DEATH ON THE MISSISSIPPI: AN ARCHETYPAL ANALYSIS OF MARK TWAIN'S HUCKLEBERRY FINN

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PREFACE

Actual and metaphorical deaths recur frequently in Twain's Huckleberry Finn. However, the patterns of these death incidents are not so easily deciphered as one might expect, for while there are indeed many deaths in Huckleberry Finn, to study every one in detail would not necessarily prove that death itself is an important motif in the work. When one examines the circumstances surrounding these deaths, however, a number of distinct and rather curious, even bizarre, patterns appear. It seems that a surprising number of deaths in Huckleberry Finn are accompanied by superstitious ritual, grotesque social protocol, and/or graphic demonstrations of the awesome power of natural forces. These deaths assume many forms; some are human demises, some are non-human expirations, and many are purely figurative "deaths."

The theory posited here is not entirely new, nor is it without critical precedent and support. Richard P. Adams, in his "Introduction to Mark Twain" in American Literary Masters, sees the pattern of death and rebirth as the largest structural element in Huckleberry Finn. Bernard DeVoto, in Mark Twain at Work, recognizes the death imagery in Huckleberry Finn as evidence of Twain's death-oriented thinking and observes that additional critical research must be conducted "to determine why death, the images and humors and disgusts

of death, the fear of death, and the threat of death colored his phantasy from childhood on."

Selected death-incidents in Twain's life which might have influenced his art will be mentioned in this study, but the major focus will be upon an examination of and evaluation of recurrent death patterns in Huckleberry Finn, based on a Jungian archetypal critical approach. Through these patterns, the reader will see that the death motif contributes toward the development of character, theme and structure in the work.

An introductory chapter defines and discusses the critical terms (Jungian) used in this investigation. After a brief study of Mark Twain's experiences with death, Huck's relationship with his father, including that relationship's Oedipal implications, will be explored. The next chapter attempts to clarify Huck's actions and feelings within the framework of the Jungian archetype of initiation. The two following chapters deal with deaths, both non-human and human, and how they contribute to the overall pattern of death in Huckleberry Finn.

I would like to thank Dr. Gary Blecker, my thesis advisor, Dr. Richard Keller, my second reader, and Dr. Charles Walton, Chairman of the English Department for their assistance in the writing of this thesis. My thanks must go, also, to Dr. Joseph L. Henderson for clarifying several points from his works.

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Chapter I

HUCKLEBERRY FINN AND THE JUNGIAN ARCHETYPE OF DEATH

The Jungian concept most heavily drawn upon here is that of the "collective unconscious" and its "archetypes." In his essay, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious," Carl Jung outlines this concept:

> A more or less superficial layer of the unconscious is undoubtedly personal. I call it the *personal unconscious*. But this personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn. This deeper layer I call the *collective unconscious*. I have chosen the term "collective" because this part of the unconscious is not individual but universal; in contrast to the personal psyche, it has contents and modes of behavior that are more or less the same everywhere and in all individuals. It is, in other words, identical in all men and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us.[1]

Jung elaborates on this concept in explaining his theory of archetypes, that is, those components of the collective unconscious which are indirectly discernable on a conscious level:

> Psychic existence can be recognized only by the presence of contents that are *capable of consciousness*. We can

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[1]Carl Jung, *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, pp. 3-4.

> therefore speak of an unconscious only insofar as we are able to demonstrate its contents. The contents of the personal unconscious are chiefly the feeling-toned complexes, as they are called; they constitute the personal and private side of psychic life. The contents of the collective unconscious, on the other hand, are known as archetypes.[2]

Jung explains that the term "archetype" appears many times in ancient writings, usually referring to things that are uncreated and unchanging. Archetypes are, according to Jung, primordial, universal images which have existed since earliest prehistory. These archetypes manifest themselves in "primitive tribal lore," often in the form of "esoteric teachings," and also in fairy tales and myths.[3] Here, as in tribal teachings, the forms have been handed down through long periods of time and have been changed into conscious formulae. In short, archetypes reveal themselves only through modified, elaborated representations. The archetype, Jung states, is essentially an unconscious entity which is modified in the process of becoming conscious and perceived, and it takes its shading from that particular mind in which it appears.[4]

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[2]Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 4.

[3]Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, pp. 4-5.

[4]Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 5.

Jung defines these modified representations as symbols:

> What we call a symbol is a term, a name, or even a picture that may be familiar in daily life, yet that possesses specific connotations in addition to its conventional and obvious meaning. It implies something vague, unknown, or hidden from us.[5]

Jung stresses that a symbol must possess an unconscious significance; it must suggest an idea whose meaning is not totally comprehensible. "Thus a word or an image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate meaning. It has a wider 'unconscious' aspect that is never precisely defined or fully explained."[6] Jung admits that the difference between something appearing symbolic or not often rests with the individual interpreter. That is, whether a thing is a symbol depends to some extent upon the point-of-view of the person examining it. Furthermore, one must view a given fact not merely as its superficial self, but as a representation of something yet unknown.[7]

This awareness of the symbolic significance of conscious facts, concepts and situations provides the key to archetypal interpretation. But one must regard such an awareness, no matter how keen it might seem, as only partially

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[5]Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," in Man and his Symbols, p. 20.

[6]Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," in Man and his Symbols, pp. 20-21.

[7]Jung, Psychological Types, p. 474.

effective at best when dealing with the essential mystery of the collective unconscious. Jung acknowledges that since archetypal manifestations draw their meaning from the unconscious it is impossible to say exactly what they mean. One can circumscribe and give an "approximate description" of the archetypal meaning, but the ultimate meaning will, by definition, always elude precise evaluation by the conscious mind. It is, therefore, possible for one to produce something which does not seem at all symbolic to oneself, but very much so to someone else.[8]

He admits, in other words, that symbolic interpretation of facts cannot be undertaken with any guarantee of one hundred percent accuracy. This should be obvious, at least when Jung's concepts are applied to literary interpretation, which is itself a somewhat inexact undertaking.

Archetypal literary criticism is in part subjective, even within its own framework of rules and concepts which must be accepted as valid, if only for argument's sake. Therefore, if another reader sees the possibility of symbolic meaning in some particular aspect of the work, even if his interpretation seems totally unique and subjective, this does not necessarily negate the validity of that reader's judgment. To be sure, Jung cautions his reader not to confuse an archetype, which is universal, with its possible symbolic

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[8]Jung, Psychological Types, p. 475.

conscious representations,[9] a distinction which is not always clearly drawn.

Jung acknowledges that the archetypes can never be completely known or understood.[10] Therefore, whenever a ritual of some sort accompanies a death in Huckleberry Finn (and one usually does), one should admit the possibility of archetypal content. This ritual might even take the form of some dramatic natural phenomenon, such as a sunrise or thunderstorm.

Before reaching the first page of text in Huckleberry Finn, the reader is confronted with the following NOTICE: "Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot."[11] Jung states that tribal lore is always "sacred and dangerous." It contains, as do religions, "a revealed knowledge that was originally hidden," and reveals these "secrets

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[9]Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 7.

[10]Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 160.

[11]Hamlin Hill and Walter Blair, ed., The Art of Huckleberry Finn, p. 25. This work contains the facsimile text of Huckleberry Finn (first American edition, 1885). Hereafter, pages from this work appear in the text in parentheses.

of the soul in glorious images."[12] The above quote from Huckleberry Finn illustrates the "danger" presented by its creator to those daring to attempt a revelation of its secrets. Whether this warning links the work with the esoteric teachings discussed by Jung is difficult to prove, but there can be little argument that Huckleberry Finn enjoys a status something akin to the sacred in many literary schools of thinking, especially in America.

Since Huck Finn tells his story in his own way, one might argue that to deal with death on a "symbolic" level in Huckleberry Finn would be to risk reading too much into Huck's narrative. One possible answer to this might be that Huck himself could not be expected to write in truly symbolic terms, at least on any sophisticated level, since to do so would be to violate the believability of Huck's character. To have Huck speak in more than subliminal terms about scenes such as the dead man in the house or the wrecked steamboat would only result in the destruction of an otherwise consistent character treatment, although Huck does manage to squeeze many commonplace "figures of speech" into his prose

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[12] Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 5. This paper will attempt to reveal a pattern behind the "glorious images" in Huckleberry Finn, within the context of death imagery. Rather than compromise the focus of this study, references to Jungian archetypal precedents (as found in myths, dreams, ancient and primitive rituals) will be limited to those which conform most readily and clearly to the subject at hand.

that use "death" or "kill." Therefore, while reading Huckleberry Finn, one must watch for unconscious revelations from Huck through the recurring patterns of certain keywords, such as "death" and "kill." This results in a tantalizing ambiguity which invites speculation and investigation of the kind undertaken in this paper.

Chapter II

MARK TWAIN, DEATH, AND HUCKLEBERRY FINN

While this thesis is not an attempt at literary psychoanalysis, it would be ignoring the obvious to overlook Twain's experiences with death, especially in his youth, that had an undeniably profound effect upon his mind. Many critics have explored this area, Coleman O. Parsons, Henry Nash Smith, Leslie Fiedler, Bernard DeVoto, William Spengemann, and Dixon Wecter[13] among them.

Coleman O. Parsons describes Mark Twain as "Alternately a crony of death and a playboy of life. . . . Each mood was a safety valve for something suppressed by its opposite."[14] Parsons reveals a strong parallel between Twain's mental duality of life-force and death-force resulting in a similar literary duality which will be examined later. Certain events in Twain's life, pertinent to this study, should therefore be examined at this point.

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[13]Coleman O. Parsons, "The Devil and Samuel Clemens;" Henry Nash Smith, Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer; Leslie Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel; Bernard DeVoto, Mark Twain at Work; William Spengemann, Mark Twain and the Backwoods Angel; Dixon Wecter, Sam Clemens of Hannibal.

[14]Parsons, p. 582.

In "The Devil and Samuel Clemens," Parsons explores some of the more significant aspects of Twain's death orientation. Twain was haunted, contends Parsons, by feelings of guilt resulting from his relationship with his brother Henry and his mother. Apparently, Henry was always the mother's favorite son; at least Sam Clemens felt this was the case. Capable of instilling deep feelings of guilt in whomever she wished, Jane Clemens succeeded in giving Sam a profound hatred for his brother Henry.[15]

This hatred, Parsons argues, "is much more significant than the usual fraternal animosities."[16] He points out that while Henry depended on Sam for protection, the older brother repeatedly betrayed this trust. Sam constantly sought to torment his brother and to discredit him in the eyes of the family. The main reason for Sam's hostility toward Henry was that Henry was simply too good, a "moral prig. . . . Without being vicious, Henry had a way of tattling, of capitalizing on his mother's preference, of letting the blame fall on Sam's head."[17] Twain revealed Henry's impression on his memory when he later admitted that Henry was the original for Sid in Tom Sawyer, insisting that his brother

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[15]Parsons, p. 583.

[16]Parsons, p. 583.

[17]Parsons, p. 584.

was "a very much finer and better boy," hardly a compliment.[18]

Sam Clemens, asserts Parsons, was sensitive and eager for love, "especially for the approving love of his mother."[19] But Henry invariably stood in his way, receiving the maternal blessing and provoking Sam's wrath. Parsons claims that Clemens brooded much over "Genesis," in which he probably saw a situation depicted which closely paralleled his own, with the Lord instead of Jane Clemens passing judgment on a resentful brother:

> And the Lord had respect unto Abel [the younger brother], and to his offering: but unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect: and Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain . . . . If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. . . . Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. And the Lord said unto Cain . . . . A fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth. And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear. . . . And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him [the curse of longevity]. And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden.[20]

Parsons adds a passage from "The Facts Concerning the Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut." It depicts "dwarfish, moldy Conscience" reminding the author of an incident in which he betrayed the doglike, loving trust of his younger brother. After pledging his honor that if the younger

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[18]Parsons, p. 584.

[19]Parsons, p. 584.

[20]Parsons, p. 585.

brother would let himself be blindfolded no harm would befall him, the author led him to a brook thinly covered with ice and pushed him in. Supposedly hounded by his conscience, the author admits seeing his brother's reproachful look a million times and fears he will see it a million more.[21] Parsons attempts to interpret the passage in the light of historical fact. Actually, Henry lived almost to his twentieth birthday in relatively sound health. Parsons suggests that "the hint of disastrous consequences of the ducking, borrowed from the skating tragedy of Sam's friend, Tom Nash, speaks . . . of an almost masochistic eagerness" on Twain's part to increase his own burden of guilt.[22]

There does seem to be some factual basis for Twain's remorse, however. After getting Henry the job of "mud" clerk on the river boat Pennsylvania, Twain had a dream in which he saw Henry's corpse in a metallic coffin. The dream proved prophetic; at Ship Island, below Memphis, the boat's boilers burst and Henry inhaled live steam. When Henry died, possibly from an ill-measured dose of morphine, Twain blamed himself. He had gotten Henry the job in the first place and had advised him to be brave in case of an accident. Also, he had insisted that a medical student "judge" what was possibly

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[21]Parsons, p. 585.

[22]Parsons, p. 585

the fatal overdose of medication. As Parsons asserts, "he had failed as his brother's keeper."[23]

Even Twain's humor, Parsons proposes, is a result of his "lifelong compulsion to shake off the cruel burden" of the guilt rooted in his relationship with Mother Jane and Brother Henry. Another way Twain might have dealt with this problem was through his "defiance of the powers which impose on boy and man codes which he cannot live up to."[24] Parsons doubts that Twain ever openly defied his mother, and since concealed defiance would only have made him more vulnerable to guilt, he probably rechanneled this hostility into other areas, such as a dislike for local rough characters, tyrants, and God.

Parsons describes another facet of Twain's "sense of guilt fixed on death."[25] In Hannibal, Sam tried to help a drunken tramp who was locked up in jail by bringing him a box of matches. The tramp proceeded to burn down accidentally the jail and himself with it. For weeks afterward, Sam was haunted by guilt, believing himself a murderer. After the death of his father, John Clemens, young Sam repeatedly walked through the house in his sleep. Years later, with the deaths of his wife and of all his children except Clara, the

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[23]Parsons, p. 586.

[24]Parsons, p. 586.

[25]Parsons, p. 586.

aging Clemens was shadowed by "a vague specter of responsibility."[26] Thirty-four years after the death of his twenty-two months old son, Langdon, Clemens admitted the possible cause in his Autobiography. In Elmira, New York, Clemens had taken his delicate son for a ride in an open barouche on a particularly cold morning. While Clemens was lost in thought, the child's furs slipped from his bare legs and the boy nearly froze. Not long afterward he succumbed to diptheria. "I was the cause of the child's illness,"[27] Clemens wrote:

> I have always felt shame for that treacherous morning's work and have not allowed myself to think of it when I could help it. I doubt if I had the courage to make confession at that time. I think it most likely that I have never confessed until now.[28]

For over thirty years, Parsons believes, Twain lived with this guilt, not having the courage to clear his conscience until "the mark was indelible."[29]

Parsons contends that Twain's early life was that of an Eden-like existence, with the Mississippi providing a sanctuary from adult responsibilities. But later, the river took on darker associations. Two of Sam's friends drowned in the Mississippi. In winter the river was especially

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[26]Parsons, p. 587.

[27]Albert Bigelow Paine, ed., Mark Twain's Autobiography, II, 230.

[28]Paine, p. 231.

[29]Parsons, p. 587.

treacherous, tempting young boys with its glittering appeal. One night, Sam and the postmaster's son, Tom Nash, sneaked out to skate "without permission."[30] While making their way back to shore about midnight, Tom fell into the icy water. He subsequently contracted a series of ailments, culminating in scarlet fever. He was left stone deaf and "ludicrously impaired in speech."[31] Twain never recovered from the shock of this outrageous mockery of justice, this "horribly disproportionate punishment of a small sin."[32] This incident later appeared in three of Twain's works: his Notebook (May 27, 1898), his Autobiography and in The Mysterious Stranger.

Leslie Fiedler has also noted Twain's mental juxtaposition of an Eden-like childhood and certain episodes of that period which produced an inescapable guilt. To Twain, Missouri was a world of "innocence and freedom and joy, a world in which he, at least, had been innocent and free and joyous, a naked boy, swimming and fishing and smoking on Jackson's Island."[33] As Twain's mature mind returned to this idyllic period of childhood, he came to realize that he had lived through this period in a culture stained by "disorder

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[30]Parsons, p. 588.

[31]Parsons, p. 588.

[32]Parsons, p. 588.

[33]Fiedler, p. 564.

and violence and slavery."[34] The violence, claims Fiedler, left the most profound and lasting impression on Twain's memory. This violence included: the dead man he had discovered after breaking into his father's office; old Sam Smarr shot down in the street and struggling for breath under the weight of a heavy Bible on his chest; the "hellish storm" that had come the night Injun Joe died and had left him "whimpering for the salvation of his soul."[35] Fiedler includes in this list of incidents the tramp who burned himself to death in the Hannibal Jail, "setting himself on fire (perhaps!) with matches the boy Twain had smuggled to him."[36] Each of these terrors, Fiedler asserts, carried with it feelings of guilt: he should not have been sneaking into his father's office after hours; he should have maintained his composure during the storm; he should not have allowed the heavy Bible to be placed on the dying man's chest; he should not have slipped the tramp forbidden matches.

Fiedler goes on to point out Twain's apparent belief that he was an "angel of death."[37] He claims that Twain, with advancing age, began to feel that he carried "the

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[34]Fiedler, p. 564.

[35]Fiedler, p. 564.

[36]Fiedler, p. 564.

[37]Fiedler, p. 564.

infection of death, out of the world he had left into the new world in which he sought peace."[38] Fiedler, like Parsons, proposes the theory that Twain felt somehow responsible for the death of his brother Henry and perhaps even for that of his father.[39] This guilt was compounded by his son's death under conditions already discussed, the death of his favorite daughter, Susy ("died where she had spent all her life till my crimes made her a pauper and an exile"[40]), his daughter Jean's epilepsy, and his wife's illness. This guilt was, Fiedler claims, finally so great that the only way Twain could combat it was to convince himself that death signified a final blessing. Yet, Fiedler believes that Twain's attempts to express his "dark despair" near the end of his life "are flat and unconvincing or shrill and sophomoric."[41] Rather, Fiedler asserts:

> His most profoundly sad books are the most mad and idyllic, his wisest those he wrote dreaming not thinking: dreaming the golden dream that threatens momentarily to turn into nightmare: and the wisest and saddest of them all, as it is also the craziest and most euphoric, is, of course, Huckleberry Finn.[42]

The phrase "dreaming not thinking" has special significance for dreaming connotes unconscious, archetypal activity.

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[38]Fiedler, p. 564.

[39]Fiedler, p. 564.

[40]Fiedler, p. 564.

[41]Fiedler, p. 564.

[42]Fiedler, p. 565.

Jung points out that writers often resort to mythological figures and motifs to express their experiences. These motifs appear in various guises in accordance with the personal unconscious of the writer. Of particular interest is Jung's contention that these manifestations of the collective unconscious "have the effect of bringing a one-sided, or dangerous state of consciousness back into equilibrium."[43]

Keeping in mind Twain's attitude toward death as seen in the light of the above statements, an observation by Joseph Henderson in Wisdom of the Serpent is especially revealing:

> Whenever we find the theme of death, whether in recurrent myths or modern dreams, we find that it is never seen to stand alone as a final act of annihilation. Apart from extreme forms of pathological depression or of infantile sadism, death is universally found to be part of a cycle of death and rebirth, or to be the condition necessary to imagine transcendence of life in an experience of resurrection.[44]

If Henderson's views are valid, it is quite possible that Huckleberry Finn contains archetypal death images which directly reflect the phantasies of Twain's unconscious. Whether or not Twain was, as William Spengemann suggests, identifying himself with Huck,[45] or whether he was attempting to correct some mental imbalance by reliving his life through

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[43]Jung, The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature, pp. 97-98.

[44]Joseph L. Henderson and Maud Oakes, The Wisdom of the Serpent: The Myths of Death, Rebirth and Resurrection, p. 4.

[45]Spengemann, p. 67.

some mythopoetic fantasy are questions whose answers lie beyond the scope of this paper. What is important to this study is the undeniable evidence that several death-images in Huckleberry Finn have their roots in Twain's early life, and that others serve to create an overall aura of negativism and evil, a perversion of the conventional death-and-rebirth cycle, which is by nature amoral. Spengemann goes so far as to say that "evil, in fact, is the only positive force in the book; goodness survives not through conflict and victory but only by running away."[46] This atmosphere of evil is, of course, much more subtle (and for this reason more disturbing) than that which Twain consciously forced into his later works.

There is evidence that Huckleberry Finn is a transitional work, forming Twain's most significant effort before his growing nihilism degenerated into moralistic dogma. Henry Nash Smith points out that Colonal Sherburn is the prototype of a series of characters in Twain's later work that have been called "transcendent figures."[47] Other examples are Hank Morgan in A Connecticut Yankee, Pudd'nhead Wilson, and Satan in The Mysterious Stranger. Huckleberry Finn, Smith contends, marks the start of Mark Twain's unmasking of himself in his work through such characters.[48]

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[46]Spengemann, p. 69.

[47]Smith, p. 136

[48]Smith, p. 137.

Larry R. Dennis reveals other traces of emerging nihilism in Huckleberry Finn. Nowhere else in Twain's works, Dennis asserts, "is the theme of life and death treated more fully," and yet "the pathos of Huckleberry Finn is that Huck's perspective is no longer possible for Mark Twain. It is an imaginative position at best."[49]

Any doubt the reader might have concerning Twain's periodic loss of detachment in Huckleberry Finn should be dispelled upon studying similarities between certain passages in the work and remarks by Mark Twain, especially in his Autobiography. Henry Nash Smith points out one of these similarities; he discusses the beginning of Chapter XXXII and Huck's approach to the Phelps's farm. Huck says:

> When I got there it was all still and Sunday-like, and hot and sunshiny; the hands was gone to the fields; and there was them kind of faint dronings of bugs and flies in the air that makes it seem so lonesome and like everybody's dead and gone; and if a breeze fans along and quivers the leaves it makes you feel mournful, because you feel like it's spirits whispering--spirits that's been dead ever so many years--and you always think they're talking about you. As a general thing it makes a body wish he was dead, too, and done with it all. (297)

A little later, Huck adds:

> I went around and clumb over the back stile by the ash-hopper, and started for the kitchen. When I got a little ways I heard the dim hum of a spinning-wheel wailing along up and sinking along down again; and then I knowed for certain I wished I was dead--for that is the lonesomest sound in the whole world. (298)

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[49]Larry R. Dennis, "Mark Twain and the Dark Angel," Midwest Quarterly, VIII (January 1967), 192.

Smith notes the similarity between the above passages and Huck's melancholy meditation at the end of the first chapter. These passages form, Smith believes, the two most potent expressions of Huck's belief in ghosts, "and in both cases the ghosts are associated in his mind with a deep depression not fully accounted for by the context of the story."[50] In Chapter XXXII, Huck is presumably depressed by the slender hope of freeing Jim. But, Smith asserts, Huck is optimistic on this subject. Rather, the emotion is not Huck's, but Twain's, and draws its power from sources outside Huckleberry Finn. Smith argues that Twain patterned the Phelps farm after that of his Uncle John A. Quarles where he spent his boyhood summers. "I can see the farm yet, with perfect clearness," Twain asserts in his Autobiography:

> I can see all its belongings, all its details; the family room of the house, with a "trundle" bed in one corner and a spinning-wheel in another--a wheel whose rising and falling wail, heard from a distance, was the mournfulest of all sounds to me, and made me homesick and low spirited, and filled my atmosphere with the wandering spirits of the dead.[51]

Smith believes that the linkage of the Phelps and Quarles farms "strongly suggests that Huck's depression is caused by a sense of guilt whose sources were buried in the writer's childhood."[52]

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[50]Smith, p. 129.

[51]Paine, pp. 102-103.

[52]Smith, p. 132.

Smith further speculates that this guilt achieved consciousness at this particular point in the writing of Huckleberry Finn because Twain was:

> Obliged to admit finally to himself that Huck's and Jim's journey down the river could not be imagined as leading to freedom for either of them. Because of the symbolic meaning the journey had taken on for him, the recognition was more than a perception of difficulty in contriving a plausible ending for the book.[53]

While Twain obviously found a satisfactory solution to the technical problem, he had to abandon the hope that Huck and Jim might find real freedom anywhere but in the imagination. Smith sees evidence of Twain's awareness of this from the beginning of the journey; Twain must have known all along that "the quest of his protagonists was doomed."[54] This is indicated in part by the "deceptions and brutalities"[55] which Huck repeatedly witnesses but is powerless to prevent. Yet, by luck and "innocent guile"[56] Huck manages to escape danger and to protect Jim. Then, at the Phelps farm, the journey ends.

The Phelps farm is not the only private memory that Twain wrote into Huckleberry Finn. The Boggs-Sherburn incident has roots in his boyhood recollections, also. In January, 1845, a well-to-do Hannibal merchant named Owsley

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[53]Smith, p. 132.

[54]Smith, p. 132.

[55]Smith, p. 132.

[56]Smith, p. 132.

shot and killed a local drunk, "Uncle Sam" Smarr, under circumstances closely resembling those of the Sherburn-Boggs episode. Whether Twain witnessed the shooting or not is unknown, but there can be little doubt that this murder left a lasting impression on his young mind.

The above examples of personal memories written into Huckleberry Finn demonstrate an important facet of archetypal interpretation, namely that "the contents of the collective unconscious are represented in consciousness in the form of pronounced tendencies, or definite ways of looking at things."[57] These contents often appear to be determined by some particular outside stimulus (in this case, Twain's personal experiences with and impressions of death), but they are in fact only released by the operation of these stimuli. The contents of the collective unconscious, being stronger than the individual events and tendencies, possess a higher "psychic value"[58] and impose themselves upon all impressions. Therefore, the inclusion of personal memories in Huckleberry Finn reflect not only the intense effect of the past events themselves upon Twain's mind, but also suggest the possibility of archetypal forces at work; they certainly express a definite way of looking at things, a pattern revolving around the concept of death.

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[57]Morris Philipson, Outline of a Jungian Aesthetics, p. 55.

[58]Philipson, p. 55.

This pattern might help explain the "mythical qualities of the theme and structure" of Huckleberry Finn as noted by Richard P. Adams in American Literary Masters. Adams claims that only in Huckleberry Finn does Twain incorporate so many major literary themes into a single work. These themes include initiation into the world, death and rebirth, and a withdrawal and return to society. He proposes that Huckleberry Finn not only possesses a plot and theme similar to that of The Odyssey and Beowulf, but it also "embodies the concrete religious feeling, the non-theological worship of nature and life, out of which true epic springs."[59]

But if Huckleberry Finn does worship life, it also worships death. Larry R. Dennis, in "Mark Twain and the Dark Angel," believes that "in Huckleberry Finn Twain seems to be saying that the vision, Huck's perspective, which can give life its full value is that vision which can give death its full value."[60]

The following chapters will attempt to give Twain's treatment of death in Huckleberry Finn its full value and by so doing enrich the reader's understanding of the work. This chapter has pointed out some of the more significant events

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[59]Richard P. Adams, "Introduction to Mark Twain," in American Literary Masters, ed. Charles R. Anderson, I, 1047.

[60]Dennis, p. 192.

in Twain's life which might have influenced his thinking about death. One should remember, however, that these events and Twain's possible thoughts about them are of but secondary importance when viewed as isolated incidents. How these events and thoughts appear in archetypal form in Huckleberry Finn is central here.[61]

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[61]Jung, The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature, p. 101. "The essence of a work of art is not to be found in the personal idiosyncracies that creep into it--indeed, the more there are of them, the less it is a work of art--but in its rising above the personal and speaking from the mind and heart of the artist to the mind and heart of mankind."

Chapter III

HUCK FINN, DEATH, AND PARENT-IMAGOS

To understand fully the death-oriented action and principles found in Huckleberry Finn, one must understand the relationship between Huck and his father. This should be apparent, since Huck's initial motivation for going down the river is to escape the potentially deadly captivity of his father. The entire work is, therefore, based upon a flight from death.

The first sign of his father that Huck sees is a set of footprints in the snow. An occult reference, the nail-cross in Pap's boot-heel to keep the devil away(55), accompanies this revelation. Huck's first desire is to run, to escape the unseen but nevertheless present threat of Pap. Indeed, the emotion of fear seems to be mutual between Huck and Pap; each seems to have a death-fear of the other.

In Psychology of the Unconscious, Jung summarizes the father-son tension which typifies the now-famous "Oedipus complex;" this pattern appears in various trappings throughout mythologies of the world:

> To be fruitful means, indeed, to destroy one's self, because with the rise of the succeeding generation the previous one has passed beyond its highest point; thus

> our descendants are our most dangerous enemies, whom we cannot overcome, for they will outlive us, and, therefore, without fail, will take the power from our enfeebled hands.[62]

Keeping in mind this generalized concept of the Oedipus problem, a closer analysis of the relationship between Huck and Pap can be made.

William Power, in "Huck Finn's Father," contends that Huckleberry Finn "draws much of its strength from tension between the hero and his father."[63] Power points out that Twain goes to considerable trouble to conceal Huck's animosity toward his father. He believes that "one of the most striking features of the novel, indeed, is the extent to which certain aspects of the story are camouflaged."[64] This concealment motif appears many times as the death imagery in Huckleberry Finn is explored.

When Pap confronts Huck, Huck says that after his initial shock he saw that he "warn't scared of him worth bothering about." Huck's later actions seem to belie this statement. Huck's description of Pap reveals his subliminal awareness that Pap is Death--at least, for him:

> He was most fifty, and he looked it. His hair was long and tangled and greasy, and hung down, and you could see his eyes shining through like he was behind vines. It was

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[62]Jung, Psychology of the Unconscious, p. 117.

[63]William Power, "Huck Finn's Father," University of Kansas City Review, XXVIII (December 1961), 83.

[64]Power, p. 83.

> all black, no gray; so was his long, mixed-up whiskers. There warn't no color in his face, where his face showed, it was white, not like another man's white, but a white to make a body sick, a white to make a body's flesh crawl--a tree-toad white, a fish-belly white. (59)

The first part of this passage shows Pap as a dark, partly-hidden figure. The second part, which stresses Pap's death-like quality, is augmented by his subsequent behavior. Power believes that Huck's feeling toward Pap "goes deeper than dislike or even hate. There is awe in it, and something approaching superstitious terror."[65] Power supports this assertion by pointing out that, even though Pap's appearance is not a complete surprise (Huck knew Pap was in the neighborhood), Huck's breath "hitches" and he sees Pap as "a supernatural being rather than a man."[66] Huck outwardly bases his feeling for Pap on the many beatings the man has given him, but Power finds this explanation unconvincing; Huck is too tough for a few beatings to have such a profound effect upon him.

Indeed, Power notes that the true reason behind Huck's antipathy toward Pap is never made clear. He points out that, while money seems to be the source of this rivalry, this "most respectable of all subjects to quarrel about" does not stand up to close scrutiny. Had Huck simply wanted to get

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[65]Power, p. 86.

[66]Power, p. 86.

rid of Pap, he presumably could have given him the money he wanted. Money obviously means little to Huck; he readily turns it over to Judge Thatcher rather than let his father have it. Huck's motivation, Power concludes, is nothing more than a desire to thwart his father.[67]

Pap tears up Huck's reward picture and tells him, "I'll give you something better--I'll give you a cowhide" (61). "I'll lay for you, my smarty; and if I catch you about that school I'll tan you good" (60). Pap is a deadly, threatening figure to Huck. His partially concealed face, peering from behind his beard, forms one of the first of several death-and-concealment images which recur throughout the work. Pap seems to want to "castrate" Huck--to take his money and strip him of civilized traits. Possibly Pap behaves this way because he fears Huck. Pap's fear surfaces in the cabin during a drunken rage. Huck recalls:

> By and by he raised up, part way, and listened, with his head to one side. He says very low:
>
> "Tramp--tramp--tramp--; that's the dead; tramp--tramp--tramp; they're coming after me; but I won't go--Oh, they're here! don't touch me--don't! hands off--they're cold; let go-- Oh, let a poor devil alone!"
>
> Then he went down on all fours and crawled off begging them to let him alone, and he rolled himself up in his blanket and wallowed in under the old pine table, still a-begging; and then he went to crying. I could hear him through the blanket.
>
> By-and-by he rolled out and jumped up on his feet looking wild, and he see me and went for me. He chased me round and round the place, with a clasp knife, calling me the Angel of Death and saying he would kill me and

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[67]Power, p. 86.

> then I couldn't come for him no more. I begged, and told him I was only Huck, but he laughed <u>such</u> a screechy laugh, and roared and cussed, and kept on chasing me up. (72)

The first part of the above scene illustrates Pap's intense fear of death. He thinks he hears "the dead" coming for him; in defense, crying like a child, he retreats into another, symbolic, kind of death--the foetal position.

With the introduction of Pap's fear of death, his related fear of Huck also appears. While in the midst of his "escape" from death, Pap sees Huck as the embodiment of his own personal death--his "Angel of Death." If alcohol has indeed lowered Pap's inhibitions, he reveals in this scene his true feelings toward Huck--a death-fear and death-hatred of him. Pap seems unconsciously aware that if Huck is free to exercise free will, the result will be Pap's death. This theory seems justified when one examines Pap's actions. He keeps Huck, his "Angel of Death," fettered in the shanty, as a dangerous demon should be.

Pap is, perhaps, justified in fearing Huck as a death-bringer. Shortly after Huck escapes, Pap indeed does meet his death. William Power sees Pap's death as highly significant. He sees "overtones of ritual" in the floating "house of death."[68] He goes on to point out that the reader is given all the facts necessary to figure out the dead man's identity but is given them in such a way that attention is

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[68]Power, p. 88.

diverted from Huck's indirect responsibility for Pap's demise. The actual disclosure of Pap's death is withheld until the very end of the work. Power believes that, logically, the two hard-looking strangers kill Pap for the money he has obtained from Judge Thatcher. "Not only did Huck's method of concealing his escape bring about Finn's death," concludes Power, "but his funds paid for it."[69] Had this been revealed earlier, Huck would not be the unstained hero; his journey down-river would be even more dark and ominous than it already is.

Huck's relationship with his father is rendered even more critical by the early loss of his mother. This gives Huck's fondness for sleeping in a barrel possible Oedipal connotations. Huck seeks to return to his mother, to a prenatal condition. Whether this should be seen as seeking death as final annihilation or as a key to rebirth is debatable, but seen in the light of the death-pattern which pervades the work, one must give the former choice serious consideration. This death-seeking would, of course, be unconscious on Huck's part.

At the same time, however, Huck is afraid of death. As Huck flees his father, he is also fleeing death, at least figuratively, quite possibly literally. Therefore, one may conclude that death, or the escaping from death, is an

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[69]Power, p. 88.

important motivating force behind the main action in Huckleberry Finn.

That Huck profits from Pap's death is also significant. The Oedipal overtones here are nearly classical in intensity. Through his father's death Huck is again rich without threat. He and Jim find Pap's body in a house floating in the swollen river, a scene in which several archetypal images emerge and contribute to this death-analogy. Among other things, there are:

> a couple of masks made out of black cloth; and all over the walls was the ignorantest kind of words and pictures, made with charcoal. There was two old dirty calico dresses, and a sun-bonnet, and some women's under-clothes, hanging against the wall, and some men's clothing, too. (98)

The masks fit into a pattern which is restated throughout the novel, that is, the linking of death and concealment. Pap's death itself remains obscured throughout the work until the last page. Sherburn tells the mob that if there is to be any lynching, it will be done at night, by men wearing masks (211).

The presence of the other contents of the house is not so easily explained, however. William Power admits that these articles comprise "a peculiar medley,"[70] and he tries to decipher the meaning of some of them. The house, he observes, "has a peculiar atmosphere. Some of the details are apparently irrelevant, so irrelevant apparently that one

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[70]Power, p. 87.

is impelled to the conclusion that they must be not only relevant but highly significant."[71] Power is not surprised by the whiskey bottles, cards and masks, but he finds the women's clothing, the boy's straw hat, and the baby's milk bottle puzzling. He also questions the function of the "ignorantest" writing on the walls. He suggests that, since Pap could not write, and tried to prevent Huck from learning to, "as an epitaph on Finn's corpse the writing may be regarded as emphasizing Finn's failure to control Huck."[72] If Huck can be seen as the Angel of Death, this contention deserves some respect; Pap's failure to keep Huck locked up resulted in his death.

The broken baby bottle might signify a marriage of opposites, that is, Huck and Jim, life and death, or any number of other opposing elements. The breaking of a glass at a wedding ceremony has a long Judaic history, signifying the destruction of a temple in A. D. 70. Leslie Fiedler refers to the union of Huck and Jim as "an anti-family of two."[73] Since Huck stands, as William Power states, "at the threshold of manhood,"[74] perhaps the bottle simply signals Huck's commencement of his journey from childhood to maturity.

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[71]Power, p. 88.

[72]Power, p. 88.

[73]Fiedler, p. 571.

[74]Power, p. 90.

If this interpretation is valid, the presence of the broken baby bottle in the house with Pap's body contributes to the overall atmosphere of ritual.

As was mentioned earlier, Huck's relationship with his father is strongly influenced by his mother, or rather, his mother archetype (or "imago," which Jung uses almost interchangably in his work). Huck's true mother is mentioned only once in the novel, by Pap, who claims she could not read or write (60). Huck's mother-imago, however, figures significantly in this study and even appears in physical form.

One of the more obvious manifestations of this mother-imago occurs through Huck's behavior. As mentioned before, Huck is in a transitional period of life, between childhood and adulthood. This period is potentially dangerous for the person experiencing it; this danger is in part due to the influences of the mother-imago. Jung describes the process of maturation as the product of tension between a need for greater consciousness, that is, to grow up, and the desire to return to a childlike existence. The "forward striving libido,"[75] or psychic energy, which controls the son's consciousness, forces a separation from the mother, that is, the world of childhood. Opposing this forward impulse, the mother-imago feeds on the mind's tendency to look backward

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[75]Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p. 297.

"to the pampering sweetness of childhood, to that glorious state of irresponsibility and security with which the protecting mother-care once surrounded him."[76]

Jung compares this retrospective longing to a "poisonous snake"[77] which thwarts the individual's energy to act. This mother-influence produces all kinds of fears, culminating in a fear of change and, ultimately, of life. He draws upon the writings of Nietzche to illustrate the perils of this situation. To Nietzche, the greatest danger presented by this confrontation of dynamics lies in isolation within oneself.[78] "Solitude surrounds and encircles him, ever more threatening, ever more constricting, ever more heart-strangling, that terrible goddess and Mater saeva cupidinum."[79] Nietzche's Mater saeva cupidinum, to Jung, translates "savage mother of desire," a term which calls to mind another facet of the Oedipal problem--the element of incest between mother and son, and its accompanying attractions and dangers. Jung defines this particular type of incest as "the urge to get back to childhood."[80]

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[76]Jung, Psychology of the Unconscious, p. 335.

[77]Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p. 298.

[78]Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p. 312.

[79]Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p. 312.

[80]Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p. 235.

This tension between mother and son, as Nietzche points out, is not without dangers. Jung comments on Nietzche:

> The libido taken away from the mother, who is abandoned only reluctantly, becomes threatening as a serpent, the symbol of death, for the relation to the mother must cease, must die, which itself almost causes man's death. In "Mater saeva cupidinum" the idea attains rare, almost conscious, perfection.[81]

There can be little doubt that Huck displays the symptoms of this archetypal situation. Solitude does indeed surround and encircle him in scenes such as that which concludes the first chapter. Huck's reaction to the "Sunday-like" stillness at the beginning of Chapter XXXII suggests the presence of this phenomenon.

Another symptom of the incest-desire under discussion appears in Huck's many attempts to take on new identities. There are many myths which involve a hero who attempts, through trickery, to reenter his mother's womb. Jung sees this as an expression of the universal desire to return to childhood. The concept of the ruse, he contends, embodies the archetypal process whereby "man tries to sneak into rebirth by a subterfuge in order to become a child again."[82] This theory invites speculation on the articles of women's clothing in "the house of death." William Power suggests

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[81]Jung, Psychology of the Unconscious, p. 346.

[82]Jung, Symbols of Transformation, pp. 234-235.

that since the clothing enables Huck to disguise himself and seek information at a nearby farm, the women's clothing might be explained as providing the materials for Huck's disguise.[83] If this idea can be accepted, we are faced with a particularly grim situation--Pap's death provides, if only tangentially, the means for Huck's Oedipal incest.

Jung explains that maturation (development of consciousness) leads to separation not only from the mother-archetype, but from the unconscious, or the entire world of instinct. Yet the yearning for this lost world continues, and at times of stress the individual must face the temptation to retreat into this world of unconsciousness.[84] Thus, Huck's tendency to lie rather than to tell the truth when faced by danger suggests a pattern of incestuous symbolism.

This concept might form the motivating force behind the pattern Huck follows in his journey down-river. This journey consists of alternating existence on the river and on land, the latter usually taking place in a house or other structure. Many critics have noted the tension existing between Huck's feelings and experiences on the river and those on the land.

Rather than try to reduce these events to a one-to-one relationship with corresponding aspects of the Oedipal

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[83]Power, p. 88.

[84]Jung, Symbols of Transformation, pp. 235-236.

incest pattern just described, suffice it to say that some such relationship does seem to exist. Huck's returns to the river are almost invariably desperate ones; usually they are simply pure flight from danger from the land. On the other hand, Huck never stays away from the land for any great length of time, in spite of what he has learned of its dangers. Whether this signifies Huck's unconscious desire to return to the mother or to escape from her is difficult to say with certainty; it is possible that there are elements of both in the tension controlling Huck's actions.

While it might seem paradoxical to say that Huck seeks and flees his mother at the same time, Jung insists that many hero cycles contain this very element as a central idea. This list of heroes includes Gilgamesh, Dionysus, Heracles, Mithras, and others. These heroes are usually wanderers, which to Jung is a clear representation of longing, "of the ever-restless desire, which nowhere finds its object, for, unknown to itself, it seeks the lost mother."[85] Jung sees a concept of universal importance in these hero-myths, a concept which may or may not account for the popularity of such epics and which might even help explain the mythopoeic attraction which Huckleberry Finn has held for so many readers:

> But the myth of the hero, however, is, as it appears to me, the myth of our own suffering unconscious, which has

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[85]Jung, Psychology of the Unconscious, pp. 230-231.

> an unquenchable longing for all the deepest sources of our own being; for the body of the mother, and through it for communion with infinite life in the countless forms of existence.[86]

This concept, along with its possible ramifications, will undergo more extensive examination in the following chapter.

A study of Huck's relationship with his parent-imagos demands scrutiny of one other character. Closely related to Huck's flight from Pap is his establishment of rapport with Jim. Early in the novel, upon learning of Pap's presence, Huck relies on Jim's mystical powers to find out what Pap will do next. Indeed, this event also signifies that Jim and his magical wisdom form an inseparable union of life and knowledge.

Jim's magic is "Nature magic" and useful mainly for purposes of revelation. On the island in Chapter VIII, Jim displays more of his powers of revelation through his communion with Nature.

> Some young birds come along, flying a yard or two at a time and lighting. Jim said it was a sign it was going to rain. He said it was a sign when young chickens flew that way, and so he reckoned it was the same way when young birds done it. I was going to catch some of them, but Jim wouldn't let me. He said it was death. (90-91)

Later, as Huck and Jim watch the storm, itself an example of Nature's power of revelation, Jim assures Huck, "Well you wouldn't a ben here, 'f it hadn't a ben for Jim." He would,

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[86]Jung, Psychology of the Unconscious, p. 231.

rather, have been out in the inhospitable weather, without food. "Chickens knows when its gwyne to rain," Jim explains, "en so do de birds, chile" (96).

Jim's magic is linked with a life-seeking force, both through the above-mentioned aspect of revelation and through its relationship with Jim's freedom from bondage. Daniel G. Hoffman observes that, while Huck takes no stock in dead people, he sees omens as evidence that evil is a positive force in the world. His "exorcisms" are legitimate attempts to control the dark powers, and while he knows far more of such things than does the average person, he is still but a disciple compared to the magus Jim.[87]

Hoffman also points out that Jim is introduced into the story as a slave. His superstitions are, at that time, portrayed as "manacles upon his soul."[88] As a slave, Jim is hardly in a position to control nature; in fact, he is quite helpless before any caprice which comes his way. Hoffman illustrates this contention with the episode in Chapter II involving Huck, Tom, and Jim. Tom hangs the sleeping Jim's hat on a branch and leaves a five-cent piece on the table. Huck recalls that "afterward Jim said the witches bewitched him and put him in a trance, and rode him all over the State,

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[87]Daniel G. Hoffman, "Black Magic--and White," in Mark Twain's Wound, ed. Lewis Leary, pp. 323-324.

[88]Hoffman, p. 324.

and then set him down under the trees again, and hung his hat on a limb to show who done it" (43). Even though slaves come from miles around to hear Jim's account of this event, he is only more enslaved by his fears; a week later Miss Watson decides to sell him down the river to even worse bondage. Rather than be placed in a position that he cannot wish away with a tall tale, Jim runs away to Jackson's Island.[89]

On the island he is beset by more fears, first the fear of capture, then that of Huck's "ghost:" "Doan' hurt me-- don't! I hain't ever done no harm to a ghos'. I alwuz liked dead people, en done all I could for 'em" (87). Once he realizes that Huck is alive, he sees that he himself is free.

Hoffman proceeds to describe the change in the nature of Jim's magic which accompanies his spiritual and physical liberation. Jim no longer voices fears of ghosts and witches. Instead, he teaches Huck how to predict the weather, avoid bad luck, and save himself from lurking death. Significantly, Hoffman observes, death is always nearby in the superstitious imagination.[90] Most of the omens Jim knows are evil ones:

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[89]Hoffman, p. 324.

[90]Hoffman, p. 324.

> It looked to me like all the signs was about bad luck, and so I asked him if there warn't any good-luck signs. He says: "Mighty few-- an' dey ain't no use to a body. What you want to know when good luck's a-comin' for? Want to keep it off?" (91)

Hoffman believes that, in this case, Luck is the folk version of the Greek concept of Fate, or the Anglo-Saxon "Wyrd." Jim's "stoical wisdom" appears in his resignation before this amoral force. This forms "a manly contrast to the psalm-singing optimism of Miss Watson and the revivalists, and to Tom's romantic evasions of reality."[91] As his predictions come true, Jim transcends his slavery to become "a magician in sympathetic converse with the spirits that govern-- often by malice or caprice-- the world of things and men."[92]

Lest the importance of such a "shamanistic" individual be lost, one must remember that Huckleberry Finn takes place in a relatively primitive society. Jung himself admits that, as a product of a twentieth-century technological society, one loses sight of the importance of magic to those living in primitive areas. He sums up this concept in one appropriate sentence: "'Magic is the science of the jungle.'"[93] Jung bases this conclusion upon his own personal experiences in Africa; appropriately, Africa is also Jim's ancestral homeland.

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[91]Hoffman, p. 324.

[92]Hoffman, p. 325.

[93]Jung, Civilization in Transition, p. 63.

Jim's talent is not an amusing curiosity to Huck; it can well mean the difference between life and death. This is true on several levels, since Jim assumes the role of Huck's "Master of Initiation," and he thereby holds the key to Huck's spiritual rebirth as well as his physical welfare. Jung stresses the importance of the ability to interpret omens to the primitive mind, observing that "primitive man is unpsychological. Psychic happenings take place outside him in an objective way. Even the things he dreams are real to him; that is his only reason for paying attention to dreams."[94] The importance of Jim's role as master of initiation is compounded in the scene of the "House of Death." This scene forms a meeting-place for Life and Death (both literal and figurative, that is, freedom from bondage) and the Huck-and-Pap Oedipal concept.

Hoffman sees the House of Death as the point from which Huck and Jim begin their "odyssey" down-river. It is at this point, he contends, that the relationship between Huck and Jim crystalizes; Jim perceives the squalid degradation of Pap's patrimony to Huck. He withholds this disturbing information while Huck, still the child, gleefully salvages the pitiful remnants, the total of which he considers "a good haul" (98). With this new knowledge,

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[94]Jung, Civilization in Transition, p. 63.

Hoffman asserts, Jim is free to assume the role that Pap was never worthy to fill, that of Huck's "spiritual father."[95]

Having grounded the reader in the basic relationships between Huck and Pap (Oedipal) and Huck and Jim (shamanistic), this paper will proceed to explain how these archetypal relationships influence the action of Huckleberry Finn in the context of death imagery. Of immediate importance is how these two archetypes place Huck in a third archetypal situation, that of initiation.

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[95]Hoffman, p. 325.

Chapter IV

HUCK FINN, ANGEL OF DEATH: THE ARCHETYPE OF INITIATION

One possibility that emerges from the pattern of deaths and related events in Huckleberry Finn is that Huck himself is an agent of death, or as Pap calls him, the "Angel of Death." Pap's suspicions must be given some credence, for shortly after Huck escapes from Pap's bondage, Pap dies a violent death under questionable circumstances.

There are other strong indications that Huck is in some type of special rapport with death. To see these indications in their proper light, it will be necessary to explain the Jungian concept of the initiation archetype as it fits into the larger concept of death and rebirth.

The American Jungian, Joseph L. Henderson, explains these ideas in Wisdom of the Serpent:

> I think it can be demonstrated from the diverse material at our disposal that the combinations are not infinite but conform to certain rather simple designs. Whenever we find the theme of death, whether in recurrent myths or modern dreams, we find that it is never seen to stand alone as a final act of annihilation. Apart from extreme forms of pathological depression or of infantile sadism, death is universally found to be part of a cycle of death and rebirth, or to be the condition necessary to imagine transcendence of life in an experience of resurrection. Somewhere between the myths of death and

> rebirth and the myths of death and resurrection we find abundant evidence for another theme in which the experience of death and rebirth is central--the theme of initiation.[96]

The significance of the above passage to this study becomes clear when one remembers that Huck is just entering adulthood--one of the major periods of human life which invites an initiation ritual. Initiation, according to Henderson, is that archetypal pattern which allows the psyche to pass from one stage of development to another. This process reveals the fear of death as being also a fear of change, or growing up, or fear of separation from the maternal world, or a combination of all three.[97]

The fundamental goal of initiation, explains Henderson, "lies in taming the original Trickster-like wildness of the juvenile nature."[98] This "Trickster" figure appears in many cultural myths; Odysseus, Gawain and Gilgamesh are personifications of this concept. And, as will be demonstrated later, Huck Finn himself may be regarded as a Trickster-figure who undergoes an archetypal initiation ritual.

There is, Henderson adds, still another kind of symbolism, dating back to the earliest known sacred traditions,

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[96]Joseph L. Henderson and Maud Oakes, The Wisdom of the Serpent: The Myths of Death, Rebirth and Resurrection, p. 4.

[97]Henderson and Oakes, pp. 4-5.

[98]Joseph L. Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," in Man and his Symbols, ed. Carl G. Jung, p. 149.

which is also connected with transitional periods in one's life. But these symbols, rather than seeking to integrate the initiate with a group-consciousness, attempt instead to release him from any pattern of existence that seems too confining. Through this symbolism, he is able to move on toward a superior, or more mature stage of development.[99] This aspect of initiation, too, holds importance for this study of Huck's ordeal on the Mississippi.

One of the most common "symbols of transcendence," as they are called, is the theme of the lonely journey or pilgrimage, which is also a spiritual journey, during which the initiate is introduced to the nature of death. This death is that of the universal death-rebirth cycle, making the journey one of "release, renunciation, and atonement, presided over and fostered by some spirit of compassion."[100] This spirit, Henderson points out, is more often depicted as a "mistress" rather than a "master" of initiation, such as "Kwan-Yin in Chinese Buddhism, Sophia in the Christian-Gnostic doctrine, or the ancient Greek goddess of wisdom Pallas Athena."[101]

Huck, too, makes such a journey and is accompanied by his own master of initiation. James M. Cox, in "Remarks on

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[99]Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," p. 149.

[100]Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," p. 152.

[101]Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," p. 152.

the Sad Initiation of Huckleberry Finn," argues that the motivation for the entire novel is Huck's initiation into "respectable society."[102] Pap treats Huck so violently, claims Cox, that Huck must stage a mock murder of himself in order to escape. "This false murder," he contends, "is probably the most vital and crucial incident of the entire novel."[103]

This "vital and crucial incident" deserves careful examination. Huck kills a pig in this false murder and uses its blood to lend realism to his own ritualized "death." Huck's behavior here closely parallels an ancient and widespread archetypal initiatory (death and rebirth) ritual.

In "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," Joseph Henderson describes the Eleusinian Mysteries, which began in early Greece, spread through the Roman Empire, and endured through early Christianity:

> The initiation rite celebrated in the Eleusinian mysteries (the rites of worship of the fertility goddesses Demeter and Persephone) was not considered appropriate merely for those who sought to live life more abundantly; it was also used as a preparation for death, as if death also required an initiatory rite of passage of the same kind.[104]

Henderson discusses certain pictorial depictions of rituals related to the Mysteries. On a Roman funeral urn is a

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[102]James M. Cox, "Remarks on the Sad Initiation of Huckleberry Finn," Sewanee Review, LXII, No. 3 (July-Sept., 1954), 394.

[103]Cox, p. 395.

[104]Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," p. 148.

bas-relief containing, among other images, a sacrifice of the "mystic pig." This, Henderson believes, points to an initiation into death, a death that carries the promise of rebirth.[105]

George Mylonas, in Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries, describes in detail some of the statuettes found in the Sanctuary of Eleusis itself. Many statuettes represent boy initiates holding pigs to be sacrificed. The pig, notes Mylonas, was the sacrificial animal of Demeter necessary for preliminary purification. "At Eleusis," he states, "we have two other fragmentary statuettes of boy initiates. One holds the pig across his chest; the other holds the pig along the side of the body . . . ."[106] Huck's description of his disposal of the pig reveals definite graphic similarities to the statuettes just described:

> Well, last I pulled out some of my hair, and bloodied the ax good, and stuck it on the back side, and slung the ax in the corner. Then I took up the pig and held him to my breast with my jacket (so he couldn't drip) till I got a good piece below the house and then dumped him into the river. (77)

The similarity between Huck and the statuettes increases with further examination. Mylonas points out that the pigs had to be purified in the sea, for this cleansed them of evil. Also, each initiate had to sacrifice his pig for

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[105]Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," p. 148.

[106]George E. Mylonas, Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries, p. 202.

himself. All this seems to suggest some sort of substitution of the pig for the initiate; the death of the pig suggested a ritual death of the initiate, thus preparing him for a new life. Huck is, indeed, preparing himself for a new life of freedom.

One famous urn, that described earlier by Henderson, is referred to as the Lovatelli urn; it was found in a colombarium on the Esquiline, near the Porta Maggiore of Rome. One scene on this urn portrays Herakles holding a sacrificial pig while it is purified by a priest who pours water over it. This scene has been interpreted as the suppression of a Trickster-personality through initiation.[107] If this is valid, it only strengthens the ties between Huck's behavior and archetypal ritual.

After Huck has dumped the pig in the river, he drags the leaking bag of corn-meal over the ground. "The meal sifted out and made a little track all the way to the lake" (77). Here Huck ritualistically plows a furrow, or plants corn. This action may be interpreted as a representation of the widespread archetypal "sacred marriage," or marriage of male and female elements. The earth is almost always seen as feminine, and the act of plowing is often represented as symbolic sexual intercourse between Man and Earth.[108] The

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[107]Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," pp. 148-149.

[108]Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p. 209.

"sacred marriage," Henderson points out, is another vital element of the initiation archetype. The secret phase of the Eleusinian Mysteries was apparently carried out underground between a hierophant and priestess. Jung believes that this "clearly points to a hieros gamos [ritual marriage] which was celebrated underground. The Priestess of Demeter seems to have represented the earth-goddess, or possibly the ploughed furrow."[109]

Huck's use of an axe during this episode is also significant. At one point during the rites at Eleusis, this instrument (or a derivative of it) assumed particular sacrificial importance. In The Gate of Horn, Gertrude Rachel Levy explains that "at a most solemn moment an ear of corn was reaped in silence. The instrument, if it was not a stone axe, seems to have carried on the memory of what the polished axe symbolized in so many Western graves of the New Stone Age."[110] Levy notes that the axe, along with its later developments, such as the plough, appears as an implement of "sacrificial fertility"[111] throughout the Neolithic period. This is presumably because the axe was used to break the earth for cultivation from very early times. Levy points out

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[109]Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p. 341.

[110]Gertrude Rachel Levy, The Gate of Horn: A Study of the Religious Conceptions of the Stone Age, and Their Influence Upon European Thought, pp. 297-298.

[111]Levy, p. 143.

a possible Stone Age parallel of the Eleusinian Mysteries; the image of the plough appears with what might be a representation of growing corn at a Neolithic grave-site at Locmariaquer.[112] In any case, when Huck rips open the sack of corn-meal with the saw (another development of the axe), he does in effect "reap corn." The curious juxtaposition of elements makes clear-cut analogies difficult but in no way diminishes the validity of archetypal conclusions of this kind.

When Huck throws the sack of corn-meal into the canoe, takes the canoe down the river into some willows, and then ties the canoe to the trees and falls asleep, he partakes of the Eleusinian Mysteries to an even greater degree. Jung explains:

> The image of Iacchus was carried at the head of the great Eleusinian procession. It is not easy to say exactly what god Iacchus is, but he was probably a boy or a new-born son, similar perhaps to the Etruscan Tages, who bore the epithet "the fresh-ploughed boy," because, according to legend, he sprang out of a furrow behind a peasant ploughing his fields.[113]

Jung notes that in the same festival procession, the winnowing-basket, the "cradle of Iacchus," was also carried. This is the liknon, described alternately in various texts as a sheaf of corn,[114] a basket of fruit,[115] or a winnowing-

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[112]Levy, p. 145.

[113]Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p. 340.

[114]Jung, Psychology of the Unconscious, p. 373.

[115]Levy, p. 297.

themselves evolved from a primitive agrarian fertility cult of strong archetypal identity. Martin P. Nilsson, in Greek Folk Religion, expresses his belief that the Eleusinian Mysteries began as an old agrarian cult celebrated around the present month of October and were closely related to the Thesmophoria, a festival of the autumn planting celebrated less than a month later. At some particular time of the year, Nilsson explains, pigs were thrown into deep caves. The decayed remains were brought up again during the Thesmorphoria, placed on altars, and mixed with the seed corn, providing what Nilsson calls "a very simple and old-fashioned fertility charm."[118] The pig, as mentioned before, was the holy animal of Demeter, who was herself associated with corn and its fertility. The purpose of these early rites was "to promote the fertility of the corn which was laid down in the earth."[119]

That these rituals originated in dim antiquity is generally accepted. Nilsson traces them back to the Mycenaean age, although it is quite possible that they predate even that period. The mention of the Mysteries in the Homeric Hymn to Demeter supports their claim to ancient beginnings; it is the oldest and most complete documentary treatment of any Greek cult.[120]

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[118]Martin P. Nilsson, Greek Folk Religion, p. 49.

[119]Nilsson, p. 49.

[120]Nilsson, p. 45.

This great age suggests archetypal significance, but age alone only poses the question: Why did the Mysteries endure and enjoy such widespread success through so many cultures? The answer, Nilsson believes, is that the Mysteries contained no strict doctrines, "but only some simple fundamental ideas about life and death as symbolized in the springing up of the new crop from the old."[121] Each age and culture might modify and interpret these basic ideas to suit its needs. Thus, concludes Nilsson, the "most venerable religion of ancient Greece is explained."[122] The power of the Mysteries was archetypal, a result of their lack of rigid dogmas and of their "close connection with the deepest longings of the human soul."[123]

Much of this appeal sprang from the myth so integrally connected with the Mysteries, the tale of Demeter and Persephone. In Myths of the Greeks and Romans, Michael Grant proposes that this story, "perhaps more than any other classical myth, has embodied and directed man's accumulated thoughts about being born and dying."[124] Therefore, there is strong evidence that the compelling concept behind Huck's actions and that revealed in the Mysteries is the same: the

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[121]Nilsson, p. 63.

[122]Nilsson, p. 63.

[123]Nilsson, p. 63.

[124]Michael Grant, Myths of the Greeks and Romans, p. 136.

universal concept of death and rebirth. This in itself is not so surprising, but the detail in which Huck parallels those (and other) archetypal rites does, at times, reach a provocative, almost disturbing level of consistency.

The Eleusinian Mysteries do not comprise the only initiatory rites which contain elements similar to those found in this episode of Huckleberry Finn. Certain island cultures of the New Hebrides still practice ceremonies derived from Stone Age concepts, transmitted through migration from Asia. On the island of Vao, for example, ritual-elements resembling those of Eleusis survive in symbolic roles remarkably similar to that of their Hellenic counterparts.

On Vao, as at Eleusis, the sacrificial animal of the Earth-Goddess is the pig, in this case, the tusked boar. The initiate is identified directly with the boar he sacrifices;[125] he offers the boar to Le-hev-hev, the Female Devouring Ghost, to prevent this lethal derivative of the Asian Mother-Goddess from annihilating his spirit.[126] Through this sacrifice, Levy explains, "the Devourer of the Dead does become Mother of Rebirth."[127] This concept appears both in the initiatory and mortuary rites of the area. Levy points out

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[125]Levy, p. 162.

[126]Henderson and Oakes, p. 141.

[127]Levy, p. 154.

that "the boars are also fertility symbols, thrown alive into graves as pigs were thrown into the Greek 'megara' of classical times."[128] Possibly Huck's treatment of the pig reflects an unconscious desire to propitiate his archetypal "savage mother of desire" mentioned earlier.[129]

Levy notes that "the axe of sacrifice is sacred here as in the West."[130] Here the axe is also an instrument of fertility and is even connected with "the rare and solemn human sacrifice which . . . is explicitly associated with rebirth."[131] Huck in fact does sacrifice himself ritually by pulling out some of his own hair. He then mixes this hair with the blood of the pig which he has smeared on the axe. Thus, three vital elements--the body of the initiate, the body of the sacrificial animal, and the instrument of fertility and rebirth--unite with an archetypal consistency which cannot be dismissed as mere coincidence.

Huck's tying the canoe to the willows before falling asleep demonstrates one of the parallels between Huck's actions and the archetypal death-rebirth ritual. Jung describes a variant on the theme of death and rebirth:

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[128]Levy, p. 163.

[129]See above, p. 34.

[130]Levy, p. 163.

[131]Levy, p. 163.

> The parallel to the motif of dying and rising again is that of being lost and found again. It appears ritually at exactly the same place, in connection with the hieros-gamos-like spring festivities, where the image of the god was hidden and then found again.[132]

Jung describes an example of this mythologem, the Samian Hera, practiced in early Greece. Every year a ceremony was held in which Hera's image was removed from the temple and hidden in a lygos-tree somewhere on the seashore. Later, worshipers "found" it entwined in the branches and regaled it with wedding cakes.[133] Jung cites a passage by Pausanias which states that the image of Artemis Orthia was also called Lygodesma, "willow-captive," because it was found in a willow-tree.[134] Both of these examples were apparently connected with the popular Greek festival of the hieros gamos, or sacred marriage. Thus, when Huck ties the canoe to the willows, falls asleep and then awakens apparently "reborn," he provides still more evidence of participating in an archetypal ritual of death and rebirth.

The minor Eleusinian god Iacchus deserves further examination. Joseph L. Henderson envisions this deity as a definite psychological type embodying a syndrome which in recent years has become known as the "renegade tendency." Henderson credits another of Jung's followers, Marie-Louise

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[132]Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p. 343.

[133]Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p. 243.

[134]Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p. 244.

von Franz, with describing this renegade tendency as a pattern "arising from a special archetype which impresses its image upon the personality in such a way as to dominate it--to the point where the personality is, as it were possessed."[135] This pattern, Henderson explains, involves a "self-renewing youthfulness as an end in itself, never reaching and by its very nature intending to reach maturity."[136] Jung, too, has an interest in Iacchus, and quotes the following passage from Ovid concerning the puer aeternus, the eternal boy, Iacchus: "For thine is unending youth, eternal boyhood; thou art the most lovely in the lofty sky; thy face is virgin-seeming, if without horns thou stand before us."[137] By "without horns," Ovid refers to the Thracian Dionysus-Zagreus, who periodically changed from a beautiful youth into a bull, often with disastrous social consequences. Iacchus and Dionysus-Zagreus illustrates different versions of the same concept; Henderson mentions still a third variant of the puer aeternus, the agricultural deity Triptolemus, "standing as a manly boy between the two goddesses, Demeter and Persephone, from whom he receives the ears of corn he has earned from his labor of plowing and seeding."[138]

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[135]Joseph L. Henderson, Thresholds of Initiation, p. 22.

[136]Henderson, Thresholds of Initiation, p. 22.

[137]Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p. 340.

[138]Henderson, Thresholds of Initiation, pp. 23-24.

Huck bears a striking resemblance to Iacchus in many ways. He certainly does not seem to want to "grow up" in the generally accepted sense. He does appear to possess a "self-renewing youthfulness" through recurrent death-rebirth experiences. Whether he possesses the destructive qualities just discussed is questionable; nevertheless, he does have a curious talent for showing up wherever violence is present.

In Chapter XV, when Huck and Jim are separated in the fog, Huck admits that he had no more idea where he was going than a dead man. When he returns to the raft, Jim first believes Huck is returning from the dead. Huck tries to convince him that it was all a dream, but Jim finally realizes the truth and shames Huck into humble submission. This passage marks a turning-point in Huck's life, and it seems hardly coincidental that this passage comprises one of the book's richest archetypal episodes. Huck "dies" and is "reborn" through a sequence of events which closely resembles several established archetypal precedents. These precedents show that Huck, in his role as initiate, enjoys a "privi-ledged" position; during his introduction to the nature of life and death, he is protected by a benign overseer. He is, in a sense, immune to physical death, and at the same time in special rapport with death. Thus, Huck is surrounded by death, his presence might even be connected causally with certain deaths, yet he is physically untouched by death. In this sense, he is an Angel of Death.

When Huck is separated from Jim in the fog, he is at the mercy of the treacherous current. The canoe spins down the river through the snags; Huck is confused and disoriented, as if lost in a labyrinth. Indeed, that is exactly the case. Joseph Henderson, in Wisdom of the Serpent, describes the role of the labyrinth in primitive initiation rites. The labyrinth, Henderson explains, may appear as a pictorial design, a garden path, a dance, or a system of passageways in a temple, but it always produces the same psychological effect. "It temporarily disturbs the rational conscious orientation to the point that . . . the initiate is 'confused' and symbolically 'loses his way.'"[139] Through this process the inner mind experiences a transcendent awareness of new and cosmic dimensions.

An intriguing example of this phenomenon is seen in John Layard's The Malekulan Journey of the Dead, an initiation rite still practiced in the New Hedbrides. Here, the "dead man," symbolic of the initiate, encounters the Female Devouring Ghost, Le-Hev-Hev, at the entrance to the cave where life meets death:

> She has drawn with her finger, in the sand, a geometric figure, and she sits beside it, waiting for the dead man to come. He sees her from a distance. He is confused and loses his way. When he regains his path and approaches the Devouring Ghost, she rubs out half the design. The dead man must know how to complete it. If he

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[139]Henderson and Oakes, p. 46.

> succeeds he passes through the lines of the geometric design into the Cave. If he does not succeed, he is devoured by this terrible ghost.[140]

This design is called "The Path," or "The Way." Again, a Hellenic parallel appears. Levy notes that "the name Eleusis was believed by the ancients to mean a Way or Passage, and connected with Elysium."[141] The labyrinth does not actually bring on the revelation, but merely prepares the initiate, makes him capable of revelation.

A common archetypal figure accompanies the initiate from death to rebirth. Henderson describes the makeup of this important figure:

> The reader will no doubt be able to supply from literature and drama many more examples of this figure acting as an intermediary between the suffering initiate and his experience of the death which may or may not lead to a rebirth; for example, the role of Thoth in the myth of Isis and Horus, Virgil in the Divina Commedia as the guide to Dante, Hermes as the guide of Aeneas in the Aeneid, Herackles as messenger to the underworld in the Alcestis. It was not unintentional that T. S. Eliot patterned Reilly, the psychiatrist in The Cocktail Party, upon this aspect of Heracles as a semiheroic, trickster-figure enabled by his mercurial nature to act as mediator between the two worlds, conscious and unconscious.[142]

As the evolution of this figure is traced back, he appears as a tribal medicine man who is known as Master of Initiation.

It should be obvious from the description above that the identity of Master of Initiation parallels that of Jim in

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[140]Henderson and Oakes, p. 44.

[141]Levy, p. 297.

[142]Henderson and Oakes, p. 48.

the previous chapter. Leslie Fiedler refers to Jim as Huck's "redemptive anima figure,"[143] although he points out that Jim represents Huck's aspiration to a deeper level of the primitive, rather than to a higher plane of civilization. Elsewhere in the book are indications that the ultimate initiation of Huck is not into life, but into final death, without rebirth. In any case, one must realize that, as Henderson points out, "at the level of the initiation archetype, masculine and feminine are interchangable."[144] There are even myths that split the Master of Initiation into two separate entities, but the function remains the same.

Huck among the snags is, like the "dead man" of the ceremony just described, lost and confused. He is undeniably separated from anything that might serve as a reference point. Arnold Van Gennep claims that the basic ceremonial pattern of initiation represents a complete cycle of change, beginning with a "rite of separation," going on to a "rite of transition," and ending with a "rite of incorporation."[145] It has already been shown how the labyrinth serves as the setting of a rite of separation in the Malekulan culture. Huck, too, is thrown into a labyrinth in the form of the fog-shrouded snags. This episode, along with Huck's near-

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[143] Fiedler, pp. 570-571.

[144] Henderson, Thresholds of Initiation, p. 159.

[145] Henderson and Oakes, p. 48.

drowning under the steamboat, also parallels the crucial stage of the Sumerian myth, The Quest of Gilgamesh.

The Quest of Gilgamesh is an account of Gilgamesh's journey to achieve immortality. This is represented as an attempt at initiation with its "threshold experience," or rite of separation, baptismal experience, initiation sleep, and a return journey with a master of initiation. In this epic, the master of initiation is represented by a semi-divine pair, Utnapishtim and his wife. This pair incorporates the motif of the conjunction of opposites necessary to fulfill the transitional period of initiation. Gilgamesh fails his initiation, however, through his own pride or trickster character.[146]

Gilgamesh's journey leads him to Utnapishtim and his wife, the masters of initiation, who tell him that if he wants true immortality (that is, of both body and spirit) he must undergo an initiation sleep, whereby he will become acquainted with the nature of life and death. Henderson describes the crucial outcome as an example of initiatory failure; Gilgamesh tries to keep the plant of immortality for his own personal revitalization, but fails. This failure results from his selfish, immature ambition to achieve immortality in the physical sense only. Utnapishtim, the wise old man, recognizes this danger beforehand and suspects

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[146]The theme of initiatory failure is widespread throughout mythology and legend. It appears in The Quest of the Holy Grail, The Odyssey, Parsival, and others.

Gilgamesh's intentions for undergoing initiation. "Deceitful is mankind, he will try to deceive thee,"[147] he tells his wife as Gilgamesh enters his initiation sleep, and he instructs her to bake a loaf of bread for each night of the initiate's slumber. As Gilgamesh falls asleep, apparently through lack of will rather than sincerity of purpose, Utnapishtim tells his wife, "Look at the strong man who wants life everlasting. Sleep like a fog blows upon him."[148]

It is not difficult to superimpose the predicament of Huck, plunging through the white fog asleep, upon the archetypal framework just described. When Huck awakes from what was to be only a "cat-nap," he sees that his surroundings have undergone a complete metamorphosis:

> I was good and tired, so I laid down in the canoe and said I wouldn't bother no more. I didn't want to go to sleep, of course; but I was so sleepy I couldn't help it; so I thought I would take just one little cat-nap.
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> But I reckon it was more than a cat-nap, for when I waked up the stars was shining bright, the fog was all gone, and I was spinning down a big bend stern first. First I didn't know where I was; I thought I was dreaming; and when things begun to come back to me, they seemed to come up dim out of last week. (138)

Huck's last remark is significant, for Gilgamesh too slept for seven nights.[149] This, plus the similarity of irresolute attitudes strengthens the thematic ties between the two

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[147]Henderson and Oakes, p. 150.

[148]Henderson and Oakes, p. 150.

[149]Henderson and Oakes, p. 151.

characters and works. When Huck reaches the raft, he finds it littered with leaves, branches and dirt. He decides, in true trickster fashion, to play a trick on his master of initiation, Jim. Jim at first finds it difficult to believe that Huck is alive, but Huck soon convinces him that he has never even been gone. Huck persuades Jim that he has apparently dreamed the entire episode, since he had been asleep for only ten minutes.

The Quest of Gilgamesh contains a strikingly similar scene. When Gilgamesh awakes after sleeping for a week:

> Gilgamesh said to him, to Utnapishtim the Distant:
> "Hardly did sleep spread over me,
> When quickly thou didst touch me and rouse me."
> Utnapishtim said to him, to Gilgamesh:
> ". . . . Gilgamesh, count thy loaves of bread:
> The days which thou didst sleep may they be known
> to thee. . . ."[150]

The above passage bears a strong resemblance in meaning (though the particular details in each work are curiously juxtaposed) to the crucial scene which follows Huck's attempt to confuse Jim. In Huckleberry Finn, Huck invites his own failure of initiation by demanding of Jim the meaning of the debris on the raft, that is, the "loaves of bread," the proof of what actually took place. As Utnapishtim shamed Gilgamesh so does Jim humble Huck with his well-known speech on the nature of the leaves, branches and dirt:

> "What do dey stan' for? I's gwyne to tell you. When I got all wore out wid work, en wid de callin' for you,

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[150]Henderson and Oakes, p. 151.

> en went to sleep, my heart wuz mos' broke bekase you wuz los', en I didn't k'yer no mo' what become er me en de raf'. En when I wake up en fine you back agin', all safe en soun', de tears come en I could a got down on my kneeš en kiss' yo' foot i's so thankful. En all you wuz thinkin 'bout wuz how you could make a food uv ole Jim wid a lie. Dat dah is trash; en trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head er dey fren's en make 'em ashamed." (141)

Huck, like Gilgamesh, fails in this particular initiatory episode. But, as is generally accepted, this event marks a turning point in Huck's attitude toward Jim. Immediately after Jim's speech, Huck realizes his mistake, that is, the unsatisfactory aspect of himself which he still displays, proving the failure of initiation or change in self. He is not reborn, but is repentant:

> Then he got up slow, and walked to the wigwam, and went in there, without saying anything but that. But that was enough. It made me feel so mean I could almost kissed his foot to get him to take it back.
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> It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger--but I done it, and I warn't ever sorry for it afterwards, neither. I didn't do him no more mean trucks, and I wouldn't done that one if I'd a knowed it would make him feel that way. (141)

Huck's reaction is similar to that of Gilgamesh when he later loses the plant of immortality to a water-snake. Henderson describes this episode from the Sumerian epic as an example of the archetypal failure of initiation. Gilgamesh's initiation sleep, claims Henderson, contains no revealing image or mystery. Yet, the loaves of bread baked by Utnapishtim's wife "must have contained something like the fecundity of Mother Nature as a much more nourishing symbol

for the content of initiation" than the plant of immortality which he later found and lost before enjoying its powers.[151] Only at the end of the epic does Gilgamesh appear to realize his error, his "sin of hubris, and the corresponding deceit Utnapishtim suspected in him." After the snake steals from him the precious plant, thwarting his hopes of rebirth:

> Then Gilgamesh sat down and wept,
> His tears flowing over his cheeks . . .
> . . . .
> "For myself I have not obtained any boon.
> For the earth-lion have I obtained the boon."[152]

Henderson explains that the true initiate must display courage, humility, and purity of heart, all of which seem to represent an awareness of self.[153] He elaborates on the implications of the failure of initiation. In the stories of Gilgamesh and Gawain, the redeeming image was some form of the Mother as a symbol of renewal and rebirth. This image promised something much more sustaining than the magical quest object originally sought. For Gilgamesh, this was the seven loaves of bread already mentioned; for Gawain it was the Grail with its magical food-product property. Thus both stories result in the classic final stage of initiation described by Van Gennep, represented by a rite of incorporation. Here occurs what Henderson describes as "an inner

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[151]Henderson and Oakes, p. 53.

[152]Henderson and Oakes, p. 53.

[153]Henderson and Oakes, pp. 53-54.

reacceptance of the Great Mother."[154] This, he explains, is simply a vision of the eternal cycle of life and death.

The branches leaves, and dirt which Huck finds on the raft might easily (and with validity) be compared with Gilgamesh's loaves of bread. They, too, represent the Great Mother and her fertility (the cycle of life and death). They, like the loaves of bread, comprise the evidence of reality which thwarts the trickster-hero's attempt to fool his master of initiation.

Henderson points out that stories such as those of Gilgamesh and Gawain stress the danger of falling asleep at the crucial point of impending revelation.[155] Huck, in the tradition of these figures, falls asleep at the critical time; indeed, the fog contributes to the evidence of initiatory overtones, since it is an archetypal symbol of revelation[156]--an opportunity for rebirth from which Huck fails to profit. But, Henderson explains, the experience of having possessed the quest-object, as Gilgamesh possessed temporarily the immortal plant, produces a partial initiatory effect. One sees from these stories that the hero never forgets his partial initiation and will therefore inevitably

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[154]Henderson, Thresholds of Initiation, p. 178.

[155]Henderson, Thresholds of Initiation, p. 178.

[156]Jolande Jacobi, Complex/Archetype/Symbol in the Psychology of C. G. Jung, pp. 161-162.

prepare himself to complete the quest at some future time.[157]

Chapter XV ends with the implication of a positive event in Huck's life in the form of his newly-found humility, or submission. Henderson stresses that submission is a characteristic of initiation, "but it is not apathy or weakness . . . ."[158] It contains, rather, "a strong element of the archetypal 'trial and strength' carried over from the heroic phase of life."[159]

Huck's subsequent adventures form a series of similar initiation attempts, all falling short of complete success. This concept of constant retesting of the initiate is seen in many cultures. Henderson recalls stories of ancient Hindu, Buddhist, and later Zen Buddhist initiations which give the impression that initiation rites should be seen as cyclical. Following each "experience of enlightenment," the initiate returns to the mainstream of human experience until all tricksterism and heroism has been refined away and only the "true adept" remains.[160]

Indeed, it does not seem to indicate weakness in the initiate's character if he fails the first attempt at initiation. As Henderson points out, one should not assume that

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[157]Henderson, Thresholds of Initiation, p. 178.

[158]Henderson, Thresholds of Initiation, p. 179.

[159]Henderson, Thresholds of Initiation, p. 179.

[160]Henderson, Thresholds of Initiation, p. 179.

initiation always implies automatic success. By its very nature, initiation is a dubious business.[161] In Thresholds of Initiation, Henderson describes one mythological initiate who is literally shoved by supernatural powers into a successful initiation, somewhat against his own will. "It is interesting to see how Odysseus on his journey wavers from being a trickster, the wily one, to the hero and finally is forced somewhat unwillingly into the role of the initiated man."[162] Athene, Odysseus's mistress of initiation, prevents him from pursuing the ousted suitors in his last exploit. Here, claims Henderson, Athene acts in the role of a "superior anima-figure," at last completing successfully the initiation of Odysseus.[163] This occurs only after repeated, unsuccessful attempts at initiation which help to make up the Odyssey.

One may conclude, then, that while Huck does fail to gain full insight into his relationship with Jim and the rest of his world, he does catch a glimpse of truth through this experience; this proves to be a turning point in his "initiation," or "growing up" process.

Turning from mythological references to Huck himself, it becomes apparent that Huck seems, even in the beginning of

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[161]Henderson and Oakes, p. 43.

[162]Henderson, Thresholds of Initiation, p. 177.

[163]Henderson, Thresholds of Initiation, p. 177.

his narrative, quite familiar with death. He makes frequent use of the words "dead" and "kill." In the opening chapter, after discounting the importance of Moses because he "had been dead a considerable time" (38), Huck retires to his room with his dark thoughts. "I felt so lonesome I most wished I was dead" (40), recalls Huck. Then, "I heard an owl, away off, who-whooing about somebody that was dead, and a whipporwill and a dog crying about somebody that was going to die" (40). A little later, he observes, "the house was all as still as death now . . ." (40).

In Chapter XIII, after seeing that everything aboard the sinking steamboat is "dead still" (127), Huck and Jim turn in and sleep "like dead people" (128). Such expressions and references abound throughout the work, but to list them all would prove as little, in itself, as would the itemization of every death that takes place in the book. The large number of such references to death, however, does serve to make one mindful of the exact wording of Huck's narrative; since Huck is only partially "sivilized," much of his metaphysical revelation must occur on a level unseen by himself.

In any case, Huck is capable of perceiving Death as an abstraction and of sensing death-connotations to a degree much greater than the casual reader might realize. When he is confronted by his father, Huck's description of Pap's face reveals quite vividly this awareness.

> There warn't no color in his face, where his face showed; it was white; not like another man's white, but a white to make a body sick, a white to make a body's flesh crawl--a tree-toad white, a fish-belly white. (59)

From this passage, and from Pap's ultimate fate, the dead man in the dead house, it is not difficult to see Huck's father as a death-victim figure of uncommon intensity. This interpretation only serves to provide additional evidence that Huck is some sort of agent of death. If nothing else, it indicates that death is an important, if not the central concept controlling the major action and ideology in Huckleberry Finn.

Huck's stay with the Grangerfords provides some insight into his attitude toward death. There seems to be some sort of rapport between Huck and the late Emmeline Grangerford. Huck says of her:

> Poor thing, many's the time I made myself go up to the little room that used to be hers and get out her poor old scrapbook and read in it when her pictures had been aggravating me and I had soured on her a little. I liked all that family, dead ones and all, and warn't going to let anything come between us. (161)

In the above passage Huck reveals once again his preoccupation with thoughts of death. He seems to be seeking some sort of understanding of his own views in this area; he is trying to come to terms with death, or at least his ideas on the subject. He mentions the fact that the morbid pictures "aggravate" him which is an interesting choice of words. In a related passage, he claims these pictures give him "the

fan-tods" (158) which implies that the pictures and poetry reach something within him that transcends ordinary disinterest or distaste. Huck is preoccupied with the idea of death, whether he chooses to be or not.

Another passage from this chapter brings up an interesting unity of imagery. Describing Emmeline's unfinished painting, Huck states:

> She was at work on what they said was her greatest picture when she took sick, and every day and every night it was her prayer to be allowed to live till she got it done, but she never got the chance. It was a picture of a young woman in a long white gown, standing on the rail of a bridge all ready to jump off, with her hair all down her back, and looking up at the moon, with the tears running down her face, and she had two arms folded across her breast, and two arms stretched out in front, and two more reaching towards the moon--and the idea was, to see which pair would look best and then scratch out all the other arms; but, as I was saying, she died before she got her mind made up, and now they kept this picture over the head of the bed in her room, and every time her birthday come they hung flowers on it. Other times it was hid with a little curtain. The young woman in the picture had a kind of sweet face, but there was so many arms it made her look too spidery, seemed to me. (158-159)

The figure in the painting strikes Huck as looking "spidery," an image that recalls the death of the spider in the candle-flame in the first chapter. The fact that both occurrences of the spider image are accompanied by some sort of ritualized behavior supports the contention that this is one of the many recurrent death-figures running through the work. The picture hangs at the head of the dead Emmeline's bed; Huck's pilgrimages to her room at the times when her work haunts him the most suggest a sort of death-worship ritual. Perhaps her

bedroom is, for Huck, some sort of death-shrine, with the central relic of fascination placed at the head of a death-bed altar; there seems to be little doubt that Huck feels an unnatural contact with Emmeline and feels drawn to her room when this contact reaches points of stress. Regardless of Huck's personal feelings on the matter, Emmeline's "spidery" picture is an irrefutable testament to human mortality; a death-painting painted by one fascinated by death, unfinished because of the death of that painter.

Huck's stay with the Grangerfords is one example of the many occasions on which he is "reborn," that is, assumes a new identity. James M. Cox remarks that Huck is "indeed the man without identity who is reborn at almost every river bend . . . ."[164] Huck must recreate himself, Cox proposes, to escape the forces which threaten him from all sides. Cox believes that the rebirth theme forms the motivating idea behind the entire action.[165]

Huck himself "dies" several times in this work, only to return to the living each time, usually accompanied by some sort of ritual, either publicly accepted, occult, or both. When he creates the impression that he has been killed at his father's cabin, he kills a pig and uses its blood to prove his own death. When he hides on the island, he watches

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[164]Cox, p. 395.

[165]Cox, p. 395.

the citizenry conduct a ritualistic search for his body. Besides firing over the water, the search party drops loaves of bread into the water hoping to locate the unfortunate protagonist. Later, when Jim first sees Huck, he begs the "ghost" not to harm him, for he "alwuz liked dead people, en done all I could for 'em" (87).

In Chapter XV, when Huck and Jim are separated in the fog, Huck admits that he had no more idea where he was going than a dead man. When he returns to the raft, Jim first believes Huck is returning from the dead. At the end of Chapter XVIII, Huck covers dead Buck's face on the riverbank. Since Huck is generally believed to be among the dead at this point, the recurrent death-within-death motif undergoes a rather grim mutation: the dead covering the face of the dead.

Huck's arrival at the Grangerfords' is brought about by his nearly drowning after the raft is smashed by a steamboat. This places Huck within the well-known archetypal death-rebirth ritual framework of baptism. In connection with the Gilgamesh myth, Joseph Henderson points out that the concept of purification or lustration often appears as an initiatory death in the form of a ritualized drowning.[166] As in the labyrinth, the initiate undergoes a loss of consciousness which may lead to a change. This change, claims Henderson, "becomes a new and important test which ushers in the period of transition."

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[166]Henderson and Oakes, p. 49.

> The symbolism of a return to the pre-natal condition, so abundantly suggested in the composite idea of the labyrinth (intestines, birth canal, umbilical cord, etc.) and water (water of death or water of life as amniotic fluid), vanishes from sight and the evidence of rebirth becomes apparent.[167]

Henderson illustrates this contention by describing the initiation rites of primitive cultures where boys are fed milk as if they were newborn babies and given new clothes and names after undergoing the rites of purification and the ordeal of ritual death in the form of circumcision or some other kind of mutilation. Gilgamesh, after his sleep, "washed his long hair clean as snow in water . . . [and] replaced the band around his head with a new one."[168]

Not only does Huck conform to the labyrinth and baptismal episodes just mentioned, but he also is reborn in the manner described. He is fed, given new clothes, and assumes a new name, George Jackson. This is, of course, only one of several episodes in which Huck is "reborn" after "dying" or at least wishing he were dead. In Chapter XXXII, shortly after the "Sunday-like" stillness makes Huck wish he were dead, "and done with it all," he is "reborn" as Tom Sawyer. Here, near the end of the book, Huck's rebirth almost achieves a glimmer of conscious recognition from the initiate. Huck remarks, "But if they was joyful, it warn't

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[167]Henderson and Oakes, p. 49.

[168]Henderson and Oakes, p. 49.

nothing to what I was; for it was like being born again, I was so glad to find out who I was" (302).

Huck is, in a sense, "dead" throughout his journey down-river. He seems immune to physical injury; his role is that of observer, or in the initiatory sense, the initiate whose reaction to various situations determines his spiritual progress. The importance of eventual success in this type of initiation is brought home by a passage from Paul Schmitt's "Ancient Mysteries and Their Transformation" quoted by Joseph Henderson in Wisdom of the Serpent. Schmitt explains that he who enters the underworld symbolically is "wedded" or "dies" and is symbolically reborn. The uninitiated remains "in death."[169]

Huck's reactions, then, determine to a certain extent whether one may view the end of Huckleberry Finn in a positive or negative light. When Buck Grangerford dies, Huck becomes nauseated and almost falls out of his tree. If Huck is an Angel of Death, he is apparently not a consciously willing one. That he is a carrier of Death, as Twain might have believed himself to be, is perhaps closer to the truth.

At the end of the book, Huck says that he is going to "light out for the Territory ahead of the rest" (386) which is quite possibly an admission of ultimate initiatory failure. Huck may well be destined to, as Schmitt puts it, remain

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[169]Henderson and Oakes, p. 56.

"in death." In Thresholds of Initiation, Henderson points out examples from various cultures in which the west assumes a definite archetypal relationship with Death. Quoting Gertrude Rachel Levy, he explains that in Sumerian mythology, as well as in Egyptian mortuary belief, "the dead seem to follow the path of the sun."[170] All "solar heroes," such as Heracles, travel westward, "the road of the setting sun."[171] In the Hellenic tradition, the west becomes "the abode of those who are reconciled to death."[172] Huck's Territories lie to the west; he must therefore travel westward, "the road of the setting sun." Like the journey from Athens to the sea in the Eleusinian Mysteries, Huck's initiation involved a journey down-river toward the sea. But his pilgrimage will never be completed; as Henry Nash Smith has observed, it was doomed to failure from its beginning.[173] It is tempting, in the light of the above evidence, to view Huckleberry Finn as a victory of Death over Life. At the very least, the book ends with an undeniable distortion of the natural death-rebirth cycle of initiation.

Henderson discusses the significance of an initiation into life as the reconciliation of opposites "on the plane

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[170]Henderson, Thresholds of Initiation, p. 150.

[171]Henderson, Thresholds of Initiation, p. 150.

[172]Henderson, Thresholds of Initiation, p. 150.

[173]Smith, p. 132.

of image and the plane of experience."[174] He admits that only a great novelist or poet can sustain the impression that seemingly trivial details of one's personal life may be seen as part of such a powerful universal symbolism. Yet, he asserts, this is in reality exactly the case; "and the mystery of initiation weaves its eternal thread through our lives and on into the shadows of death."[175]

This chapter has dealt with death-imagery as it appears in Huckleberry Finn on a more or less ritualistic level. The next two chapters will proceed to cover more literal examples of death, some of which contribute to the archetypal pattern of initiation just discussed.

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[174]Henderson and Oakes, p. 73.

[175]Henderson and Oakes, p. 73.

Chapter V

NON-HUMAN DEATHS

Some of the most significant deaths occuring in Huckleberry Finn are those of non-human victims. For various reasons, many of these deaths are important to the pattern of deaths under examination here.

In the opening chapter, a spider's death in a candle-flame assumes grim metaphysical implications through Huck's superstitious interpretation:

> Pretty soon a spider went crawling up my shoulder, and I flipped it off and it lit in the candle; and before I could budge it was all shriveled up. I didn't need anybody to tell me that that was an awful bad sign and would fetch me some bad luck, so I was scared and most shook the clothes off of me. I got up and turned around in my tracks three times and crossed my breast every time; and then I tied up a little lock of my hair with a thread to keep witches away. But I hadn't no confidence. You do that when you've lost a horseshoe that you've found, instead of nailing it up over the door, but I hadn't ever heard anybody say it was any way to keep off bad luck when you'd killed a spider. (40)

It is perhaps significant that the spider dies in the flame of a candle, rather than being dispatched by means less symbolically fertile, such as the more conventional death by a careless human foot. In any case, Huck's ritual follows the recurrent pattern already mentioned, thus placing this incident well within the bounds of this study's premise. The

candle-flame as a means of death is significant in at least two respects; first, the candle, or indeed the flame itself, might easily be interpreted in a Jungian manner. The shape of the candle can be seen as a phallic image, or a fertility symbol in general. Whatever the specific interpretation of the image itself, one aspect of the incident remains undeniable: that is, that something quite graphically ritualistic has taken place, both in the spider's death and in the resulting action by Huck.

This incident is only one of several similar incidents that occur throughout the work. Remembering that everything the reader sees is through Huck's eyes, one might reasonably conclude that Huck has put everything down for some particular purpose; consequently there is no "irrelevant" material in the work. Huck, whether he realizes it or not, includes what he feels necessary for the reader's understanding of the essential meaning that emerges from the progress and patterns of events that occur in the book.

In "The Role of Folklore in Huckleberry Finn," Ray W. Frantz, Jr. discusses the death of the spider and its implications. He views the incident as the first of a series of evil signs and omens which culminates in Huck's discovery of his father in his room. This series of images is, Frantz contends, the most carefully constructed of many examples of "folklore forecasting" which Twain uses to forge plot unity

in Huckleberry Finn.[176] The spider-image is rendered more grotesque through the use of "withheld knowledge," that is, such phenomena as the whipporwill and the dog crying out in the night, and the sound "that a ghost makes when it wants to tell about something that's on its mind and can't make itself understood, and so can't rest easy in its grave . . ." (40). This concealment-death link appears throughout the novel.

When Huck turns around three times, crossing himself every time, he unknowingly partakes of an archetypal ritual which Carl Jung discusses in The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature. Jung describes a design associated with man's efforts to "banish his dark forebodings by expressing them in a magical or propitiatory form."[177] It is a double cross inscribed in a circle, and it appears today in Christian churches and Tibetan monasteries.[178] This particular abstract design appears even in Rhodesian rock-drawings of the Stone Age beside "amazingly lifelike" pictures of animals. Huck's affinities with such ritualized behavior is more than coincidental; James Cox sums up Huck's use of ritual.

> Because Huck completely lives his rituals, because he participates to the tips of his fingers in a struggle

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[176]Ray W. Frantz, Jr., "The Role of Folklore in Huckleberry Finn," American Literature, XXVIII (Nov., 1956), 314.

[177]Jung, The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature, p. 96.

[178]Jung, The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature, p. 96.

> for survival, and because his whole world and all its values are at stake, he transcends the empty rituals of Tom Sawyer's universe and achieves mythic significance.[179]

Another important non-human death, again by violence and again accompanied by elaborate superstitious ritual, occurs in Chapter X. Significantly, the incident foreshadows another important, and no less violent death. Huck says:

> Now you think it's bad luck [to talk about the dead man in the house]; but what did you say when I fetched in the snakeskin that I found on the top of the ridge day before yesterday? You said it was the worst bad luck in the world to touch a snakeskin with my hands. Well here's your bad luck! We've raked in all this truck and eight dollars besides. I wish we could have some bad luck like this every day, Jim. (99)

Jim cautions Huck, assuring him that bad luck is certainly on the way. He soon proves this by being bitten by a rattlesnake, an event which heralds an impressive collection of ritualistic folk-remedies, which of course proves successful.

More important to this study, however, is the fact that Jim's would-be reptilian executioner is where it is as a direct result of the violent death of its mate. The archetypal possibilities for interpretation here are impressive. The snake-figures, one killed, the other a would-be killer, present possibly even sexual connotations; the location of this incident, the cavern, seems to support this interpretation. The serpent is a well-documented and conventional archetypal figure, usually signifying fertility, either sexual or

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[179] Cox, p. 400.

agricultural. The cave is a classical archetypal representation of the womb, the prenatal state, or figurative death. In the Eleusinian mysteries, at one stage of the ceremony the initiates sat together while a representation of a snake was passed through their laps.[180] In the scene from Huckleberry Finn under discussion, Huck and Jim "unite" in the sacred marriage, joining black and white, the initiate and the master of initiation. It takes place in the womb of the earth, as did the Eleusinian rites. These details combine to form a surprisingly complete parallel pattern of images.

Not all of the non-human deaths in Huckleberry Finn are of a literal nature, however. For example, in Chapter XII, death visits an inanimate object, as well as its human contents. After describing a thunderstorm, the traditional archetypal depiction of Nature's presence, Huck introduces the wrecked steamboat "that had killed herself on a rock" (116). The wreck itself is a broken, skeletal monument to the mortality of Man and his creations. In flashes of lightning, the reader sees the wreck "very distinct" (116); the steamboat, an obviously transient extension of humanity, has destroyed itself against a rock, which in turn is the figurative statement of Nature's immovability. Later, Huck sees the wreck dragged down deeper and deeper into the river as it

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[180]Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p. 343.

drifts downstream, soon to disappear beneath the surface. The steamboat is not only defeated, but must be obliterated, by Nature.

There are, of course, human deaths aboard this boat, creating a "death-within-death" image. These human deaths, however, shrink in importance against the graphic display of the sinking boat. Huck does not see the men die; he only sees the lifeless hulk slipping deeper and deeper into the water.

Perhaps the storm contributes to the mystery and tension conveyed by the dramatic events that take place in the above episode, but it also serves another, equally important, purpose. For the storm is to Huck one of the great physical revelations of Nature's terrible, all-powerful beauty, made evident in Chapter IX, when Huck describes his impressions of the summer storm viewed from the safety of the cave:

> Pretty soon it darkened up and begun to thunder and lighten; so the birds was right about it. Directly it begun to rain, and it rained like all fury, too, and I never see the wind blow so. It was one of these regular summer storms. It would get so dark that it looked all blue-black outside, and lovely; and the rain would thrash along by so thick that the trees off a little ways looked dim and spider-webby; and here would come a blast of wind that would bend the trees down and turn up the pale underside of the leaves; and then a perfect ripper of a gust would follow along and set the branches to tossing their arms as if they was just wild; and next, when it was just about the bluest and blackest--fst! it was as bright as glory and you'd have a little glimpse of tree-tops a-plunging about, away off yonder in the storm, hundreds of yards further than you could see before; dark as sin again in a second, and now you'd hear the thunder

> let go with an awful crash and then go rumbling, grumbling, tumbling down the sky towards the underside of the world, like rolling empty barrels down stairs, where it's long stairs and they bounce a good deal, you know. (95-96)

The above passage illustrates a number of aspects of Huck's thought patterns. Huck's view of the storm is an almost classical archetypal one;[181] he sees the storm as the physical presence of some unseen power. The hint of revelation is definitely present in Huck's account of the wind, or archetypal "breath of God," turning up the pale underside of the leaves or, in a general sense, revealing things normally or previously hidden. This idea is restated later in the same passage when the lightning allows Huck to see much further into the woods than he had been able to see previously. Other "coincidental" images appear in this passage. For example, Huck compares the thunder to the sound of empty barrels rolling down stairs. The significance of the image of empty barrels becomes plain when one remembers that Huck watches the storm from the warm safety of the cave. Both the cave and the empty barrels, plus Huck's desire to sleep in an empty hogshead (as pointed out in Chapter III) point to an underlying unity of imagery that cannot be ignored.

The storm scene also illustrates Huck's awareness of Man's helplessness against the power of natural forces. The trees become personified, "tossing their arms as if they was

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[181]Jacobi, p. 161.

just wild" (95). This links the storm scene with the steamboat incident; both episodes underscore the recurrent motif of the doomed frailty of men and their creations against the cosmic omnipotence of amoral Nature.

The above-mentioned "storm passage" assumes additional significance when compared with the "dawn passage" in Chapter XIX. Again, Huck and Jim witness a display of natural power and revelation:

> Not a sound, anywheres--perfectly still--just like the whole world was asleep, only sometimes the bull-frogs a-cluttering, maybe. The first thing to see, looking away over the water, was a kind of dull line--that was the woods on t'other side--you couldn't make nothing else out; then a pale place in the sky; then more paleness, spreading around; then the river softened up, away off, and warn't black any more, but gray; you could see little dark spots drifting along, ever so far away--trading scows, and such things; and long black streaks--rafts; sometimes you could hear a sweep screaking; or jumbled up voices, it was so still, and sounds come so far; and by-and-by you could see a streak on the water which you know by the look of the streak that there's a snag there in a swift current which breaks on it and makes that streak look that way; and you see the mist curl up off of the water, and the east reddens up, and the river, and you make out a log cabin in the edge of the woods, away on the bank on t'other side of the river, being a wood-yard, likely, and piled by them cheats so you can throw a dog through it anywheres; then the nice breeze springs up, and comes the woods and the flowers, but sometimes not that way, because they've left dead fish laying around, gars, and such, and they do get pretty rank; and next you've got the full day, and everything smiling in the sun, and the song-birds just going it! (177-178)

The above passage, along with the "storm" passage, reveals a great deal about the pattern of concealment and revelation that appears throughout Huckleberry Finn. It is especially

revealing of Huck's ability to perceive beauty and ugliness in mutual proximity, without confusing the two. Indeed, in the beginning of the passage, Huck presents the reader with total nothingness, "not a sound, anywheres." Then, in a manner curiously similar to the Biblical depiction of the Creation, he discerns "a kind of dull line" dividing the land and water. It is still impossible to see details. Then the sky appears over the land and water. Shades of gray replace blackness, suggesting elements not easily placed in a simple duality. This possibility is given more credence by another event; the river loses its crisp edges, softens up. Then, amid the coming dawn's beauty, Huck perceives evidence of hidden death in the streaks which indicate swift water running over snags. Then wood-piles appear, monuments to man's dishonesty and greed, piled "by them cheats so you can throw a dog through it anywheres." A pleasant breeze appears from wood and flowers, blowing away the image of the wood-piles, only to be quickly qualified by Huck: often the breeze is contaminated by the smell of dead fish, particularly gars. Significantly, Huck mentions "gars" instead of any other fish here, the gar being a primitive, reptillian, and generally unpleasant fish. The gars contrast with the song-birds that appear with the full day in the next sentence. Huck clearly sees the dualities in nature.

Larry R. Dennis has noted that "Huck's is not Adam's innonence; Huck has seen death."[182] He believes that to categorize Huck as Adamic in attitude is incorrect. Huck's response is not human, claims Dennis, but is instinctive, that is, almost animal. Huck's journey brings him into contact with the many masks that civilization gives to death, and Huck remains relatively pure only through Twain's will. Dennis points out that Huck's view of life and death is that of two aspects of the same process; one does not necessarily deny the other. This "natural" view of life and death which Huck exhibits while he is free may be contrasted with the concept of death he displays while in "captivity," that is, "imprisoned" by the Widow Douglas, Pap, and others. This latter concept pictures death as static, "antipodal to life."

Dennis gives examples of Huck's experiences with this latter concept. In the first chapter, Huck describes the Widow Douglas's house as "still as death." This contrasts the house sharply with the world around it, teeming with the noises of life. Death, in this sense, is "antipodal to life."[183] In Chapter XXXII, as Huck approaches the Phelps farm, he experiences a feeling similar to that which he underwent at the end of the first chapter:

> When I got there it was all still and Sunday-like, and hot and sunshiny--the hands was gone to the fields; and

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[182]Dennis, p. 183.

[183]Dennis, p. 183.

> there was them kind of faint dronings of bugs and flies in the air that makes it seem so lonesome and like everybody's dead and gone; and if a breeze fans along and quivers the leaves, it makes you feel mournful, because you feel like it's spirits and you always think they're talking about <u>you</u>. As a general thing it makes a body wish <u>he</u> was dead, too, and done with it all. (297)

Houses, an obvious symbol of civilization, often accompany this type of death-image. Dennis believes that living within houses means imprisonment to Huck, physically and psychically, denying him the natural perspective of life-death totality.[184] Miss Watson constantly gives Huck negative commands; don't scrunch up, don't gap and stretch. Her orders involve physical restriction. In these situations, Dennis proposes, Huck sees life as "growth, change, potentiality," and death as "fixed, static, and negative."[185]

Pap also imprisons Huck in a house. Dennis draws a parallel between this episode and Huck's bondage at the Widow Douglas's.[186] During one of Pap's alcoholic fits, the cabin almost becomes a true house of death for Huck. Pap chases him with a knife, then collapses in a stupor. The stillness that Huck observes in the world outside the cabin is strangely similar to that of the first chapter. Huck recalls, "then he laid stiller, and didn't make a sound. I could hear the owls and the wolves, away off in the woods, and

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[184]Dennis, p. 184.

[185]Dennis, p. 185.

[186]Dennis, p. 184.

it seemed terrible still" (71-72). When Huck escapes from Pap's prison, Dennis points out, his means of complete escape is by a "ritual slaying of the self."[187] Death frees him, for in his natural framework, life and death are not antipodal.

Dennis sees a pattern behind Huck's two views of death. His own, natural view reveals itself while Huck is free on the river, which Dennis believes is really a double symbol--a symbol of life and of death. The same river that carries the canoe downstream carries the House of Death. Creative and destructive forces are not antithetical here, but part of one force. "Huck's perspective toward death and life is identical with the river's reconciliation of these two forces."[188] This idea seems to be supported by Huck's "dawn passage" and its reconciliation of life and death images.

In the "dawn passage," Huck's inclusion of song-birds "just going it!" offers further evidence of a "life-force" at work in Huckleberry Finn which is usually coupled with an opposing "death-force." It would be tempting to place this duality in a one-to-one relationship with the before-mentioned concealment-revelation duality and conclude that life-force is equated with, and often accompanies, revelation, while death is equated with, and often accompanies, concealment.

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[187]Dennis, p. 185.

[188]Dennis, p. 186.

This is, however, an oversimplification of a matrix of influences so complex that it is doubtful that Twain himself could fully comprehend all of the variables at work. There is, however, a surprising number of death-concealment and life-revelation links in Huckleberry Finn. When Buck Grangerford is killed, Huck covers his face; dead Emmeline Grangerford's unfinished painting is almost always covered; Sherburn, after killing Boggs, tells the would-be lynch-mob that if there's any lynching done, it will be at night, by men in masks; the river swallows up the wrecked steamboat with the dead men aboard; Jim believes Huck is dead after losing him in the fog; Jim covers the dead man's face in "the house of death."

The deaths discussed here were, for the most part, human ones. The following chapter examines those specific human expirations which most readily and graphically conform to the archetypal patterns already spelled out.

Chapter VI

HUMAN DEATHS

There are, of course, human deaths in Huckleberry Finn. These, no less than those other types of death already mentioned, conform to certain patterns of recurrent images and motifs involving superstitious ritual, grotesque social protocol, and/or graphic demonstrations of the awesome power of natural forces. While these deaths do not invariably conform to well-established archetypal formats, still the elements of ritual and superstition always leave open the possibilities of archetypal interpretation. Jung admits that we can never know all the archetypes and that ritual of any kind often indicates some kind of archetypal presence.

One of the most dramatic examples of human death in Huckleberry Finn is the killing of old Boggs in Chapter XXI. An aura of inevitability pervades the final minutes before the shooting of Boggs. After Sherburn gives Boggs until one o'clock to leave, Boggs proceeds to engage in a "dance of death"--indeed, the sight of the crowd pleading with him to leave "right away," Boggs's riding off down the street, returning, leaving, and returning again, all suggest a kind of

bizarre choreography. The tension builds, is relieved when Boggs rides down the street, only to be raised even higher when the doomed man returns. This buildup of tension is framed in a mood of undeniable inevitability.

This aura of inevitability is enhanced by the behavior of Boggs himself. Up until the time that it is too late to stop the shooting from taking place, Boggs is uncontrollably hostile towards Sherburn and quite vocal about his hostility. Then, in that last instant before the fatal shooting, Boggs shows signs of repenting his former displays, as if once again, though too late, in control of himself. Huck says:

> In about five or ten minutes, here comes Boggs again--but not on his horse. He was a-reeling across the street towards me, bareheaded, with a friend on both sides of him aholt of his arms and hurrying him along. He was quiet, and looked uneasy; and he warn't hanging back any, but was doing some of the hurrying himself. (206)

This description of Boggs's apparent state of mind supports the contention that he is a helpless part of some inevitable mechanical sequence of events. It is never clear whether or not the shooting takes place before or after the specified deadline of one o'clock. This suggests the possibility that Sherburn is also part of the mechanistic plan of Boggs's death. The image of Boggs, bareheaded, being led along by two men, suggests an execution of some sort. This idea is supported by the carnival atmosphere immediately following the killing and the actual circus going on in town at the same time. The scene suggests an execution in the European

Middle Ages, when such an event was exploited as a festive, commercial occasion catering to the amusement of the spectators. The one o'clock deadline, along with Huck's unconscious portent of doom, supports this interpretation. Before the Boggs incident begins, Huck describes the town in which the killing will take place:

> On the river front some of the houses was sticking out over the bank, and they was bowed and bent, and about ready to tumble in. The people had moved out of them. The bank was caved away under one corner of some others, and that corner was hanging over. People lived in them yet, but it was dangersome, because sometimes a strip of land as wide as a house caves in at a time. Sometimes a belt of land a quarter of a mile deep will start in and cave along and cave along till it all caves into the river in one summer. Such a town as that has to be always moving back, and back, and back, because the river's always gnawing at it. (203)

Huck's above description sets the stage for the death of Boggs. This world is a precarious one, poised on the brink of oblivion. The river, the book's ultimate natural power, eats away at man's puny creations. The entire Boggs incident is surrounded by an unseen, amoral force which drives events to their ultimate conclusion with an overpowering efficiency.

One also wonders why, after countless monthly drunks and similar empty threats, Boggs is doomed for this particular tirade. That "proud-looking" Sherburn is easily the best dressed man in that town (205) implies that he might take serious action against Boggs for this verbal abuse and is a powerful enough figure in the community to take whatever vengeance upon the town drunk he chooses. But this logical

analysis of cause and effect is not completely satisfying; there is still an annoying random factor--Huck. Here again is evidence that Huck and death appear together a little too often for natural coincidence to explain.

After his last-minute change of heart proves pointless, Boggs is shot. Sherburn drops his pistol in the dirt, suggesting that he is, in this particular event, only an agent; after the fatal shots are fired, his immediate role as executioner is over. Boggs, lying on the ground, is a figure literally stifled by a predatory society concerned primarily with its own amusement:

> The crowd closed up around them, and shouldered and jammed one another, with their necks stretched, trying to see, and people on the inside trying to shove them back, and shouting, "back, back! give him air, give him air!" (206)

As the crowd still crushes in on him, Boggs lies with a Bible on his chest, breathing his last, while the religion of his society (in the form of the Bible) literally presses the breath out of him (207).

The almost surrealistic display of ritualistic behavior by the townspeople following Boggs's death gives this incident even more significance. Huck describes the grotesque proceedings:

> Well, pretty soon the whole town was there, squirming and scroughing and pushing and shoving to get at the window and have a look, but the people that had the places wouldn't give them up, and folks behind them was saying all the time, "Say, now, you've looked enough, you fellows: 'taint right and 'taint fair, for you to stay

> thar all the time, and never give nobody a chance; other folks has their rights as well as you." (207)

The remark about "rights" carries even more irony than one might imagine. The need to see death seems to be so basic and so strong that it molds the townspeople into one seething organism whose one need is to witness death. Not only is this a need, but a right. Since Boggs was once one of them, they are, in a sense, witnessing the small death of part of the larger organism; thus, it <u>is</u> their right to witness his death. This town is caught in the perpetual posture of the uroboros: the serpent devouring himself, tail-first.

Huck then describes even more stylized and ritualistic proceedings:

> The streets was full, and everybody was excited. Everybody that seen the shooting was telling how it happened, and there was a big crowd packed around each one of these fellows, stretching their necks and listening. One long lanky man, with long hair and a big white fur stove-pipe hat on the back of his head, and a crooked-handled cane, marked out the places on the ground where Boggs stood, and where Sherburn stood, and the people following him around from one place to t'other and watching everything he done, and bobbing their heads to show they understood, and stooping a little and resting their hands on their thighs to watch him mark the places on the ground with his cane; and then he stood up straight and stiff where Sherburn had stood, frowning and having his hat-brim down over his eyes, and sung out, "Boggs!" staggered backwards, says "Bang!" again, and fell down flat on his back. The people that had seen the thing said he done it perfect; said it was just exactly the way it all happened. Then as much as a dozen people got out their bottles and treated him. (208)

This "long lanky man" seems to be regarded by the townspeople, for the moment at least, as some sort of "sign-giver," marking out Truth in the dirt for all to see. When he is finished, and his word accepted, a dozen followers treat him to their ambrosia. The number twelve, plus the act of marking the dirt with a "crooked-handled" cane, make this white-capped man seem almost a perverted Christ-figure. Followed by twelve disciples, the white-crowned bringer of truth makes signs in the dirt much as did Christ (John 8:6), with his crooked cane as a staff. Indeed, the whole scene involves religious ritual, including the affirmation by those who know the Truth first-hand that the lanky man's re-enactment of Boggs's death is correct.

Here, once again, is an undeniable example of death-worship, this time by nearly an entire town; many of the people watching the reenactment of the death saw the real death. Therefore, they must not be watching the ritual for the purpose of becoming informed of the facts of the event. Not only do they wish to see dead Boggs himself (this could be dismissed as simple curiosity), but they also want to re-experience the event (which they have already seen) in stylized, ritualized form. This, along with the other "co-incidental" aspects of the incident already cited (such as the Bible and the townspeople literally stifling Boggs in much the same way that Huck feels stifled by society and

its religion), contributes to the overall pattern of Death and its abstract connotations which, as stated previously, recur throughout Huckleberry Finn.

The attempted-lynching scene which follows the shooting offers another cryptic thread to the fabric-pattern of Death. Once again the ideas of Death and concealment are linked, this time by Sherburn. He tells the mob, "If any real lynching's going to be done, it will be done in the dark, Southern fashion; and when they come they'll bring their masks, and fetch a man along" (211). This linking of Death and "masking," or concealment, occurs several times throughout Huckleberry Finn. When Huck and Jim find Pap's body in the house, they find, among other things, "a couple of masks made out of black cloth" (98). When the men in the steamboat are killed, the hulk slips beneath the water, concealing what it holds inside (127). When Buck Grangerford is killed, Huck covers his face, compounding the death-within-death image by adding the aspect of concealment. Notably, the other deaths just mentioned also conform to the death-within-death motif as well as that of death-and-concealment. This pattern of events is too complete in detail and too consistent in occurence to be dismissed as the rationalization of coincidental, unrelated happenings.

Another human death that deserves treatment here is that of Buck Grangerford. His death is a direct result of a

murderous feud whose beginning is nearly lost to living memory and whose end seems totally academic. In short, it is death for death's sake. The fact that it is a feud immediately suggests archetypal overtones, or at least basic primal forces at work. Huck's referral to the Shepherdsons as "high-toned, and well born, and rich and grand, as the tribe of Grangerfords" (165), is hardly coincidental. In addition to the suspicious, if appropriate, use of the term "tribe" is the obvious indication that this tribal appetite for blood-vengeance is concealed beneath a thin, pretentious veneer of gentility and refinement. Huck describes the local church-service:

> The men took their guns along, so did Buck, and kept them between their knees or stood them handy against the wall. The Shepherdsons done the same. It was pretty ornery preaching--all about brotherly love, and such-like tiresomeness; but everybody said it was a good sermon, and they all talked it over going home, and had such a powerful lot to say about faith, and good works . . . . (168)

The above passage illustrates the concealment of under-lying barbarism among the Grangerfords. Daniel G. Hoffman has noted this grotesque phenomenon; the Grangerfords, he observes, display more culture than Huck has ever seen, and they even apologize to Huck for searching his pockets. But this "morality of manners," notes Hoffman, is but a thin veneer over their essential barbarism; they do not understand the object of their loyalty. "In pursuing an endless revenge for a grievance none can remember, they live by the law of

the feral wilderness." Hoffman sees the feud as "an American Oresteia, a tragedy in which Apollo and Athene, the gods of light and wisdom, do not appear, and the Furies are never appeased."[189] The sermon on Christian charity fails to move the Grangerfords, and the love of Harney and Sophia only causes more death.

A close examination of those events leading up to and immediately following Buck's death suggest strong archetypal connotations. The incident begins when Huck awakes to find the Grangerfords gone; he learns that they have ridden out to catch Harney before he can take Sophia across the river. Huck follows the river road until he hears gunfire in the distance; he arrives at the steamboat-landing and climbs a convenient tree into the forks that are "out of reach" (172) and watches the proceedings.

Behind the wood-rank alongside the steamboat-landing lie two young men under attack from "four or five men cavorting around on their horses in the open place before the log store . . ." (173). The men meet limited success against the boys and even suffer a casualty; the boys take advantage of the temporary confusion and take up a defensive position behind the wood pile beneath Huck's tree. Huck recognizes one of them as Buck. The men ride away, and Huck reveals his presence to Buck. Buck is now in the full heat of berserk

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[189]Hoffman, pp. 320-321.

possession:

> Buck begun to cry and rip, and 'lowed that him and his cousin Joe (that was the other young chap) would make up for this day, yet. He said his father and his two brothers was killed, and two or three of the enemy. Said the Shepherdsons laid for them, in ambush. Buck said his father and brothers ought to waited for their relations--the Shepherdsons was too strong for them. I asked him what was become of young Harney and Miss Sophia. He said they'd got across the river and was safe. I was glad of that; but the way Buck did take on because he didn't manage to kill Harney that day he shot at him--I hain't ever heard anything like it. (174)

Suddenly, the men resume the attack from behind, forcing the boys to run, both wounded, for the river, "and as they swum down the durrent, the men run along the bank shotting at them and singing out, 'Kill them, kill them!'" (174). This event weighs on Huck's mind as heavily as any episode in the work. "It made me so sick I most fell out of the tree. I ain't agoing to tell <u>all</u> that happened--it would make me sick again if I was to do that" (174). Huck then reveals something quite significant. "I ain't ever going to get shut of them [the killings]--lots of times I dream about them" (174).

Carl Jung has several pertinent points to make concerning events of the type just described. The killings take place at a point near that where Harney and Sophia crossed the river--perhaps the very spot. For Jung, the river-ford <u>is</u> an archetype, exerting an influence upon one who stumbles into its grasp. Jung describes this type of archetypal influence as a force, having autonomy, which can suddenly take

hold of a person, "like a seizure."[190] Jung proceeds to describe one such "spontaneous" occurrence in European history:

> Of course, we have a famous case in our Swiss history of the King Albrecht who was murdered in the ford of the Royce not very far from Zurich. His murderers were hiding behind him for the whole stretch from Zurich to the Royce, quite a long stretch, and after deliberating, still couldn't come together about whether they wanted to kill, the king or not. The moment the king rode into the ford, they thought, "Murder!" They shouted, "Why do we let him abuse us?" Then they killed him, because this was the moment they were seized; this was the right moment. So you see, when you have lived in primitive circumstances in the primeval forest among primitive populations, then you know that phenomenon. You are seized with a certain spell and you do a thing that is unexpected.[191]

Jung cites an example of the river-ford and death archetype in his study of the poem "Hiawatha" by Longfellow. It is interesting to note that in Myths of the Greeks and Romans Michael Grant compares Longfellow's Hiawatha to Triptolemus, [192] an Eleusinian deity who in turn Joseph Henderson identifies as a variant of Iacchus.[193] Jung describes an event in this mythopoetical work that in many ways resembles the death of Buck in Huckleberry Finn.

Hiawatha's first deed was to kill a roebuck with his arrow:

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[190]Richard I. Evans, Conversations with Carl Jung, p. 51.

[191]Evans, p. 51.

[192]Grant, p. 132.

[193]See above, p. 58.

"Dead he lay there in the forest,
By the ford across the river."

> This is typical of Hiawatha's deeds. Whatever he kills generally lies by or in the water, or better still, half in water and half on land. His subsequent adventures will explain why this is so. Further, the roebuck was no ordinary animal, but a magic one with an unconscious (i.e., symbolical) significance.[194]

The similarity between the death of Buck Grangerford and the above archetypal reference should be obvious. What few differences there are between the incidents cited by Jung and Buck's death can be explained quite satisfactorily through the concept of the personal unconscious. For one living near the Mississippi River in an area such as the Grangerfords' domain, a steamboat landing might well prove as close an approximation of a ford as would be necessary for that person's mind to experience (or describe) the archetype through those personal surroundings. Indeed, we are told that the two lovers did make it across the river, apparently crossing somewhere nearby.

All of the essential ingredients of the river-ford archetype are present at Buck's death. The men are at first irresolute; after suffering a casualty they temporarily break off the attack entirely. Then, in an attack upon the boys from behind, the men succeed in driving the boys into the river near the landing. This frames the action within the archetypal situation and triggers the classic response. The

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[194]Jung, Symbols of Transformation, p. 326.

men pursue the wounded boys, yelling, "Kill them, kill them!" They are caught up in the archetypal "seizure" described by Jung.

Two particular details must be noted here. In Longfellow's poem, Hiawatha makes magic clothing from the hide of the buck he kills.[195] Similarly, Huck receives a new set of clothes from Buck. Finally, it is interesting that Huck's dead friend, also killed within the same symbolic framework as Hiawatha's magical animal, is named "Buck."

Buck's hysteria, as well as that of his enemies, also conforms to certain archetypal patterns. Jung, in Psychology and Religion, describes how consciousness in its beginnings must have been "a very precarious thing."[196] He points out that in primitive societies today one may still observe how easily consciousness is lost or becomes unconscious again. "Running amok" is one example of this phenomenon; it is the equivalent of "going berserk" in Germanic saga.[197] "This is," Jung explains, "a more or less trance-state, often accompanied by devastating social effects."[198] The last statement might well be applied to the literary incident under examination here.

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[195]Jung, Symbols of Transformation, pp. 326-327.

[196]Jung, Psychology and Religion: West and East, p. 17.

[197]Jung, Psychology and Religion: West and East, p. 17.

[198]Jung, Psychology and Religion: West and East, p. 17.

The elaborate customs of politeness used by the Grangerfords take on more significance in light of the observation by Jung concerning the prevention of such outbursts. Primitives, he notes, take elaborate steps to accomplish this, "speaking in a hushed voice, laying down their weapons, crawling on all fours, bowing the head, showing the palms."[199] Jung contends that these customs are not peculiar to primitive cultures but are very much in evidence in our own society:

> Even our own forms of politeness still exhibit a "religious" consideration of possible psychic dangers. We propitiate fate by magically wishing one another good day. It is not good form to keep the left hand in your pocket or behind your back when shaking hands. If you want to be particularly ingratiating you use both hands. Before people of great authority we bow with uncovered head, i.e., powerful one, who might quite easily fall sudden prey to a fit of uncontrollable violence.[200]

When we consider how the above passage might explain the Grangerfords' "morality of manners," we see two aspects that have echoes in other parts of Huckleberry Finn. First, upon interpreting the young Grangerfords' treatment of their father in the light of the above passage, we see the possibility of true Oedipal terror lurking just under the surface of their stylized "respect" for their father. Huck's description of him supports this contention:

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[199]Jung, Psychology and Religion: West and East, p. 17.

[200]Jung, Psychology and Religion: West and East, p. 17.

> Sometimes he smiled, and it was good to see; but when he straightened himself up like a liberty-pole, and the lightning begun to flicker out from under his eyebrows you wanted to climb a tree first, and find out what the matter was afterwards. He didn't have to tell anybody to mind their manners--everybody was always good mannered where he was. (164)

Huck's illustrative use of thunder and lightning is also interesting, considering how often thunder storms occur in the work. In this case it serves to place the Grangerfords in an elemental framework, thus reinforcing the validity of an archetypal interpretation.

The second recurrent motif of which the Grangerfords' manners are but one example is that of terrible doom lying in constant fear of not only their feud-enemies, the Shepherdsons, but of their own leader, their father. Just as the houses on the bank in Boggs' village are in constant danger of destruction from the primeval force of the destructive river, which is always "gnawing at" them, so are the outwardly-civilized Grangerfords in danger of a bood-bath in their own home, which appears to be a temple of gentility.

In Huckleberry Finn, the concept of loss of consciousness, or "loss of soul," does not only appear with the death of Buck Grangerford. Apparently, Twain was quite aware of, one might even venture to say, obsessed with, the idea. In "The Devil and Samuel Clemens," Coleman Parsons purports that when faced with a situation or report of mass violence, Twain "was tempted to gloat over these outrages as

irrefutable proofs that the human race was utterly brutal, damned, and depraved."[201] Lynching, in particular, represented "the acme of modern cruelty"[202] to Clemens. When one returns to the lynch-mob scene following the Boggs shooting, he sees a definite pattern supporting the above contentions. The lynching scene is the culmination of the inevitable process which begins with the description of the houses perched on the edge of the hungry river. As the river gnaws at the land, so do the "perils of the soul" threaten and finally conquer the minds of the mob.

All this is supported by Jung's archetypal view of human behavior. He contends that "beneath all natural shyness, shame, and tact, there is a secret fear of the unknown 'perils of the soul.'" One is reluctant, admits Jung, to reveal such a ridiculous fear even to himself. But, rather than being unfounded, this fear is all too justified; the average person is ignorant of the impersonal forces lurking in his unconscious only because they rarely appear in his daily relationships:

> But if people crowd together and form a mob, then the dynamisms of the collective man are let loose--beasts or demons that lie dormant in every person until he is part of a mob. Man in the mass sinks unconsciously to an inferior moral and intellectual level, to that level

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[201]Parsons, p. 601.

[202]Parsons, p. 600.

> which is always there, below the threshold of consciousness, ready to break forth as soon as it is activated by the formation of a mass.[203]

The above quotation might well serve to sum up not only this chapter devoted to human deaths in Huckleberry Finn, but the entire novel, as well. As Huck observes while witnessing one of the many examples of mass violence in the work, "Human beings can be awful cruel to one another" (311).

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[203] Jung, Psychology and Religion: West and East, pp. 14-15.

Chapter VII

CONCLUSION

The treatment of death and related death archetypes in Huckleberry Finn contributes toward the work's structure, theme, and characterization.

The life-death cycle reveals itself through an archetypal pattern whose total effect accounts for much of the novel's universal appeal. Here Twain the artist is, as Jung proposes the artist should be, "'collective man,' a vehicle and moulder of the unconscious psychic life of mankind."[204] Huckleberry Finn's popularity for the first ninety years of its existence supports the contention that its theme and quality are archetypal in nature.

Death is obviously an important component in the structural makeup of Huckleberry Finn. Death of one kind or another occurs at virtually every turning-point in the story, and it is quite possibly the most powerful single force behind the action of the novel. When linked with life, it certainly forms the most important cyclical continuum of the work.

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[204]Jung, The Spirit in Man, Art and Literature, p. 101.

Much has been written about the apparent lack of structural or thematic unity in Huckleberry Finn. The shift separating the last section of the book (that dealing with Jim's imprisonment) from the rest of the work has formed the basis for most of this criticism. When studied in the light of archetypal imagery, however, the novel appears thematically consistent and structurally coherent.

This same archetypal imagery casts doubt on Huck's character development; it is highly questionable whether Huck matures significantly in this work. His attitude toward Jim seems at one point to "mature," but later appears to revert almost to its starting point as revealed in Chapter II. In all other respects, Huck remains an Iacchus-figure, the "eternal youth."

Bernard DeVoto claims that "Huck never encounters a symbol but always some actual human being working out an actual destiny."[205] But he makes this statement in comparing Huckleberry Finn with Melville's Moby Dick. The characters in Huckleberry Finn are not purely allegorical figures, but many of them do participate in archetypal symbolism of one kind or another. Huck himself is involved throughout the work in the symbolic patterns of initiation.

It is, of course, impossible to prove just how much of the archetypal imagery in Huckleberry Finn is a product of

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[205]DeVoto, Mark Twain at Work, p. 100.

Twain's collective unconscious. There is certain evidence, however, suggesting that Huckleberry Finn is a result of what Michael Grant calls "a widespread human instinct" that "prompts the conversion of stories or events or places or persons into instinctive centres of reference, which, since the world is too much with us, take the form of myths."[206] Grant notes that novelist Hermann Broch believed that "mythical novels come into being at periods of dislocation . . . which call for a new coherence."[207] Grant believes that this theory might explain the popularity of Herman Melville in the years following World War II, as well as the recently increasing critical interest in the literary uses of myth. This idea might also prove enlightening when applied to a study of the circumstances surrounding the writing of Huckleberry Finn.

Although Huckleberry Finn was not begun until 1875, it represents the culmination of a progression of thought begun as early as 1866[208]--less than a year after the end of the most destructive war in the country's history. The idea did not take form until 1870, with the first draft of Tom Sawyer.[209] In that year, in a reply to a letter from his

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[206]Grant, pp. 279-280.

[207]Grant, p. 280.

[208]Adams, p. 1043.

[209]Adams, p. 1043.

boyhood friend, Will Bowen, Twain stated his renewed interest in his own childhood; in one remarkable passage from this letter, he revealed what might be the influence of archetypal dynamisms:

> The old life has swept before me like a panorama; the old days have trooped by in their old glory again; the old faces have looked out of the mists of the past; old footsteps have sounded in my listening ears; old hands have clasped mine, old voices have greeted me, & the songs I have loved ages & ages ago have come wailing down the centuries![210]

The possibility of a not-too-hidden meaning here is all too obvious. Whose "old faces" appeared to him "out of the mists of the past?" Are the footsteps he heard those of his old comrades on the streets of Hannibal, or those of the jubilant procession from Athens to the Sea of Eleusis? Are the songs those of the American frontier or those of the universal longings of humanity, the Hymn to Demeter and The Quest of Gilgamesh? It is reasonable to assume that the "old hands" which clasped his also helped guide his pen, but whose hands were they? Like the archetypes themselves, these questions must remain ultimately an unfathomable mystery.

Archetypal criticism does not always produce crystal-clear parallels and uniformly acceptable progressions of deduction leading to irrefutable conclusions. This type of literary interpretation is by nature subjective and often

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[210]Theodore Hornberger, ed., Mark Twain's Letters to Will Bowen, p. 18.

abstruse. But if the reader has had the patience to follow the material and arguments presented here, he will have added perhaps in some small measure to his appreciation and understanding of Huckleberry Finn.

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