

HUCKLEBERRY FINN: A MISSISSIPPI MOSES

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HUCKLEBERRY FINN: A MISSISSIPPI MOSES

Few people, I think, will deny that Mark Twain in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn treated slavery as an inhumane and immoral practice. The immorality of the practice, however, never occurred to most inhabitants of the Mississippi valley because as Twain repeatedly said, they were told from a thousand pulpits that the Bible proved God's support of the institution. Under these conditions, nothing could be more challenging, or more devastatingly effective than the possibility of proving through a modern parallel to a Biblical story that not only did the Bible not endorse slavery but the consequences of teaching that it did were moral blindness, hypocrisy, and violence. In Huckleberry Finn Twain took up this challenge and created a modern Moses whose journey from a barrel to the territory closely resembles that of the Biblical Moses from the ark of bulrushes to the wilderness.

One immediate effect of observing this parallel is to enable us to recognize a unifying element in a novel that some critics have thought too loosely organized. A second effect is that the already powerful indictment of society that is easily observable in the novel is made even more severe by adding the weight of Biblical authority to the already strong moral arguments against slavery. Huck, however, begins his journey in ignorance of the personal and social evil of slavery but ends it in full awareness of the personal effect the institution has on Jim and an instinctive if unarticulated awareness of the moral sickness pervading the South as a result of slavery. Ultimately Huck's reaction,

like that of Moses, is to abandon the society that enslaves and to point the way of escape into the wilderness.

Even in the beginning of the novel, Huck is not ignorant of man's capacity for violent and evil actions, but it is during the river voyage that he first realizes the various degrees of hypocrisy that accompany the violent actions of "Christian" men. Furthermore in the last nine chapters of the novel Huck becomes aware of what is possibly the most subtle form that evil can take. It is this phase of his experience that brings Huck his most severe test, and it is in these chapters that the thematically necessary "plagues," escape, pursuit, "miracle" and departure for the wilderness take place. And finally this part of the novel allows us to see Huck becoming a whole boy, no longer searching for an identity and no longer torn between two things.

The Bible will, of course, be a constant source of reference in following Twain's modern Moses through his adventures, but other than that the principal source of information must naturally be Twain's own works. The Autobiography is particularly useful because of the wealth of observations Twain made concerning boyhood impressions and attitudes toward slavery. One fictional work of Twain's, Tom Sawyer Abroad, provides some particularly valuable insights into Huckleberry Finn. Useful works on Twain and his novel abound, but those that comment on Huck as a Mississippi Moses are few indeed. Only Kenneth S. Lynn seems to have realized that Huck and the Mosaic saga are inextricably associated. He confines himself, however, in observing specific parallels primarily to the

"Moses in the Bulrushers" story in Chapter One and to the incident of the dead baby in the famous raftsmen's passage which was not included in the first edition of the novel.¹

A second useful source is several articles that focus critically on the last nine chapters of the novel. Lionel Trilling in 1948² and T. S. Eliot in 1950³ praised these concluding chapters and were promptly answered by various critics who felt that the ending of the novel was structurally and thematically quite weak. Leo Marx, for example, argued that "The most obvious thing wrong with the end, then, is the flimsy contrivance by which Clemens frees Jim."⁴ Opinions like this about the last episode in the novel appear in a new light once the appropriateness of these chapters to the thematic portrayal of Huck as a modern Moses is considered. No artistic judgment of these chapters is intended, but through an examination of the events in them it may be possible to demonstrate that these "doubtful" chapters are thematically justified.

Although Twain refers for various reasons to several parts of the Pentateuch (the humorous reference to the Balaam's ass story from Numbers in Chapter Eight being one example), he draws primarily on the events in the first fourteen chapters of Exodus to create his modern parallel to the adventures of Moses. The essence of these chapters is familiar to almost everyone, but it might not be amiss to recall the principal events in Moses' life up to the time when he led the Hebrew nation out of Egypt.

At the time of Moses' birth, Pharaoh was attempting to reduce the Hebrew population by killing new born males. Moses' mother

hid him in the Nile in an ark of bulrushes among the flags where he was found and adopted by Pharaoh's daughter. He was raised by her as an Egyptian, but as a young man he was forced to flee Egypt when he killed an Egyptian for mistreating a Hebrew. While dwelling in exile in Midian, Moses was given signs by God, told that the old Pharaoh was dead, and sent back to Egypt to deliver his people. Among these signs was a rod which when cast down turned into a snake. This rod was the instrument used by Moses to turn the Egyptian rivers to blood. This plague like the later ones was intended to convince Pharaoh he should release the Hebrews, but each time Moses confronted him, Pharaoh's heart "was hardened" and he refused. Aaron, Moses' brother, acted as the spokesman for Moses during this time. Pharaoh refused to grant the brothers' demands, however, and Moses acting on God's orders brought a series of plagues upon Egypt in the form of frogs, flies, lice, boils, locusts and the like. Pharaoh still refused to release the Hebrews, and the final plague, the Passover night, fell upon Egypt killing the first-born male of every Egyptian household. The males of Hebrew families were untouched because they had marked the lintels of their houses with lamb's blood. Pharaoh and his people, thoroughly frightened by this time, ordered the Israelites to depart. The Hebrews camped on the banks of the Red Sea, but Pharaoh changed his mind and sent his army after them. During the night Pharaoh's army was confused by a dark cloud, and an east wind arose, parting the waters and allowing the Hebrews to pass over the sea on dry land. In the morning Pharaoh's army was allowed to see what had

happened and followed the Hebrews, only to have the wind stop and the water return to drown them.

In later chapters of Exodus the Hebrews journeyed to Mt. Sinai where the two tablets of the law were given Moses. From there they entered the wilderness where they wandered forty years fed by God's bread--manna--and were led by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night.

All these events are suggested or paralleled by Twain in Huckleberry Finn. Sometimes he merely parodies them as he does with the comic plagues in the Arkansas farm chapters, but his ultimate purpose is serious.

Twain, obviously, is not an ancient Hebrew recording what he believes to be historical fact, but a novelist employing a Biblical analogy in a contemporary situation. Therefore it should be no surprise to discover that he has rearranged the sequence of some of the events for his own purposes. Nor should it surprise us that the contemporary situation does not correspond in all respects with the Biblical one. For example, in the novel Hebrews who believe in the Old Testament God do not confront Egyptians who believe in heathen idols. In one respect only are the white inhabitants of the Mississippi valley like the Egyptians: their hearts were hardened or "stupefied" toward the slaves.

It is commonly believed that an infallible effect of slavery was to make such as lived in its midst hard-hearted. I think it had no such effect--speaking in general terms. I think it stupefied everybody's humanity as regarded the slave, but stopped there. There were no hardhearted people in our town--I mean there were no

more than would be found in any other town of the same size in any other country; and in my experience hard-hearted people are very rare everywhere.⁵

Hardhearted people may indeed be rare, and in Huckleberry Finn that appears to be so. Only Pap, the Duke and the King and possibly Colonel Sherburn qualify as thoroughly hardhearted. Judge Thatcher and the Widow Douglas, the Grangerfords, the Wilkses, and Phelps all appear kindhearted toward Huck; only Jim can expect no mercy from them, and in the end even he receives it unexpectedly through the repentance of the dying Miss Watson.

The great fault of these kindhearted people is that, like Twain's mother, they are not even aware that they are wrong in enslaving the Negroes:

As I said, we lived in a slaveholding community; indeed, when slavery perished, my mother had been in daily touch with it for sixty years. Yet, kindhearted and compassionate as she was, I think she was not conscious that slavery was a bald, grotesque and unwarrantable usurpation. She had never heard it assailed in any pulpit but had heard it defended and sanctified in a thousand; her ears were familiar with Bible texts that approved it, but if there were any that disapproved it they had not been quoted by her pastors; as far as her experience went, the wise and the good and the holy were unanimous in the conviction that slavery was right, righteous, sacred, the peculiar pet of the Deity and a condition which the slave himself ought to be daily and nightly thankful for. Manifestly, training and association can accomplish strange miracles.⁶

These people as they appear in Huckleberry Finn use their religion to justify slavery, and to that extent they are heathen and Egyptian.

On the other hand the Negro slaves were only half Christian and relied upon superstition in all real emergencies. Twain explains this in recalling "Aunt" Hannah, a Negro woman he knew in

his childhood. Twain believed she had lost her health on the desert trek out of Egypt with Moses and had lost her hair in fright at seeing Pharaoh drowned. "She was superstitious, like other Negroes; also, like them, she was deeply religious. Like them she had great faith in prayer and employed it in all ordinary exigencies, but not in cases where a dead certainty of result was urgent."⁷ The Negroes relied primarily upon the superstitious interpretation of natural signs in dealing with the supernatural as Jim does in Ruckleberry Finn, and the most cursory examination of Exodus will show that the Hebrews did likewise. The story of the Hebrews' escape from bondage in Egypt is filled with "signs" of many kinds ranging from the plagues to the parting of the Red Sea which was interpreted as a sign of God's favor. Aunt Hannah and indeed most Negroes saw in the story of Moses the one outstanding Biblical example that slavery did not find favor with God.

Huck, of course, is ignorant of the fact that contemporary religion, as the support of slavery, is placed in the position occupied by the religion of Egypt and represented in the Bible by Pharaoh with his priests and magicians. Although Huck does not learn this on the raft trip, he does recognize the paradox of morality at odds with religion and eventually announces his famous decision to go to hell rather than betray Jim. At the beginning of the novel, Huck fails to connect the story of "Moses in the Bulrushers" with the contemporary situation, and there is no reason to suppose he does so later. The thought of comparing himself to so great a Biblical figure as Moses would not have occurred to him.

The evidence is there, however, for the discerning reader to examine and to discover Huck Finn in the bulrushes for himself. In the first few lines of Huckleberry Finn we are given several important facts which connect Huck with the story of Moses. Since arks of bulrushes are presumably rather rare in the Mississippi valley, Twain portrays Huck living in the next closest thing--a barrel. He is taken from that barrel into the home of the Widow Douglas who is described in Tom Sawyer:

...fair, smart, and forty, a generous good-hearted soul and well-to-do, her hill mansion was the only palace in the town, and the most hospitable and much the most lavish in the matter of festivities that St. Petersburg could boast....⁸

Since her home is the only palace in town, she is obviously of the aristocratic slave-owning class and serves well enough as a substitute for Pharaoh's daughter.

After establishing this basic situation, Twain introduces directly the story of Moses. The Widow reads the story of "Moses in the Bulrushers" to Huck who is very interested until he learns that Moses is dead. He says, "I don't take no stock in dead people."⁹ This is ironic considering that he will soon be "dead" by his own devising; he will no longer be Huck Finn but a "spirit" in search of an identity. He will be in effect, as I will attempt to show, the very spirit of Moses himself passing through the land.

One more preparatory incident was needed, however, before Twain could plunge directly into his portrayal of a contemporary Moses, and that incident was the great raid of Tom Sawyer's bandit gang upon the Sunday school picnic. This incident, like many others in the novel, appears to be a gratuitous anecdote, the

inclusion of which serves no direct purpose in advancing the main action of the novel--that is, the escape and flight to freedom of Jim. The incident is usually justified as an early example of the romantic-feudal nonsense which Twain felt dominated the pre-war South and which through Tom he thoroughly satirized in the concluding chapters of the novel. This is, of course, part of the purpose, but the incident also plays a part in the Moses analogy; it identifies the "religious" people of the Sunday school with the Arabs.¹⁰ Thus by extension, Twain is asking us to identify the religious code of St. Petersburg and those who subscribe to it with the religion of the people of Egypt who enslaved the Hebrews. During the raft trip and the Arkansas farm episodes, we learn to extend this identification to virtually all of the white inhabitants of the river valley. At this point, after having Huck adopted out of his "ark" into the home of the widowed aristocrat and after demonstrating Huck's lack of awareness by having him fail to see any importance in the dead Moses or to identify the picnickers with the Arabs, Twain is ready for Huck to begin his journey into understanding.

Huck, like Moses, is unable to escape the patriarchy from which he springs. Moses, out of sympathy for a mistreated slave of his own race, kills an Egyptian and is forced to flee the wrath of Pharaoh. Huck, on the other hand, is physically carried into enslavement by his father and stages his own "murder" to escape the death he fears at his father's hands.

Pap, naturally, plays an important part in this episode, and his role is a complex one. As town drunk and ne'er do well, he

is certainly not a member of the slave-owning aristocracy, but occupies a position in society between aristocrat and slave. Pap's low position in society does not mean that he is without prejudices but merely that he has been too ineffective a parent to impose his prejudice upon Huck. Consequently Huck escapes being born into the aristocracy and does not fully acquire the attitudes toward slavery and society that Tom Sawyer has. What Twain has to say of himself applies equally to Tom:

In my school boy days I had no aversion to slavery. I was not aware that there was anything wrong about it. No one arraigned it in my hearing; the local papers said nothing against it; the local pulpit taught us that God approved it, that it was a holy thing and that the doubter need only look in the Bible if he wished to settle his mind--and then the texts were read aloud to us to make the matter sure; if the slaves themselves had an aversion to slavery they were wise and said nothing.¹¹

Huck isn't as fully "trained" as Tom; in fact, Pap is disturbed by the prospect that he might be. When Pap comes for Huck he says, "First thing you know you'll get religion, too. I never see such a son" (p. 18). Obviously Huck's parentage deprives him of the full effect of religious "training" in the community; presumably it also helps Huck to grow during his experiences on the river in contrast to the unchanged and still immature Tom who reappears at the end of the novel. In Chapter Six Pap indulges in a tirade against a "mulatter" and reveals himself to be in spirit on the side of the enslavers--that is, morally, financially, and intellectually inferior to the man about whom he speaks. In short Pap is as much a slave inside as Jim is "white inside." In spite of his low social position and inner serfdom, he is by race and

inclination a slaver and thus by contrivance of Twain an "Egyptian." It is important to keep both these factors in mind as we follow Huck through the next few events in his development.

On the Illinois shore Pap keeps Huck locked in a cabin until one night while drunk he mistakes Huck for the Angel of Death and nearly kills him. Since the Death Angel is associated in almost everyone's mind with the Passover in Egypt, the reference to him here should be a give-away for what follows. On that Biblical night the first born male of each Egyptian household was slain and the males of the Hebrews were spared. The events in the cabin on the Illinois shore are Twain's version of this Biblical event. Significantly, both Pap and Huck feel endangered in this situation. Pap in his delirium tremens thinks Huck is the Death Angel coming after him, and Huck fears that Pap may succeed in killing him the next time he gets drunk. When Pap leaves, Huck fakes his own death, and an important part of his plan is the killing of a wild pig. Huck spreads plenty of pig's blood around for much the same reason (to escape death) and in much the same way that the Israelites spread lamb's blood on the evening of the first Passover. Thus having both "killed" himself symbolically and yet having warded off actual physical death, Huck is ready to meet Jim.

Pap, however, is not so lucky as Huck. His death is not symbolic but real; his vision of the approaching Death Angel proves true, and the manner of his death, or rather the way in which his body appears, is also significant. Pap is of the same mold as the Duke and the King, and although they bear the name of royalty and serve as surrogate Pharaohs throughout most of the journey, they

in reality share the position with most of the white adults in the novel including Pap, Colonel Grangerford and even kindly Uncle Silas. Thus Pap's death is very like that of the Biblical Pharaoh. The river in the annual but nevertheless abnormal condition of flood stage brings Pap's body floating by in a house. The Death Angel he foresaw has found him, and he, as it was popularly believed Pharaoh had been, is washed away in the flood.

Thus Pap, by being himself an inward slave on the one hand and an "Egyptian" who enslaves Huck on the other, foreshadows the struggle of Huck to "decide forever betwixt two things" (p. 180). Huck symbolically kills Pap's eldest son during the "passover" on the Illinois shore, but the "Egyptian" side of Huck's nature is not given the final fatal stroke until his famous decision to go to Hell and even then it is not wholly dead, for in the last nine chapters of the novel we witness its death throes. As Jim says in the chapter which in some editions is called "Was Solomon Wise?": "De 'spute warn't 'bout a half a chile, de 'spute was 'bout a whole chile...." (p. 67). The continuous assumption of various names by Huck is a constant recurring symbol throughout the novel of Huck's spiritual struggle, and it is only at the end of the novel when Huck finally rejects society that he becomes spiritually a whole child and regains his identity. Huck's last and most difficult struggle toward this begins, interestingly enough, immediately after he decides "forever" between his Egyptian and Israelite halves when he is mistaken for Tom Sawyer by Aunt Sally.

Now I was feeling pretty comfortable all down one side, and pretty uncomfortable all up the other. Being Tom Sawyer was easy and comfortable, and it stayed easy and comfortable till by and by I hear a steamboat coughing along down the river (p. 188).

It was easy and comfortable to be Tom, a boy at home in society, but it was indeed "pretty uncomfortable" to be a rebellious Israelite in the land of bondage.

By the time Pap's body floats by, Huck has arrived at Jackson's Island and met Jim. While they are on the island, Huck handles a snake skin, an act that Jim believes causes his misfortune when he is bitten by a snake and when in the dark he and Huck accidentally pass Cairo. These events cause Huck to say, "Anybody that don't believe yet that it's foolishness to handle a snake-skin, after all that that snake-skin done for us, will believe it now if they read on and see what more it done for us" (p. 80). The implication of this statement is clear; the snake skin is responsible for all of the evil things that happen to Huck and Jim in the remainder of the novel.

For an explanation of why Twain should want to place such emphasis on superstition, we must recognize the basic fact that superstition is the real religion of Huck and Jim. In it they have faith, but in the religion of Miss Watson they can find no real answers, as Huck demonstrates repeatedly. Additionally, we must recognize that superstition and magic in the novel parallel the important part they play in the Biblical story.

For the purpose of convincing Pharaoh of his divine authority, Moses was given a rod which he could turn into a snake and which he waved in the air when calling plagues down upon Egypt. Each time

Moses used this rod Pharaoh became angrier and increased the suffering of his slaves. The rod-snake, therefore, was to the Hebrews a bringer of bad luck just as the snake skin is to Huck and Jim.

The last adventure, the one that sends them away from the island, begins when Huck disguised as a girl goes ashore for information. He is soon found out by the sharp-eyed Mrs. Loftus, but she allows him to leave when he tells her he is a runaway apprentice bound for Goshen. Goshen was, of course, the dwelling place of the Hebrews while they were in Egypt. In that sense Huck doesn't lie to the woman when he tells her he is bound there because his destination is truly the island where Jim, Huck's Hebrew, is waiting to be rescued. When Huck reaches the island again, he alarms Jim with the call "They're after us!" and identifies himself perhaps unconsciously in that moment with Jim. Never afterward in the novel does he repudiate that identification, although his "training" tells him he should and nearly causes him to betray Jim.

Since they are forced to leave Jackson's island, they plan to float down to Cairo at the mouth of the Ohio. From there they intend to take a boat north to safety. Cairo like Goshen is one of many towns with Egyptian names in the region of Southern Illinois which was in Twain's day and still is known as "Egypt." Cairo, Egypt, like the Cairo of the novel is located on a great river, and anyone fleeing down the Nile would be geographically free of Egypt and in the clear waters of the Mediterranean after passing Cairo. Huck and Jim miss Cairo in a fog and lose their chance for safety. From that moment they are no longer fleeing the land of bondage as the youthful Moses did, but they are

beginning a return journey similar to the one the mature Moses made.

It is now that their river adventures or "plagues" begin although the first one befalls them before they reach Cairo. Huck swims out to a much larger raft one night, hoping to learn whether or not he and Jim have passed Cairo. He hides by a woodpile and hears a story about a raftsmen, Dick Albright, who is haunted by a barrel. The barrel follows any raft Albright is on and misfortune befalls his companions until one night the crewmen haul the barrel aboard and open it. In it they find Dick Albright's murdered baby, Charles William Albright. Shortly after the conclusion of the story one of the men discovers Huck and demands his name. Huck in desperation gives the first name that occurs to him, Charles William Albright. The men laugh and let him go after he tells them a more plausible story, but the point has been made. Huck, the boy who lived in a barrel and was killed by his Pap, as Mrs. Loftus believed, is identified with the dead baby in the barrel; but as Kenneth S. Lynn says:

...it also reveals that behind the novel there stands the Bible. A baby in a barrel afloat on a great, continental river: beyond a raftsmen's fantasy we discern the infant Moses in the ark of bulrushes hidden in the Nile. Through that association we can understand that Twain was doing a great deal more than simply setting up a magnificent joke when he began "Huckleberry Finn" with a chapter entitled "I Discover Moses and the Bulrushers"; for although Huck soon loses all interest in Moses, "Because I don't take no stock in dead people," the humorous introduction of the Biblical story effectively announces the sombre theme of death and rebirth, with its attendant implications of slavery and freedom, and inextricably associates Huck with the Mosaic saga of an infant who "died" and was reborn in the river, and who grew up to lead an enslaved people to freedom.¹²

This scene did not appear in the first edition of the novel, but

it was originally and is properly a part of it. The ease with which this episode lends itself to a reinforcement of the Moses theme justifies its inclusion in this discussion. With this further identification of Huck with Moses in mind, let us now turn to a series of events in which he functions as Twain's Mississippi Moses should.

On board the wrecked steamboat Walter Scott, Huck sees two thieves about to murder a third. They decide to leave him stranded on the foundering boat so that he will drown and there will be no signs of violence on his body. Huck hides in an upper bunk just above their heads as the men make their plans; then Jim and he steal their boat leaving them all stranded. Huck lands down river and arranges, by lying, for help to be sent to the Walter Scott, but it is too late in coming, as Huck discovers when he sees the dark sunken wreck float by too low in the water for anyone alive to be aboard.

With the exception of Pap these are the first of many men to die in the novel. As Huck may be considered indirectly responsible for Pap's death (since, as Mrs. Loftus mentions, it was Huck's disappearance that made money available for his drinking and gambling), so he is more directly responsible for the deaths of the three robbers. Huck acknowledges his responsibility and expresses mild regret even though the dead men were thoroughly bad when he says, "I felt a little bit heavy-hearted about the gang, but not much, for I reckoned if they could stand it I could" (p. 64).

His responsibility for the new flurry of killings in the

Grangerford-Shepherdson¹³ feud episode is less direct but carries with it more obvious moral and religious implications. Separated from Jim by the collision of a steamboat with their raft, Huck swims ashore and is taken into the Grangerford household where he meets the youngest son, Buck. Buck immediately presents Huck with a riddle:

...and he asked me where Moses was when the candle went out. I said I didn't know; I hadn't heard about it before, no way.

"Well, guess," he says.

"How'm I going to guess," says I, "when I never heard tell of it before?"

"But you can guess, can't you? It's just as easy."

"Which candle?" I says.

"Why, any candle," he says.

"I don't know where he was," says I; "where was he?"

"Why, he was in the dark! That's where he was!"

"Well, if you knowed where he was, what did you ask me for?"

"Why, blame it, it's a riddle, don't you see?" (pp.83-84)

This riddle is one of a traditional group of children's riddles and jingles. Assuming that Buck's riddle belongs in this tradition, one must still consider the reasons that brought Twain to include it in this episode. Aside from the literal fact that Huck, our Moses, has just had his raft lantern snuffed out by the steamboat and has been forced to swim in the dark foggy night to safety at the Grangerfords', why should Twain want to include this seemingly pointless joke? The reason is, of course, that the joke is not pointless; Huck-Moses has just stepped across the Grangerford threshold into a world where the "light of the world," the teachings of Christ, has made no impression. He has entered a house whose inhabitants live in the Mosaic Old Testament world of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. He is in an unenlightened

pre-Christian world where the New Testament is forgotten.

The head of this household is an aristocrat to his very toes as Huck's description proves:

Col. Grangerford was a gentleman, you see. He was a gentleman all over; and so was his family. He was well born, as the saying is and that's worth as much in a man as it is in a horse, so the Widow Douglas said, and nobody ever denied that she was of the first aristocracy in our town; and pap he always said it, too, though he warn't no more quality than a mudcat himself. Col. Grangerford was very tall and very slim, and had a darkish-paly complexion, not a sign of red in it anywheres; he was cleanshaved every morning all over his thin face, and he had the thinnest kind of lips, and the thinnest kind of nostrils, and a high nose, and heavy eyebrows, and the blackest kind of eyes, sunk so deep back that they seemed like they was looking out of caverns at you, as you may say. His forehead was high, and his hair was gray and straight and hung to his shoulders. His hands was long and thin, and every day of his life he put on a clean shirt and a full suit from head to foot made out of linen so white it hurt your eyes to look at it;...(p. 89)

The Colonel is the arch-typical Southern Colonel. He is a patrician owner of a large plantation and many slaves and as such is, along with his family, an appropriate victim for a modern Passover.

Thus we are not surprised when Huck plays a leading role in the events that follow. When the family attends a Sunday sermon on brotherly love with their rifles in their hands, no one can miss the irony. The point is reinforced when Huck is told by Sophia that "she'd forgot her Testament" (p. 93). She asks him to get it for her, and in acting as her messenger he provides the stimulus that results in the resumption of the feud.

When Huck awakens one morning, he learns the family has gone in pursuit of Sophia, who is eloping with Harney Shepherdson. Huck follows the sound of fighting and climbs a cottonwood tree to observe. In this raised position so similar to the one he occupied

on the Walter Scott while listening to the murderers, Huck is able to see and hear the Shepherds sons kill Buck and his cousin. Since Buck's father and brothers had been killed before Huck's arrival, all of the males, not just the eldest son, of the Grangerford household are slain as the rattlesnake skin continues to do its work and threatens to turn the river literally to blood. Where Twain's Moses passes, severe judgement indeed falls upon the Egyptians.

Following this bloody episode Huck, reunited with Jim, takes to the river again, where they soon encounter the Duke and the Dauphin and continue the Passover which was begun in Pap's cabin and now is extended to the "Egyptians" along the river. In company with the Duke and the King, Huck begins to witness the "plagues" of his time, i.e. dishonest and immoral acts, some of which make the thievery and murder he has witnessed earlier seem clean by comparison.

In an Arkansas town Huck witnesses sloth, incontinence, anger, pride and lust. The town is full of loafers who enjoy nothing so much as a good dog fight: "There couldn't anything wake them up all over, and make them happy all over, like a dog-fight--unless it might be putting turpentine on a stray dog and setting fire to him or tying a tin pan to his tail and see him run himself to death" (pp. 118-119). Many of the houses are crumbling into the river; there is "considerable whisky-drinking going on" (p. 119) and several fights as well. In this setting Twain has another aristocrat, a colonel, "a proud-looking man about fifty-five" (p. 120) kill a harmless old drunk from no other motive, apparently, than

that he is proud and old Boggs has slandered him. The loafers become an angry mob determined to lynch Colonel Sherburn but are cowed when he confronts them and tells them what cowards they really are. His speech makes clear that the lawlessness and violence of the class whom Sherburn by his act represents are made possible only by the moral laxity and cowardice of the populace at large. The general insensitivity of the people is underscored in the comic circus scene which follows. The apparently drunken horseman in the circus ring in danger of falling is uproariously funny to the crowd, but Huck says: "It warn't funny to me though; I was all of a tremble to see his danger" (p. 126). In contrast to Huck, who is a morally responsible individual, the people of the town are little better than the indecent half-man half-animal called a camelopard played by the King in the evening performance of "The Royal Nonesuch." Indeed the King and the Duke have judged their audience correctly. Unable to draw a crowd to their performance of "Shakespeare" they advertise what Huck calls their "worse than low comedy" routine with the line "Ladies and children not admitted." The Duke said, "if that line don't fetch them I don't know Arkansaw" (p. 127). It fetched them. An appeal to their lust, no matter how vague, packed them in.

Huck and his companions cannot, of course, stay in town after performing this routine; not because the people were angry at the kind of performance, but that they felt cheated because of its brevity. They take to the river again, but they remain there only briefly because they soon return to the shore and become involved in the Wilks episode.

The greed and hypocrisy of the Duke and the King in the Wilks episode disgust Huck. This disgust coupled with his admiration for the girls, leads him to take positive action for the first time in the novel. All Huck's previous actions were defensive ones. He pretended to kill himself to escape death at Pap's hands; he fled Jackson's island with Jim to avoid capture; and he passed Cairo and met the Grangerfords and the Duke and the King all by accident. He has experienced ashore all of the evils of society and finally reacts against it. He undertakes his first positive action and attempts to balk the plans of the Duke and the King. Unfortunately for Huck's plans, a new set of Wilks brothers arrive to claim the inheritance, and Huck is nearly lynched along with the King and the Duke.

Huck escapes from the mob and runs to the raft, but he is thoroughly frightened when he arrives there to see Jim: "I glimpsed him in the lightning, my heart shot up in my mouth and I went overboard backwards; for I forgot he was old King Lear and a drowned A-rab all in one, and it most scared the livers and lights out of me" (p. 172). The Duke had dressed Jim this way so it would be safe to travel in the day time. It is ironic that Jim as part king, part drowned Arab should be safe when the Negro slave is not. Jim disguised as an Arab belongs on this American Nile. The incident serves to remind the reader of the earlier raid on the Sunday school picnic which Tom Sawyer identified as an Arab caravan. As long as Jim blends in with the rest of the Arabs in this American version of Egypt, he is unnoticed and safe.

By this time Huck has seen enough of the immorality rampant in society for him to realize that men fail to follow the very religion that they use to justify slavery. On the other hand, Huck has been steadily acquiring knowledge of Jim as a human being in between his experiences ashore. On the night they pass Cairo, Huck fools Jim and learns that he has feelings:

"What do they dey stan' for? I's gwyne to tell you. When I got all wore out wid work en wid de callin' for you, en went to sleep, my heart wuz mos' broke bekase you wuz los', en I didn' k'er no' mo' what become er me en do raf'. En when I wake up en find you back ag'in, all safe en soun', de tears come, en I could 'a' got down on my knees en kiss yo' foot, I's so thankful. En all you wuz thinkin' 'bout wuz how you could make a fool uf ole Jim wid a lie. Dat truck dah is trash; en trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head er dey fren's en makes 'em ashamed" (p. 73).

This incident increases Huck's understanding of Jim, but Huck is not yet ready to make the decision that he eventually must.

In the following chapters Huck struggles with his conscience, but when the opportunity to tell on Jim presents itself, he lies. Huck's lie to the two men searching for "runaway niggers" only delays the decision he must make between what "morality" he has acquired under the civilizing influence of the widow and the instinctive knowledge that Jim's quest for freedom is right. It is, after all, a quest with which Huck can sympathize since he is himself fleeing Pap's tyranny where his condition differed little from that of a slave. After the Royal Nonesuch episode when they are back on the raft, Huck awakens one morning to find Jim mourning for his family, and Jim tells him the story of his daughter's deafness. Huck says:

I do believe he cared just as much for his people as white folks does for their'n. It don't seem natural, but I reckon it's so. He was often moaning and mourning that way nights, when he judged I was asleep, and saying, "po' little 'Lizabeth! po' little Johnny! it's mighty hard; I spec' I ain't ever gwyne to see you no mo'" (p. 131).

After Huck's repeated discoveries that Jim is human and a good man are combined with his encounters with the rottenness at the base of Southern society, he is ready to make his long postponed decision. The decision is forced on him by the Duke and the King's betrayal of Jim. At first he decides to write Miss Watson telling her where Jim can be found, but then he recalls all the things he has learned about Jim on the trip and picks up the letter:

It was a close place. I took it up, and held it in my hand. I was a-trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself:

"All right, then, I'll go to hell"--and tore it up" (pp. 179-180).

Without doubt, this is the high point in the novel. In the mouth of an ignorant, superstitious fourteen year old boy, Twain has put a single sentence that at once symbolizes not only the condemnation of a whole society, but the rejection of the entire moral and religious code upon which it is based. If the religion of civilized society demands and justifies the return of Jim to slavery at the expense of instinctive morality, then one must choose "forever, betwixt two things." One must either be false to one's own instincts, or reject the false values imposed from without. Huck follows his own instincts and immediately announces his plan to free Jim. This continuation of positive action first begun during the Wilks episode provides Huck with the opportunity

to be the Moses whose spirit he has now fully absorbed and fully represents.

Here the final episode of the novel begins. In these last nine chapters the theme of Moses that permeates the novel is swiftly outlined and drawn to a close. First Huck and Tom appear as brothers in the roles of Moses and Aaron. They warn the slave owners in the Phelps' house of impending disaster because of the slave. They inflict plagues in the form of snakes and spiders upon slave and masters alike, and, finally, escape, are pursued, the "Egyptians" are "killed," and Huck and Jim miraculously freed and ready to depart for the "wilderness."

Huck begins his attempt to free Jim by going to the Phelps' farm where he is mistaken by the Phelps for their nephew Tom Sawyer. As he approaches the Phelps' farm he says:

I went right along, not fixing up any particular plan, but just trusting to Providence to put the right words in my mouth when the time come; for I'd noticed that Providence always did put the right words in my mouth if I left it alone (p. 184).

In this respect, too, Huck's condition is similar to that of Moses who was promised by God that he would "be with thy mouth, and with his [Aaron's] mouth, and will teach you what he shall do" (Exodus 14:15). Moses was, of course, accompanied by Aaron who "met him on the road" and was his spokesman and brother. Huck meets Tom on the road from town, and Tom quickly agrees that they should pose as brothers in order to get Jim free. Tom becomes chief spokesman and planner in the escape that follows just as Aaron was spokesman for Moses.

With the arrival of Tom the stage is set for the final act of our parable, and it becomes apparent that Huck and Jim have, for all practical purposes, made a round trip. The Phelps' farm in Arkansas contains the same kind of gentle, kindly Christian people that Huck left behind in St. Petersburg. Uncle Silas is a preacher, an advocate of the same religion Miss Watson professed, and like her he is a slave owner. Aunt Sally, like the Widow Douglas and Tom's Aunt Polly, is motherly but blind to the evils of slavery. Even Tom himself is still full of the nonsense he has absorbed from romantic novels. Only Huck has changed; he has embarked upon a course directly opposed to all that Tom's upbringing has taught him is right; therefore, the most astonishing thing that could happen would be for Tom to agree to help free Jim.

Well, one thing was dead sure, and that was that Tom Sawyer was earnest, and was actuly going to help steal that nigger out of slavery. That was the thing that was too many for me. Here was a boy that was respectable and well brung up; and had a character to lose; and folks at home that had characters; and he was bright and not leather-headed; and knowing and not ignorant; and not mean, but kind; and yet here he was, without any more pride, or rightness, or feeling, than to stoop to this business, and make himself a shame, and his family a shame, before everybody. I couldn't understand it no way at all (p. 196).

Twain is, of course, being ironic here, and yet there is genuine amazement on Huck's part. Tom has "style," knows books, and has been properly brought up, and yet he is going to do the thing for which Huck expected to be damned. Until this moment Huck has been alone in his struggle, but now, Tom, because of his unexpected behaviour, becomes a link between Huck in his isolation and the society that threatens his damnation. In any case, Huck knows that

Tom's word can be relied upon so he follows his lead in preparing Jim's escape.

The elaborate foolery of the escape plan allows Twain to introduce comic plagues which parallel those in Exodus. Huck and Tom drive Aunt Sally to distraction when they capture some rats and snakes which get loose in the house. In addition Huck says: "We got a splendid stock of sorted spiders, and bugs, and frogs, and caterpillars and one thing or another" (p. 222). And just as in Exodus, these plagues fall impartially on the enslavers and the enslaved, on Aunt Sally and Jim alike.

Interestingly, the means for creating these plagues or for having access to the means to create them, as well as having access to Jim, is a rod--a lightning rod. As Moses used his rod to bring on the various plagues in Egypt, so Huck and Tom rely on the lightning rod as a means of creating their own "magic." In this way they parallel not only the Biblical story, but the more serious "plagues" Huck witnessed in his various river-shore adventures. Each time Huck and Tom carry out another part of the escape plan they slide down the lightning rod, and after completing a portion of their plan, they climb up to their room again.

One part of the plan includes repeated warnings to Jim's captors of impending trouble. One of the warnings consists of a sign bearing a skull and crossbones nailed to the front door and another of a coffin on the back door; both of these are obviously symbols of death. The death that logically should follow such warnings has, of course, been meted out to other less likeable "Egyptians" during the river voyage. Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas cannot be

disposed of in the manner of a Pap or a Grangerford because they present another more subtle side of the problem.

Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas are not evil persons; in fact, they are very kind. Huck says of Uncle Silas that: "He was a mighty nice old man. And always is" (p. 213). This kindness is the severest test Huck, with his new found resolution, can be made to face. He has resolved to "go to hell" and to get Jim free, but he is suddenly confronted by Tom's uncle and aunt. These combined factors weaken his resolution, and after the escape when Tom lies wounded and Huck is at the farm but able to run away again, he goes down the road half planning to leave:

But she was on my mind and Tom was on my mind, so I slept very restless. and twice I went down the road away in the night, and slipped around front, and see her setting there by her candle in the window with her eyes towards the road and tears in them; and I wished I could do something for her, but I couldn't, only to swear that I wouldn't never do nothing to grieve her any more. And the third time I waked up at dawn, and slid down, and she was there yet, and her candle was most out, and her old gray head was resting on her hands, and she was asleep (p. 236).

Huck is clearly weakening at this moment, and if the escape attempt had not already been made, he might not now be willing to undertake it.

The escape, however, has been made with the "Egyptians" in hot pursuit and convinced that "sperits" must have had a hand in it. The river cannot be expected to part as the Red Sea did for the Hebrews, but Twain, nevertheless, has arranged for a "miracle" to free Jim. When Jim and Tom are brought back, Tom unexpectedly reveals that Miss Watson has died and granted Jim his freedom.

When Tom makes this revelation, one of the sources of Huck's

confusion evaporates. "And I couldn't ever understand before, until that minute and that talk, how he could help a body set a nigger free with his bringing-up" (pp. 242-243). Whatever hope Huck may have had that Tom's behaviour might lead to a reconciliation of his "damned" soul with society disappears with that statement. As long as Tom's "style" seemed to have behind it the same basic purpose that Huck had, he could tolerate Tom's cruel and absurd plans, but with Tom's revelation, Huck's uncertainty departs. He knows now that Tom's moral perceptions are the same as those of any of the other inhabitants of the Mississippi valley.

Similarly Huck realizes that the kindness and motherliness of Aunt Sally, like that of the Widow Douglas, is a trap. Their kindnesses to Huck may be many, but their kindnesses to Jim are of the same kind as those of the men who chain Jim up after the doctor tells them how Jim helped Tom. "So everyone of them promised, right out and hearty, that they wouldn't cuss him no more" (p. 239). Aunt Sally, Huck thinks before he hears Tom's news, will make life easier for Jim once she learns how he helped the doctor and Tom, but Huck knows also that she will not turn Jim loose. Therefore, Aunt Sally's intention to adopt and "sivilize" Huck hastens his plans to depart for the wilderness because as he says: "...I can't stand it. I been there before" (p. 245).

Indeed he has been there before. The kindly Christian people of St. Petersburg who use the Bible to justify slavery are replaced by the kindly Christian people of the Phelps' farm who use the Bible to justify slavery. The paradox of Uncle Silas as slave

owner and preacher is perhaps never clear to Huck, but the unacceptability of what he represents is borne home to Huck as Jim decides to risk his freedom to get help to Tom. Huck acknowledges Jim's humanity when he says: "I knowed he was white inside." Huck's opinion is reinforced when at the very end Jim explains that Pap is dead, and Huck realizes that Jim has been sparing his feelings. Consequently Huck's rejection of being "civilized" this time is no mere attempt to escape the restriction imposed by attendance at school and church or the discomfort of good clothes; it is the rejection of a society in which the humanity of even the good people is stupefied in regard to the slave.¹⁴

Thus Twain used a Biblical parallel to disprove the contention that slavery was the "peculiar pet of the deity." He succeeded in demonstrating the evils of slavery, but no one, apparently, observed the Biblical parallel. It may be partly for this reason that Twain published in 1894, nine years after Huckleberry Finn, a sequel called Tom Sawyer Abroad. In this tale Twain sets Huck and Jim adrift once more, but this time they are accompanied by Tom.

They are adrift in a balloon, the passenger section of which is shaped like a boat, and they are as much at the mercy of wind and storm as they were of the river in the earlier book. They are not blown abroad to Europe where Tom's romantic fancy could run riot and he could get his fill of castles and other remnants of Sir Walter Scott's fictional world, nor are they blown to the Heart of Darkness in the Congo where Huck and Jim could witness the exploitation of the African by white men. Instead a storm

blows them to the Sahara desert where they "wander" for several days, then to Egypt and Cairo, and finally across the Red Sea at the point where Moses crossed, and thence to Mount Sinai where Huck and Tom are left camping at the end of the story.

While they are "wandering" in the Sahara, Twain draws a parallel to an episode in the earlier novel. The boys see a bandit gang raid a caravan in a scene strongly reminiscent of the raid of Tom's bandit gang on the Sunday school picnic. During the raid as they drift, they see a baby stolen and carried away into probable slavery. They save the baby, and the Negro Jim returns it to the arms of the mother who stares worshipfully after them as they go sailing away in the sky. To the ignorant Arab woman this mysterious rescue can be no less than divine intervention on behalf of her son.

More explicitly than this, however, Twain invites us to compare the Arabs with people back along the Mississippi. When the boys find another caravan, they hover over it for days and begin to call people by name:

The longer we traveled with them, and the more we got used to their ways, the better and better we liked them, and the gladder and gladder we was that we run across them. We had come to know some of them so well that we called them by name when we was talking about them, and soon got so familiar and sociable that we even dropped the Miss and Mister and just used their plain names without any handle, and it did not seem unpolite, but just the right thing. Of course, it wasn't their own names, but names we give them. There was Mr. Alexander Robinson and Miss Adaline Robinson, and Colonel Jacob McDougal and Miss Harryet McDougal, and Judge Jeremiah Butler and young Bushrod Butler, and these was big chiefs mostly that wore splendid great turbans and simmeters, and dressed like the Grand Mogul, and their families. But as soon as we come to know them good, and like them very much, it warn't Mister, nor Judge, nor nothing, any more, but only Elleck, and Addy, and Jake, and Hattie, and Jerry, and Buck, and so on.¹⁵

They enter into the joys and sorrows of these people, but like so many of the people in Huckleberry Finn, these desert travellers die suddenly. They are buried in a dust storm. Before he dispenses with them, however, Twain makes it abundantly clear that the three boys in the balloon have come to feel about them just as though they were folks back home.

As they leave the Sahara, they enter Egypt, and Jim is nearly overcome with excitement.

"Hit's de lan' of Egypt, de lan' of Egypt, en I's 'lowed to look at it wid my own eyes! En dah's de river dat was turn' to blood, en I's looking at de very same groun' whah dey marked de door-pos', en de angel o' de Lord come by in de darkness o' de night en slew de fust-born in all de lan' o' Egypt. Ole Jim ain't worthy to see dis day!"

And then he just broke down and cried, he was so thankful. So between him and Tom there was talk enough, Jim being excited because the land was so full of history--Joseph and his brethern, Moses in the bulrushers, Jacob coming down into Egypt to buy corn, the silver cup in the sack, and all them interesting things; and Tom just as excited too, because the land was so full of history and was in his line, about Nouredin, and Bedreddin, and such like monstrous giants, that made Jim's wool rise, and a raft of other Arabian Nights folks, which the half of them never done the things they let on they done, I don't believe.¹⁶

The sight of Egypt brings out once more Tom's already well recognized inclination for romantic fiction and balances it with Jim's understandable interest in Moses, an interest which Huck appears to share. In short we have presented to us exactly the same conflicting interests that are so clearly observable in Huckleberry Finn.

They no sooner arrive in Egypt than a dense fog settles over the land making it impossible to see. They literally pass over Egypt at roof top level skimming so close to the house that on one occasion they knock a man off his roof. This journey through the

fog comes to a stop when they nearly collide with the Sphinx. Huck and Tom leave Jim on top of it, and to get a better view they back up as the fog lifts. Soon they behold men scaling the Sphinx in order to capture Jim; they rescue him from these Egyptians amid a hail of bullets just as they did in Huckleberry Finn. This rescue obviously serves to couple the memory of the much more elaborate escape in Huckleberry Finn with the setting and people of this tale.

From the Sphinx they journey to Cairo, and from there they cross the Red Sea at the spot where Moses crossed. They arrive at Mt. Sinai, and Tom's corncob pipe breaks. Huck and he camp on Sinai while they send Jim to St. Petersburg to get a new one. Soon Jim returns and informs them that Aunt Polly wants Tom home immediately. They leave for home, and thus abruptly the story ends. This sudden ending of the story at the point where one might reasonably expect Huck, Jim, and Tom to continue to follow the path of the Israelites through the wilderness and into the Promised Land is once more very similar to Huckleberry Finn, which ends as the boys prepare to go to the territory. One can only conclude that a large share of the purpose of Tom Sawyer Abroad very probably is to make people aware of Biblical parallels in Huckleberry Finn that had previously been only imperfectly observed if at all. The work is at best a disappointing one and without the purpose expressed above seemingly a pointless one.

In any case it is apparent that both Tom Sawyer Abroad and Huckleberry Finn end at the point where Jim's freedom is no longer

in doubt. To be sure, in Tom Sawyer Abroad Jim was in danger only a few moments, but in Huckleberry Finn the issue is in doubt for most of the novel. Therefore, the concluding chapters in which Jim is finally assured of his freedom are highly important because they fulfill the quest for freedom which brought Jim on the voyage. The manner in which Jim obtains his freedom has disturbed a number of critics, and even some who have defended the last chapters of the novel have done so with reservations.

For example, Lionel Trilling, who feels that the last episode has a certain formal aptness, also believes that it is "too long," "a falling off" from the action on the river, and a device to allow Huck to "return to his anonymity."¹⁷ Similarly, T. S. Eliot argued that since Huck properly belongs nowhere in society, the ending appropriately allows him to fade away in a "cloud of whimsicalities."¹⁸ Actually the reverse is true. Huck does not return to anonymity or fade away; on the contrary, he regains his true identity after the disguises and aliases of the earlier chapters.

Another critic, Leo Marx, has raised questions that are more difficult to answer concerning the ending's "farceical" activities. Mr. Marx states that Twain failed here "to invent an action capable of placing in focus the meaning of the journey down the Mississippi." Huck and Jim are made into low comic characters by Tom's activities. Thus Jim loses his dignity, and the gravity of Huck's moral struggle is lost sight of, but the worst weakness in the ending is the "flimsy contrivance" by which Jim is made free. Miss Watson epitomizes all of the evils that Huck and Jim are fleeing. She is Jim's owner and wants to sell him for money, and she teaches

piety to Huck in the next breath. Her sudden death and grant of freedom to Jim, Marx feels, suggests that Mark Twain is dishonestly vindicating "persons and attitudes that Huck and Jim had symbolically repudiated."¹⁹

Admittedly, Miss Watson's deathbed gift of freedom to Jim comes as a surprise, but her action is not as inconsistent with the general pattern of the novel as Marx suggests. Her act constitutes her admission of guilt rather than Twain's vindication of any "persons and attitudes" whom she may be said to represent. She was the first of the "Egyptians" encountered in the novel, and she is the last to die. Her death brings the novel full circle and is in a sense the fulfillment of the warning signs pinned to the door of the last Egyptian in the novel, Uncle Silas. Jim is not the only one freed by a sudden revelation of his master's death. Huck doesn't learn of his father's death until the end of the novel, and it is in that moment that he, like Jim, becomes finally free. This dual revelation of the deaths of the enslavers is the "miracle" that clears the path of Huck and Jim to the territory.

In summary then, it seems apparent that Twain in his novel *Huckleberry Finn* created an ignorant but deeply moral boy who was not so blinded by his upbringing that he could not learn that slaves were human and entitled to the same rights as other men. To increase the effect of the boy's rejection of a more learned but less moral society, Twain introduced the Biblical story of Moses. The adventures of the boy, *Huckleberry Finn*, parallel closely those of the Biblical figure, but the boy is never himself aware of the fact.

The society in which he lives uses the Bible to justify slavery, and it is by creating a modern parallel to the Biblical story of Moses that Twain sought to demonstrate the falsity of this position. Perhaps because of his low position amounting to partial estrangement from society, Huck has escaped the full force of the warped religious training that justifies slavery and is, therefore, able to sympathize with the Negro slave, Jim. On the other hand, he has absorbed enough of the teachings of society to make him believe his sympathy for the runaway slave is immoral. Throughout the novel, then, his "heart" and his "conscience" are in conflict, and this is symbolized by his assumption of numerous identities throughout the course of the struggle.

After several preliminary incidents to indicate that the majority of adult white people in the novel represent the Egyptians of the modern parallel and to suggest that Huck is a modern Moses, the main action of the novel, which also parallels the main actions of Moses' life, begins. Huck escapes his father's hands by symbolically killing himself and thus begins a journey down the Mississippi which in some respects is a continuation of the Passover begun at Pap's cabin. Wherever Huck-Moses travels, he to a limited degree brings judgment upon the Egyptians. On the "Walter Scott," three robbers die because Huck steals their boat. In the Grangerford episode, many deaths occur because Huck acts as a messenger for Sophia who has forgotten her Testament. During the Wilks episode, Huck's responsibility for the judgment which nearly falls upon the Duke and the Dauphin is no longer accidental but the result of direct action.

The decision he makes then foreshadows the one he will make when the two pitiful Pharaohs sell Jim to the Phelps. Huck rejects society and its morality in favor of natural morality. He decides to free Jim. One more struggle remains, however, before Huck can forever lay the ghost of his Egyptian self and become the living embodiment of the qualities of Moses that he represents. He has witnessed all forms of evil in society, and he has learned on board the raft of Jim's humanity. What remains is for him to confront once more, now that he has acquired his knowledge, the same environment which he left behind in St. Petersburg where the evil of slavery is cloaked under the velvet of kindness.

At the Phelps' farm he finds such an environment. Jim has lost his freedom and is once more in bondage; Aunt Sally is motherly and kindly like the Widow Douglas, and Uncle Silas combines the ownership of slaves with the preaching of religion after the manner of Miss Watson. To complete the setting, Tom Sawyer arrives, still as oblivious to moral questions as he was in the opening chapters. In the last chapters his childish activities contrast sharply with Huck's now mature ones. Acting as brothers, thematically as Moses and Aaron, they reenact the basic events of the Biblical story culminating in the "miraculous" freeing of Jim. The plagues, warnings, escape, pursuit, and "miracle" for which they are responsible supply the thematic justification for the nine disputed chapters.

Reinforcing the Moses theme in Huckleberry Finn, one finds in Tom Sawyer Abroad, a sequel, several events and passages that suggest an identification of Arabs with Mississippi Valley white

people. These events in the Sahara and Egypt correspond to the thematic movement of Huck during his earlier adventures.

The purpose of this paper, finally, is to urge a new interpretation of Huckleberry Finn that answers many of the questions that have been raised by various critics about the novel. The last nine chapters in particular appear to be more in keeping with the developing themes of the earlier chapters than some critics have hitherto supposed. Additionally, the recognition of the Moses theme throughout the novel makes apparent a unity in the novel that has not previously been observed.

NOTES

¹Kenneth S. Lynn, "Huck and Jim," Yale Review, (Spring, 1958), 421-31.

²Lionel Trilling, "Huckleberry Finn," The Liberal Imagination, (New York, 1950), pp. 104-117.

³T. S. Eliot, "An Introduction to Huckleberry Finn," The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, (London, 1950), pp. vii-xvi.

⁴Leo Marx, "Mr. Eliot, Mr. Trilling, and Huckleberry Finn," The American Scholar, XXII (Autumn, 1953), p. 426.

⁵Mark Twain, The Autobiography of Mark Twain (New York, 1961), p. 33.

⁶Twain, Autobiography, p. 32.

⁷Ibid., p. 6.

⁸Mark Twain, Tom Sawyer (New York, 1961), p. 38.

⁹Mark Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 4. Subsequent references to this edition will appear in the text.

¹⁰The dictionary defines an Arab as an inhabitant of Arabia, but in Twain's day and in our own, Egyptians are commonly considered to be Arabs. In fact, in Tom Sawyer Abroad Twain allows Huck, Jim, and Tom to see Arabs in the Sahara.

¹¹Twain, Autobiography, p. 32.

¹²Lynn, pp. 426-427.

¹³It is interesting to note that the names of the feuding families suggest the Biblical situation under discussion. For example, the granger in Grangerford means farmer, in this case plantation owner, and the other family name, Shepherdson, suggests the sons of the shepherd Joseph who are apparently triumphant in this episode.

¹⁴Twain, Autobiography, p. 33.

¹⁵Twain, Tom Sawyer Abroad, (New York, 1924), p. 92-93.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 105.

¹⁷Trilling, pp. 104-117.

¹⁸T. S. Eliot, "An Introduction to Huckleberry Finn," Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, ed. Sculley Bradley, Richmond Groom Beatty, E. Hudson Long, Norton Critical Editions, (New York, 1961), p. 327.

¹⁹Marx, pp. 425-27.

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HUCKLEBERRY FINN: A MISSISSIPPI MOSES

by

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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In writing Huckleberry Finn, a realistic portrayal of life in the Mississippi Valley before the Civil War, Mark Twain chose to make the adventures of his main character parallel those of a great Biblical figure--Moses. By so doing Twain increased the force of his commentary upon a corrupt society. In order, however, for the significance of this parallel to be clearly understood, the reader must recognize the fact that in the novel the Mississippi becomes an American Nile, and the people who inhabit its banks become in actions, if not in fact, Egyptians. With this in mind, one can trace in the actions of Huck, from ark-barrel at the beginning of the novel to his departure for the wilderness-territory at the end of the story, the major events of Moses' life including the plagues, Passover, and "miraculous" delivery from bondage.

After the initial chapters of Huckleberry Finn in which the "Moses in the Bulrushers" story is introduced and Huck is adopted by the Widow Douglas, Huck escapes from a cabin where he has been taken by his drunken father who mistakes him for the angel of death. Huck makes it appear that he has been murdered and scatters pig's blood around the cabin in a manner not unlike and for a purpose not very different from that of the Israelites at the first Passover, (i.e. to save his life).

Soon afterward Huck meets Jim, his Israelite, whom he must deliver from bondage. With Jim, Huck journeys down the river observing the judgment and death that fall upon the "Egyptians." That this trip is an extension of the Passover begun in Pap's cabin is most clearly seen in the Grangerford-Shepherdson feud episode. Living temporarily with the Grangerfords, Huck acts as a messenger

for Sophia. When he returns to her the Testament that she "forgot," which contains a message from a member of the rival family setting the time of their elopement, Huck provides the stimulus which brings on the battle between the two families.

This adventure and the others on Huck's trip prepare the reader for the concluding nine chapters of the novel, which some critics have called inferior and inappropriate to the episodes that precede them. This paper attempts to show that these chapters are thematically appropriate and carefully planned.

In these last chapters Twain swiftly outlines and draws to a close his Moses theme. Acting as brothers, thereby recalling Moses and Aaron, Huck and Tom attempt to free Jim. They warn the slave owners, Tom's uncle and aunt, that disaster threatens because of the slave, Jim. They inflict plagues in the form of spiders and snakes upon these slave owners, escape, are pursued, and finally are "miraculously" freed by the revelation of Pap's and Miss Watson's deaths. Pap, incidentally, like Pharaoh, is washed away in a flood. As the novel ends, Huck-Moses and his Israelite Jim are ready to depart for the wilderness.

In a sequel Tom Sawyer Abroad Twain repeats the Israelite-Egyptian theme in Huckleberry Finn in a way that tends to reinforce this interpretation of the earlier novel. In Tom Sawyer Abroad Huck, Tom, and Jim are once more together and adrift, but in a balloon shaped like a boat rather than a raft. The similarity to the earlier situation is obvious, but this time they cross the desert in North Africa where they follow a caravan and learn to call its Egyptian members by Mississippi Valley names. As in

Huckleberry Finn, these people are suddenly killed while the boys hover overhead. The final similarity between the two novels comes as they pass over Egypt at rooftop level, rescue Jim from the top of the Sphinx where he is being attacked by Egyptians, and finally cross the Red Sea where Moses crossed and camp on Mt. Sinai at the edge of the wilderness.

There is considerable evidence, then, to support a new interpretation of Huckleberry Finn as the story of a modern Moses. This interpretation enables us to answer many critical objections to the novel and particularly those that claim that the ending is thematically inappropriate. On the contrary, the apparently non-sensical behaviour of Huck and Tom recapitulates Exodus and thus resolves the basic problems of slavery and freedom raised in the novel.