

American Dream of Freedom in Mark Twains' *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn***Assist. Lecturer Tewfeek Muslim Haran****(MA in English)****University of Kufa, PO Box (21)****Faculty of Education/Dept of English****tawfeeqm.harran@uokufa.edu.iq****009647801169608****Asst. Lecturer Bahaa A. Muslim Abdul-Ameer****American Dream of Freedom in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn***

الحلم الأمريكي في الحرية في رواية مغامرات هكلبيرفن للكاتب الأمريكي مارك توين

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ملخص البحث:

تعرض هذه الدراسة البحثية الحلم الأمريكي ومشكلة الحرية في رواية مغامرات هكلبيرفن للكاتب الأمريكي مارك توين، فكرة الرواية نشأت مع الحلم التاريخي لحرية الشعب الأمريكي التي خلقت وكشفت الأثر الأدبي لأجل أشراق المبادئ الأساسية لحرية الشعب الأمريكي على الرغم من ما واجهته الرواية من الاتهام بالعبودية وانتهاك الحريات العامة وبالتالي الرواية أيضا واجهت قضايا متعددة معقدة بسبب لغتها وموضوعها المثيرين للجدل وهذا اصبح كجذر أساسي للعمل الشاق وكحل أيديولوجي للنجاح في تحقيق الحلم الأمريكي وقد نجح الكاتب في البحث عن واحدة من مبادئه، وأصبحت منازلته اللاحقة موضوع جدل عالمي وخاصة المعنية بمسألة حرية الناس السود. وسعى جاهدا لكثير من الأحلام لنفسه وللآخرين بحيث يحقق أحلام كبيرة للشعب الأمريكي. معظم الناس في الوقت الحاضر دون شك تدرك أهمية الأعمال الأدبية من أجل مستقبل أكثر نجاحا.

Abstract

The present paper tackles American dream and the conflict for freedom in the novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. According to the novelist Mark Twain, the idea for the novel originated with the historical dream of American people freedom. The novel creates and discovers the basic elements of freedom and humanity even that it had been denounced slavery and violation. It is an attempt to render the questions of what it means to be a free man despite all the challenges confronted the crisis of freedom. The novel highlights on the place and suffering of slavery therefore, it could also face up to complicated cases because of its controversial theme and diction. This becomes as an essential root of hard work and as an ideological key to success in the American dream achievement. The author succeeded in seeking one of his tasks, and his subsequent trial became the subject of international controversy particularly as concerned the issue of black people freedom. He always endeavors many dreams for himself and others so that his

dream achieves great dreams for American nation. Most people nowadays are without doubt aware of the importance of literary works for a more successful future.

Introduction

Webster refers to a great past that Mark Twain is Pseudonym of Samuel Langhorne Clemens (b. 1835, d. 1910) American writer, humorist, and professor who won a world audience for his literary works of youthful adventures. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) popularly considered as Clemens's greatest work and American classic and is often called a masterpiece, even the great American novel. Despite its elevation to such eminence, however, Clemens himself did not regard it as exceptional. He placed the first version of these stories in a mid-19th-century Missouri setting in the Gilded Age. (1995:1140)

Adams coined the term American Dream and stated the American Dream is "that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement. It is a difficult dream for the European upper classes to interpret adequately, and too many of us ourselves have grown weary and mistrustful of it". In addition to his mention, he also assured "It is not a dream of motor cars and high wages merely, but a dream of social order in which each man and each woman shall be able to attain to the fullest stature of which they are innately capable, and be recognized by others for what they are, regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position."

(Adams,214- 215)

The American dream is different from any dream in the world because that all men are created equal. All people and immigrants have rights in life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. There must be regardless to those who say various sayings about American dream which is not just the pursuit of material prosperity or financial gain. Thomas Wolfe said, "...to every man, regardless of his birth, his shining, golden opportunitythe right to live, to work, to be himself, and to become whatever thing his manhood and his vision can combine to make him." (loc.American-Dream.gov/)

Huckleberry Finn's importance lies in both its content and its construction. The novel is simultaneously a children's story, a humorous adult novel and a profound sociological document. In this case, it interstates world themes as liberty, race, conscience, and vice. Huck begins his journey by escaping from a brutal captivity imposed by his father, then travels down the river and witnesses brawls, murders, lynch mobs, a pointless

bloody feud, and greedy chicanery. With such horrors as a backdrop, Huck is consumed with guilt over his promise to help Jim escape a promise that has led him to steal the property of Jim's owner, Miss Watson, thereby flouting the legal and social conventions of his society. Sure that he will go to hell for this sin, he writes a letter to Miss Watson revealing where Jim is, but suddenly decides he would rather go to hell than betray his friend. Few novels have moments that are more poignant. (Rasmussen,179-80)

Critical Vantage of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Among other obstacles to understanding Huckleberry Finn are the claims that it is one of the greatest American novels ever written. As early as 1913, the eminent literary critic H. L. Mencken called Huckleberry Finn "one of the great masterpieces of the world... The full equal of Don Quixote and Robinson Crusoe . . ." In 1941, V. S. Pritchett called Huckleberry Finn "America's first truly indigenous masterpiece," and nine years later, critic Lionel Trilling called it "one of the world's great books and one of the central documents of American culture." The Nobel Prize-winning poet T. S. Eliot grew up in Missouri, in which Huckleberry Finn is partly set, but did not read the book until he was an adult because his parents had steered him away from it during his childhood, perhaps out of fear that it might corrupt him. He later recalled that his parents regarded the book as unsuitable for boys, so he grew up thinking it must be a book suitable only for boys. When he finally read the book as an adult, he discovered that it was, in fact, eminently suitable for adults, and he added his voice to those who called it a masterpiece. All this is extravagant praise for any book and more especially for one that early critics dismissed as the "veriest trash" and that went on to inspire repeated calls for censorship. It is therefore not surprising that readers who approach the book hoping to find one of the greatest novels ever written may instead come away confused and fail to notice the book's true merits, many of which are so subtle that they may appear, on first reading, to be flaws rather than virtues. In this regard, it may be worthwhile to look a little more deeply at the issue of the book's greatness. The idea that Huckleberry Finn is the Great American Novel may well have originated with a remark that the 20th-century American writer Ernest Hemingway

made in Green Hills of Africa in 1935 a year that happened to coincide with the centenary of Samuel Clemens's birth. Much time and energy have gone into trying to understand what Hemingway meant by those words. Although he appears to say that Huckleberry Finn is the greatest American novel, he does not explain what makes it so. Moreover, if one reads his remarks about the book in their entirety, his praise is accompanied by a serious criticism:

"All modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn. If you read it you must stop where the Nigger Jim is stolen from the boys. That is the real end. The rest is just cheating. But it's the best book we've had. All American writing comes from that. There was nothing before. There has been nothing as good since." (R. Kent Rasmussen,199)

America, Whitman claims, is the accretion and growth of every dialect, race" and its language is the syncretic incorporation of the contribution of many peoples and languages. As in the ideal democracy, also in language. (Portelli, ١٦١)

Whitman, deeply immersed in the culture of his day, engages issues of authenticity, identity, and commoditization and uses a model that allows him to explore the relationship between objects, knowledge, and the authenticity of that knowledge. Like Whitman, Twain was also engrossed in the events of his day, but particularly in commerce and production as in chapter three of the novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.*,

Twain invokes the twin discourses of commoditization and authenticity to examine the potential commoditization of the self, especially through Huck's repeated acts of self-creation. (Balkun,15)

From Twain's use of "race" when writing about Hawaii, we can better uncover his strategies in these major works. As a result, the inconsistency and struggle that highlight Twain's treatment of race in his Hawaiian writing reveal that the islands were a crucial literary starting point for him. Moreover, for his audience, the discussion of race beyond America allowed exploration of central issues facing the country at home during Reconstruction. Hietala explains: "The expansion to the Pacific was not primarily an expression of American confidence. Anxiety, not optimism, generally lay behind the quest for land, ports, and markets."11 Part of this apprehension over savagery, politics, labor, and race is addressed by Twain in his Hawaii letters. He confidently assures America that Hawaii will not corrupt them with cannibalism, that they need not worry about newly freed slaves participating in government, and that labor problems can be solved with the other as compliant worker. As a result of his letters, Twain not only announced himself to the literary world, he opened Hawaii as an imperial, capitalist, and imaginative space for the developing nation. (McBride,125)

The critical difference between Tom and Huck is captured in a scene near the end of the novel as they work to help Jim escape. Tom, obsessed with following the "rules" of the

fictional accounts he has read, has finally agreed to dig him out with picks and pretend they are using case knives. Huck, who simply wants to see Jim free as soon as possible, responds:

"Now you're talking!" I says; 'your head gets leveler and leveler all the time, Tom Sawyer,' I says. 'Picks is the thing, moral or no moral; and as for me, I don't care shucks for the morality of it, no how. When I start in to steal a nigger, or a water-melon, or a Sunday school book, I ain't no ways particular how it's done so it's done. What I want is my nigger; or what I want is my watermelon; or what I want is my Sunday- school book; and if a pick's the handiest thing, that's the thing I'm a going to dig that nigger or that watermelon or that Sunday-school book out with; and I don't give a dead rat what the authorities thinks about it nuther." (Twain,248)

While some critics have used this moment to criticize Huck for equating Jim with objects, the reference to a watermelon and a Sunday school book also resonates with earlier object driven episodes, such as the gang's raid on the Sunday school picnic and the foods Huck and Jim decide to "borrow." This is not to suggest that Huck does not objectify Jim throughout most of their time together, but I contend that this attitude in effect, Huck's entire attitude toward objects changes by the end of the novel. Huck's faith in the exchange value of objects and their cultural significance is essential to understanding his relationship with Jim, whose status as slave is fundamental to his identity for Huck. For much of their time together, Huck makes no distinction between the person of Jim and Jim as an object owned by Miss Watson. This is immediately evident in both his early references to Jim, whom he identifies first and foremost as property:

"Miss Watson's big nigger" and "Miss Watson's nigger, Jim"

As a nonperson, Jim can be the butt of jokes, he can be cheated without remorse, and he can be an absurd example of pride:

"Huck observes that he was most ruined, for a servant, because he got so stuck up on account of having seen the devil and been rode by witches"
(Twain,5-17)

But all this starts to change once Jim has been "diverted" from his object position, first by himself when he runs away and then by Huck, who helps him; the latter spends the rest of their time together trying to figure out ways to return Jim to the status of commodity. (Balkun,47-48)

The Issue of Freedom and the Evidence of American Dream

Huck's role as a narrator also serves to strengthen the novel in other, more subtle ways. One of the strongest objections that has been made to Huckleberry Finn is that it fails to condemn slavery explicitly. There is some validity to that charge. As the novel's narrator, Huck not only never condemns slavery, but he also frequently expresses views that support the notion that slaves are the rightful property of their owners. One such moment occurs in chapter sixteen, in which Jim expresses his hopes for the future and says that if he and his wife cannot buy the freedom of their children, "they'd get an abolitionist to go and steal them." When Huck hears those words, he is shocked and regrets helping Jim to escape:

"Thinks I, this is what comes of my not thinking. Here was this nigger which I had as good as helped to run away, coming right out flat-footed and saying he would steal his children-children that belonged to a man I didn't even know; a man that hadn't ever done me no harm." (Twain,92)

Passages such as that appear to support the view that Huckleberry Finn fails to condemn slavery. However, it is through Huck's actions, rather than his words, that slavery is condemned. Trained to believe that slavery is condoned by Christianity, he believes he is sinning by helping Jim. Eventually, he decides to purge himself of sin by writing a letter to Jim's rightful owner, Miss Watson, to tell her where she can find her slave (chapter 31). For a moment, he feels "good and all washed clean of sin for the first time." However, as he thinks about what a good friend Jim is, his heart softens, and he relents. He then concludes "All right, then, I'll go to hell" and tears up the letter. One of the ironies of the novel is that Huck usually does the right thing, while thinking that he is doing the wrong thing. That is a point of view that can only be sustained by having him narrate his story. (R. Kent Rasmussen,201)

slavery was very visible manifestation of man's inhumanity to people, but also in the systematic way in which an *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* fully men were reduced to chattel property.

"Soon as it was night, out we shoved; when we got her out to about the middle, we let her alone, and let her float wherever the current wanted her to; then we lit the pipes, and dangled our legs in the water and talked about all kinds of things. we was always naked, day and night, whenever the mosquitoes would let us... Sometimes we'd have that whole river all to

ourselves for the longest time . . . it's lovely to live on a raft. We had the sky, up there, all speckled with stars, and we used to lay on our backs and look up at them, and discuss about whether they was made, or only just happened." (Bloom, Harold,5-7)

According to R. Kent Rasmussen (2007), of the many charges made against Huckleberry Finn, perhaps the most contentious is the claim that the novel reflects white racist views. Among the evidence amassed in support of that charge, Exhibit A is the book's generous use of the word nigger. In 1957, when the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People sought to have the book banned from New York public schools, it cited the novel's "excessive use of 'nigger.'" It is true that the novel does use that word frequently (more than 200 times), but does that fact alone make the book "racist"? The first thing to keep in mind is that the narrative is told, not in Clemens's voice, but in Huck's. Clemens uses the word nigger only when he puts it in the mouths of his characters. In Huckleberry Finn, every word of the narrative comes through the voice of Huck. In the only nonnarrative portions of the text, the brief prefatory notes, the only allusion to African Americans uses the term negro. In Tom Sawyer, Clemens's only Tom and Huck story that is not narrated by Huck, the word nigger appears nine times, but only in its characters' dialogue. When Clemens speaks in the voice of that novel's anonymous narrator, he uses only negro and colored to refer to African Americans that appears to be disrespectful occurs at the end of the wonderful passage in chapter fourteen in which he argues with Jim about the biblical king Solomon. That chapter concludes with Huck's remarking, "you can't learn a nigger to argue." However, even that remark can scarcely be construed as a reflection of the author's racist attitude, as the remark is ironic. Huck's attempt to best Jim in an argument is entirely unsuccessful, as Jim outargues him on every point. Instead of recognizing that he has been defeated by a black man whom he describes elsewhere in the same chapter as having "an uncommon level head, for a nigger" Huck incorrectly concludes that black people cannot argue properly. To perceptive readers, however, it is clear that the novel is in fact, demonstrating that a black person is perfectly capable of exercising logic superior to that of a white person. Indeed, in this passage and in many others, the strongest message that the novel conveys is that no one race is superior to any other. As in all chapters of the novel, here is tremendous verbal energy here, the sort of energy often released when White writers avail themselves of Black languages and dialects. Mark Twain was right to include great black people dialects. (Rosenwald, Lawrence,66)

Twain's satiric target here is the self-delusive paradox of identitarian moral norms, which are a matter of both choice and blood a paradox that enables the majority to see itself simultaneously as morally upright and as naturally determined. One of the sharpest pricks of Twain's satire lies in his depiction of the unconscious and unblinking acceptance of the code as nature by such diverse and intelligent characters as Roxy and Wilson. That neither recognizes the fact that the code cannot be nature if outsiders like themselves can exemplify it suggests Twain's skepticism about any hope for an escape from the false consciousness of identity.

(Crane, D. Gregg,177)

As *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* ended, Huckleberry Finn set out for the uncharted new territory. As Twain does not specify what this new land will be like, we can only speculate about this place to which Huck yearns to go, and about his reasons for leaving civilization. Arguing that Huck's decision to separate from American society is an indictment of the American dream of freedom, Sanford Pinsker shows how Twain's novel transcends our traditional understanding of the American Dream. For Pinsker, Huck's decision to light out for the Territory indicates a dark understanding of our desire for a free society. While Pinsker acknowledges that Jim's "gradual movement toward freedom" marks a sub-text in the novel, Pinsker claims that Huck ultimately realizes that he can never be a part of American society and can never be free, "even should he make it to the territory and manage to survive." Thus, Pinsker concludes that, despite the novel's many comic episodes, Twain remains skeptical about the possibility of ever attaining freedom in a flawed society built upon the impossible dream of "freedom and justice for all."

Freedom is America's abiding subject, as well as its deepest problem. American people realize the great interest of freedom. It is very essential for everything in life. It is also the first duty of intelligent men to restate the obvious. (Bloom, Harold, 2009:1-2)

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