

A RE-EVALUATION OF THE STRUCTURE OF TWAIN'S
ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

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Mahmood Shamsar
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The

Charles E. Walton

Approved for the Major Department

370818

Harold E. Dunt

Approved for the Graduate Council

PREFACE

The purpose of this thesis is to explore and to explain why Mark Twain's novel, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, is a great piece of American and world literature. Chapter One examines Twain's theory of composition and his idea of story structure. Chapter Two summarizes and reviews the arguments of four critics, Leo Marx, Edward Wasiolek, Henry Nash Smith and William O'Connor, who find flaws in the structure of the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Chapter Three treats the arguments of critics such as Lauriat Lane, Lionel Trilling, T. S. Eliot and Richard Adams who praise the novel for its strong structural elements. Chapter Four analyzes and re-evaluates the structural elements of the novel in order to demonstrate its overall formal unity.

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M. S.

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CHAPTER I

MARK TWAIN'S THEORY OF COMPOSITION AND STORY STRUCTURE

Twain's ideas and theories about the art of writing fiction can be found in his novels, short stories, Autobiography, letters, sketches and criticism. In his Autobiography he writes:

. . . narrative should flow as flows the brook down through the hills and the leafy woodlands, its course changed by every boulder it comes across and by every grass-clad gravelly spur that projects into its path; its surface broken, but its course not stayed by rocks and gravel on the bottom in the shoal places; a brook that never goes straight for a minute, but goes, and goes briskly, sometimes ungrammatically, and sometimes fetching a horseshoe three quarters of a mile around, and at the end of the circuit flowing within a yard of the path it traversed an hour before; but always going, and always following at least one law, always loyal to that law, the law of narrative, which has no law. Nothing to do but make the trip; the how of it is not important, so that the trip is made.¹

Twain's idea of storytelling is clearer in his Preface to Those Extraordinary Twins in which he explains "a man who is born with the novel writing gift has a troublesome time of it when he tries to build a novel." In this preface he writes that:

He has no clear idea of his story; in fact he has no story. He merely has some people in his mind,

¹Clemens, Mark Twain's Autobiography, p. 237.

and an incident or two, also a locality. He knows the selected locality, and he trusts that he can plunge those people into those incidents with interesting results. So he goes to work. To write a novel? No--that is a thought which comes later; in the beginning he (the writer) is only proposing to tell a little tale; a very little tale; a six page tale. But as it is a tale which he is not acquainted with, and can only find out what it is by listening as it goes along telling itself, it is more than apt to go on and on and on till it spreads itself into a book.²

Obviously, then, Twain "discovers his subjects, not before, but as he writes."³ The result of this way of writing is surprising, because as Long observes, "the original motif often disappeared, as it happened in Pudd'nhead Wilson, which began as a farce but changed to a tragedy."⁴ In the process of composition, farcical materials evolved into the "tragedy" of Pudd'nhead Wilson.

Twain's answer to an unidentified clergyman who asked him about his method of composition shows that Twain was not certain about his method of writing and that he did not even know if he had any method of composition or not. He writes to the clergyman:

Rev. & Dear Sir:

Your inquiry has set me thinking--but so far, my thought fails to materialize. I mean that, upon consideration, I am not sure that I have methods in composition. I do suppose I have--I suppose

² Twain, Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins, p. 207.

³ Hudson Long, Mark Twain Handbook, p. 312.

⁴ Ibid., p. 312.

I must have--but they somehow refuse to take shape in my mind.⁵

Twain declares that his stories are written unconsciously. In his letter to the clergyman, he continues:

Let us guess that whenever we read a sentence & like it, we unconsciously store it away in our model-chamber--it goes, with the myriad of its fellows, to the building, brick by brick, of the eventual edifice which we call our style. And let us guess that whenever we run across other forms--bricks whose color or some other defect offend us, we unconsciously reject these, & so one never finds them in our edifice. If I have subjected myself to any training processes--& no doubt I have--it must have been in this unconscious or half-conscious fashion. I think it unlikely that deliberate & consciously methodical training is usual with the craft.⁶

Since Twain wrote his stories "unconsciously" and without plan, he often had to revise them. He reduced Pudd'nhead Wilson from 81,500 to 58,000 words. He also revised The Prince and the Pauper several times, and when the book was almost finished, he destroyed all but 288 of the 600 pages he had written.⁷ The Tramp Abroad and Roughing It also underwent several revisions. Moreover, when Twain finished The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, he sent the manuscript to his friend Howells to read it and mark where it should be

⁵Clemens, "My Methods of Writing," Mark Twain Quarterly, VIII (Winter-Spring, 1949), 1.

⁶Ibid., p. 1.

⁷Sydney J. Krause, "Twain's Method and Theory of Composition," Modern Philology, LVI (August, 1959), 169.

revised. Instead of reading the manuscript, Twain simply hunted out the pencil marks Howells had made and emended accordingly.⁸

Twain's idea about structure of a tale differs from the traditional method of storytelling inherited from the past and sacred to most writers. "The sacredness of story structure, which Twain has in effect challenged, is rooted in Aristotelian theory."⁹ Unity of time, place, and action are three basic rules of this theory. "A main action, with the beginning, middle, and end, a dominating character, a complication, a climax--these historic essentials get scant homage in Clemens's criticism and practice."¹⁰

Although Twain ignores Aristotelian theories on unity, several basic rules and theories of fiction are reflected in his works. The most important one is the use of observation and experience. Edgar H. Goold observes that the fundamental rule of Twain's writing maintains that an author must rely upon his own observation and experience with which to provide the framework and the substance of his work. From this foundation all other basic rules of writing would branch out. Twain believes that "a good fiction should have a

⁸Ibid., p. 170.

⁹George Feinstein, "Mark Twain's Idea of Story Structure," American Literature, XVIII (1946), 160.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 161.

solid underlying basis in fact which should give it an authenticity that could never be achieved by pure invention."¹¹

To support this theory, Goold cites an article Twain wrote for the Princeton Review in 1888 in which he argues:

If you attempt to create a wholly imaginary incident, adventure or situation, you will go astray and the artificiality of that thing will be detectable, but if you found (your story) on a fact in your personal experience it is an acorn, a root, and every created adornment that grows up out of it, and spreads its foliage and blossoms to the sun, will seem reality, not inventions.¹²

Twain emphasizes experience and observation because he believes that, by using personal experience and observation, a writer avoids artificiality.

Twain advocates writing the way that people speak. His standard practice of revision of his manuscripts calls for constant re-reading aloud until the dialogue sounds convincing. He believes in the use of jargon and dialects, and in the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn four dialects are used. Twain feels that the dialect used should fit the characterization and that the dialect should remain consistent throughout the novel, in order to present a believable sense of realism for the characters and the book.¹³

¹¹Edgar H. Goold, Jr., "Mark Twain on the Writing of Fiction," American Literature, XXVI (May, 1954), 143.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., pp. 147-8.

Even though Twain did not follow the Aristotelian form in composition and structure of a tale, he did have several clearly defined rules in writing. In his Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses, he names eighteen rules which dominate the art of writing fiction. These rules, although somewhat exaggerated, help define his theory of storytelling:

1. That a tale shall accomplish something and arrive somewhere. . . .
2. They require that the episodes of a tale shall be necessary parts of the tale, and shall help develop it. . . .
3. They require that the personages in a tale shall be alive, except in the case of corpses, and that always the reader shall be able to tell the corpses from the others. . . .
4. They require that the personages in a tale, both dead and alive, shall exhibit a sufficient excuse for being there. . . .
5. They require that when the personages of a tale deal in conversation, the talk shall sound like human talk
6. They require that when the author describes the character of a personage in his tale, the conduct and conversation of the personage shall justify said description. . . .
7. They require that when a personage talks like an illustrated, gift-edged, tree-calf, hand-tooled, seven-dollar Friendship's Offering in the beginning of a paragraph, he shall not talk like a negro minstrel in the end of it. . . .
8. They require that crass stupidities shall not be played upon the reader as 'the craft of the woodsman, the delicate art of the forest,' by either the author or the people in the tale. . . .
9. They require that the personages of a tale shall confine themselves to possibilities and let miracles alone
10. They require that the author shall make the reader feel a deep interest in the personages of his tale and in their fate, and that he shall make the reader love the good people in the tale and hate the bad ones. . . .

11. They require that the characters in a tale shall be so clearly defined that the reader can tell beforehand what each will do in a given emergency. . . .
12. Say what he is proposing to say, not merely come near it.
13. Use the right word, not its second cousin.
14. Eschew surplusage.
15. Not omit necessary details.
16. Avoid slovenliness of form.
17. Use good grammar.
18. Employ a simple and straightforward style.¹⁴

Among these rules of fiction, Twain apparently values greatly the use of realistic characterization and dialogue, because they can be traced more easily in his works. As a realist, he emphasizes that the character in a tale should be "alive." According to Goold, Twain praises writers whose characters are truly drawn from life. He praises Israel Zangwill's The Master because its "characters are real, they are flesh and blood, they are definite. . . ." ¹⁵ Twain finds defects in Cooper's The Deerslayer because he believes the characters are ". . . not the sort of people that the author claims they are." ¹⁶

Twain always emphasizes realistic dialogue. Following closely the traditional forms of the western frontier, Twain relies heavily upon colloquial idiom and syntax.

¹⁴Clemens, "How to Tell a Story," in The Writings of Mark Twain, pp. 79-81.

¹⁵Goold, p. 146.

¹⁶Ibid.

The extent of his usage of such a device is rooted in what he considers to be the stream of life conversation of the common people in different parts of America. On this basis, Twain condemns Cooper's The Deerslayer because he believes it lacks realistic dialogue.

Then, too, Twain insists that the writer of a fiction should tell his story in detail. According to Goold, Twain wrote from Nevada (where he was working for the Virginia City Territorial Enterprise) that his sister Pamela would not make a good reporter because she did not appreciate the importance attached to names and persons.¹⁷ In 1877, Twain advised Howells that "a story about a runaway horse would not go well without the little details of names and places and with things left out [which] are the true life of all narrative."¹⁸ Twain, then, as a realistic novelist demands of his contemporaries and of future writers the same standards for writing fiction that he would demand for himself in order to attain a high standard for his craft.

Form in a literary work for Twain is an individual matter. It shows "the author's mental processes." It is the externalization of an author's thinking. For Twain, "literary form is plainly a function of personality rather than of

¹⁷Ibid., p. 144.

¹⁸Ibid.

genre."¹⁹

Twain's ideas of observation and experience, the use of concrete details and realistic dialogue, the law of probability, and of the development of realistic characters are reflected in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. The relationship of these ideas to the novel stems partially from Mark Twain himself and his own experiences as a river pilot on the Mississippi River. Twain relies heavily on his own personal experiences to supply the content and the form of the novel. His knowledge of the intimate details of life along the Mississippi River, of the panoramic vistas and scenes along the Mississippi, and of the people and daily events aboard a steamboat became the breeding ground for the framework and content of the novel, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

¹⁹Feinstein, p. 162.

CHAPTER II

STRUCTURAL FLAWS IN THE ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

Critics differ in their opinions about the form of Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Their differences of opinion can be readily categorized into two groups. One group criticizes and finds flaws in the story, whereas the other group applauds Huckleberry Finn as a masterpiece. Leo Marx, Edward Wasiolek, Henry Nash Smith, and William O'Connor are among those critics who find serious flaws in the structure of this novel. Lauriat Lane, Lionel Trilling, T. S. Eliot and Richard P. Adams, on the other hand, praise the novel. This chapter is devoted to a discussion of the critics finding flaws in Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and the next chapter will discuss the critics who praise the novel.

Before examining the criticism, one should probably consider what a "flawed" novel is. Sudden changes in the mood of a story or an abrupt shifting in the tone, style, setting, and characters may sometimes create defects which critics call "flaws." Usually flaws are more visible toward the end of the novel. The author in beginning to write a

novel may spend more time in overall revision of his manuscript in such a way as to sustain the continuity of the plot, character, setting, and the theme of the story. However, as a work grows in size and complexity, the author may lose sight of the original idea of the story with the introduction of a new character, setting and subplot. As the author reaches the desired end of his story, he simply may not know how to finish it satisfactorily. He ends the story any way he can and this may create flaws for his novel.

Leo Marx criticizes the ending of Huckleberry Finn.²⁰ Marx agrees that many lovely, delightful and humorous things happen in this novel, and the journey has an idealistic aspect for the boys, yet there is a definite irregularity which the reader can easily notice. He disagrees with Trilling and T. S. Eliot in observing that the ending of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn has a "certain normal aptness" or "it is right that the mood of the end of the book should bring us back to the beginning;" instead, he believes that the last part of the novel is the most irrelevant to it. He says that through the words which Twain uses for Huck and Jim throughout their adventures, the reader finds that the story is not superficial child's play. It rather portrays a "quest for freedom."²¹ Huck realizes the significance of

²⁰Leo Marx, "Mr. Eliot, Mr. Trilling, and Huckleberry Finn," American Scholar, XXII (Fall, 1957), p. 425.

²¹Ibid.

the journey which is Jim's freedom. He knows that without it his own freedom would be endangered. One may notice the dialogue between Huck and Jim where Huck thinks the danger is threatening both of them. "Get up and hump yourself Jim!, there ain't a minute to lose. They are after us!"²² Huck knows that if Jim is not freed, their journey will be a failure. Yet, even though Jim becomes free at the end, he is not liberated by the journey.

For Marx, the most obvious defect in the novel is "the flimsy contrivance by which Clemens frees Jim."²³ Marx believes that Jim's release should be brought about by a friend, not by Miss Watson who caused all the trouble for both Huck and Jim. Jim is loyal to Miss Watson, but he decides to run away when he finds out that she is about to sell him to slave traders. Then, there is no longer a cause for his loyalty. Jim and Huck do not like Miss Watson's standard of values. Huck and Jim seek the freedom from everything for which Miss Watson stands. She is the enemy; it is she who tries to teach them the cumbersome task of spelling and praying and even keeping clean.

Marx says that Twain did not attempt to explain what caused Miss Watson to shift her feelings towards Jim and,

²²Ibid., p. 426.

²³Ibid.

thus, set him free. Her change of heart surprises the reader who is use to characters being developed consistently. An abrupt change in character, especially at the end of the story, tends to upset the mood of the novel.

Marx calls the rescuing of Jim by Huck and Tom a "preposterous monkey business." Marx admits, however, that "the careless improvisation, the nonchalant disregard for common-sense plausibility--all these things should not surprise the readers of Twain or any low comedy in the tradition of 'Western humor.'"²⁴

Marx believes that the ending of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is a "burlesque." He also believes that it is "too fanciful, too extravagant and tedious." Marx cites the example of catching two dozen snakes or so and subsequently letting them escape and calls it a means of providing a gaudy atmosphere for the escape.²⁵

Marx points out another flaw in the novel when he contends that Twain made "comic characters" out of Huck and Jim. Marx maintains that Huck grows both physically and morally during the journey. In the beginning of the novel, we see him as a boy of fourteen who plays cops and robbers with other children of his age. Gradually, he grows up.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 427.

²⁵ Ibid.

His character develops. He can judge and decide what is right and what is wrong. He has sympathy for human beings and their struggles. He becomes mature. Man's inhumanity to man bothers his conscience, but as soon as Tom appears Huck loses all of his good characteristics. He falls under the influence of Tom and becomes a toy in his hands. Huck becomes Tom's assistant in torturing Jim. Jim's suffering is a source of pleasure for Huck and Tom. Huck's transformation of character makes him a comic character.²⁶

Like Huck, Jim undergoes some changes in his character. He is an "individual" on the raft. He is brave enough to admonish Huck when Huck only for a joke throws a rattlesnake in his bed and Jim is bitten by it. But in the final episode he again becomes submissive. In spite of his desire to object to Huck and Tom's way of freeing him, Jim allows them to torture him by throwing rats and snakes into his hut for their own amusement.²⁷ Marx, then, believes that "the flimsy device of plot, and discordant farcical tone, and the disintegration of the major characters" are the cause of the failure for the ending.²⁸

Marx disagrees with T. S. Eliot who argues that "the

²⁶Ibid., p. 429.

²⁷Ibid., pp. 429-430.

²⁸Ibid., p. 430.

river gives the book its form." He believes that the river is the source of "beauty, terror and serenity of mind." It also helps provide "food and motion" for the novel. It helps Jim and Huck get away from the dangers of civilization, but "it can not and does not supply purpose." Marx adds that by exaggerating the role of the river within the novel, T. S. Eliot neglects the central theme of the novel which is the quest for freedom.²⁹

To end the novel with the mood of the beginning is another flaw which Marx finds in Twain's book. Marx disagrees with Lionel Trilling who argues that "some device is needed to permit Huck to return to his anonymity, to give up the role of hero."³⁰ Marx also opposes T. S. Eliot's contention that "it is right that the mood at the end of the book should bring us back to that of the beginning."³¹ Instead Marx believes that to give up the role of hero is a defeat for Huck. It is ridiculous to have Huck escape from everything and everybody who bothers and annoys him at the beginning and then to have him return to them and everything which is the cause of his troubles. His happy return is not a victory. It is a defeat, a "defeat in the guise of victory."³²

²⁹Ibid., p. 431.

³⁰Ibid., p. 433.

³¹Ibid.

³²Ibid., p. 434.

Marx says that at the beginning of the novel Huck is introduced to the readers as a boy who tries to adapt himself to the way in which other boys of St. Petersburg live. But later, they find that Huck differs from the other boys; there is a rebellious streak in Huck's character. He cannot tolerate Tom's fantasies about things such as A-rabs and the elephants. He parts from Tom because he does not like Tom's "romanticizing of experience." He stays in the mood of rebellion, like a hero, till toward the end of the novel. But with the re-appearance of Tom, everything changes. Huck submits himself to Tom's harmful, romantic style of rescuing Jim.

Marx also disagrees with Trilling's and Eliot's belief that the last chapter gives the book "unity" and "symmetry" in structure. Marx says that such "unity is imposed upon the novel." It is "meretricious, a jerry-built structure achieved only by sacrifice of characters and theme."³³ Marx adds that in a unified work there is a harmony between the "meaning" and the "theme." But there is no such thing in Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.³⁴

In the opinion of Marx, neither do the river and the raft have enough power to fulfill their mission, as a thematic and structural device. The river, instead of lead-

³³Ibid., p. 434.

³⁴Ibid.

ing Jim and Huck to freedom, carries them to "the heart of slave territory," and the raft moves only with the "current--Southward into slave country."³⁵

Finally, Marx suggests that for the ending Twain might have designed a scene in which "Jim's fate" as well as Huck's was left "in doubt." In this case, readers could assume that "the principals were defeated but alive, the quest was unsuccessful but not abandoned." Marx believes that leaving Huck's and Jim's fate in doubt could also make harmony with the "symbols, the characters and the theme of the novel."³⁶

The next critic, Edward Wasiolek, maintains that Twain's novel, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, has the quality of make-believe in which everything is pretended to be real. One can easily notice this quality even at the beginning of the novel where the boys play robbers, stop stagecoaches and carriages on the road, and kill people and kidnap them. Devices of make-believe are also used in Huck's escape from his father when he pretends to be drowned. Wasiolek states that the quality of make-believe is the most noticeable in the last section of the novel where Tom tries to rescue Jim, with his

³⁵Ibid., pp. 437-38.

³⁶Ibid., p. 439.

tedious and painful plan.³⁷

By comparing the life of the shore with the life on the river Wasiolek shows that life on the river is not "predictable" but "fluid." He also believes that life on the river is real because it is "inchoate," but on the shore it is "still, rigid and predictable. It is movement of reality stilled into flexible form."³⁸ This, according to Wasiolek, is not life, but an imitation of life. By contrasting these two worlds, Wasiolek concludes that Twain's novel, the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, is "comic" and at the same time "pathetic" because Twain shows "real life stilled into unreal."³⁹

Wasiolek criticizes Twain for such "sharp contrasts" in his novel because readers tend to pursue them throughout the novel, but at the end they find no solution for them.⁴⁰ To Wasiolek, the quality of make-believe which formulates the structure of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is, on the one hand, "harmless" and at the same time "cruel and harmful." It is harmless when it relates to the world of adolescence. Such is Tom's world when he lives in a boy's world. What

³⁷Edward Wasiolek, "The Structure of Make-Believe: Huckleberry Finn," University of Kansas City Review, XXIV (Winter, 1957), 97.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., p. 98.

⁴⁰Ibid.

he does is "entertaining, ridiculous and harmless," but when his play-acting touches the adult world it creates harm and disaster. Jim's "suffering" and the "disorder of the Phelps' household and the wounding of Tom" are the results of the contrast between the real world and the world of make-believe.⁴¹

Wasiolek finds some similarities between Tom's world of make-believe and the world of the Grangerfords and the Shepherdsons. Wasiolek believes that in both worlds reality is ignored. They "are indifferent to real human situations; both are entranced with the rules of their play-acting."⁴² The quality of make-believe is visible in Tom's world by the lack of real motivation for freeing Jim and in the Grangerfords-Shepherdsons it is obvious by having no motivation for their feuds.⁴³

Finally, Wasiolek states that in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn Twain has "drawn perhaps his most pessimistic view of man, for he has created a world with a structure in which life is inevitably stilled into unlife--into the forms of make-believe." Yet through the structure Twain also has shown us "what life without make-believe, without

⁴¹Ibid., p. 99.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

the stilled forms by which men live, could be."⁴⁴

In his article entitled "A Sound Heart and Deformed Conscience," Henry Nash Smith admires Twain for using Huck as a narrative persona and says that this technique solves the difficulties about point of view and style, because in Twain's earlier works the presence of author as an intruder in the story was quite visible, but in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn this problem is not seen anymore.⁴⁵ Smith also admires Twain for his masterly use of the vernacular, for the serious purpose and for "transforming the vernacular narrator from a mere persona into a character with human depth."⁴⁶ Smith states that this achievement in technique made the novel a masterpiece in American literature; yet, it has created a "new technical problem," because the story begins as Huck's and Jim's adventures and their escape from home in order to gain their freedom. Later on it moves from adventure into "social satire," and then to the "psychological penetration" of Huck's character in the moral crises of Chapter XXXI. But since Huck's effort to help Jim fails, Twain turns the story from tragedy to comic resolution.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 101.

⁴⁵Henry Nash Smith, "A Sound Heart and a Deformed Conscience" in Mark Twain: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 83.

⁴⁶Ibid.

Smith regards these changes a flaw in the novel.⁴⁷

Smith believes that Jim and Huck run away from their home because they have no power to fight against forces which threaten them. He interprets their action [running away] a "vernacular protest" and says that it is "the convention of backwoods' humor that the vernacular character be placed in a weak position."⁴⁸ Although Jim is technically free and Huck decides to go to a new territory, they are not successful in their efforts because their freedom was given to them by such an implausible device that nobody believes it.⁴⁹

Smith states that from beginning of the novel until the end, Twain had difficulty with his story. After he had written about fifteen chapters, he put the manuscript aside because he could not find any way in which to finish it. For example, when Huck and Jim have to leave Jackson Island in a hurry because of the slave hunters, they lose their way and reach Cairo, Illinois, instead of Ohio, a free state. They want to go back, but they lose their canoe while sleeping. Therefore they let the river carry their hand-made raft until they get a chance to buy a new canoe and get back to where they want to be. From this moment Twain realized that he could not free Huck and Jim by the

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 83.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 84.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 85.

river so he laid the novel aside temporarily.⁵⁰

In trying to show Twain's dilemma, Smith suggests that, after a three year interval, Twain again started Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and tried to finish it. He changed the novel from an adventure story to a social satire. He intended to find a way to combine the social satire with the narrative scheme of Huck's and Jim's journey on the raft, but he was not successful because in Chapters XVII and XVIII nothing is told about Jim. Apparently, Twain lost sight of Jim and Huck and the prupose of their journey on the raft.⁵¹

Smith contends that Twain introduces the King and the Duke in Chapter XIX because he wants to keep Huck and Jim floating southward but, because of this opportunity to satirize the stagnated culture of the people who live along the Mississippi River, he ignored Huck's and Jim's main purpose of the journey. Twain gives to both of them a "passive role." Although they are "physically present" in the story, they do nothing. Jim is "hidden with the raft for considerable periods" and Huck is only an "observer." Thus the entire "meaning of the journey is changed."⁵²

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 86.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

Smith argues that the satirical method which Twain uses in his novel prevents him from showing Huck as a person in "his own right." By this method Huck becomes a "mask" for Twain, not a "fully developed character." Twain places himself within the character of Huckleberry Finn and makes philosophical statements and draws conclusions far beyond the capacity of Huck.⁵³

Smith contends that Huck and Jim's story begins as a simple flight from physical dangers which threaten them. As the story moves forward, it is more involved with emotion and feeling than with mere adventure. Huck becomes a complex character. His feelings toward Jim gradually change; he becomes more humble to him. His "apology" to Jim is "striking evidence of growth in moral insight."⁵⁴ In Smith's opinion, changing the story from adventure to satire shows that Twain had difficulties in finding a way for Huck and Jim to continue their voyage. After Chapter XVI, Twain shows a preoccupation with the intricate development of old and new characters within the novel as opposed to ending the voyage of Jim and Huck. It was this problem which made Twain put the manuscript aside near Chapter XVI. In order to solve the existing problem, he introduced the Duke and the King into

⁵³Ibid., p. 88.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 89.

the story to cover up the weakness of the plot, and to "postpone Huck's moral dilemmas."⁵⁵

There is another problem in Chapter XVI which Smith believes should be solved. He notes that in this chapter Huck's attitude toward Jim changes when he realizes that Jim is going to be a free man as soon as they reach Cairo. Huck's inner conflict increases when he hears that Jim intends to steal his children in order to free them from slavery. When he encounters the slave hunters looking for Jim, Huck tricks them and then rescues Jim. At this point, "we are given no details about how Huck's inner conflict was resolved."⁵⁶

The main flaw which Smith finds in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is its sudden changes of tone from Chapter XXXI to the end. Smith states that after the raft reached Arkansas and the Duke and the King were removed from the story, Twain realized the river could not help Huck and Jim gain their freedom, so he turned the story on Tom Sawyer and gave up Huck's role to Tom to cover the difficulty which he had encountered. Since the journey had a strong "symbolic meaning" for Twain, he could not realize the new technical problem which appeared by using this device of shifting the

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 89.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 90.

primary role from Huck to Tom. To solve the previous problem, Twain had to leave Huck and Jim and the "image of their happiness on the raft" and allocate the entire last ten chapters of the book to Tom Sawyer and his nonsense game of rescuing Jim and thus acknowledged that the "vernacular values embodied in his story were mere figments of imagination. . . ."57

Smith says that Twain destroyed the raft two times, once when it was run over by a steamboat in Chapter XV and the second time when he destroyed it "symbolically" by showing that Huck's and Jim's journey was completely "pointless." In both circumstances, the raft could be a means to attain freedom.⁵⁸

Smith assumes that by two different devices Twain tried to cover up the facts that Huck's and Jim's struggle for freedom was only a "dream." Changing the identity of Huck with Tom was his first attempt and introducing the episode involving Colonel Sherburn was his next attempt. This episode, in spite of its vivid scenes, is irrelevant to the story, for the main characters are not involved in the plot. Twain seems unconscious that Huck remains only a "spectator" in that episode.⁵⁹

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 95.

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 97.

Another critic who notes flaws in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is William Van O'Connor. He states that in spite of being praised by two famous contemporary critics, Trilling and Eliot, the book has a series of flaws which prevents it from having a high rank in American literature. O'Connor believes that "Twain's refusal to respect the work of art" and his "imperfect sense of tone" are the sources of these flaws.⁶⁰ Both the river and the raft are expected to be the means of help for Jim and Huck to gain their freedom, but the river, which runs southward, conflicts with Jim's northward route to escape.⁶¹

O'Connor argues that the picaresque form which Twain uses in his novel is a suitable form for the rapid actions and adventures both on the shore and on the river. It also gives the book a "unity," "a melodramatic mixture of reality and unreality and of comedy and horror."⁶² Many times, however, Huck by his bits of action, dialogue, and observation which are inappropriate for him, breaks this unity. "Melodrama" and "claptrap" are two sorts of theatricality which O'Connor traces in this novel.⁶³

⁶⁰ William Van O'Connor, "Why Huckleberry Finn is not the Great American Novel," College English, XVII (October, 1955), p. 6.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., p. 7.

⁶³ Ibid.

The relationship between Huck and his father, the shooting of Boggs, and the tar and feathering of the Duke and the King were mentioned by O'Connor as melodramatic scenes because the reader easily moves from a scene of violence to a humorous dialogue. The serious scene where Huck and Jim encounter thieves and murderers begins with a long, humorous dialogue starting with the phrase "Was Solomon Wise?" which shows its relation to melodrama.⁶⁴ O'Connor says that usually no problem develops when a scene of violence combines with a comic or humorous scene or reality mixes with unreality, but sometimes because of Twain's "nature of stylization" and his "sense of proper distance," the action becomes "gruesomely real." In this case, the general tone of the novel changes, and the scene becomes irrelevant to its main purpose, because of a theatrical imbalance between reality and unreality or the comic and tragic. Huck's telling of the murders in "Why Harney Rode Away for his Hat" reflects the same quality.⁶⁵

In spite of Huck's apology to Jim in Chapter XV which shows a new improvement in Huck's moral character and relationship with Jim, O'Connor believes that there are some parts in this novel in which Twain "loses sight of Huck's moral sensitivity." He says that after the raft is run over

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 7.

⁶⁵Ibid.

by the steamboat and Huck gets ashore safely, we do not hear anything about Jim throughout Chapters XVII and XVIII. Huck completely forgets Jim; he never searches for him or thinks about him. We are not told why Huck does not search for Jim or why he does not grieve about his death.⁶⁶

O'Connor also believes that the King and the Duke's performance of Hamlet's soliloquy create an incongruity in the book, because it is hard to believe that the narrator Huck should be able to know so much about Shakespeare and his soliloquies. Such artlessness spoils the tone of the novel.⁶⁷

Although some critics such as Marx, Wasiolek, Smith and O'Connor find considerable flaws in the structure of the book, Huckleberry Finn, there are many well-known critics who praise the novel both thematically and structurally and consider it a masterpiece in American literature. The next chapter is devoted to the critical acclaim of Huckleberry Finn as a great piece of literary work.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 7.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 8.

CHAPTER III

STRUCTURAL STRENGTHS IN ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN

Within the debate about the merits of Mark Twain's novel Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, there is a school of thought which holds the novel to be a great example of American literature. The critical acclaim of the novel is based not so much on the praise of the physical linguistic structure of the book, but on the concentration of the innate qualities which exist in the characterization and on the thematic and moral values which are evident within the novel. The intent of this chapter, then, is to establish the reasons why the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is thought to be a model of American literature. The critics whose viewpoints will be summarized are Lauriat Lane, Lionel Trilling, T. S. Eliot, and Richard P. Adams.

Lauriat Lane considers the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn a masterpiece of American literature for three reasons. The first reason is that the book contains the qualities which are evident within a "world novel." The second reason is the use of a form of epic poetry which helps to give scope and structure to the novel. The third reason is

that within the usage of epic poetry lies the literary device known as the Allegory.

Lane infers that a "world novel" possesses several qualities. First, the novel must have a great impact on its reader. It must possess the quality of durability. It must be considered a great novel not only because of its importance to the literary world, but because of its "essential nature."⁶⁸ Huckleberry Finn possesses a quality which is present in many "world novels"--the theme of appearance versus reality. Twain's attempt to reveal truth gives the book its thematic structure.

Lane cites several different illustrations to support the argument that truth is central to the book. She points out that "the lie of appearance is always far different from the truth or reality and to the truly heroic and individual conscience no amount of self delusion can ever bridge the gap lying between."⁶⁹ In essence, Lane argues that the character of Huckleberry Finn does not succumb to the illusion which separates the world of appearance and the world of reality. Huck is able to keep his hold on reality and at the same time convey that message to his reader. Thus Twain does not arrive at the point of despair because of the continuous

⁶⁸Lauriat Lane, "Why Huckleberry Finn is a Great World Novel," College English, XVII. (October, 1955), p. 1.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 2.

opposition of appearance and reality; he retains his balance through the persona Huckleberry Finn. In several of his later novels and short stories Twain exhibits a very pessimistic view of life in that he feels there is a disparity between the world of appearance and the real world and because of this inability to differentiate between them he is driven to despair.

Lane also praises the book for its epic quality. An epic poem is one that draws within its structure things, scenes, and people which are a part of everyday life of that which the epic poem is trying to portray. The epic poem is the life, death and breath of people. The scope attained by Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is rooted in the device and imagery of the river. The river portrays and defines all aspects of life and human existence from the lower class to the higher class, including all of the thoughts, feelings and emotions which make up that being which may be called "human." Lane maintains that Huck and Jim are epic characters:

He knows the river and how to deal with it; and he knows mankind and how to deal with it. And he has the supreme American virtue of never being at a loss for words. In fact, Huck, though he still keeps some of the innocence and naivete of youth, has much in common with one of the greatest of epic heroes, Odysseus, the practical man. Jim also has some of the qualities of an epic hero. He has strength and courage, and he possesses the supreme virtue of epic poetry, loyalty. It is part of Twain's irony that in Huck and Jim we have,

in one sense, the two halves of an epic hero. In Huck, the skill and canniness; in Jim, the strength and simple loyalty.⁷⁰

Lane observes that although the novel is a representation of an epic poem, the poetic aspect is found within the very essence of this book. The poetical aspects of the book help to develop the tone and provide a transitional point between periods of major action within the novel. Lane feels that by the use of the jargon and dialects of the western frontier, Twain's style of writing is not far removed from those qualities which are evident within the traditional form of the epic style.⁷¹

Lane also believes that the mode of allegory plays an important role within the structure of Twain's novel. She defines allegory as "the representation of one thing in the form of another . . . a process by which the spiritual is embodied in the physical."⁷² Viewed allegorically, certain physical actions must also have within them a spiritual nature and have within that action consequences which must affect future actions. Certain allegorical images, such as the "journey" are evident within the novel. For the characters of Huck and Jim, there arises a conflict between the world of the raft and the world of the shore which represents an

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 3.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ibid., p. 4.

antagonistic conflict between the spirit and reality. Within this framework during the course of the book, it becomes increasingly evident that there is no escape for Huck and Jim as in the episode of the Duke and the Dolphin when they make their escape from the town on the shore. Huck and Jim are unable to leave the world of reality. In different parts of the novel, Huck and Jim find that their individual efforts to escape are equally disappointing. Jim is trying to escape from slavery and Huck is trying to run away from his father. Lane attributes this supposition to the fact that "the symbolic fact of his death accomplished, Huck must find an identity with which he can face the real world."⁷³

Throughout the novel it is evident that Huck as a character has continuously undergone a struggle between the world of the spirit and the world of reality. He is struggling for his own sense of self-identity. In the beginning of the novel, Huck is presumed dead by the townspeople. The events which follow his "death" show this struggle for manhood and his escape from himself. Lane finishes by saying "and at the end of the story he is about to undertake another journey, this time to the west, in search

⁷³Ibid., p. 5.

of further experience and further knowledge."⁷⁴

Lionel Trilling, in his review of the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, posits that the greatness of Twain's novel lies in its core which is truth. Truth is defined or explained in the terms of the character and characterization of Huck. It is important to stipulate that truth must be reconciled within the framework of opposition, that is, the opposition of the standard of truth of the world versus the honesty and truth of Huck. Truth is personified in the book through the honesty and truth of Huck himself.

When one looks at the characterization of Huck, it would seem on the surface that he represents all the things which would be considered bad. Huck is poorly dressed, he lies, he cheats, he smokes, he steals, he is ill-educated, and he is homeless. Trilling states that beyond all this he has a redeeming character. He is concerned about his fellow human beings.

Truth is the whole of a boy's conscious demand upon the world of adults. He is likely to believe that the adult world is in a conspiracy to lie to him, and it is this belief, by no means unfounded, that arouses Tom and Huck and all boys to their moral sensitivity, their everlasting concern with justice, which they call fairness. At the same time it often makes them skillful and profound liars in their own defense, yet they do not tell the ultimate lie of adults: they do not lie to themselves.⁷⁵

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 5.

⁷⁵Trilling, The Liberal Imagination, p. 108.

Trilling also feels that Huck shows an affinity and sense of responsibility toward people.⁷⁶ Huck on different occasions shows by his actions that he is more concerned about other people than he is for himself. For example, when a circus audience laughs at a drunken man who is trying to ride a horse, all that Huck can think about is the sadness and danger of the situation for the man. But Huck is not sentimental or innocent concerning his relationships with other people.

His fellow men are likely to be dangerous and wicked. He travels incognito, never telling the truth about himself and never twice telling the same lie, for he trusts no one and the lie comforts him even when it is not necessary.⁷⁷

Another proof of Huck's moral development is that he does not have personal pride which might affect his well-being. He understands and respects both the rich and the poor. He knows what money and power are for, but he seems to be "unaffected by it."⁷⁸ Trilling states that Huck's life is one of moral testing and development. His concern for people as opposed to himself makes him a great character to provide the true moral character and tone of the novel.

Within the novel, the moral development of Huck is

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 111.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 112.

⁷⁸Ibid.

assisted by the presence and imagery of the river. Trilling believes that Huck's "intense moral life may be said to derive from his love of the river."⁷⁹ Trilling calls the river a god:

the god is benign, a being of long sunny days and spacious nights. But like any god, he is also dangerous and deceptive. He generates fogs which bewilder, and he contrives echoes and false distances which confuse.⁸⁰

Like a god, the river may not judge rightly or wrongly. It is good to those people who travel with the current and try to fit their habits to the ways of the river and gives trouble to those people who try to go against its current.

In some ways, Trilling sees a connection between the river and human society. He feels the human community formed by Huck and Jim on the river is the composition of human society in that within the character of Jim, Huck has found his true father. Therefore, he is not escaping from civilization, but he has created it within his own life style on the river.⁸¹

In concluding his article, Trilling focuses on the importance of form and style and tries to conclude why the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is a great novel. Trilling

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 109.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 110.

⁸¹Ibid.

considers the form and style "almost perfect."⁸² He defends the elaborate and clumsy ending by arguing:

It is a rather mechanical development of an idea, and yet some device is needed to permit Huck to return to his anonymity, to give up the role of hero, to fall into the background which he prefers, for he is modest in all things and could not endure the attention and glamour which attend a hero at a book's end.⁸³

The form and style of the novel, Trilling states, follows the picaresque novel, or novel of the road, "which strings its incidents on the line of the hero's travel."⁸⁴

Another critic who critically acclaims the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is Andrew Lang, a contemporary of Twain. He praises Huckleberry Finn as an historical novel. Within the characterization of Huck, Twain finds a way to tell the story. By using him as a narrator, Twain is able to remain neutral to the action taking place. What is realized through Huckleberry Finn is a person of originality, of a likeable nature, and one who gives to the book a serious tone not common in Twain's other works. The true reality of the greatness of Twain is shown when one views the struggle of the character of Huck in his moral dilemma concerning the issue of slavery which is shown on a more personal level in his

⁸²Ibid., p. 116.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 117.

decision to help Jim escape.⁸⁵

Lang holds that as a descriptive masterpiece, no novel has better touches of natural description: the star lit nights on the great river, the storms, the whole landscape, the sketches of little rotting towns, of the woods, of the cotton-fields, are simple, natural, and visible to the minds' eye.⁸⁶

Though Lang feels that there are certain deficiencies in the book, over all "it remains a nearly flawless gem of romance and humor . . . the world appreciates it, no doubt, but 'cultural critics' are probably unaware of its singular value."⁸⁷

Eliot states that Twain deals primarily with two elements in Huckleberry Finn. These elements are the boys and the river. Eliot says that these elements give the book its right to greatness. Huck as the narrator greatly influences the style of the book because the novel and Huck are inseparable. The whole of the novel is simply Huck's description of time, personalities, places and actions. Huck is "the passive observer of men and events."⁸⁸

Secondly the river "gives the book its form." With-

⁸⁵Andrew Lang, "The Art of Mark Twain," in the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, (Norton Critical Edition), p. 282.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 283.

⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸T. S. Eliot, "Introduction to Huckleberry Finn, " in Critics on Mark Twain, p. 65.

out the river, the novel would have been just different chapters of separate events. Thus the river gives the book its form and a sense of direction.⁸⁹

Symbolically for Eliot the imagery of the river is very strong. The river for him assumes human characteristics. The mood of the river may change. It may move slowly and easily; in the next moment it may move with tremendous violence and force. Not only does the river have its own mood, but it also influences the lives of men.⁹⁰

In describing the influence of the river on the lives of men, Eliot says that in most modes of travel there are usually alternatives in the direction that an individual may take in getting to his destination, but when one travels on the river he is forced to follow its course. As Eliot states: ". . . the river with its strong, swift current is the dictator to the raft or to the steamboat. It is a treacherous and capricious dictator."⁹¹

In order to understand the form that the river gives to the novel, it is important to know about the relationship between the river and Huckleberry Finn. Huck has an operational knowledge of the river. Huck's love for the

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 66.

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

river was derived from his knowledge of it; that is, knowing the currents and eddies, swimming in it, fishing in it and travelling in it. The river was a part of Huck's daily life.

He possessed great respect for the river and in what it had done for him. In one way the river directs Huck and Jim into different situations. But by the same token it provides a means of escape for them. In the novel, the river is the easiest way for Huck to help Jim escape to free territory. Although it did not provide for Huck and Jim a way of achieving their freedom physically, it did provide the tools, people and opportunity for them to become spiritually free. Each new adventure in the novel presented a new problem which had to be solved. Through the solution of these problems, Huck and Jim spiritually grew because they had no one but themselves on which they could depend.⁹²

Throughout the novel one is very conscious of the power and presence of the river. It is the river which steers Huck and Jim on their many adventures. It provides an opportunity to meet different people and also it enables Twain to show the pulse of life along the river. As a device, the river provides a means by which Twain is able to add color description to the panorama of the

⁹²Ibid., p. 66.

Southern lifestyle along the river. Therefore, it gives life to the novel. The river is the spirit of the novel because it gives the novel its flow and direction. The river provides a connection for the individual adventures which take place within the novel.⁹³

The next critic to be considered is Richard P. Adams. Adams feels that up until now no formula has been presented which systematically accounts for the greatness of the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.⁹⁴ Adams states that the novel is a pattern of "symbolic death and rebirth." Imagery gives the novel its themes and form. Reviewing the novel, Adams breaks the book down into three parts in which the symbolic theme of death and rebirth becomes evident. The first stage of the novel occurs around the village of St. Petersburg, with Huck interacting with Widow Douglas and his father. The second stage begins when Huck fakes his death and escapes. This shows that Huck has withdrawn from the life of St. Petersburg and society. There is a pattern of withdrawal for Huck each time he leaves the shore and returns to the river. The third stage begins when Huck enters the Phelps' plantation under a false identity. Adams feels this symbolizes his desire to return to civil-

⁹³Ibid., p. 66.

⁹⁴Richard Adams, "The Unity and Coherence of Huckleberry Finn," Tulane Studies in English, VI (1956), p. 87.

ization even though he has some reservation about doing so.⁹⁵

Adams contends that in Huck's growth from a boy to a man, he, on three separate occasions, decides to save and free Jim from slavery. In Adams' mind, each successive decision is more important than the previous one. In making this decision as an act of rebellion from society, Huck's knowledge increases concerning three important points regarding the solution of his moral dilemma. First, slavery is evil; second, the society that depends on or fosters slavery is also evil; and third, the way that culture conceals its innate evil from itself and others is evil.⁹⁶

The meaning of the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn in terms of the framework which Adams provides is that the themes of death and rebirth are consistently developed throughout the novel. As the death and rebirth sequence occurs, Huck attains a greater maturity. In Adams' world the structure of the novel is defined by the abolishment of the thought and feeling of childhood. Each time Huck passes a moral crisis, he is a better person because he is able to understand his moral situation and thus he is better able to deal with it. Adams feels that Twain's use of

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 88.

⁹⁶Ibid., pp. 90-91.

motive and imagery reinforces the thematic core of the novel. This helps to bring unity and coherence by joining these individual elements together. From the moral aspect of the novel, Adams contends that:

the total result of these thematic, structured, and symbolic workings is a novel which has a remarkably high degree of consistency, coherence, and unity. Its theme is the growth of an individual personality. Its crisis is the moral decision, repeated three times, to repudiate the conventions of society and do the individually, humanly right thing.⁹⁷

In summarizing his argument concerning the novel, Adams says that the death-rebirth thematic structure of Huckleberry Finn required that Huck escape to the territories in the west at the end. Continued death and rebirth symbolizes his continued development as an individual. No other author would have been satisfied to let Huck accept the moral values of society and return to it uncritically in a happy ending. This would have gone against the very character and nature of Huck.⁹⁸

A number of critics, then, praise the structure of the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and show why it is a masterpiece of American literature. The next chapter will support the contention that the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn has qualities of a great novel because of its sound

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 103.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 102.

structure and its thematic treatment of social satire and different moral themes through the development and interaction of the different characters presented within the novel.

CHAPTER IV

A RE-EVALUATION

In trying to analyze the importance of the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Chapters II and III have summarized the arguments set forth by critics who either criticize the novel or praise it because of its great place in American literature. The purpose of this thesis has been to weigh the arguments by these critics and to arrive at my own conclusions concerning the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn and its place in American literature. Central to the development of this thesis is the supposition that the major themes within the novel play a major part in shaping the novel. The major themes, such as the quest for freedom, the satirical treatment of life along the shore, and the moral and spiritual development of the main character, Huckleberry Finn, help unify the book. Furthermore, other elements important to the novel such as character development, symbolism, and style join together to help formulate the structure, the content, and the purpose of the novel.

In trying to evaluate the merits of Huckleberry Finn, it is essential to consider the public audience for whom

Twain was writing. The American public had an appetite for trying to understand what was happening in their daily lives. They usually wanted to know about scenes and places apart from where they lived. When the book was published, the excitement of the West and its roughness was slowly coming to a close. They were keenly aware of their history and their heritage. The American public romanticized their past but yearned for the true to life character of writing which Twain displayed. These are part of the influences with which Twain had to deal as he wrote the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

Furthermore, Twain did not consider himself to be primarily an author but a humorist who would necessarily concentrate more on the substance of a book rather than on the structure of the novel. As a humorist Twain would only use the details and other descriptive devices that would be needed to tell the story. One of the great arguments concerning the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is the lack of continuity--how certain characters are used in the book and then forgotten--which seemingly would be a flaw in structure. Obviously Twain only used what he considered necessary to tell a story and was not too worried about form. The book reads just like a day in a person's life; one experiences things and sees people who will never reappear. The book is a series of adventures.

In the beginning of the story, Huckleberry Finn is portrayed as a boy who seems to be confined by society and civilization. He enjoys the life of living on the river and has a mind and soul which seem to draw him towards adventure. A series of adventures such as living on the raft, passing Cairo in the night, being separated from Jim, observing the Grangerford-Shepherdson feud, meeting the King and the Duke, witnessing the killing of Boggs, and living on the Phelps' farm, help dramatize the moral development of the main character, Huck, and develop the satire upon the culture of the South.

Huck matures through the process of crisis. Whenever there is a crisis, a decision must be made. Through this process and through each decision that is made, Huck reaches a higher level of maturity or a greater insight and understanding of his situation. Three times Huck is forced to make a decision concerning Jim. The first time occurs when he finds out that Jim is a slave and he decides to continue the journey with a runaway slave because he is so lonesome. He cannot anticipate the problems he may encounter later.

The second time is when Jim and Huck approach Cairo and Huck realizes that Jim is going to be free pretty soon. Huck becomes frightened when he learns that Jim is going to steal his own children. He is in a dilemma whether or not

to turn Jim over to his owner. Huck regards Jim as the property of someone which he is helping steal. In the conflict with his conscience, Huck decides that he is not able to give Jim up to his owner and so he decides to help Jim escape. He is beginning to break away from his society-oriented conscience.

Part of Huck's moral development relates to his apology to Jim for fooling him about a dream. From this point, Huck realizes that a slave as much as a white person has feelings and can love his family. Huck grows and becomes morally mature through the novel. The boy who once threw a snake into Jim's hut for his own entertainment now becomes more sensitive about the fate and the life of other people. He feels pity even for the Duke and the King being tarred and feathered. The murder of Boggs and the Grangerford-Shepherdsons' feud make him sick. He sees no joke in the scene where the drunken man rides on the speeding horse. Each of these scenes is good evidence for showing Huck's moral maturation. Huck finally learns to be responsible. When he decides to help Jim escape and get his freedom back, he gains "the dignity and nobility of which mankind is capable. . . ."99

The third crisis occurs in Chapter XXXI when Huck

⁹⁹Robert A. Wiggins, Mark Twain Jackleg Novelist, p. 61.

goes through an agonizing struggle to decide whether or not he should help Jim escape from the Phelps' plantation. In his mind he considers every reason why he should let Jim go with slave traders. At first he argues that it would be better for Jim to be a slave with his family but then Huck thinks of the rumors and the stories which there would be about him and how he had run away with a slave. Huck finally decides that he would rather go to hell than let Jim be a slave. His decision is based more upon his new experiences and awareness about slaves and slavery. Through experiencing a series of different events, he realizes the meaning of freedom, the brutality of the slave traders and slavery, and the absurdity of civilization. As a result of this awareness and experience he decides to help with the escape of Jim.

Another point of Huck's character development is reached with the re-introduction of Tom Sawyer into the story. At the end of the book, Tom re-enters to try to find a way to release Jim. All during this time, Tom fantasizes about the wonderful ways in which he will save Jim. The problem is resolved when it is found that Miss Watson has set Jim free in her will. Tom had always played the role of leader and Huck was the follower. It was hard for Huck to break this tie with Tom. At the end of the story, Huck does finally break all ties when he heads out

for the new territory in the West. This marks another high level of development in Huck's character. At this point he has reached a level of maturity in which he makes his own decision concerning his life style and the way in which he wished to live.

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is also a satire against Southern culture and society and those institutions which support it. Southern society and its culture were economically and socially based and dependent upon slavery for their survival. Although the civil war had ended fifteen years before the book was published, the feeling on the issue of slavery was still unsettled in this country, so any effort on Twain's part to expose the South and the institution of slavery was a courageous act. Through the introduction of different characters such as Huck, Jim, Miss Watson, the Duke and the King, Colonel Sherburn, Boggs, and the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons, Twain is able to satirize the Southern culture and Southern society which supported slavery.

In the Grangerford-Shepherdsons' feud, Huck talks about the cruelty of human beings to each other. In this episode, Twain satirizes the Aristocratic culture of the South. The most ugly and horrifying side of this culture is given in the episode concerning the killing of Boggs by Colonel Sherburn, a typical man of aristocracy. Twain

attacks it and reveals the brutality and inhumanity of such a culture. The episode concerning the King and the Duke is another example of Twain's satire against Southern society and culture. At the camp meeting, the King pretends that he is a terrible sinner and lies to the people about being a pirate for thirty years. The people take up an offering for the King and he walks off with the money. This scene shows both the exploitation of some people and the gullibility of some other people. Another satire evident in the novel is where the King and the Duke decide to put on Shakespeare's play Hamlet. Twain is satirizing the importance of a name and how people respond to the name without knowing much about its content. Because of this, the King and the Duke are able to carry off a frontier version of Shakespeare without anyone in the audience catching on.

The killing of Boggs by Colonel Sherburn and his confronting the mob is a realistic type of satire on people. In the beginning, Colonel is shown as the most hated individual in the town because he killed an innocent harmless person, but in the transformation of a group of people into a mob, the mob becomes more hated than Colonel Sherburn because it takes on the same characteristics which had been attributed to the Colonel.

Since the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is a satire on the South and its culture, each character por-

trays a role which symbolizes a part of that culture or the struggle to break free from it. This helps the purpose of the book which is an overall condemnation of slavery.

The character of Huck symbolizes several things. First of all, he represents the characteristics of the Western frontier and an individual who has a desire for adventures. Secondly, through his process of character development, Huck represents those who can liberate themselves from the conventions of society. Jim symbolizes slavery and the bonds that it places upon man. The Shepherdson-Grangerford families illustrate and symbolize the shallowness of Southern aristocracy in the way they fought each other, having much respect for honor but little respect and sensitivity for another human being. They represent the brutality of man under the veneer of civilization. Emmeline Grangerford was the typical woman of aristocracy who was completely involved with all of the elements of civilization such as poetry, painting, good diction, fine clothes and good manners but she had no feeling and understanding for what went on in the world outside of her door. The King and the Duke represent the type of man within society who will take advantage of anyone in any situation.

The simplicity of Twain's style in this book is one of the elements of its greatness. In the context of style, imagery is most important in providing vitality and

structure to the novel. Twain's use of imagery is simple, yet helps present a colorful picture. The reader is given the feeling, the breath, and the life of what is happening. For example, consider Huck's description of the Phelps' farm in Chapter XXXII, where he says the Phelps' farmyard is "mostly bare and smooth, like an old hat with the nap rubbed off." Here the imagery effectively describes the physical environment and also establishes a sense of mood about it. Twain also uses imagery to describe his characters. About his father, Huck says: "You could see his eyes shining like he was behind vines." Instead of writing a phrase "his father had sharp, piercing eyes" Twain establishes mood by the effective use of imagery. Huck's description of Colonel Sherburn in Chapter XXII is also very effective: "Then pretty soon Sherburn sort of laughed; not the pleasant kind but the kind that makes you feel like when you are eating bread that's got sand in it." Again, instead of saying "Colonel Sherburn had a bitter laugh," Twain creates an exact feeling of mood. For Twain, style is a tool which gives the novel a unified structure and purpose.

Related to the style, there is the "highly colloquial flavor of Twain's prose."¹⁰⁰ Twain was interested in the spoken language. He was master of dialect. Each charac-

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 58.

ter speaks his own dialect. According to Goold, the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn contains "four different Mississippi River dialects."¹⁰¹ The prose in this book has rhythms, and "the rhythms are dependent primarily upon parallelism--parallelism of sentences as well as of elements within the sentence. He regulates tempo by varying the length of the elements and the complexity of the parallelism itself."¹⁰² In doing so, he "not only effects a difference in tempo between dialogue and narrative but a difference within the narrative itself."¹⁰³ Gerber, in his discussion on the style and point of view in Huckleberry Finn, suggests George Mayberry in the dialect analysis of the book has discovered that in Huck's description of the circus

the sentence rhythm is adapted to the gait of the horse and the activities of the performers. The sentence elements first come in twos, then threes; then there is a quick acceleration to a climax followed by a drop to a spondaic ending.¹⁰⁴

Twain in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn made a "music of words which is beautifully sustained and modulated to the

¹⁰¹Goold, p. 147.

¹⁰²Helmut E. Gerber, "Style and Point of View" in Huckleberry Finn and His Critics, p. 413.

¹⁰³Ibid.

¹⁰⁴Ibid.

very end."¹⁰⁵ He has created a

new literary style . . . which is capable of extreme conventionalization. It is literary because it is sustained beyond the span of spoken language to meet the requirement of a long story and because it is consciously adapted to the purpose of a novel which even those critics who objected to the concluding part of the book, where Tom Sawyer takes over, on the ground that this makes a disunity, admit it to be in the main a masterpiece of literary form. But it is also literary because, unlike ordinary spoken language, it is always conscious of the traditional English--notably of the Bible and Shakespeare--from which it is departing.¹⁰⁶

The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, then, combines a number of literary elements to form a masterpiece. Although it is part of the critic's job to analyze the novel by breaking it down into those elementary factors which establish the greatness or the failure of a novel, it must be taken as a whole entity in order to understand the overall impact of the novel on its readers. A number of elements such as the transformation of its main character, the development of moral themes, the use of satire, and the effective literary style combine to provide unity, structure, and purpose for a great piece of American literature, the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.

¹⁰⁵Richard Chase, "Mark Twain and the Novel," in Huckleberry Finn and His Critics, p. 401.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 402.

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