concerns the library at Borrooloola, a remote settlement forty-five miles down the Macarthur River at the bottom end of the Gulf of Carpentaria in the Northern Territory. The story was apparently started by Ernestine Hill, who arrived there in the middle of the Wet some time in the early 1930s, and found four white men and 'a library of 3000 books':

the finest and most comprehensive library in the North. I peered through the dusty windows of the old court-house, at myriads of canvas-covered volumes, and could scarcely believe them true. The library became a kindly light of sanity to men half mad with loneliness. (Hill 214)

Volumes from the Macarthur River Institute were loaned to itinerant bushmen, read by inmates of the lock-up, and passionately debated by the old-timers who sat around on the banks of the river, but all the time the contents of the old courthouse were being slowly eaten away by termites. All that remains of the library, apart from the legend, are some of the old catalogues. They reveal it to have been, in fact, a fairly typical government-subsidised and subscription-supported library of the late 1890s and early 1900s, in which a selection of classics and contemporary literature was included along with a much larger number of mass-market popular novels (see Jose 116–19).

At the limit of the known world the very materiality of books, far from guaranteeing the dissemination of social and cultural values, appears to put writing at risk. In Borrooloola, Bill Harney recalled, "A splendid edition of Shakespeare had been used to light some camp-fire, and my first introduction to Plutarch was in the lavatory of the local pub" (Jose 108). This is hardly a typical example of the 'differentiated uses and meanings' (Chartier 3) to which sacralised cultural objects are liable, but it is a reminder that they are also perishable goods. How did they manage to do the invisible work of culture

1 The two hundred volumes inside the box were the property of the South Australian Literary and Scientific Association, founded in London two years earlier. They were retrieved, some of them stained with sea-water, and formed the basis of the colony's first subscription library.

formation before the hostile colonial interior got the better of them, leaving almost no trace of their onetime circulation?

So little is known about that invisible work that it is impossible to form any certain idea of the effects of imaginative, discursive, or narrative texts on the minds of settler colonial readers, and ultimately on ways of thinking or being in settler colonial societies. Borrooloola is therefore a valuable cautionary tale for historians of reading. It encourages us to celebrate the energy of a bush cognoscenti – it declares the existence of an intellectual life among colonial working people – and at the same time to remember that historical records almost never yield any direct evidence of how their ideas might have flowed into active life. Unlike working-class Britons, nineteenth-century Australian readers were not, for the most part, given to autobiographical reflection (cf. Vincent; Rose). Without surviving copies of the books they read (and might have inscribed with comments or marginal notes) we must rely on a small number of scattered and sometimes cryptic or oblique secondary records: library loan registers and minute books, publishers' and booksellers' sales figures and other circulation statistics, book reviews, and an occasional letter or diary entry. On the basis of this kind of evidence we must conclude, with Robert Darnton, that 'the experience of the great mass of readers lies beyond the range of historical research' (177). Perhaps, then, we should turn our attention away from readers, trying instead to piece together what Peter Middleton has called 'long biographies' of written texts from 'the aggregative textual archive that composes [their] textual memory' ('Biography').²

Twenty years ago, D.F. McKenzie declared that 'a history of books will have no point if it fails to account for the meanings [those books] later come to make' (14), but the fact remains that the history of reading has not turned out to be much like McKenzie's vision for it.³ There are some important exceptions – Priya Joshi's *In Another Country* comes to mind – but generally, faced with almost no direct evidence of what was read in the past (as distinct from what was available to read), the history of reading has directed its efforts to what it *can* find out – 'what was *reading* in the past?' – available through analyses of literacy, reading behaviours, and so forth.⁴ Cultural histories based on studies of reading, such as Jonathan Rose's remarkable investigation of autodidactic culture in Britain, characteristically turn away from texts to concentrate on the reconstruction of mentalities. Recently, however, some literary historians have begun to respond to McKenzie's challenge. Franco Moretti, for example, has developed a method of amalgamating a wide range of available book history data in order to shift the focus of literary hermeneutics from 'the close reading of individual texts to the construction of abstract models' ('Graphs' 67). For Moretti, meaning is not to be found in the small-scale internal analysis of works

2 Middleton draws on Appadurai's idea of the long biography of the commodity.

3 See Price.

4 I discuss the phenomenological bias in reading history, and the root of Chartier's concern that reading history must be something more than a history of what is read, in 'The Secret Reading Life of Us'.

but in the large-scale external analysis of formal characteristics and ideological tendencies available only to the inspection of broad trends in writing, publishing and reading. (This is an implicit rebuff of Edward W. Said's method of focusing 'as much as possible on individual works ... as great products of the creative or interpretative imagination' because 'you cannot grasp historical experience by lists or catalogues and, no matter how much you provide by way of coverage, some books, articles, authors, and ideas are going to be left out' [xxiv-xxv].) Moretti calls this counter-intuitive hermeneutics 'distant reading', 'where distance ... *is a condition of knowledge*: it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text: devices, themes, tropes – or genres and systems' ('Conjectures' 57).⁵

Like Moretti (and, in a different way, Middleton), I am interested in a model of literary interpretation responsive to the spatial and temporal distances across which texts move. My approach is to use quantitative reading data to analyse the circulation of Victorian written culture in a range of Australian colonial contexts, and to construct from that analysis locally situated re-readings of well-known and lesser-known novels. The first step is to establish that a significant number of readers did (or did not) read certain works; the second – something that can only be deduced from quantitative data of this kind – to establish exactly what *combinations* of novels were read, by individuals, subgroups, and the whole reading community. This latter aim suggests the one area where quantitative reading history can support a historically-informed literary analysis. Loans data give us insight into the borrowing patterns of every person who takes out more than one book: each reader reads a particular cluster of works, and in a particular order – and just as for individuals, so too for groups of women readers, shopkeepers, farmers, politicians and so on, and for the whole local library membership (see also Webby in this issue).

What these patterns reveal is that works of fiction (and non-fiction) are seldom read in isolation, but within the immediate horizon of other works – the genres and authors of which cannot always be safely predicted. In the cases of individual readers, these combinations have been determined by many factors, some of them random and most of them unrecoverable. We can, however, significantly reduce the risk of being misled by this kind of data if we ignore individual readers and analyse instead all combinations of loans across the entire library for a prescribed period. Taking this consolidated approach, it is possible to generate an amazon.com-style list: of the *x* readers who borrowed *Jane Eyre*, *y* also borrowed *The Mill on the Floss*, *Wuthering Heights* and so on. The outcome of this list is something more than a micro-canon, those works given special status by a particular reading community. What it shows up is a series of distinctive patterns and correspondences among literary works, patterns and correspondences that come into existence *for that reading community at that time*.

5 'Distant reading' is also the title of Middleton's book.

Among the consequences of this, we can no longer be satisfied with the one-to-many relationship inherent in those historical modes of criticism where ‘the novel’ – meaning, generally, one novel at a time – is said to exist ‘within the larger network of practices and discourses we call culture’ (Childers 3). Indeed, reading data of this sort can usefully aid us in rethinking our assumptions about the constitutive role of fiction in culture (as distinct from its referential function) because they give us a compelling rationale for looking at more than one novel at a time; and because they resituate that constitutive role in the act of consumption as well as the act of production – in this case, the still larger network of practices and discourses we call the culture of the nineteenth-century British world.

From the scant remnants of those acts of consumption we can begin to reconstruct a cultural moment, inferring from combinations of read texts some of the local ‘ways of using’ cultural products that were almost always ‘imposed by a dominant economic order’ (Certeau 13). What we encounter is a one-time tactics of cultural use for ‘the contact zone’, to adopt Mary Louise Pratt’s widely-known term for the work of culture at the colonial frontier. The contact zone is ‘the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict’ (6). The associated concept of transculturation is, Pratt argues, ‘a phenomenon of the contact zone’ (6). It describes the ways in which

subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture. While subjugated peoples cannot readily control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what they absorb into their own, and what they use it for. (6)

But in what ways can it be true that settler readers in Australia were subordinated or marginalised groups in the sense Pratt means? Weren’t they, rather, the advance troops of the dominant metropolitan culture, establishing a (largely) hostile contact zone between Imperial Britain and Indigenous Australia? And if by transculturation Pratt is referring to the production of an underground written culture, can it be adapted to include reading cultures? The answers to these questions are not straightforward. Settlers cannot be viewed exclusively in the abstract, as imperial functionaries. The profound unsettlement of their everyday experience of colonial life needs also to be acknowledged (see Wills 72). Settler readers were front-line agents, vehicles for the dissemination of ideas and values that normalised and neutralised their activities: the real-world activities of political domination, exploitation, and cultural destruction. Proud of their Britishness, Australian settlers read books that organised and reinforced ‘perceptions of Britain as a dominant world power’ and ‘contributed to the complex of attitudes that made imperialism seem part of the order of things’ (Boehmer 3). But the colonial newcomers, as they set about creating another Britain from the social and institutional structures, technologies and skills, narratives and cognitive maps they carried over with them, also found themselves alienated from their homeland, and out of place in their new country.

Distanced as they were from the centres of mid-Victorian colonial power – even ignored by them – reading itself became a kind of contact zone: part of the settlers' struggle to stay in touch with the centre, to imagine themselves in some merely outlying province, where news took a little longer to reach. What they read, however, only reinforced the unreality and relative unimportance of a place where print culture was received but almost never produced. For the shipment of print products was largely one-way: it made one home – mid-Victorian Britain – more vitally present and real than the other, colonial Australia, which was either absent, hurried over, falsified, exoticised, or distorted (see Henderson in this issue).

Records of reading are the textual remains of past acts of transculturation, therefore. They link historical readers with specific mid-Victorian novels, but they cannot put us directly in touch with those readers, only with the presence of differentiated 'structures of feeling' (Williams 128–35) lingering in variable combinations of texts, as submerged histories of 'copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power' (Pratt 7). In what follows I want to consider one example of what I mean, by examining a cluster of books circulating within the horizon of Charles Dickens's *Great Expectations* (1861) in colonial Adelaide in the second half of 1861 and the first half of 1862. I will begin with Edward Said's *Culture and Imperialism* in order to emphasise the particular problems that colonial Australia presents to postcolonial theories of the Victorian novel and to Victorian studies. More importantly, though, Said uses his reading of Dickens to make the general point that colonialism exiled its subjects permanently from metropolitan space. We cannot know what Dickens's readers in Adelaide felt or thought about that, but we can look afresh at the problem of colonial exile and return in the mid-nineteenth century through a group of novels jointly in circulation in a colonial city in which those problems were actively lived and felt.

Said chooses *Great Expectations* for the very first application of what he terms 'contrapuntal reading' in *Culture and Imperialism*. He does so because Dickens's novel illustrates his central argument: that fiction was 'immensely important in the formation of imperial attitudes, references, and experiences' (xii). But more than this, the plot of *Great Expectations*, motivated as it is by the wealth and generosity of an unwelcome and unlawfully returned convict, is also useful for indicating the 'shadowy presence' of the colonial world in the metropolitan history of the mid-Victorian novel (xviii). We must, Said insists, usher the convict Abel Magwitch out of the shadows and into the light if we are to see again how 'the great cultural archive' (xxiii), his term for the imaginative and narrative literature of the imperial metropolis, is intimately connected 'with the imperial process of which [it was] manifestly and unconcealedly a part' (xv). The method of contrapuntal reading – thinking through and interpreting together 'experiences that are discrepant, each with its particular agenda and pace of development, its own internal formations, its internal coherence and system of external relationships, all of them co-existing and interacting with others' (36) –

is the key instrument in the process of reopening 'views and experiences that are ideologically and culturally closed to each other' (37).

Said's reading of *Great Expectations* lays out what is at stake. British Australia is 'a "white" colony like Ireland' (xvi): it began as a penal settlement in New South Wales, from which convicts like Magwitch were forbidden to return. Even after the abolition of convictism – in 1861 only Western Australia, a latecomer to transportation, still received convicts – the stigma remained. Said quotes Robert Hughes's popular history of convictism, *The Fatal Shore*, which asserts the existence of a kind of 'colonial stain'. Certainly free labourers could 'succeed, but they could hardly, in the real sense, return. They could expiate their crimes in a technical, legal sense, but what they suffered there warped them into permanent outsiders. And yet they were capable of redemption – as long as they stayed in Australia' (Said xvi). *Great Expectations* is an exemplary text for Said's purposes because the 'prohibition placed on Magwitch's return is not only penal but imperial': 'subjects can be taken to places like Australia, but they cannot be allowed to "return" to metropolitan space' (xvii).

Having acknowledged the 'relatively attenuated presence of Australia in nineteenth-century British writing' (xvii) and pointed out the happy fact that a strong tradition of Australian writing did subsequently develop despite the indifference of Dickens, Said is anxious to move his argument forward. When Magwitch's 'delinquency is expiated' (xvi), all the 'truth of [Pip's] position' comes 'flashing' on him: 'its disappointments, dangers, disgraces, consequences of all kinds' (*Great Expectations*, vol. 2, chapter 20). He collapses and is revived into sanity and normality by being given the chance to begin again, this time as a clerk in the East for the company of shipping brokers in which he had secretly bought an interest for his friend Herbert Pocket. Thus, 'even as Dickens settles the difficulty with Australia, another structure of attitude and reference emerges to suggest Britain's imperial intercourse through trade and travel with the Orient' (Said xvii). There, by contrast, Pip's hard work will guarantee him repatriation. In this way, Dickens's denouement settles a difficulty for *Culture and Imperialism* too, because Australia does not seem, in the end, to be a very satisfactory example of the complex exchanges Said is trying to tease out. Magwitch is not, after all, a typical colonial subject: he is an Englishman in gaol. His relationship with Pip is not that between coloniser and colonised, but between two natives of the same great colonial power, one an upstart village boy, spoiled by money and the expectation of more money, the other an exiled criminal turned prosperous ticket-of-leave man. As many critics of *Great Expectations* have observed, Dickens takes great pains to establish the interdependence of these two characters, and the consequences of Pip's denial of their interdependence.⁶

Australia can never offer Pip the 'normality' of Britain's other colonies precisely because in *Great Expectations* the 'inferior peoples' (Said 12) are not the Indigenous inhabitants; Dickens has no interest, in this novel, in Aboriginal

6 See, for example, Brooks.

Australians. '[T]his is not a people,' Edward Gibbon Wakefield had written of New South Wales in 1829, 'but a colony of low-bred English' (67). Magwitch's Australia – the novel is set back a generation, and its action is roughly contemporary with Wakefield's remark – is in more than one sense an English underworld (Gilmour 116). But it is also – and here, as elsewhere, Dickens is interested in the impact of the past on the present – a mythical outlying hub of individual enterprise. Magwitch, like so many other convicts, is a professional criminal apparently committed to private enterprise and 'the acquisitive values of capitalism' (McQueen 4–5). Men like him 'set the pattern for the free labourers who succeeded them' (4–5): émigré Britons who became the colonial readers of *Great Expectations*.

South Australia, however, was a free colony and had never received convicts. Originally intended, as George Fife Angas described it, as 'a place of refuge for pious Dissenters of Great Britain' (qtd in Pike 130), it was rational, middle-class, paternalistic, utilitarian, and evangelical: mid-Victorian before the fact, one might say. Adelaide's reputation for respectability, sabbatarianism, temperance, pietism, serious-mindedness, and the glorification of work spread quickly. The city was, a commentator wrote in the 1880s, 'too strong for larrikinism and reports a far healthier social and moral tone than obtains in either Melbourne or Sydney; but for these advantages the little town pays the small but disagreeable price of Philistinism. Want of culture, Phariseeism and narrow mindedness find a more congenial home there than anywhere else' (Twopeny 123). It was a place Dickens would certainly have hated.

South Australia was also the site of a great, failed experiment in Wakefieldian 'concentrated settlement', or systematic colonisation. Designed 'in theory, to extend the limits of settlement in an orderly fashion so that more and more settlers would be placed on the land' (McQueen 162), it worked by blocking immigrant workers from 'buying land for seven years, during which time they would have to sell their labour power in order to survive. The price of land had to be kept high enough to stop the workers becoming self-supporting in a trice, but low enough to encourage them to work for wages out of which they could save to purchase their independence' (255). The failure of systematic colonisation did not deter Catherine Spence from declaring later that South Australia was a radical utopia:

In the early days of a free colony we see something of that Utopia where man learns the usefulness, the dignity and the blessedness of labour, where work is paid for according to its hardness and its disagreeableness, and not after the standard of overcrowded countries where bread is dear and human life and strength is cheap. (Qtd in Whitelock 212)

The colony was by no means exclusively radical, however. Originally governed jointly by an independent and radical-minded Board of Commissioners and by the Colonial Office, republicanism came to flourish alongside ardent monarchism; a suspicion of the British establishment alongside a tendency to ape some of its most venerable institutions (in, for example, the Adelaide Club);

and a commitment to radical social values alongside a pragmatic conservatism typical of small land-holders and petit-bourgeois capitalists.

These contrasting characteristics were evident in the South Australian Institute, founded in 1856, which played a central role in the circulation of mid-Victorian written culture in Adelaide. Like its counterparts in other Australian colonies, the Institute had its origins in the useful knowledge movement earlier in the century, but was essentially a subscription-supported library and occasional venue for lectures and soirées. Its readership was overwhelmingly middle-class, and included many leading political, commercial and professional figures. Catherine Spence recalled in her autobiography that it was

a treasure to the family. I recollect a newcomer being astonished at my sister Mary having read Macaulay's History. 'Why, it was only just out when I left England,' said he. 'Well it did not take longer to come out than you did', was her reply. We were all omnivorous readers, and the old-fashioned accomplishment of reading aloud was cultivated by both brothers and sisters. (Spence 20)

In October 1861, two copies of *Great Expectations*, each in three volumes, arrived at the Institute in North Terrace. Their journey from London by mail steamer had taken much the same route as the transport ships that brought convicts like Magwitch to New South Wales, although much less time – six weeks rather than six months. True to Spence's memory of the library, the volumes were on the shelf in Adelaide and being borrowed scarcely three months after the book had been published in London, by Bradbury and Evans in July 1861. By that time, however, many readers were already well into the story: it was being published in Dickens's *All the Year Round*, which had arrived in Adelaide in February in a flurry of publicity. Platts' bookshop and lending library announced its arrival on the front page of the *South Australian Advertiser* on 18 February as 'A Message from the Sea. – The Extra Christmas Number of ALL THE YEAR ROUND, containing the amount of TWO ORDINARY NUMBERS. The December Part contains the commencement of a NEW SERIAL STORY, by CHARLES DICKENS entitled GREAT EXPECTATIONS'.

The two copies of the novel were added to the Institute library's stock of nearly 5,000 titles of all classes (many in multiple volumes), of which about one-third (1,584) were novels (see Table 1). Over the next eight months – loan records beyond May 1862 have not survived – *Great Expectations* was loaned 46 times to 40 borrowers. This seems an insignificant number given that the library's 1,159 registered borrowers (paying subscribers) took out 32,223 loans for the entire seventeen-month period.⁷ But as Table 2 indicates, the bottom range of the top 20 fiction titles for that seventeen-month period extends from loans in the seventies to about one hundred. Even setting aside the fact that library subscriptions were family subscriptions (hence the apparent paucity of loans to women in the records), and that a novel was likely to be read by other members of a household or social circle, *Great Expectations* would almost

7 In 1861 Adelaide was the capital city of the least urbanised colony in Australia, and had a population of 18,303 (Vamplew 41). Six percent were members of the Institute library.

certainly have figured in the top 20 with a further ten months' borrowings. This is especially likely given Dickens's overwhelming popularity with Institute subscribers (see Table 3), and bearing in mind the combined popularity of *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*.

Table 1. SA Institute 1861–62: Holdings and loans by class

<i>Class</i>	<i>Class name</i>	<i>Held</i>	<i>Loaned</i>	<i>%</i>
A	Moral and Mental Philosophy &c	106	83	78
AA	Jurisprudence, Political Economy, Statistics, Commerce, &c	88	46	42
B	History and Historical Memoirs, Chronology and Antiquities	382	250	65
C	Biography	273	198	73
D	Geography, Topography, Travels and Voyages	632	476	75
E	Geology and Mineralogy	38	26	68
F	Chemistry, Metallurgy, Electricity, Galvanism &c	34	22	65
G	Zoology &c	69	59	86
H	Botany, Agriculture, Gardening &c	45	29	64
I	Anatomy, Physiology, Medicine &c	40	32	80
K	Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Engineering &c	124	79	64
L	Arts and Manufactures, Architecture, Painting and Music	99	53	54
M	Novels and other Prose Works of Fiction	1584	1467	93
N	Poetry and the Drama	151	87	58
O	General Literature, Collected Works, Essays, Criticism, Speeches, Correspondence, Miscellanies &c	740	598	81
P	Latin and Greek Literature	4	0	0
Q	German Literature	53	23	43
R	French and other Modern Literature	68	16	24
	TOTAL (excluding periodicals and reference works)	4530	3544	78
S	Bound Periodicals	65 *	2768	N/A
T	Encyclopaedias, Dictionaries, Grammars and other Works of Reference	238	18 ^	N/A

* All volumes of each title were assigned the same shelf number. Loans refer to total number of volumes.

^ Works of reference, mostly not for loan.

Table 2. SA Institute 1861–62: Top loan titles

<i>Bound Periodicals</i>	Total borrowers/ loans	Fiction	Total borrowers/ loans
1. <i>Household Words</i>	176/396	1. Scott, <i>Waverley</i> (1814)	130/200
2. <i>New Monthly Magazine</i>	153/392	2. Eliot, <i>Adam Bede</i> (1859)	126/136
3. <i>Bentley's Miscellany</i>	124/224	3. Lytton, <i>What Will He Do with It?</i> (1859)	121/231
4. <i>Fraser's Magazine</i>	113/200	4. <i>Tales from 'Blackwood'</i> (1858)	120/222
5. <i>All the Year Round</i>	101/139	5. Mulock, <i>John Halifax, Gentleman</i> (1856)	118/128
6. <i>Macmillan's Magazine</i>	88/114	6. Mulock, <i>A Life for a Life</i> (1859)	114/122
7. <i>Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine</i>	87/137	7. C. Kingsley, <i>Two Years Ago</i> (1857)	110/118
8. <i>Once a Week</i>	82/108	8. Hughes, <i>Tom Brown's Schooldays</i> (1857)	110/115
9. <i>Dublin University Magazine</i>	72/124	9. Collins, <i>The Woman in White</i> (1860)	104/126
10. <i>Eliza Cook's Journal</i>	64/111	10. H. Kingsley, <i>Geoffry Hamlyn</i> (1859)	96/102
11. <i>Cornhill Magazine</i>	64/78	11. Trollope, <i>The Warden</i> (1855)	87/92
12. <i>Leisure Hour</i>	58/68	12. Eliot, <i>The Mill on the Floss</i> (1860)	85/105
13. <i>Family Herald</i>	54/76	13. Eliot, <i>Scenes of Clerical Life</i> (1858)	84/94
14. <i>Tait's Edinburgh Magazine</i>	50/74	14. Eliot, <i>Silas Marner</i> (1861)	84/87
15. <i>The Family Friend</i>	45/71	15. Reid, <i>The War-Trail</i> (1857)	83/90
Other		16. Marryat, <i>Percival Keene</i> (1842)	79/87
1. Macaulay, <i>History of England</i>	67/100	17. C. Kingsley, <i>Westward Ho!</i> (1855)	79/82
2. <i>Chambers' Pocket Miscellany</i>	58/86	18. Dickens, <i>Bleak House</i> (1853)	78/80
3. <i>Wilson's Tales of the Borders</i>	44/98	19. Marryat, <i>Poor Jack</i> (1840)	77/78
		20. Dickens, <i>Barnaby Rudge</i> (1841)	74/80

We can ascertain, then, that *Great Expectations* was fairly widely read among the South Australian Institute subscribers, who were drawn from the full range of middle-class occupations: clerks and shop assistants, artisans, professionals, and shopkeepers. It was also probably read by a significant number of non-paying 'registered readers', including some labourers, who were permitted to use

the reading room, and who would have had access to the 'room' copies of the latest volumes of *All the Year Round* (Bridge 45). In addition, many Adelaide readers subscribed to *All the Year Round* through one of the local commercial booksellers, Rigby's or Platts', or borrowed the novel from commercial circulating libraries or book clubs (Talbot 10).

Table 3. SA Institute 1861-62: Top 40 authors

<i>Author</i>	Total loans	<i>Author</i>	Total loans
Dickens, Charles	965	Trollope, Frances	186
Marryat, Frederick	936	Yonge, Charlotte Mary	177
Reid, Capt. Mayne	849	Smedley, Frank	175
Bulwer Lytton, Edward	681	Lee, Holme	174
Lever, Charles	565	Sala, George Augustus	173
Trollope, Anthony	492	Hughes, Thomas	172
Cooper, James Fenimore	481	Brontë, Charlotte	171
Eliot, George	422	Gaskell, Elizabeth	159
Mulock, Dinah Maria	416	Chamier, Frederick	158
James, G.P.R.	396	Reade, Charles	154
Kingsley, Charles	383	Jerrold, Douglas	136
Scott, Sir Walter	334	Stowe, Harriet Beecher	129
Dumas, Alexandre	322	Marsh, Anne	125
Ainsworth, William Harrison	315	Macaulay, Thomas Babington	124
Collins, Wilkie	295	Kingston, William Henry	119
Thackeray, William Makepeace	269	Smith, Albert Richard	119
Aimard, Gustave	258	Rowcroft, Charles	115
Grant, James	216	Neale, William Johnson	114
Gore, Catherine	210	Haliburton, Thomas	112
Gerstaecker, Friedrich	188	Warneford, Lieut. Robert	111

What can we discover about the reception and impact of *Great Expectations* in South Australia? Australian newspapers did not generally review new British fiction. They reprinted some reviews from the British papers, but these were seldom novel reviews. There were no significant local periodicals publishing literary reviews in this period either: in fact the *Illustrated Australian Magazine* is the only local monthly in the Institute library catalogue. Few readers in colonial Adelaide, with the notable exception of Spence, have left accounts of

their reading in letters or diaries, and none that I can find mentions *Great Expectations*. All that survives of this unremarkable moment in the Victorian novel's global literary history, in other words, is the work itself, and the evidence of its having once been passed around among a few dozen people in a small, remote, and inhospitable colonial city.

The reading archive does not reveal how *Great Expectations* was received in Adelaide in the 1860s, then; but it does reveal that the novel was read within the horizon of certain other novels, magazine articles and stories, and non-fictional works. At the same time, I would argue, these patterns of consumption may be legitimately traced onto the wider Adelaide reading community (after all, if even half the library's loaned books were read by just one other person in a household, they would have reached more than ten percent of the city's population). Reading this configuration of texts and meanings, we can recover *something*, however slight, of the formation of a cultural imaginary in colonial South Australia. It is not my intention to guess the local concerns of Adelaide's readers, therefore, but to reconstruct one of the innumerable networks of significance in which these novels were enmeshed across the English-speaking world.

In this regard, I am adapting the approach of recent studies of Victorian print culture which have established that the initial publication of many novels as serials in newspapers, magazines, and instalments shaped particular contexts for meaning that are lost to readers of modern editions (see Ives 276; Hughes and Lund 2 and ff.; Brake). The use of consolidated loans data here has the same general aim, and differs only in shifting the focus from the conditions governing the writing, publication and metropolitan reception of fiction to the variable conditions of its more distant readings. Although I am concerned with the mechanics of the imperial book trade and the 'regimes of value' governing colonial reading practices (Frow 144–55), the history of reading here serves a re-interpretation of *Great Expectations* aimed at drawing out an obscured complex of textual and cultural meanings.

Table 4 shows the top twenty-five books borrowed along with *Great Expectations* during the loan period. Ten of them are bound volumes of periodicals which roughly correspond with the overall trends in periodical loans, except that Dickens's *All the Year Round* is, predictably, more popular. The continued prominence of *Household Words*, which had ceased publication in May 1859 and would never rival the circulation figures of its successor, should also be noted, since Institute readers would have embarked on *Great Expectations* already familiar with the 'Arcadian Australia' promulgated there (Lansbury) – and especially with the romanticised gentlemen and gentlewomen convicts of John Lang's 'true tales of early Australia'.⁸ On the other hand, only six of the twenty most popular novels in the library also figure in the *Great Expectations* list. Significantly, that list includes no Scott, despite the overwhelming popularity of *Waverley* at the Institute, and no adventure romance –

8 They appeared in *Household Words* in April 1859.

although *Tales from 'Blackwood'* (1858) collected stories from a range of Gothic and historical romance genres.⁹ Readers of *Great Expectations* were readers of provincial domestic realism (Eliot, Trollope, Mulock), the sensationalism of Wilkie Collins, and novels-with-a-purpose (*What Will He Do with It?*, *Nothing New*, *Two Years Ago*). Their preferences confirm the overall preferences of the library's subscribers for the latest or very recent novels: the earliest is Collins's *Hide and Seek*, published in 1854, but being read here in the new one-volume edition published in 1861 to take advantage of the author's booming sales.

Table 4. SA Institute 1861-62: Other loans by the 40 borrowers of *Great Expectations* (showing no. of borrowers and no. of loans)

Bound Periodicals	Borrowers/ Loans	Fiction	Borrowers/ Loans
<i>Household Words</i> (1850-1859)	18/37 (Total: 176/396)	<i>Tales from 'Blackwood'</i> (1858)	13/26 (Total: 120/222)
<i>All the Year Round</i> (1859-1895)	16/20 (101/139)	George Eliot, <i>Silas Marner</i> (1861)	13/15 (84/87)
<i>Bentley's Miscellany</i> (1837-1868)	14/22 (124/224)	Wilkie Collins, <i>Hide and Seek</i> (1854)	13/13 (42/44)
<i>Macmillan's Magazine</i> (1859-1907)	14/22 (88/114)	Henry Kingsley, <i>The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn</i> (1859)	12/12 (96/102)
<i>Fraser's Magazine</i> (1830-1882)	14/32 (113/200)	Charles Lever, <i>One of Them</i> (1861)	11/12 (60/62)
<i>Once a Week</i> (1859-1880)	13/17 (82/108)	Wilkie Collins, <i>The Woman in White</i> (1860)	11/18 (104/126)
<i>New Monthly Magazine</i> (1814-1884)	11/29 (153/392)	Anthony Trollope, <i>The Three Clerks</i> (1857)	10/10 (40/41)
<i>Dublin University Magazine</i> (1833-1877)	9/19 (72/124)	Dinah Mulock, <i>Nothing New</i> (1857)	10/11 (44/45)
<i>Cornhill Magazine</i> (1860-1975)	8/11 (64/78)	Anthony Trollope, <i>Barchester Towers</i> (1857)	9/9 (65/68)
<i>Eliza Cook's Journal</i> (1849-1854)	6/8 (64/111)	Charles Kingsley, <i>Two Years Ago</i> (1857)	9/10 (110/118)
Non-fiction		Isabella Blagden, <i>Agnes Tremorne</i> (1861)	8/9 (34/38)
<i>John Hollingshead, Ragged London in 1861</i>	5/6 (17/18)	Edward Bulwer-Lytton, <i>What Will He Do with It?</i> (1859)	8/16 (121/231)
Edward Trelawny, <i>Recollections of the Last Days of Shelley and Byron</i>	5/5 (11/11)	George Eliot, <i>Adam Bede</i> (1859)	8/11 (126/136)

Collins was Dickens's collaborator and close friend, and one of a number of contributors to *All the Year Round* whose fiction was especially popular with

9 I have set aside the twelve-volume *Tales from 'Blackwood'* because it is not possible to know exactly which volumes were borrowed.

readers of *Great Expectations*. *Hide and Seek* is dedicated to Dickens and is Collins's most Dickensian novel (Peters). *The Woman in White* finished its run in *All the Year Round* just a few months before *Great Expectations* began, and Collins's innovative plotting and thrill-seeking effects were certainly an influence on Dickens. He began *Great Expectations*, too, to rescue the still fledgling *All the Year Round* from the nearly disastrous unpopularity of one of Charles Lever's novels (*A Day's Ride: A Life's Romance*); and followed it up with a new serial by Bulwer Lytton (*A Strange Story*), the man who persuaded him to change the ending of *Great Expectations* to imply that Pip and Estella can be happy together. Bulwer's very long *What Will He Do with It?* (its readers had to borrow it twice on average to finish it) is arguably the greatest achievement of the only novelist whose reputation and popularity rivalled Dickens's in 1861, when Thackeray was in the last years of his life, and the generation of George Eliot and Trollope was in its first phase.

Clearly, South Australian Institute readers were drawn to the work of Eliot and Trollope, whose realism was already challenging the massive authority of Dickens's romance of 'familiar things' (Preface, Dickens). In particular, Eliot's spectacular rise to eminence in Adelaide is perhaps not surprising given the city's strong northern provincial, evangelical, and philosophically radical cultures: Helen Spence, for example, corresponded with Eliot, who at one point even considered accompanying her sister to settle in South Australia.¹⁰ Eliot's first 'Scenes of Clerical Life' had begun to appear only in 1857 (in *Blackwood's*), yet by 1861 all four of her books feature in the Adelaide top twenty, and only *Waverley* is more popular than *Adam Bede*. Australia is something of an afterthought in the plot of *Adam Bede* – as New Zealand is in Trollope's *The Three Clerks*. However, the last-minute decision to save Hetty Sorrel by having her death sentence commuted to transportation (an historical convenience: the novel is set around 1800), indicates a strong renewal of interest in the idea of Australia as a place of redemption in the 1850s and 60s (see Lansbury).

Three other novels, all of them written before *Great Expectations*, confirm the importance of Australian themes and locations for the colonial readers of Dickens's new novel, and in particular the importance of stories of the returning colonial. Tom Thurnall, in Charles Kingsley's *Two Years Ago*, returns to England from the Victorian goldfields with £1,500 in gold sovereigns sewn into his money belt; lost in a shipwreck, the belt is secretly retrieved and the money stolen by the heroine's mother. *The Recollections of Geoffry Hamlyn*, by Kingsley's brother Henry, concerns two men, Hamlyn, the directionless younger son of a gentry family who becomes a successful sheep farmer in Australia and returns to England a moderately well-off old bachelor, and the villainous George Hawker, who turns bushranger, kills his own son, and is hanged. The Byzantine plot of Bulwer Lytton's *What Will He Do with It?* turns on the fortunes of William Waife, an old 'genius' of the stage and (it is finally revealed) a

10 Eliot vol.2, 88.

transported convict, who has, like Magwitch, secretly returned to England, to care for his endangered granddaughter, Sophy.

The majority of books read in company with *Great Expectations* in Adelaide do not touch directly on Australia at all, however; nor do they have any immediate connection with Dickens; nor are they even – as in the case of *Silas Marner*, for instance – always generically of a piece with *Great Expectations*.¹¹ Yet Eliot's short lyrical fable of lost money and recovered kinship, the most popular work of fiction with readers of *Great Expectations*, is a good example of the way many mid-Victorian narratives with exclusively English settings and themes raised some of the same issues about settler-colonialism as novels which openly declare an Australian interest. With unexpected sharpness, *Silas Marner* throws light on a distinctive set of attitudes to, and understandings of, settler-colonial experience and its meanings for Britain in the late 1850s and early 1860s. Like *Great Expectations*, and like *What Will He Do with It?*, *Geoffry Hamlyn*, and *Two Years Ago*, it involves theft, deception, exile, and return, and examines the deadening and corrupting influence of money. Silas is Eliot's William Waife, a kind of obscure genius in flight from his past. Wrongly convicted of theft in Lantern Yard – incriminated by the smoothly-spoken dissembler and false gentlemen, William Dane (originally named William Waife, interestingly) – Silas goes involuntarily into exile in the village of Raveloe. There, his marked difference is registered racially and in terms reminiscent of the returning colonial: he belongs to a 'disinherited race', with his queer appearance, catalepsy, near-demonic powers as a herbalist, and reputed stash of gold coins. In response, Silas enslaves himself to work (as Magwitch does) and to money. Bereft of his religious belief and disconnected from social life, he becomes a miser, obsessed only with his gold. When it is stolen (by another false gentlemen, Dunstan Cass, the Compeyson of the piece), he finds in its place an astonishing golden-haired girl, whom he takes as his own child and who ultimately redeems and re-humanises him.

In effect, *Silas Marner* turns *Great Expectations* on its head in its affirming story of the reintegration of a social outcast by the act of fathering. Part of Eliot's purpose is to explore allegorically her Wordsworthian conviction that art has the power to bring about effective social change: that realism, in particular, can participate in 'the remedial influences of pure, natural human relations' (Eliot vol.3, 328). By contrast, Dickens's novel reverses the fairytales of his own earlier work, in which the orphan, free to create himself, turns out to be a gentleman in disguise. *Great Expectations* reflects a growing despair at the artist's power to represent society adequately, let alone play any role in the amelioration of social problems. This despair is at the root of Dickens's decision to set the novel back in time, in the transportation period, and to make Pip's

11 The clutch of books with Anglo-Italian subjects and settings – *Agnes Tremorne* by Isa Blagden, friend of the Brownings, Trollopes, and Lyttons in Florence; Lever's *One of Them*, based on his diplomatic experiences in the same city; and Trelawny's *Recollections* – is a fascinating and distracting subset best left for another time. Regrettably, too, space does not permit me to extend the following discussion to include Trollope, or (especially) Mulock.

'second father' a convict who looms out at him from the marsh fog in the churchyard, and years later returns illegally, shattering the illusions of the twenty-three-year-old hero who cannot 'settle to anything' until he comes into his expectations (vol. 2, chapter 20).

Dickens had already made use of the motif of the prison in *Little Dorrit* (1857) to express something of this pervasive despair and frustration, but in *Great Expectations* he goes much further, likening the whole social world of the novel to a penal colony, where the casual brutality and captivity of prisoners has passed out into the culture, and is passed down from one generation to the next. The abusiveness of Joe's father is repeated in the bullying Mrs Joe, whose violent death is a perpetuation of the violence she represents. The uncontrollable murderous aggression of Pip's monstrous *alter ego* Orlick recurs in the nonchalant beatings of Bentley Drummle. Miss Havisham schools Estella in the cruelty to which Compeyson had subjected her. Molly's wrists; Jaggers's hand-washing; Wemmick's moated stronghold; the ever-present hulks: a poisoned atmosphere of crime and punishment hangs over everything.

Most of all, Pip is entrapped – or, in another prominent metaphor, marooned – by his expectations: by the promise of property and the manufacture of a leisured gentlemanliness. Like the marsh-country itself, and the dark hulks sitting at low-tide off the Medway, everything in England is as 'stranded and still' (vol. 3, chapter 15) as the expectant hero. This is a place where the promise of action strangles action itself – and where few people are free to create themselves and their own futures. *Great Expectations* shares none of the disturbing ultra-modern blandness of Collins's sensation fiction, with its up-to-date hats, crinolines, and checked trousers – that was all alien to Dickens's imagination. But it does share with *The Woman in White* that same pervasive and terrifying sense of the powerlessness of individuals against the subterranean violence beneath the bright surfaces of prosperous modern England.

The Australia of *Great Expectations*, if it is that "part of the world where a good many people go, not always in gratification of their own inclinations, and not quite irrespective of the government expense", as Wemmick says (vol. 3, chapter 5), functions neither to redeem England nor to repress its iniquities and injustices. It is true that Magwitch must reveal himself to Pip in order to shock him out of his delusions and begin the process of his redemption. But Magwitch must also die because he is the cause of Pip's malady. Dickens refuses to romanticise the convict or cast his actions as self-renovation. Australia is that familiar place of unconstrained individualism and absolute action, where intelligence is as irrelevant as comportment, and even a criminal or "an ignorant common fellow" can do as well as "them colonists" with their "blood horses" (vol. 2, chapter 20). But Dickens does not share Magwitch's deluded faith in his own redemption by the use of money to exact revenge on corrupt gentility. He is intent on moving away from the stock characters and contrasts of the Australian romance: the unrepentant bushranger versus the steadfast sheep-farmer, and so on. The impossibility of Magwitch's return, the necessity of his death, and the confiscation of his fortune, must all be read together as a

refutation of the clichés and myths about the power of colonial wealth to regenerate old England.

No Victorian novelist contributed more to those clichés and myths than Bulwer Lytton in the *Caxtons* trilogy, of which *What Will He Do with It?* is the final instalment. Its 'author', Pisistratus ('Sisty') Caxton, had made good in Australia in the first of the series, *The Caxtons* (1849). To that novel was attributed, with some exaggeration, the beginning of the cult of the colonies in Britain (Escott), promulgating as it did Bulwer Lytton's belief that colonial settlements would develop stable constitutions and civilisations only if 'self-developed forms of monarchy and aristocracy' were encouraged to flourish, and if the colonies were drawn 'more closely into connection with the parent state'. He endorsed the wholesale transplantation of superfluous adaptable men (not women) of all classes, from the humblest right up to any 'spare scions of royalty itself' (*Caxtons*, part 12, chapter 7), with the double aim of expanding British values and revitalising British society through the better use of a small surplus in the upper classes. For Bulwer Lytton emigration did not mean the last of England. He foresaw what did, to some extent, transpire among the more prosperous colonists and colonial governing classes in Australia – 'the passage of spare intellect, education, and civility, to and fro' (part 12, chapter 7).

A decade later, Bulwer Lytton returned to the Young Englishish possibilities for the revival of modern English civilisation under a youthful, energised, enlightened, and colonialised aristocracy. In *The Caxtons* Sisty had summed up the colonies as an unprecedented opportunity for capital and social investment by aristocratic younger sons who could never inherit the family pile, or do very much for themselves at home: "Our object, I take it, is to get back to England as soon as we can", he briskly puts it (part 17, chapter 1), before effortlessly trebling his £5,000 through sheep farming (a plot reworked in Charles Reade's *It is Never Too Late to Mend*). It was this nabob-ish sentiment that Disraeli was appealing to years later when proposing that Victoria be crowned Empress of India:

Our colonists are English, they come, they go, they are careful to make fortunes, to invest their money in England; their interests in this country are immense, ramified, complicated ... they look forward to returning when they leave England, they do return – in short, they are Englishmen. (qtd in Lansbury 54–55)¹²

Lytton did introduce a parallel character, Guy Bolding – the man who succeeds in Australia on 'nothing but wits' (part 12, chapter 6) – but his success did little to convince Dickens that Australia was a place where less able or capitalised individuals and families could make a pile and come home. In *Little Em'ly* and the Micawbers (in *David Copperfield*, published shortly after *The Caxtons*) he deflates the romance of the returning colonial, most famously in Mrs Micawber's departing speech proclaiming the "eminence and fortune" that would, inevitably, "flow back into the coffers of Britannia":

¹² *Parliamentary Debates* (UK) 3rd series, vol 227, column 1726: 9 March 1876.

'An important public character arising in that hemisphere, shall I be told that its influence will not be felt at home? Can I be so weak as to imagine that Mr. Micawber, wielding the rod of talent and of power in Australia, will be nothing in England?... I the more wish, that, at a future period, we may live again on the parent soil.' (Chapter 57)

In *Great Expectations* Australia no longer functioned in Dickens's imagination as this conveniently remote place set aside exclusively for the cure of Britain's social ills, where its criminals and fallen women could be taken off its hands, or its labouring poor, or its surplus population. Nor does he subscribe to Bulwer Lytton's dream or fantasy that 'Australia should seek to redeem the British past' (Christensen 156). The ever more dominant myths of an Arcadian Australia identified in Coral Lansbury's landmark study had virtually had their day for him. In *Great Expectations* Australia is, rather, part of the wider problem England has in burying its past, revitalising itself, and re-imagining its future. Pip is no offspring of a vital young country, but a scion of a corrupt old social order. His self-delusion is no different, by implication, from the manifold self-delusions of the new chums: the men drawn by gold-fever and land-fever to easy prosperity in post-transportation Australia. And, certainly, Dickens insists from the beginning on the interchangeability of those two dark worlds, when as a little boy Pip feels his life literally turned upside down by the sudden appearance of a seemingly cannibalistic colonial savage in the local churchyard. For one terrifying moment in that opening chapter the English child has his unwilling antipodeanism impressed upon him sharply and violently (until the church tower rights itself again). The point of *Great Expectations* is not that there can be no possibility of colonial return, therefore, but rather that, in an age of 'portable property', where money, commodities, and people move out and back across the world with a newly alarming expediency, the return of the unwanted colonial represents the return of an inescapable past which seriously threatens 'society's "great expectations", those values usually associated with progress, civilization, and modernity' (Pykett 167).

As he had with the dysfunctional families in *Little Dorrit* and *Bleak House*, Dickens challenges the myth of social regeneration through forms of (often surrogate or occulted) familial succession. Magwitch and Miss Havisham inadvertently conspire to create in their gentleman and lady another generation of Compeysons. Pip is, in the end, a sham: a false gentleman – as bogus as a bunyip aristocrat. His life is a lie, and lies, as Joe reminds him gently when the boy first returns from Satis House, "'ain't the way to get out of being common, old chap'" (vol. 1, chapter 10). Indeed, Pip's likeness to 'them colonists' – those who, for all their property and airs, will never be gentlemen – is significant. But more than that, Pip's shame originates in the repressed knowledge that his newly acquired social status is tenuous, tawdry, and ill-gotten. What Dickens shows, in fact, is how the process of false inheritance literally *takes possession* of the heir, so that Pip becomes the property of Magwitch, a relationship that effectively reverses the colonial relationship by making Magwitch the owner of a kind of genteel slave. "'If I ain't a gentleman'", he says, "'I'm the owner of such. All on

you owns stock and land; which on you owns a brought-up London gentleman?" (vol. 2, chapter 20). The motives behind the double revenge of Magwitch and Miss Havisham on the unregenerate Compeyson ensure that the violent past in *Great Expectations* goes on fathering, even from the remotest distance, an equally violent and perverted future.

Great Expectations, we might say, extrapolates from the village fairytale of *Silas Marner* a fable of modest expectations for a new world ahead. Only when Pip acknowledges his secret past can he see where the real future lies: as a clerk, and distantly a partner, in the great British trading empire. He must give up any hopes romantically attached to instant and unaccountable wealth from colonial pastoral holdings or goldfields. The empire is a vast and quickly growing global system of exchange: can its circulating wealth be regenerative, or must it stifle and spoil by recycling the dark past? *Great Expectations* does produce a version of a fairytale ending: Pip's traumatic recognition that he is indeed one of the 'self-swindlers' (vol. 2, chapter 9) leads to his collapse and rebirth as a new child, reconciled with his boyhood hero Joe and reconstituted as a new imperial subject modelled on the candour, self-assurance, and humility of the commercial classes expanding across the globe. Corrupted by Magwitch's property and its specious claims of class elevation, Pip learns to follow Wemmick's 'guiding-star': "Get hold of portable property" (vol. 2, chapter 5). This is Dickens's version of Bulwer Lytton's 'vital principle' (see Christensen 146-47): in the commercial empire, energy and vitality are called for, and money is its own reward. Pip duly becomes a hard-working middleman in the image of Herbert Pocket, not an idle, corrupt gentleman in the image of Compeyson.

There is no knowing what the surveyor Octavius Wastell, bank clerk Robert Page, or crown solicitor William Bakewell – or any of 37 other Adelaidians or their families – thought of Dickens's new novel in 1861–62.¹³ Doubtless it provoked comment in a year in which the colony was preoccupied with questions of immigration (an intercolonial exodus had reopened debate over the resumption of assisted immigration) and the ongoing problem of convictism. On 3 January a *South Australian Advertiser* editorial confessed 'to a little disgust' at finding Tasmania 'crying out for a few ship loads of felons' in return for a little 'English gold': 'A nice style of emigration, this!'¹⁴ But that is as far as it goes. From the surviving library records, however, we can see how readers' responses to *Great Expectations* would have been shaped by its arrival into a dense network of texts and meanings through which South Australian settler colonials, precursors of the independent Australian-Britons of later decades, were constantly measuring their own experience and re-evaluating their uncomfortable and irresolute relations with the rest of the British world. All that is left over

13 South Australian Institute Loans Register 1861–2, CRG 19/115/1-3, State Records Office, South Australia.

14 That the colony was worried about 'the contaminating effects of convictism' on immigration (*South Australian Advertiser*, 3 Jan 1861) was re-emphasised in June when delegates from the General Association of Australian Colonies (including three South Australians) petitioned the Home Government to reject Western Australia's request for more convicts (convictism had begun there in 1850, and would not end until 1868).

from those readings, finally, is a slightly different *Great Expectations*: one modified by its momentary historical adjacency to other texts and meanings. If this is nothing more than a subtle local inflection of the mid-Victorians' preoccupation with the rejection of the past – a preoccupation central to *Silas Marner*, *What Will He Do with It?*, and many other novels – it had special relevance for settler readers with great expectations for the future, and even greater ties to what they had left behind.

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