

HUCKLEBERRY FINN: SOCIAL SATIRE THROUGH
AN INNOCENT HERO

A THESIS
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THE
TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF
ARTS AND SCIENCES

BY
WANNA LOU DEAN LLOYD, B. A.

DENTON, TEXAS

MAY, 1972

Texas Woman's University

Denton, Texas

May, 1972

We hereby recommend that the thesis prepared under
our supervision by Wanna Lou Dean Lloyd
entitled "Huckleberry Finn: Social Satire Through
an Innocent Hero"

be accepted as fulfilling this part of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts.

Committee:

Charles T. Bruce
Chairman
Levon B. Fulwiler
Eleanor James

Accepted:

Mary Evelyn Huey
Dean of Graduate Studies

PREFACE

Several generations of Americans have read Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain's masterpiece, with undiminished affection, because it recreates the astounding world of childhood while, at the same time, it portrays the past age of nineteenth century America. Its main attraction to me, along with countless other readers, however, is its social criticism directed towards all human beings. On the deepest level Huckleberry Finn is a complex work of art, approaching such profundity in its satire that it has attained universal recognition as a classic. This satiric criticism can cause the reader, after soul-searching views of himself, to improve his own being. To bring even the smallest improvement in a human being, Twain, I feel, has achieved success. Because Twain, through Huck, attempted this endeavor, I have been intrigued with him and his book, Huckleberry Finn; consequently, the two have been chosen as the subject of this thesis. Not only has the subject been delightful, but so have the people involved.

I wish to express appreciation to Dr. Charles Bruce, my major professor, for his patient encouragement. Whenever my enthusiasm was dampered, or my long hours of research were hardly fruitful, his reassuring and resourceful advice

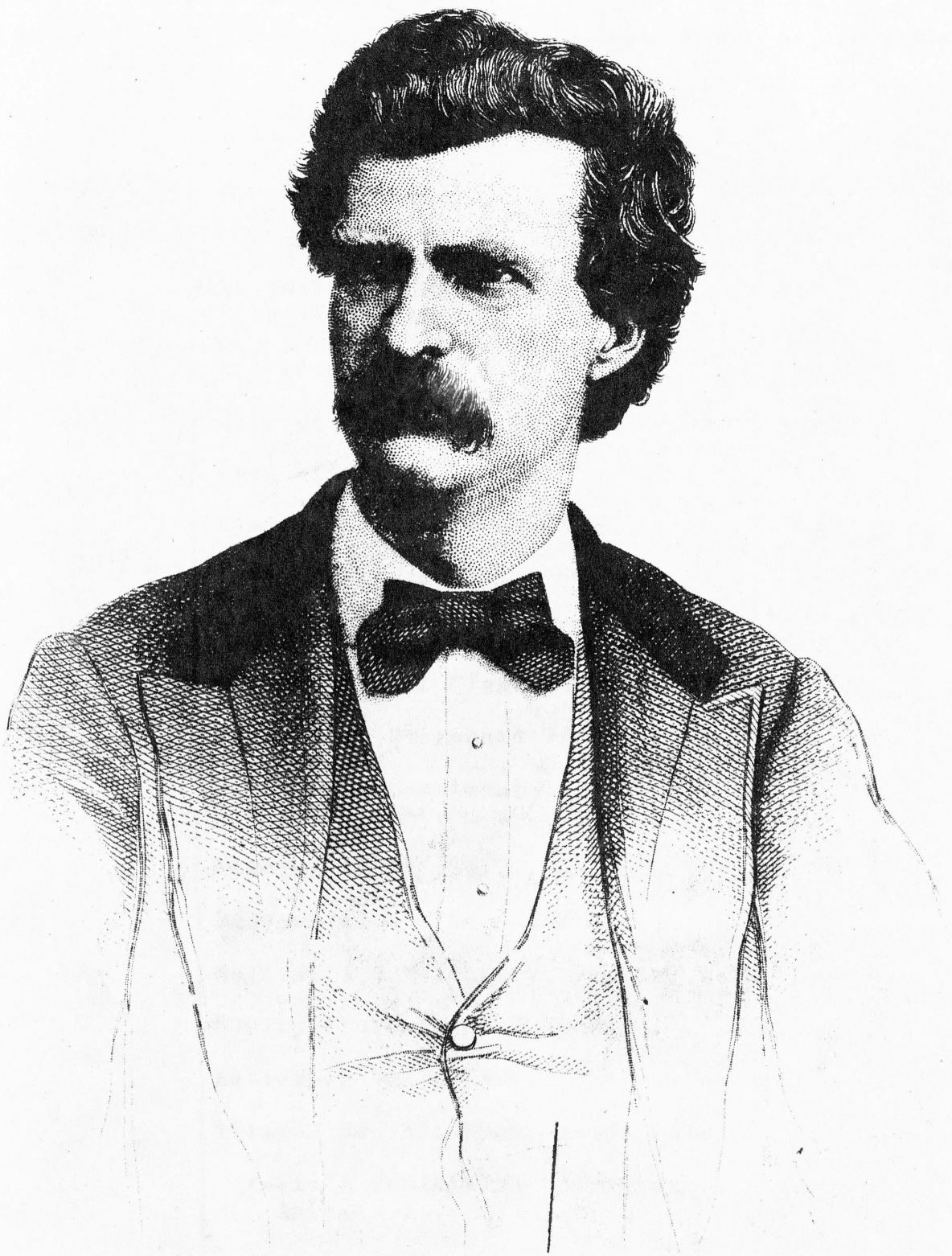
would bring clarity, followed by accomplishment. I sincerely thank him.

I also thank Dr. Eleanor James and Dr. Lavon Fulwiler, members of my reading committee, for their time and assistance in bettering this thesis. My instructors' aid was vital to this endeavor; however, the aid of my family was also important.

First, I wish to thank my parents for instilling in me a desire to learn and advance. They have worked hard and sacrificed much to offer the best in undergraduate opportunities. My husband has, as unselfishly, offered occasion for my graduate work at Texas Woman's University. Both he and my little son have willingly sacrificed that my graduate work might be accomplished. I deeply thank my parents, my son, and my husband for their unceasing generous support.

December 4, 1971

Wanna Lou Dean Lloyd



SAMUEL LANGHORNE CLEMENS ("Mark Twain")

American novelist

Nov. 30, 1835 - April 21, 1910

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CHAPTER I

MARK TWAIN'S TEMPERAMENT AND PHILOSOPHY CONCERNING HUMANITY

Samuel L. Clemens, better known as Mark Twain, is an immensely popular humorist--a humorist with a message. He is popular in our day; he was popular in his day--the late 1800's and early 1900's. The extent of his popularity during his own lifetime can best be conveyed by an anecdote. In 1878 a ne'er-do-well named Jesse M. Leathers boarded a train in Cincinnati bound for Washington, D. C. Describing the incident to Clemens in a letter some years later, he reported that when the conductor discovered the passenger had no money to pay his fare, he was furious. Leathers, however, was not without resources. In lieu of a ticket he produced a brief note addressed to him by Clemens (whom he had not met and never would meet). The conductor looked at the notepaper, smiled, and said that the note would do because he liked Twain. Leathers stated, "He took me to Chillicothe, the end of the route, where I stopped overnight. Here I made the acquaintance of a gifted Irishman who, when he saw your letter, put up the drinks for the house, and invited me to dine with him. He proved to be a boss workman on the Baltimore and Ohio R.R. and learning my

embarrassed condition by degrees offered to settle my Hotel bill and presented me a pass over the Road which carried me to Parkersburg, Va."¹ Later, in Virginia, the next conductor was unmoved by the sight of a letter from Jefferson Davis introducing Leathers to Judah P. Benjamin, but the note from Clemens again melted the resistance. "'Ah!' he exclaimed, 'this is Mark Twain. Good! My wife is a great admirer of Mr. Clemens--give me his autograph, or signature and I will pass you through safe and sound.' The bargain was struck at once and he tore off your 'fist' and the monogram and carefully placed the preacious (sic) relic in his pocket, handing me back the rest of the letter."² This is the kind of veneration that railway conductors and gifted Irishmen in bars might feel for generals or prizefighters, but it is not their usual attitude toward men of letters. Whether in the popular concept Twain be classified as humorist or man of letters, the name Mark Twain meant more than telling jokes. It designated, and still does, a figure upholding innocence--innocence of the individual beset by humanity, the "damned human race" as he called it.³ According to the editor, Henry Nash Smith, in his introduction to

¹Henry Nash Smith, "Introduction," in Mark Twain: Twentieth Century Views, ed. Henry Nash Smith (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 1.

²Smith, p. 2.

³Edward Wagenknecht, Mark Twain: The Man and His Work (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1935), p. 140.

Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, this term was also the name of a luncheon club founded by Twain in his lonely old age for himself and three greatly loved friends.⁴ Each of them believed humanity is damned because of the horrible ills it practices. This "damned human race" that they spoke of was then and still is guilty of needless conventions, wars, malice, and vindictiveness of which Twain, especially, did not approve.

Mark Twain hated humanity because it allowed certain evil circumstances to exist. Because the human race allowed and still allows these things, he poured fierce scorn upon it. He was willing to admit that he himself rested under this self-pronounced condemnation, for he said, "what a man sees in the human race is merely himself in the deep and honest privacy of his own heart. Byron despised the race because he despised himself. I feel as Byron did, and for the same reason. . . . Man is a museum of diseases, a home of impurities; he comes to-day and is gone to-morrow; he begins as dirt and departs as stench."⁵ Twain felt that man is the least adapted animal on this planet because of his horrible ills. According to Twain's idea, man was probably not made intentionally. He may have worked himself up from the primeval slime, through some unhappy accident, much to

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

⁵Wagenknecht, p. 139.

the surprise and grief of the Creator. In any event, God's creation was not totally perfect on arrival, for his is the only bad heart in the whole animal kingdom. Man alone is capable of malice, hypocrisy, drunkenness, vindictiveness, and war; furthermore, when he is not cruel by nature, he is merely a victim of the crowd, a follower. To Twain it seemed a pity that Noah and his party could not have missed the boat, for then the universe would have been cleansed of the "damned human race." Twain also wondered if it would not have been possible to exterminate the race by some invention withdrawing all oxygen from the air for a period of two minutes.⁶ Though Twain disapproved of humanity's ills and scorned them, when he dealt with an individual, his view was entirely different.

The individual, because he is a member of the contemptible race, needs help and concern. Mark Twain, the lover of the individual blighted as he might be, was one to help any person in need. His housekeeper tells, "He would listen, no matter what you wanted to say, just like he would listen to a little child's story, and help you."⁷ Besides his sympathetic listening, he was generous with time and money. When Helen Keller was striving to pay her way through college, Twain pleaded with Mr. and Mrs. H. H. Rogers in New York City to interest themselves in her need for funds; they

⁶Wagenknecht, p. 139.

⁷Wagenknecht, p. 140.

did so quite liberally. He wrote, "It won't do for America to allow this marvelous child to retire from her studies because of poverty. If she can go on with them she will make a fame that will endure in history for centuries. Along her special lines she is the most extraordinary product of all the ages."⁸ Not only was Twain kind to this blind, deaf, and temporarily dumb person; he was kind and helpful to others. Another afflicted woman writing to him asked for his autograph and a picture. He mislaid the request, but when he found it again, sending what she asked for was not enough. He wrote a letter in great detail explaining his delay. In New Zealand, an old man became ill during his lecture. Twain stopped talking, went backstage to offer assistance, and waited for the man's improvement before resuming his lecture. Another example which indicates his love for the individual concerns an artist. Having finished his day's work on Twain's portrait, the painter was caught unprepared to make his way home in a storm. Twain insisted on lending him his overshoes, for an invitation which might cause Twain's departure from the house was hardly as important as the artist's comfort.⁹ The point of each of these examples involving Twain's kindness is that he truly loved the individual; he recognized and honored human worth in the

⁸Mark Twain, Mark Twain's Letters, ed. Albert Bigelow Paine (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1917), II, 638.

⁹Wagenknecht, p. 140.

deserving individual. Evidence of strong feeling toward the individual was his admiration of worthwhile acts.

At the same time that Mark Twain utterly detested the evil deeds of the human species, the "damned human race," he admired and cherished the noble deeds and aspirations of the individual. If he had been less sensitive to fineness of spirit, if the standards he held for human beings had not been quite so high, perhaps he would not have hated it so badly when people behaved disgracefully. When people behaved nobly, however, he admired and praised their actions highly. For example, Helen Keller and her teacher, Miss Sullivan, were lauded by Twain after Helen's writing began to be published. In a letter to Miss Keller concerning her writing, he said, "You are a wonderful creature, the most wonderful in the world--you and your other half together--Miss Sullivan, I mean, for it took the pair of you to make a complete and perfect whole."¹⁰ The acts of Helen Keller and Miss Sullivan were admired just as the acts of Joan of Arc and scores of others as individuals were admired by this writer who felt humanity had its shortcomings. He could be thrilled by a deed of unselfish heroism, and when it was reported to him, his eyes would often fill with tears as he would praise the doer's generosity. He had a great love for the noble act--an act such as King Arthur's risking his life in the smallpox hut or Huck Finn's refusing to

¹⁰Twain, Twain's Letters, p. 731.

surrender Nigger Jim to slavery. Twain heartily loved the good. Gamaliel Bradford has said, "No man ever more abused the human heart, or railed at the hollowness of human affection, and no man ever had more friends or loved more."¹¹

Mark Twain not only wanted friends but also needed them. He hated solitude; he did not enjoy being left alone. "Had he lived in Eden, he was sure he would have greeted the Serpent as a welcome change--anything for society."¹² He saw and liked to see all things and all men and women. The touch of a human hand was pleasant to him as was the sound of a human voice, speaking no matter what jargon. He made friends of pilots, pirates, miners, peasants, emperors, and clergymen, particularly clergymen, over whom he apparently exercised such witchery that oaths from his mouth fell on their ears like prayers from other people. (This wide variety of friends may also account for his range of knowledge about different people.) The company of all of these people, important as it was to him, pleased Twain, but just as dynamically if not more so, his company pleased others--people of all sorts.

Twain was popular with many persons. This hospitable man was often the center of a cosmos of beloved friends, an intimate of the famous men and women of his time, courted,

¹¹American Portraits 1875-1900 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1931), p. 8.

¹²Wagenknecht, p. 141.

praised, sought after, universally loved. Though shy as a teenager in Hannibal, Twain later developed a radiant personality which brought him popularity even as early as his Carson City mining days. In a crowd he was usually the life of the occasion, making it one to be long remembered. Whenever he showed the slightest sign of making a remark, there was often dead silence as friends waited to hear this likable man speak. To many persons, Twain was pleasant to be around. Probably because of his pleasant nature, the visitors liked to return to the Clemens house.

The social life of the Clemens' home in Hartford, Connecticut, was highly active. Walter Blair has said, "one sometimes feels the Clemens mansion was less secluded and quiet than a railway station."¹³ For seventeen years, beginning in 1874, the Clemens' home was a sort of general headquarters for literary people, near and far, as well as distinguished foreign visitors of every sort. Frequently there were guests (possibly relatives, friends, or literary men) overnight or for several days. During one week guests were entertained at seventeen out of the twenty-one meals and on three out of the seven evenings.¹⁴ His life at Hartford was surely subject to a busy social whirl; however, as

¹³Mark Twain and Huck Finn (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960), p. 84.

¹⁴Wagenknecht, p. 142.

caught up by the social life as he was, he never completely succumbed to its rulings on all points.

If he felt the need or merely the urge, Twain would break one of society's accepted rules and think little of doing so. For the most part, he did abide by the standards and codes of society--moral, social, and literary--which in his heart he disbelieved.¹⁵ But, occasionally, he did just as he desired. Once, at a dinner given in his honor, he pushed back his chair before the end of the meal, stated that he had had enough, called for a cigar, and walked up and down the room talking while the rest of the guests finished their meal. Another time he walked in on a dinner to which he had not been invited because it was not known that he would be in the city. He had discovered, from a talk with friends, who would be present at this particular dinner party. Because the opportunity was too good to pass, he dressed hurriedly, walked in without ceremony just as the feast began, drew up a chair by the side of the hostess, helped himself to her oysters, and for the rest of the evening was the life of the party.¹⁶

Mark Twain, this man who could be bold, daring, and nonconforming on various occasions, had another characteristic that would sometimes set him apart from other people.

¹⁵"Wonder for Huckleberry Finn," Twelve Original Essays on Great American Novels, ed. Charles Shapiro (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1958), p. 79.

¹⁶Wagenknecht, p. 145.

At times he would display sheer sentimentality, a trait not seen in everyone. Of course, this is probably to be expected in a person so sensitive to fineness of spirit within the human species. He could read about the heroine Joan of Arc and cry. Susy, his daughter, has said, "Hearing the MS. read aloud is an uplifting and revealing hour to us all. Many of Joan's words and sayings are historically correct and Papa cries when he reads them. In fact he almost always fills up when reading any speech of hers. . . . 'The noble child, the most innocent'--these are names he gives Joan."¹⁷ Sentimentality, an occasional characteristic of Twain, is mentioned here to emphasize his deep sensitivity.

Deeply sensitive to people, their actions, and their feelings, Twain naturally responded to children. He always loved the child. This warmth appears most clearly in his relations with his own children. While they were small, he played with them, and delighted when they abused him. He was never bored when they insisted that he tell them very long stories. His personal life, however, at this point is not the important matter. The importance lies in his feeling and outlook towards youth because youth plays such a role in his writings. To recognize his feeling, one can view his love for Susy--or any of his children. After the death of Susy, in a letter to the Rev. J. H. Twichell in Hartford, Connecticut, Twain stated, "I did not know that she could

¹⁷Wagenknecht, p. 145.

go away, and take our lives with her, yet leave our dull bodies behind."¹⁸ This admission not only verifies his love for her but also implies his response to youth itself. "Young girls are," he has written, "the treasures of a father's life, the light of his home, the joy of his heart."¹⁹ Youths--Susy, his other children, Joan of Arc, or Huck Finn--approach a state more nearly innocent of humanity's ills than any other age group. Twain deeply loved such a state of innocence. Even though he felt the human race itself was damned for its ills, he loved youth. Love for the innocent, respect for the individual--these were chief traits of Twain.

Respect for an individual should exist and in Twain it did. The shrewd Katy Leary, the best known of Twain's servants, received much attention from him. He watched over her and guarded her carefully, though she may not always have appreciated it when he sent her suitors home and locked up the house at 10:00 P.M. He seemed never to have been unreasonable with her except when he would misplace one of his manuscripts and then accuse her of having burned it. There would be no action taken--other than the passing of many words between them. And when his coachman Patrick McAleer died, Clemens acted as a pallbearer in company with his own gardener, and in a public address praised Patrick as the

¹⁸Twain, Twain's Letters, p. 641.

¹⁹Mark Twain, "Why Not Abolish It," Harper's Weekly, 47 (2 May 1902), 732.

ideal gentleman. For the funeral Twain provided a memorial wreath with a card worded, "In loving remembrance of Patrick McAleer, faithful and valued friend of our family for thirty-six years."²⁰ Not only white but also Negro servants were treated respectfully. George, his butler, received this statement of praise in Mark Twain's Autobiography: "He was a colored man--the children's darling and a remarkable man."²¹ In viewing Twain's treatment of servants, one can easily see why he loathed the jinricksha in the East.²² He could not feel it was right that one man should draw another about. He was not unkind toward any individual--a member of the "damned human race"--be that person lowly or not. Neither was he unkind to animals.

This kindness to animals was made evident by his dislike of the sport of hunting. At that time, and now, hunting to many men was a favorite recreation. In his boyhood, his uncle and his cousins sometimes took him hunting, but he never shot anything, nor did he show any great desire to learn. To him pleasure could not be derived from inflicting suffering and death on dumb creatures. He once went to a cockfight but had to leave before it was over. The bullfight was a sight of horror as far as he was concerned.

²⁰Mark Twain, Mark Twain's Autobiography, ed. Albert Bigelow Paine (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1924), p. 31.

²¹Twain, Autobiography, p. 60.

²²Wagenknecht, p. 151.

William Dean Howell's testimony will help reinforce the idea that Twain believed hunting to be a form of needless cruelty: "He abhorred the dull and savage joy of the sportsman in a lucky shot, an unerring aim, and once when I met him in the country he had just been sickened by the success of a gunner in bringing down a blackbird, and he described the poor, stricken, glossy thing, how it lay throbbing its life out on the grass, with such pity as he might have given a wounded child."²³ Twain was extremely tender-hearted.

Rather than merely saying he was tender-hearted about animals, one can say he was a protector of them, for he loved animals. His daughter Susy said, "Papa is very fond of animals, particularly of cats. . . ."²⁴ Even while busy at work, preoccupied and indifferent to the comings and goings of other members of his household, Twain, no matter what he was doing, would see that his cats were made comfortable. If one should curl into a corner-pocket of the billiard table, Twain would insist that the game be played in only three of the four spots in the table so that the cat could be undisturbed. His attention, however, was not given so freely to dogs as it was to cats, partly because of the dogs' loud, disturbing barks. But the prime reason for this inattention to dogs was his dislike of the dogs' servility. To Twain, the cat's independent spirit is

²³Wagenknecht, p. 144.

²⁴Twain, Autobiography, p. 82.

admirable. His admiration of independence, of course, is not surprising in a person who admires an independent spirit and independent actions in man. The dog is lacking in this spirit. Although the independent cat was the center of his favor, Twain was kind to and often protected any animal. While staying at Tyringham in 1904 during unpleasant weather, he put out the fire he had built in his cold room when he remembered there was a brood of swallows in the chimney. And never would he allow a driver of a carriage to whip his horses. Being late was more acceptable to him than permitting cruelty to animals. Not even snakes and bats were excluded from his sympathies, though he detested flies and spiders.²⁵ Lover of animals as he was, Twain often felt man's nature fell short of that of animals.

He was completely, and quite seriously, convinced that man is the least admirable figure in the animal kingdom. He once said, "Man isn't even handsome, as compared with the birds; and as for style, look at the Bengal tiger--the ideal of grace, physical perfection, and majesty. Think of the lion and the tiger and the leopard, and then think of man--that poor thing!--the animal of the wig, the ear-trumpet, the glass eye, the porcelain teeth, the wooden leg, the trepanned skull, the silver wind-pipe, a creature that is mended and patched all over from top to bottom."²⁶ Also

²⁵Wagenknecht, pp. 153-154.

²⁶Wagenknecht, pp. 154-155.

man's character is much more unattractive than an animal's, for what animal would be guilty of the refined, useless cruelties that human beings inflict upon one another--malice, hypocrisy, drunkenness, vindictiveness, war. This inferiority is most epigrammatically summed up in the words of Pudd'nhead Wilson: "If you pick up a starving dog and make him prosperous, he will not bite you. This is the principal difference between a dog and a man."²⁷ Twain felt that man often falls short when compared to animals. When comparisons of the two are made, ills show up in man that animals do not begin to have. A few of these comparisons between man and animals that Twain made are given here to help substantiate his view that humanity has ills.

Twain heartily believed that man has ills that animals do not. Hypocrisy, envy, malice, cruelty, vengefulness, seduction, rape, robbery, swindling, arson, bigamy, adultery, and the oppression and humiliation of the poor and the helpless have always been common among the peoples of the earth.²⁸ What animals are guilty of these traits? None of them are. Their dispositions are geared to self-preservation, and beyond that, these characteristics do not exist in them. In man, these characteristics can be termed as mere ills of the "damned human race," for Twain knew that rarely

²⁷Wagenknecht, p. 155.

²⁸Mark Twain, Letters from the Earth (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc., 1968), p. 176.

does self-preservation even enter into the employment of these things. Hence, he would have reversed the application of the titles higher and lower to man and other animals.

After studying the traits and dispositions of animals and man, Twain humiliatingly renounced his allegiance to the Darwinian theory of the Ascent of Man from the Lower Animals. He made up his own definition of Higher and Lower Animals. He came to believe in a new theory named the Descent of Man from the Higher Animals.

After making this unpleasant conclusion, he began verifying and establishing critical observations declaring man's inferiority to Higher Animals. His experimental observations were made in the London Zoological Gardens.²⁹

He first observed that man has a sadistic nature. The desire to inflict pain for pleasure is a trait of some men--not animals--according to one experiment about which he has written:

In the course of my reading I had come across a case where, many years ago, some hunters on our Great Plains organized a buffalo hunt for the entertainment of an English earl--that, and to provide some fresh meat for his larder. They had charming sport. They killed seventy-two of those great animals; and ate part of one of them and left the seventy-one to rot. In order to determine the difference between an anaconda and an earl--if any--I caused seven young calves to be turned into the anaconda's cage. The grateful reptile immediately crushed one of them and swallowed it, then lay back satisfied. It showed no further interest in the calves, and no disposition to harm them. I tried this experiment with other anacondas;

²⁹Twain, Letters from the Earth, pp. 176-177.

always with the same result. The fact stood proven that the difference between an earl and an anaconda is that the earl is cruel and the anaconda isn't; and that the earl wantonly destroys what he has no use for, but the anaconda doesn't. This seemed to suggest that the anaconda was not descended from the earl. It also seemed to suggest that the earl was descended from the anaconda, and had lost a good deal in the transition.³⁰

A second observant study revealed man's horrible greed. Twain was aware that many men who have accumulated more millions of money than they can ever use have shown an irresistible desire for more. These men will often stoop to cheating the ignorant and helpless out of their meager pennies to add to their own wealth. Aware of this, he furnished many different kinds of animals the opportunity to accumulate vast amounts of food, but none of them would do it. Some would gather a winter's supply, but no more would they take. From this observation he concluded that man is greedy and that animals are not.³¹

Not only is man a victim of sadism and greed, he will fight in organized masses to exterminate his own kind for pay. The Hessians, Prince Napoleon, and thousands of others have helped to slaughter strangers of their own species who have done them no harm and with whom they have no quarrel. Higher animals do not fight in organized masses; they fight individually to protect themselves, but never do they engage

³⁰Twain, Letters from the Earth, p. 177.

³¹Twain, Letters from the Earth, pp. 177-178.

in war.³² Twain conducted other comparisons between man and animals; however, that is not the object at this point. The object is merely to verify, through the aid of these comparisons, that Twain believed that man is evil. Twain felt that because animals do not have such ills, man could possibly learn much from animals.

Probably the chief lesson that Twain hoped man would derive from watching animals' living was their state of brotherhood, a state lacking in the "damned human race." In Twain's eyes, animals do not have hypocrisy, greed, drunkenness, or any other ill typical of man; therefore, in his writing he compared man to animals, hoping to stimulate a change in humanity. He wanted to help bring about an animal-like brotherhood among mankind. As much as he hoped that pointing up the comparisons would help change man, he began to believe they never would. Man pays little attention to animals' ways. When he does, he will not look to animals as teachers; therefore, instead of relying on comparisons to animals, Twain employed a writing device to help him improve the human species' way of living. This device he used was the voice of the innocent hero.

Twain used an innocent hero as a vehicle to criticize the "damned human race" and to show where improvement can, and needs to, occur. The human being has a way of acquiring set patterns of life, mechanically adhering to them as the

³²Twain, Letters from the Earth, p. 178.

only right way and never questioning their worth. Since these patterns are so often vicious, Twain in his writings satirized them through his innocent hero. In the following chapters of this thesis an attempt is made to show Mark Twain's use of an innocent hero, Huckleberry Finn, to criticize the "damned human race." Twain heartily disapproved of humanity and its social ills. In spite of his scorn for humanity's wrongs, he loved the individual person--be that person Helen Keller with her accomplishments, a servant, or the backwoods bumpkin, Huckleberry Finn. Twain, this popular, frequently visited man, who, upon occasion, would successfully break the social behavior code, had a heart of warmth. His heart not only warmed up to individuals' noble acts or children's smiling faces, but also it opened up to seemingly insignificant animals. Their comfort, their protection was important to him. Possibly they were so important because he could look at them and see traits he admired--the cat's independent spirit, a dog's eternal gratitude for being made prosperous, each animal's sense of brotherhood with its own kind. In Twain's opinion, man could learn much from animals if he would. He could learn to throw off his evil, foolish ways--his jealousies, hypocrisies, vindictiveness. Twain evidently felt humanity would not learn from what could be seen in animals; therefore, to help purge society of its ills, he satirized them. This satire employed innocent heroes to scorn these social ills. Huck Finn is

one such hero. In the following chapters this thesis attempts to show how Huck in Twain's popular classic, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, speaks out on social ills. The second chapter strives, first, to show that Huck qualifies as an innocent hero, and, second, to give his overall functions in the novel. The third chapter attempts to make evident the specific social ills observed and reported by Huck in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, a novel in which humanity can view itself through Huck's eyes.

CHAPTER II

HUCK FINN: AN INNOCENT HERO

The idea of innocence, of essential human goodness, has been a subject of speculation in literature for years and years. European philosophers experimented with the idea before America really took hold of it. When America did take it up, much was being done with it, and much is still being done with it. "In America, the idea of innocence entails the belief that the individual [the innocent hero] will, operating in a naturally permissive environment, dictate right action without recourse to either institutional dogma or to educated reason. . . . The innocent hero usually confronts the world with infinite good will and expects it to deal with him in the same spirit."¹ His pure heart--his innocence--seeking earnestly to carry out his inner desire, virtuous action, is often, however, an insufficient defense against corruption. This corruption may be in the form of characters, situations, or institutions representing the social sins of uniformity, sham, and repression of virtuous instinct.² For complete understanding

¹William C. Spengemann, Mark Twain and the Backwoods Angel (United States: Kent State Univ. Press, 1966), p. x.

²Spengemann, p. xi.

of the innocent hero, one must view more closely the character of such an individual as well as other factors regarding him.

The innocent is compassionate, kind, and instinctively good. He innately desires to be free from all forms of external restraint. Although listless and often lazy, he can be practical and quick-witted when occasion demands. "He is often optimistic, unself-consciously confident in the rightness of his internal promptings, and consequently sure of universal good will."³ To have these qualities, the character needs a refuge that is close to nature where he can escape evil pressures.

At some point in his career, the innocent inhabits an idyllic setting, a delightful land that offers freedom, purity, and spaciousness. From this source of nature comes the hero's innocence.⁴ Sometimes this paradise is a wide prairie which resembles the sea, or a small village lying on a winding river near a forest. Sometimes it is an ocean, sometimes heaven. It is almost always hazy, summery, and sleepy. It even may abound in magic and mystery.

In contrast to this pastoral setting is the unidyllic setting of civilization. In Mark Twain's stories of innocence are scenes of urban, industrial civilization, with

³Spengemann, p. 1.

⁴Albert E. Stone, Jr., The Innocent Eye (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1961), p. 270.

its schools, churches, armies, social classes, and businesses. "The people who inhabit these civilized locales lack individuality and generally represent dominant social attitudes. They are lawyers, judges, priests, senators, soldiers, or common people banded together into a mob. They function as groups or as spokesmen for a group, not as free individuals, and they are deeply suspicious of social heretics who fail to conform to civilized opinions and values."⁵ This setting of pressuring social conformity along with the idyllic setting of natural freedom serves an important role in Twain's novels.

This role involves the hero. In all of Twain's works which relate the adventures of innocence, the hero moves between these two dissimilar settings, and the movement constitutes his education, which makes up the basic action of these stories.⁶ In most cases, the innocent begins his career in the happy land, free and joyfully ignorant. Circumstances then arise to drive him into civilization, where innocence along with the idyllic paradise disappear. Disillusioned and embittered with life in the unidyllic setting, the hero longs for his vanished happiness and speaks bitterly against the evils of this new habitation. In some of Twain's stories, however, the hero moves in the other direction, from repression to freedom, from

⁵Spengemann, p. 2.

⁶Spengemann, p. 3.

civilization to nature. When this happens, the values implicit in the settings remain the same. The only change, however, is that the outcome has a mood of optimism and relief, rather than bitterness and frustration; whatever the direction of the movement be, nevertheless, Twain is to be credited for the innocent's movement between the two differing settings. The static picture of an innocent in one locale, used by others in the past, lost popularity with Twain's innovation of movement for the innocent. He created situations in which, no matter which pattern of movement existed, there was a conflict between the individual, who was free and innocent, and society, which was restrictive and evil. Before Twain's use of innocence in this way the hero made no movement at all between the two settings of urban and rural locality. Before, the innocent was an absolute stationary character. Having begun to move from innocence to experience or from constraint to freedom in Twain's stories, the hero takes on a new slant, for the innocent must take one of three routes. Because corruption in the unidyllic setting is more powerful than innocence, the hero must, first, either trade his natural virtues for civilized vices; secondly, be totally defeated at the hands of society; or, thirdly, return to his natural setting of innocence.⁷ This new slant adds much more interest for the reader.

⁷Spengemann, p. 3.

The interest comes indirectly from the movement, for it is this device that allows the hero to be an instrument of moral comment while in the midst of society. While he is there, or merely just remembering his social experience, the figure of youth comments on adult hypocrisy, sentimentality, and cruelty, as well as stands for a moral norm by which the false values of a Sunday school society are being judged.⁸ The words "Sunday school society" connote in Twain's eyes a society that will listen to and then praise a sermon or lesson on brotherly love on Sunday, but will condone killing a neighbor on Monday. The innocent sees things he most likely does not understand. As he sees them, he reports them. Although he may not perceive the reality he is making known to the reader, he most definitely is a vehicle for the author to pass judgment on an ill. On occasion, the innocent hero is a conscious or an aware reporter. Then he is a reliable narrator. When he is unaware of the truth he is revealing, he is unreliable. Whether reliable or unreliable, the innocent hero is, nevertheless, a means for the author to speak firmly about ills in the "damned human race" he would like to see removed.

Huck Finn, the protagonist in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, fits the above analysis of an innocent hero who unconsciously reveals social ills needing to be recognized by humanity. Huck, a young orphan, is innocent, at least

⁸Stone, p. 44.

in the sense that society's rules and prejudices do not control him; however, it must be established at this early point that Huck represents innocence--yet, not perfect innocence. Being a part of humanity, he must fall victim to fault; for example, Jim and Huck secretly "borrow" chickens and such for food (p. 56). But, in the light of having shortcomings as have all who have ever lived upon this earth, with the exception of Christ, Huck is an innocent hero because he listens to his inner being, and, therefore, triumphs over evil more often than not. He is a better person because he is not trained to yield to society's false ideas and conventions. By the same token, not all individuals making up society are evil. The Wilks sisters, victimized by the greed of the king and the duke for their inheritance (pp. 138-140), are not evil. Many of society's members, along with some of society's conventions, are basically good. Many of the social ideals of civilization, however, are bad. Slavery, feuds, lynching, murder, hypocrisy, malice, cruelty, and vengefulness epitomize social evils. These human ills Huck unconsciously reveals to the reader. Not falling victim to these false ideals of civilization if his inner desires are obeyed, Huck is more nearly innocent than evil. At times he does not obey his inner desires, but more often he does. Imperfect as he is, however, this young boy serves as Twain's mouthpiece, his weapon against

human frailties. Appealing to the reader as he does with his good and bad characteristics, Huck definitely has an admirable character.

His character is one of compassion, benevolence, and instinctive goodness. If he were not benevolent and compassionate, he would not have made it his mission to carry Jim, the escaped slave, to freedom. He is so compassionate towards Jim that he remarks, "Alright, then I'll go to hell," rather than allow Jim to be returned to Miss Watson as a slave (p. 180). To Huck, who has lived all his life in a slave-holding society, no act is worse than harboring some good white person's slave. It is an act so evil in society's eyes that hell is the proper punishment for the doer. This act against accepted standards also helps show he is instinctively good, for Huck is listening to his inner being, not society's teachings, when he vows to aid Jim, a man that Huck sees as having the same emotions and feelings as white men. Not only is Huck a better person for following his inner desires; he has a natural desire to be free from all forms of external restraint. Throughout the novel he seeks freedom from control--Pap, Widow Douglas, or any other controlling substitute. Although the quick-witted Huck is a bit listless and lazy at times, he industriously pursues freedom to obey his impulses. Furthermore, he is optimistic, confident in the rightness of his internal promptings, and sure of universal good will. All

of these traits make him precisely fit the definition of an innocent hero. For if he were not confident in the rightness of his inner being, he would not be willing to "go to hell" for helping Jim to safety. The fact that he is so helpful to Jim points to his many other good qualities.

To manifest further the innocence of Huck, various instances call attention to some of his characteristics of virtue. Loyalty, humility, shame, unselfishness, love, realization of human worth, and sympathy are some of his qualities. Loyalty is a chief attribute. Torn between Miss Watson and Jim, Huck is loyal to the Negro in saying he has smallpox when confronted by a slave hunter (p. 77). The men on shore naturally will not chance taking smallpox just to see if the other traveler on the raft is black or white. Of course, these men, being part of the "damned human race," do not offer to help the diseased either; nevertheless, Huck's loyalty to Jim saves the Negro from renewed slavery. Humility is evident when the formerly mischievous Huck, having told Jim his night of agonizing, sorrowful worry about Huck's possible loss was only a dream, apologizes to the colored man. His humility and concern are further supported by his statement, "I didn't do him no more mean tricks, and I wouldn't done that one if I'd 'a' knowed it would make him feel that way" (p. 74). As well as being humble, he is unselfish, for he rushes to rescue Jim from Mr. Loftus and the other "nigger" hunters

(p. 54). Outstanding of all traits is his love and compassion for Jim which are also seen through his many attempts to maintain Jim's freedom. Unlike most of the white people along the shores of the Mississippi River, he is aware of the Negro's human worth. Clearly his awareness is shown when he remarks that Jim "knowed most ever'thing" (p. 40). When Jim talks repentantly of his mistreating his own little deaf and dumb child, Huck comments, "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" (p. 131). Not only is Huck aware of individual worth, but he is also deeply sympathetic. His heart goes out to the drunk at the circus who is sorely jeered by the crowd (pp. 125-126), ole Boggs who is "sassed" by the mob as he rants through the streets (p. 119), and the king and the duke who are tarred and feathered by the raging rush of people. "Well, it made me sick to see it; and I was sorry for them poor pitiful rascals . . ." (p. 194) reveals his true inner being. Numerous incidents such as these show Huck's virtue. But from this limited number of examples, one can readily conclude the boy is innocent; however, his state of innocence depends on his escaping to a refuge where social evil does not exert a compelling influence.

In the Innocent Land of freedom and repose--the Mississippi River--to which he escapes, Huck can act in

accordance with his instincts.⁹ Throughout the introductory episodes in St. Petersburg with Widow Douglas' routines and Pap's drunken squabbling over the custody of him, Huck continually displays the urge to be free. He wants custody of himself so that he can listen to his inner desires and not to the social demands manifested in these guardians; therefore, he embarks upon the river seeking refuge in this idyllic setting of mystery and repose. When he pulls out into the river, away from the real world, the physical limitations of space open up for him. The sky seems "ever so deep" (p. 31) and the river appears "miles and miles across" (p. 30). The scenery is described in a dreamlike manner.¹⁰ Here in this fantastic atmosphere Huck communes with nature to strengthen his innocence. On Jackson's Island a friendly squirrel jabbars at Huck. Even in a storm he is as comfortable as are the animals near him when the storm is over. On the raft he and Jim contemplate the stars and the sunrise. Being at home in this setting, he, along with Jim, sheds his clothing and goes naked, an act symbolic that the Adamic innocence in the Garden of Eden exists on the raft. Here in the Innocent World--just as he sheds his clothes--Huck casts off the stifling ideas in his head. No compromise between the good heart (his instinctive desires) and the evil head (society's conventions

⁹Spengemann, p. 78.

¹⁰Spengemann, p. 72.

and mores) is possible.¹¹ The ways of the good heart bring about a highly desirable microscopic community aboard the raft for Huck and Jim.

A tiny society of true brotherhood and good will exists on the raft. This commendable relationship established by Huck and Jim contrasts with the actual society along the Mississippi shores. Here, Huck has a chance to practice the brotherhood to which he is devoted.¹² "Other places do seem so cramped and smothery," Huck explains, "but a raft don't. You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft" (p. 99). "What you want, above all things, on a raft, is for everybody to be satisfied and feel right and kind towards the others" (p. 106). Remarks such as these prove that brotherly love and good will exist on the raft. At the same time these remarks of the unconsciously critical Huck aim a devastating criticism at the existing social order along the shores of the Mississippi. It, with its slavery, feuds, lynching, murder, and a spurious Christian morality, is entirely different from the idyllic setting of the raft with its freedom, happiness, and harmony.¹³

The unidyllic setting of pressuring conformity is definitely present for Huck to encounter. St. Petersburg

¹¹Spengemann, p. 78.

¹²Leo Marx, "Mr. Eliot, Mr. Trilling, and Huck Finn," American Scholar, 22 (Autumn 1953), 431.

¹³Marx, p. 434.

along with all spots on the Mississippi riverbanks furnishes a microscopic picture of the evils which the world launches against innocence--vulgarity, malice, fraud, greed, and violence. Scenes of urban, industrial civilization with its schools, churches, social classes, and businesses--all are present at one time or another. The conflicting dogmas of Miss Watson's and the Widow Douglas' religions confuse Huck, leaving him with little more than an impression of the equal senselessness of all dogma.¹⁴ Huck's new fortune, the main instrument of his rise to social acceptance, brings him only trouble from Pap; so he gives it away to Judge Thatcher. Pap's quarrels with the Judge over the custody of Huck increase the youth's anxieties. These incidents with scores of others blend to make the shores of the Mississippi an unidyllic setting for Huck to encounter. The people inhabiting these civilized locales lack individuality and generally represent dominant social attitudes. Repeatedly they function as groups seeking conformity to civilized opinions and values. This setting, undesirable as it is, along with the desirable idyllic setting, provides the occasion for Huck to enact the role of the innocent hero as he moves between the differing settings.

In Adventures of Huckleberry Finn Twain's innocent hero Huck moves between these settings of civilization's

¹⁴Spengemann, p. 71.

repression and nature's freedom. Since the action is predominantly evasive, it is fitting that the structure be called mainly denitiatory.¹⁵ Huck's struggle for freedom, which drives him out of St. Petersburg and down the river to the Phelps farm, leads him away from society. In the idyllic setting of nature his inner being is nurtured and strengthened to such a degree that it begins to rule his actions; however, he cannot stay forever in this desired location. He must continually go to the civilized shores for food, information, and excitement as he and Jim float downstream, but each time as he touches the shore, the social evils crowd in upon him bringing about his flight to the raft's repose to be re-vitalized as an innocent. The motivating force behind each of these several evasive flights from society is the ills of the "damned human race." He cannot stay when civilized decorum, viciousness, or restraint touches him; he is at rest only so long as external pressures leave him alone. Evil, in fact, is the only active force in the book; Huck's goodness survives not because he is involved in conflict and emerges victorious but only because he runs away.¹⁶ Huck tries repeatedly to live on the shore, but each time similar evils chase him away. Huck's adventure, therefore, is basically denitiatory; however, it is overlaid with a

¹⁵Spengemann, p. 69.

¹⁶Spengemann, p. 69.

set of experiences which acquaint him fully with the evil of society. It is in this way that Twain causes Huck to come in contact with and then unconsciously cry out against the ills of the "damned human race" that the writer so fervently wished to correct.

Huck is Twain's instrument of moral comment about humanity. His dominant trait is to see only the appearance of life and to speak in a voice that is unconsciously ironic.¹⁷ He does not perceive the reality which is apparent to the author and the reader. Of course, this lack of perceptiveness helps to make him a perfect medium for satire as he plays the role of innocent hero. Over and over as he approaches the towns along the banks of the Mississippi, he insists that the dominant culture is decadent and perverted. Values have begun to crumble. The inhabitants can hardly be said to live conscious lives of their own; their actions, their thoughts, even their emotions are controlled by civilized ills.¹⁸ Huck unknowingly reports this dilemma to the reader through his description of appearances. He reports what he sees; however, he reports other things also. He reports what he himself inwardly experiences--the struggle between his innate desires and society's conventions.

¹⁷Spengemann, p. 64.

¹⁸Henry Nash Smith, Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press, 1962), p. 117.

Huck not only watches events occur but at certain times is torn internally between his inner desires, a sound heart, and his deformed conscience, the product of civilization's teachings. This conscience is simply the attitude he has taken over his environment on the land. "What is still sound in him is an impulse from the deepest level of his personality that struggles against the overlay of prejudice and false valuation imposed on all members of the society in the name of religion, morality, law, and refinement."¹⁹ Twain supported the theory that a sound heart and a deformed conscience are at war within Huck when he wrote the following statement for his lecture tour in 1895: "I should exploit the proposition that in a crucial moral emergency a sound heart is a safer guide than an ill-trained conscience. I sh'd support this doctrine with a chapter from a book of mine where a sound heart and a deformed conscience come into collision and conscience suffers defeat. Two persons figure in this chapter: Jim, a middle-aged slave, and Huck Finn, a boy of 14, . . . bosom friends, drawn together by a community of misfortune."²⁰ With this statement Twain himself verified that Huck undergoes a struggle between his inner desires and his misled conscience. As he is torn, Huck describes his reactions. From this conflict the reader can see the boy striving to prevent the

¹⁹Smith, Development of a Writer, p. 122.

²⁰Blair, p. 143.

ills of humanity from swallowing him up. On the river there is little danger, but on the shore he has a problem. Nevertheless, on the raft or off, he serves as a commenting force. His commenting, as has already been stated above, is unconscious. He unknowingly reports about the society that has already been swallowed up by false values. Unaware, he furthermore tells of his own struggle with these same threatening false values. In spite of his powerful deformed or ill-trained conscience, however, the sound heart is most often the victor in Huck; therefore, he fits well the role Twain wished him to play as an innocent hero in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. But to further reinforce Huck's innocence, his similarity to Moses, the Biblical prophet, can be given.

Kenneth S. Lynn has compared Huck to Moses in the Bible. He believes Twain was doing a great deal more than making another joke when he began Huckleberry Finn with a chapter entitled "I Discover Moses and the Bulrushers" even though Huck soon loses all interest in Moses, "because I don't take no stock in dead people" (p. 4). The amusing introduction of the Biblical story effectively announces the idea of slavery and freedom as a part of the roles of both Huck and Moses.²¹ In the Biblical saga Moses "died" and was reborn in the river, and later grew up to lead an enslaved people

²¹"Huck and Jim," Yale Review, 47 (Spring 1958), 426-27.

to freedom. The term "died" is used here because Moses' mother was pretending his death when she put him afloat in a basket on the river since the Egyptian king had commanded the death of all boy babies among the Hebrew slaves. After being found on the river by the Egyptian princess and taken as her son, Moses, being treated as an Egyptian, was given freedom. Later, he was led by God to guide the enslaved Hebrews to freedom. Huck, when he sets afloat on the river, is pretending to be dead in order to escape Pap. He, too, is reborn, believes Lynn, because on the river he is given freedom. On the river he is no more a slave to Pap, Widow Douglas, or any other controlling force that epitomizes social ills than Moses was a slave to the Egyptians. Having found his freedom, Moses led the Hebrews out of slavery. Lynn implies that Twain hoped Huck, having found his freedom on the river, would lead the inhabitants of civilization, slaves to human ills as they are, out of bondage. Consequently, such a comparison along with his many qualifications establishes the fact that Twain in Huckleberry Finn uses Huck as the innocent hero as a vehicle for satire.

Huck is an innocent hero, and some critics believe that Jim is an innocent hero as well. The latter is inaccurate. It is true that Jim is a potential innocent hero, but he falls short of the qualifications; therefore, he cannot be called one. Instead, he is more of a measuring stick for Huck's moral growth. Because Jim shares so many

of Huck's misfortunes and because he represents the fugitive freedom of the Innocent Land, one can, at first glance, think him to serve the same function as Huck. Furthermore, Jim has many of Huck's qualities such as love, unselfishness, and loyalty. Jim, too, is fleeing from slavery, but the types of slavery differ. Jim's slavery is the physical bonds of imprisonment by a slave holder; Huck's, the bonds of social ills by a "damned human race." People are further led to believe Jim is an innocent hero because, according to Daniel G. Hoffman, Jim transforms from a gullible suppliant to witches and ghosts on shore to Huck's spiritual father on the raft. The term "father" would fit because he takes care of Huck; for example, he stands his watch on the raft beyond his length of time in order that Huck may get extra sleep. Constantly, Jim does good things, but, after a short while, falls to the sidelines. After the raft is run over by the paddle wheeler and Jim and Huck are separated, Jim is never pictured again with highly elevating powers. He falls to the sidelines as Huck becomes more prominent in his observation.²² Instead of being called an innocent hero of satire, Jim should be termed as a proper object of Huck's moral speculations. "As a Negro, Jim can measure the Southern white boy's increasing detachment from institutionalized society and his expanding natural benevolence. In Jim's

²²Form and Fable in American Fiction (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1961), pp. 332-335.

world Huck slowly learns to treat his companion as a human being."²³ Consequently, Twain uses Jim to measure and stimulate moral growth in Huck. Thus, it can be concluded that Huck is the one and only innocent hero in the novel.

Although Huck's role as an innocent hero has hopefully, at this point, been firmly implanted in the reader's mind, it is not yet suitable to discuss particular social ills made evident by him. First, Huck's functions in the novel's three-part structure must be established. Being the most conspicuous of these three elements, the first part involves Huck's and Jim's flights toward freedom. Making up the second element in the novel is the social satire of the towns along the river. Last of all is the developing characterization of Huck wherein he undergoes a soul-searching moral crisis. Henry Nash Smith argues, "The narrative tends to increase in depth as it moves from the adventure story of the early chapters into the social satire of the long middle section, and thence to the ultimate psychological penetration of Huck's character in the moral crisis of Chapter 31."²⁴

In the beginning chapters Huck and Jim's journey down the river is primarily a flight from physical danger; Huck inwardly does not like the social ills epitomized by Pap, Miss Watson, Widow Douglas, Judge Thatcher, or any other

²³Spengemann, pp. 73-74.

²⁴Smith, Development of a Writer, p. 114.

controlling force. This world where the established codes are either hypocritical or superficial is undesirable to him.²⁵ Because of this discomfort along with his concern for his and Jim's protection, the two set out in a flight on the Mississippi River. Jim is running away from actual slavery; Huck, from the cruelty of his father, from the well-intentioned "sivilizing" efforts of Miss Watson and the Widow Douglas, from respectability and routine in general. This flight for freedom fills the first sixteen chapters of the book, but it is here that Twain laid aside his manuscript in 1876.²⁶

The narrative plan had run into difficulties for him. When Huck and Jim shove off from Jackson's Island on their raft (at the end of Chapter 11), they hastily do so to escape slave hunters after Jim. No long-range plan is mentioned until the beginning of Chapter 15, when Huck says that at Cairo they will sell the raft, board a steamboat on the Ohio, and make their way to the free states. But they float beyond Cairo in the fog, and a substitute plan of making their way back to the mouth of the Ohio in their canoe is foiled when the canoe vanishes while they are sleeping. They then plan to buy a canoe farther down the river to go back; meanwhile, they drift with the raft.

²⁵Charles Kaplan, "Holden and Huck: The Odysseys of Youth," College English, 18 (November 1956), 79.

²⁶Blair, p. 151.

Drifting downstream with the current of the Mississippi, however, could not be reconciled with the plan to free Jim by transporting him up the Ohio; but the Mississippi, the river Twain could blindfoldedly describe to perfection, was the river he needed to write about.²⁷ Nevertheless, this shifting of rivers caused him to abandon the story temporarily.

When Twain began the manuscript again in 1879, after an interval of three years, he had thought of a different plan for the narrative. Instead of concentrating on the story of Huck and Jim's escape, he now plunged into a stronger satiric description of the society of the prewar South. Huck was essential to this purpose, for Twain intended to view his subject ironically through Huck's eyes. But Jim was more or less superfluous. During the action of Chapters 17 and 18, explanatory of the Grangerford household and the feud, Jim disappears from the story. Twain had apparently not yet found a way to utilize social satire with the narrative scheme of Huck and Jim's journey on the raft. Here, however, Twain came up with a device to keep Huck and Jim floating southward while he continued his panoramic survey of the towns along the river. The device is the introduction of the duke and the king.²⁸ In Chapter 19 they come aboard the raft, take control of it,

²⁷Smith, Development of a Writer, p. 116.

²⁸Smith, Development of a Writer, p. 116.

and hold Huck and Jim as virtual captives. In this manner the narrative can maintain the overall form of a journey down the river while providing ample opportunity for satire when Huck accompanies the two scoundrels on their raids ashore. But only the outward form of the journey is continued. Its meaning has changed with the entrance of the king and the duke.

With their entry the fundamental role of Huck becomes observation. His and Jim's quest for freedom has in effect come to an end. Jim is physically present but he assumes an entirely passive role, and is hidden with the raft for long periods of time. Huck is also essentially passive; his function now is that of observer as well as deliverer of satire towards the towns along the banks. Again and again he reveals that the dominant culture is decadent and perverted.²⁹ In the "damned human race" he sees ills that sicken; one such ill is the king's hypocrisy: "I never see anything so disgusting" (p. 138). He has had a similar reaction to the brutality of the Grangerford feud: "It made me so sick I most fell out of the tree (p. 97). In describing such scenes he speaks as a moral man viewing an immoral society, an observer who is himself free of the vices and weaknesses he describes.³⁰ Throughout this long

²⁹Smith, Development of a Writer, p. 117.

³⁰Smith, Development of a Writer, p. 118.

middle section, while he is primarily an observer, he is not a free agent who is responsible for what happens.

Because choices are made solely by the king and the duke in this middle section, Huck is free of any inner conflict. He has had no real moral crises between his sound heart and ill-trained conscience while the captors are on board. In Chapter 31, however, he escapes from these men and faces once again the responsibility for deciding on a course of action regarding the runaway slave Jim. This is a major moral crisis for him. The question of Jim's escape has risen earlier in Chapter 16. For the first time Huck then faces up to the fact that he is helping a slave to escape. His ill-trained conscience, deformed as it is, tells him to return Jim to Miss Watson, but his sound heart prevents this action. The reader must understand why this situation has not been mentioned earlier: Twain seems to postpone the exploration of Huck's moral dilemma with the entrance of the king and the duke.³¹ Huck can no longer make a decision for himself in their presence; therefore, the dilemma momentarily lies at rest. In Chapter 31 Huck's genuine moral crisis occurs. His situation is much more desperate than it had been at the time of his first struggle with his conscience. The raft has borne Jim hundreds of miles downstream from the pathway of escape and the king has turned him over to Silas Phelps

³¹Smith, Development of a Writer, p. 119.

as a runaway slave (p. 182). The quest for freedom has "all come to nothing, everything all busted up and ruined" (p. 178). Huck thinks of notifying Miss Watson where Jim is, since if he must be a slave he would be better off "at home where his family was" (p. 178). But then Huck's sound heart tells him that Miss Watson would probably sell Jim down the river as a punishment for running away. At the same time, however, his deformed conscience rebukes him for "stealing a poor old woman's nigger that hadn't ever done me no harm, . . . it hit me all of a sudden that here was the plain hand of Providence slapping me in the face and letting me know my wickedness was being watched all the time. . . . I most dropped in my tracks I was so scared." In his state of fright, he thinks that if he had been attending Sunday school, he would have remembered "that people that acts as I'd been acting about that nigger goes to everlasting fire" (p. 178); therefore, he would not have harbored the stolen slave Jim. Nevertheless, his sound heart finally wins over with the statement, "All right, then, I'll go to hell" (p. 180). He is not only refusing to tell Miss Watson about Jim; he plans to steal the Negro from slavery again.

The account of Huck's mental struggle involving the choice to help Jim or report him draws together the theme of flight from bondage and the social satire of the middle section, for he is trying to work himself clear of the

perverted value system of St. Petersburg.³² When the third section shows that Huck has been in part perverted by society's ideals, the satire of this decadent slave-holding society gains immensely in force. Satire emerges again and again in the novel through the point of view of the innocent hero Huck.

It is true that satire forcefully emerges from these first thirty-one chapters, but those remaining undergo a drastic shift in tone. These last twelve chapters, being a commonplace of criticism, seem to offer little of the satiric force that has been so apparent in the book. At this point the raft is destroyed and Jim is captive at the Phelps farm. Huck, wanting to save Jim, makes his way to the Phelps farm, where he takes on the name of Tom Sawyer. With the intentions of his sound heart being definitely there, Huck, however, is sorely misled by Tom, an illusion-filled boy, now calling himself Sid Sawyer. Tom takes control with his complicated pranks of freeing Jim, and Huck becomes once again, as he is in the early chapters at St. Petersburg, a subordinate carrying out orders. Possibly Twain allows Tom and Huck's irresponsible foolery because he realizes there is no successful way to give Jim complete freedom from servitude and Huck freedom from humanity's ills. Twain does set Jim theoretically free in the end and has Huck set out for the "Territory" because he

³²Smith, Development of a Writer, p. 120.

cannot stand to be "sivilized" (p. 245), but in nineteenth century days, it was not likely a Negro would ever actually be free; nor was it likely that Huck would escape humanity's ills for very long in the new "Territory." Nevertheless, whether Twain meant Jim and Huck to be totally free or not, the first three parts of the novel's structure point out humanity's ills in a dynamic way, despite these last chapters of prankish foolery. No matter what the reason for Tom's escapades in these last frequently criticized chapters, it is of no concern in this particular thesis. The intention here is to convince the reader that Twain sought to purge the "damned human race," as he called it, of certain civilized ills through the use of his innocent hero, Huck Finn. In Chapter III of this thesis, certain of these social ills will be identified.

CHAPTER III

SOCIAL ILLS REVEALED BY HUCK

One of the greatest books to have come out of the United States of America--Adventures of Huckleberry Finn--begins with this preamble: "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" (p. 2). Hoffman says, "What a way to begin: 'No trespassing!'" This, of course, is only the first of the innumerable jokes, pranks, disguises, tricks, deceptions, ruses, and verbal extravagancies that make Adventures of Huckleberry Finn a book that has won the world's heart."¹ It is Twain's ironic way of challenging his readers to actually question his motive, his moral, and even his plot. For his book might pass off as just a mere boy's adventure story if adult attention were not called to his writing in the above negative way. He wanted to teach a lesson, but he had to have a listening, alert audience. Probably the preamble aided in attaining it, but whether it did or not, the important issue is that people in this twentieth century are beginning to listen, even though they may not yet have learned

¹Hoffman, p. 317.

to take his advice. When the novel was first published in 1885, the nineteenth-century readers did not listen at all. Their critics called Twain's book vulgar, rough, inelegant, irreverent, coarse, semi-obscene, trashy, and vicious.² But even though readers of the past or present may or may not have paid heed to the lessons being taught, Twain put them there just the same. He wanted the needless faults of humanity to be removed so that the human species would no longer qualify as the "damned human race." In his endeavors to teach timeless lessons to man, however, he was not writing to the few cold-blooded people who were deliberately calloused and hard-hearted and usually beyond redemption; nor did he have in mind those few saintly persons who require no major alteration of character. Instead, he was probably thinking of the large, kind-hearted middle group of society with its unintentional, thoughtless failings.³ Those in the middle group as well as those in the minority groups should pause and look closely at certain of these social ills that Twain so fervently hoped to help remove through Huck Finn, his innocent hero who obeys his sound heart more often than his ill-trained, deformed conscience. Twain said himself that he was preaching "sermons"

²Arthur Vogelback, "The Publication and Reception of Huckleberry Finn in America," American Literature, 11 (Nov. 1939), 265.

³Gilbert M. Rubenstein, "The Moral Structure of Huckleberry Finn," College English, 18 (Nov. 1956), 75.

through his writing. Lynn says, "This humorist was not only a giber, but a destroyer, a Jeremiah preaching the corruption of the state. When he described his books as 'sermons,' America took it as just another joke, but Twain was in dead earnest."⁴ Probably the people who best understood him were not his admirers and friends, but the librarians who banned his books as morally corrupt. Like Joan of Arc, Twain dreamed of helping cleanse society of its ills so that it might become great. If in the end it was safer to burn Joan, it was plainly more convenient to regard Twain as a joker who never made fun of anything high or good.⁵ Even if some of his readers did not recognize his efforts as an attempt to purge humanity of its ills through the comments and actions of Huck Finn, they, nevertheless, could look to his recorded statements to know it is true. Huck's comments and observations reveal just how false humanity's ideals really are. Then, in turn, Twain had hoped the reader would recognize the falseness of his own values and make changes within his own character. A big change is needed by many members of the "damned human race" who are hypocritical.

Many times Huck sees hypocrisy as he scrambles back and forth from the raft to the land. In the opening paragraphs of Chapter 18 Huck begins telling about Colonel

⁴Lynn, p. 423.

⁵Lynn, pp. 423-424.

Grangerford and his family. He has just previously been separated from the Negro Jim, his fellow traveler down the Mississippi River, by a steamboat paddle wheel's overturning the raft. After reaching land, Huck is cautiously admitted into the Grangerford home when the family knows for sure he is not a Shepherdson, one of their feuding opponents. After being accepted by them, Huck describes the head of their family: "Colonel Grangerford was a gentleman all over; and so was his family" (p. 89). He tells of the politeness of these folk toward one another, their hospitality toward friends, their fine manners; but when an opposing Shepherdson comes near, fire begins to fly. Their gentle warmth transforms into high-spirited violence. It is this polite, affectionate family that jolts Huck into realizing they are engaged in a feud so devastating that he wishes he "hadn't ever come ashore that night, to see such things. I ain't ever going to get shut of them" (pp. 97-98). These genteel, impeccably mannered people who delight in killings make him sick (p. 97). For Huck, the innocent hero, to be made sick about these killings carries far more impact than it would for another spokesman to be. Even Twain himself could not attain the emphatic criticism of hypocrisy that Huck does because he would not have the innocence of Huck. Henry Nash Smith's observation can help clarify the above statement that Twain could not serve effectively as critic of the Grangerfords'

vice. Smith believes that Twain momentarily steps into the shoes of Colonel Sherburn in Chapter 22 when Sherburn reproaches the mob for wanting to lynch him.⁶ Although Sherburn successfully disperses the crowd, his criticism of the mob's ill is much less effective with the reader than Huck's criticism of the Grangerfords' ill. Sherburn, or the momentary voice of Twain, is isolated by intellectual superiority and is contemptuous of mankind in general. Sherburn is without a moral sense or sense of guilt. He does not experience the inner struggle that Huck does because he does not have a sound heart. Huck's human warmth is missing in him. Having committed the cold-blooded murder of Boggs (p. 121), Sherburn feels no remorse for the wrong as Huck does when he commits a wrong. Sherburn, devoid of pity or guilt, is filled with adult aggressiveness foreign to Huck's nature; therefore, his denunciations of the human race, Twain's or anyone's other than an innocent hero's, can carry little power with the reader.⁷ Huck Finn is the appropriate spokesman to feel sickness about the Grangerfords' hypocritical brotherly love. While viewing their killings in the feud, Huck, sickened as he is, exposes their true feelings about loving a neighbor. Through Huck, a commenting youth with innocence, the reader can easily see the Grangerfords as the epitome of hypocrisy.

⁶Development of a Writer, p. 136.

⁷Smith, Development of a Writer, pp. 136-137.

In describing the Grangerford parlor, Huck further exposes their hypocrisy that is reflected in the decor. He explains the fireplace bricks are kept redder than fire-darkened bricks "by pouring water on them and scrubbing them with another brick; sometimes they wash them over with red water-paint they call Spanish brown" (p. 85). When in good shape "the clock fills the family with pride by performing more spectacularly than ordinary clocks, striking one hundred and fifty times." An "outlandish parrot" on each side of the clock is "painted up gaudy." The fruits in the basket on the table are "much redder and yellower and prettier than real ones is." The bricks, however, are only discolored bricks painted over and the showy clock keeps poor time. The gaudy parrots are "made out of something like chalk" (p. 85) and the fruit is artificial. "If this parlor, as rooms in fiction often do, embodies the qualities of those who furnished it, the Grangerfords are folk who try to look finer than they are."⁸ The books on the table are significant as are the trimmings in the room. Henry Clay's Speeches is standard equipment for a Southern home, but Friendship's Offering is ironic for such a house of hatred. "A big family Bible, Pilgrim's Progress, and a hymnbook are unlikely to persuade the bellicose family to follow the Christian injunction to love one's neighbors. Family Medicine which 'tells you

⁸Blair, p. 229.

what to do if a body is sick or dead,' will not be removed from its neat pile and used if the ailing or defunct is a Shepherdson. The author's name underlines the incongruity of even an unused book on healing in this house of killers: it is Dr. Gunn."⁹ Both the parlor decor and the unused books on the table help Huck reveal the hypocrisy of the Grangerfords. As he views the parlor, he sees only the appearance of life and speaks out in a voice that is ironic. Huck, with his candor, unknowingly makes the parlor's reflection of hypocrisy evident to the reader.

Huck sees hypocrisy in both Widow Douglas and Miss Watson, his overseers for a time. Widow Douglas will not allow Huck to smoke, but shortly afterwards, she "took snuff" (p. 4), another form of tobacco. Saying that prayer will bring anything, Miss Watson insists Huck pray every day. When his prayer for fish hooks is not answered and he tells her, she calls him a fool (p. 11). The young narrator does not call either of the actions hypocrisy, but each is pointed up to be just that by his dislike of the acts. His internal promptings make him unappreciative of what both of the ladies have done. Although he most likely does not have "hypocrisy" in his vocabulary, Huck implies to the reader through his discomfort that the women have been hypocritical.

⁹Blair, pp. 229-230.

On the last page of Chapter 24 the king and the duke launch their scheme for robbing the Wilks girls of their inheritance, with the king pretending to be a parson and the duke acting the part of a deaf mute. Thoroughly disgusted with both of the hypocritical men, Huck comments, "It was enough to make a body ashamed of the human race" (p. 137) to see such hypocrisy.

Pap Finn repeatedly acts as another hypocrite, for his actions and his words do not agree. He fusses about the expense of rearing Huck (p. 24), but over and over he takes and spends any money Huck acquires by his own means since Pap never gives him any. Pap's terrible habit of cursing is also directed toward the government for its taking away his freedoms; nevertheless, he is holding Huck hostage at the time he is quarreling (p. 24). Often Pap, as many others do, exemplifies hypocrisy as the innocent hero frankly exposes what he sees.

The Phelps, too, are hypocritical. "They are almost perfect specimens of the dominant culture. They are kind to their friends and relatives; they have no taste for violence; they are people capable of devoting themselves to their spectacular dinners while they keep Huck's beloved friend Jim locked out back in a little hut with the window boarded up."¹⁰ Of course, Aunt Sally visits Jim to see if he is "comfortable" and Uncle Silas comes in "to pray with

¹⁰Marx, p. 432.

him" (p. 208), but these acts seem to be merely pretense, not genuine concern. After Jim's unsuccessful escape, when Tom asks about him, Aunt Sally replies: "Him? . . . the runaway nigger? . . . They've got him back, safe and sound, and he's in the cabin again, on bread and water, and loaded down with chains, till he's claimed or sold" (p. 241). For Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas to do such acts as these to a human being and still consider themselves as kind and concerned is hypocritical. At this point it must be established that an act of Aunt Sally or any other character may be classified under hypocrisy by one reader, under inhumanity by another, and under another ill by a third reader. To agree that a particular action is classified as a certain kind of ill by all readers is really not the point of this thesis. Neither was it the point of Twain. The point is to grade a specific action as being bad. Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas are both wrong in their actions toward Jim, whether the actions be categorized as hypocrisy or as other evils. The innocent Huck, the moral man viewing immoral society, discloses their evildoing through his dislike of Jim's ill treatment.

Huck scorns pretended piety and other perversions of Christianity. He contends with religious pretense in many characters. Miss Watson, playing the part of a good Christian, always calls her "niggers" in for prayers (p. 5). But it seems that if she really believed the Lord gave these

creatures souls and died for them on the cross to free them from sin, then she would free them from slavery. The king and the duke, struggling to trick the Wilks sisters out of their money, kneel down and rest their foreheads on the coffin of the deceased Mr. Wilks. They "let on to pray all to theirselves." One of them "blubbers out a pious goody-goody Amen . . . and all that kind of rot and slush till it was just sickening" (p. 138). Pretended or misguided piety and other perversions of Christianity obviously head the list of counts in Twain's indictment of humanity delivered through Huck.¹¹ Of course, it is still Huck's innocence that brings the effectiveness of the indictment. His occasionally having fallen victim to civilization's false ideals himself helps give force to his comments about perverted Christianity that other spokesmen could not have made. As Huck speaks, he makes known Twain's dislike of Christian piety and perversion, but he also exposes that Twain did respect the worth of prayer. Huck comments that under certain conditions, "there ain't no doubt but there is something in that thing. That is, there's something in it when a body like the widow or the parson prays." Huck believes that bread for his hungry body comes to him because of the widow's prayer (p. 33), but he does not believe that Miss Watson's mercenary conception of prayer (p. 11) is the right way to use Christianity either. Having spent

¹¹Smith, Development of a Writer, p. 118.

a Sunday in church with the Grangerfords, Huck furthermore implies that they misunderstand the true meaning of Christianity as well. They pretend to enjoy the sermon about brotherly love, but yet, they keep their guns between their knees during the sermon because the Shepherdsons sit right across the aisle (p. 93). He seems to think these actions of his fellow human beings are awfully hard to understand, especially since the brotherhood of the Grangerfords and Shepherdsons is a sharp contrast to the brotherhood he and Jim have on the raft. Huck's declaration that "What you want, above all things, on a raft, is for everybody to be satisfied and feel right and kind towards the others" (p. 106) shows that they come close to having a perfect brotherhood, something these feuding families know nothing about. In Huck's mind all of these characters in their different ways pervert the true meaning of Christianity. He knows that their way of living cannot compare to the true brotherhood he and Jim have on the raft. His experience with Jim in an idyllic setting makes their pretense and perversions of Christianity readily evident to him, more so than to one having experienced only the unidyllic settlements along the banks of the Mississippi River.

Subtly Huck also reveals man's self-pleasing interpretations of the Bible. Tom Sawyer's gang will rob during the week, but not on Sunday, the sabbath (p. 10), because the Bible admonishes humanity to keep the sabbath holy. It

also teaches not to steal, but Tom does not remember this commandment. Thieves on the Walter Scott, a wrecked steamboat, decide they are "unfavorable to killin' a man" when the laws of nature will drown him because he is left on the sinking ship. One of them comments, "it ain't good sense, it ain't good morals" to commit murder (p. 60). According to their interpretations, God must not consider it a sin to wish that a man will die; but according to the standards of Huck, it is just not right. Over and over again Huck implies that humanity has some confused ideas about the Bible and the religion it represents. Man enjoys abiding by one commandment, but overlooking two others.

Huck also repeatedly encounters inhumanity or brutality. Inhumanity is at its height when Huck describes the worthless loafers of Bricksville who enjoy urging a dog to attack a sow and her litter:

And pretty soon you'd hear a loafer sing out, "Hi! so boy! sick him, Tige!" and away the sow would go, squaling most horrible, with a dog or two swinging to each ear, and three or four dozen more a-coming; and then you would see all the loafers get up and watch the thing out of sight, and laugh at the fun and look grateful for the noise. Then they'd settle back again till there was a 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).

Not only does Huck disapprove of inhumanity to animals, but he hates inhuman, cruel behavior to fellow men because he,

being an innocent hero, confronts the world with infinite good will and wants everyone else to do the same.

Huck witnesses much inhumanity in Bricksville, a small town on the river front where he, as a hostage of the king and the duke, spends a good bit of time. The crowds jeer and laugh at Boggs, an old drunk. The jeering is bad enough, but one of the townsmen, Colonel Sherburn, who has been briefly mentioned earlier, stoops to killing the old fellow for his having criticized him (pp. 119-121). Sherburn commits the murder, and then, experiencing no remorse for the deed, rebukes the mob for their efforts to lynch him. With the reader his reprimand carries little power, for he does not fit the qualifications of an innocent hero. Instead, Huck's comments of disgust with Sherburn's inhumanity are far more effective. His disgust-filled comments are again effective when these Bricksville people later that day make fun of a drunken clown riding a dangerous horse at the circus. The whole crowd of people stand up laughing and shouting while the running horse slings its rider from side to side. As the crowd laughs, Huck says, "It warn't funny to me, though; I was all of a tremble to see his danger" (p. 126). This statement alone shows how Huck empathizes with the victim of inhumanity, something that Sherburn could not do.

Huck is repeatedly concerned for others who are subjected to inhumanity, even if these others have been inhuman to him and his beloved Jim. The king and the duke

are the targets of brutality after their trickery over the Wilks estate. Having slipped away from Aunt Sally's farm and gone into town with Tom Sawyer, Huck tells what they see:

--here comes a raging rush of people, with torches, and an awful whooping and yelling, and banging tin pans and blowing horns; and we jumped to one side to let them go by; and as they went by, I see they had the king and the duke astraddle of a rail--that is, I knowed it was the king and the duke, though they was all over tar and feathers, and didn't look like nothing in the world that was human--just looked like a couple of monstrous big soldier-plumes. Well, it made me sick to see it; and I was sorry for them poor pitiful rascals, it seemed like I couldn't ever feel any hardness against them any more in the world. It was a dreadful thing to see. Human beings can be awful cruel to one another (pp. 193-194).

Through these statements, Huck, with his innocent warmth and good will, emphatically exposes inhumanity, one of the worst traits of the human race.

Again and again this vice is directed toward Huck and various other characters. Once, when he and Jim are floating down the river on their raft, a steamboat aims right for them. Huck remarks that steamboats "try to see how close they can come without touching; sometimes the wheel bites off a sweep, and then the pilot sticks his head out and laughs and thinks he's mighty smart" (p. 80). One particular steamboat comes smashing straight through Huck and Jim's raft, never stopping to check the damage. Another instance of brutality occurs when Huck, hiding in a tree during the Grangerford-Shepherdson shooting squabble,

has to see the young boy Buck killed: "It made me so sick I most fell out of the tree. I ain't agoing to tell all that happened--it would make me sick again if I was to do that" (p. 97). Then toward the last of the book, poor old Jim, locked in a shanty behind Aunt Sally's home, has to endure chains, curses, mere bread and water for food, and solitude because he helps bring Tom Sawyer, whose leg has been wounded during Jim's attempted escape, back to safety (pp. 237-238). Huck desperately wishes he could open the eyes of these inhuman people; he wants to stop their brutal actions to Jim, and to dozens of others throughout the book. In his eagerness for universal good will, a characteristic of his innocence, he can hardly tolerate inhumanity.

Unconsciously Huck exposes another ill, the corrupt conformity of the individual. The Grangerford-Shepherdson feud is a circumstance showing conformity that is evil. When Buck is trying to learn the causes of the feud, Buck reveals that he is uninformed about the start, now thirty years in the past. He vaguely recalls that there was a lawsuit and a shooting; other details have been forgotten. Buck comments, "Oh, yes, Pa knows, I reckon, and some of the other old people; but they don't know, now, what the row 'as about in the first place" (p. 92). When giving Buck's comment to the reader, Huck unknowingly shows that man is a victim of corrupt conformity. Man unreasonably

accepts the rightness of a matter without individual thought. Buck and the younger Grangerfords, fighting for reasons they do not even know, are merely joining the crowd in their corrupt deeds. Huck, the moral man that he is, viewing the corrupt conformity of the Grangerfords, is literally sickened.

Tom Sawyer's actions epitomize corrupt conformity as well. His robbery gang along with its activities must be patterned after what he considers authoritative books. When Tom and Huck are trying to rescue poor Jim from Aunt Sally's little hut, the Negro has to write on a shirt with his blood, make meaningless inscriptions (that he cannot read) on the wall, endure the company of scores of rats and snakes in his cabin, plus tolerate other senseless things (pp. 202, 216, 223) because Tom believes he should. Tom comments about these and earlier activities in this way: "I've seen it in books; and so of course that's what we've got to do" (p. 9). He argues with Huck that the people who made the books know what is correct for them to do. Throughout the novel Huck retaliates with, "I say it's a fool way, . . . I don't take no stock in it" (p. 10), and "I don't give a dead rat what the authorities thinks about it nuther" (p. 206). Huck believes that tradition that leads to corrupt conformity, whether put in a book or passed on by others, is often a needless menace. Man has a head of his own in order to think for himself. Huck thinks for

himself most of the time. His sound heart and deformed conscience continuously wage a battle within him with the sound heart usually being the victor. This is why it is so difficult for him to endure Tom's corrupt conformity. Tom should think for himself instead of conforming to vicious practices.

The issue of slavery in Huckleberry Finn is a prime example of this horrid ill. Tradition and past training of almost everyone in the novel have resulted in their corrupt conformity to slavery. Referring to himself as "ornery" and not "brung up right," Huck declares that he would rather "go to hell" than let Jim lose his freedom (p. 180). "Jim is more valuable to Huck as a person than all the laws and standards of society."¹² Huck feels he has not gone to Sunday school as he should and his pap has not bothered to teach him the acceptable rules to live by; therefore, he believes he is bad. If he had gone to Sunday school he would not be wicked and want Jim to have freedom as he does now. As has already been said in Chapter II, the Sunday school would have taught him that "people that acts as I'd been acting about that nigger goes to everlasting fire" (p. 178). Twain's allowing Huck to believe his helping Jim escape is evil probably stems from Twain's memory of Hannibal mores. He once said that he doubted his mother, as compassionate as she was, ever

¹²Stone, p. 149.

questioned the morality of slavery. She conformed to the evil practice just as other Hannibal citizens conformed to it. "She 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 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."¹³ She, following her righteous elders, was a perfect example of corrupt conformity before Twain. In his notebook of 1895 he wrote this message: "In those old slave holding days the whole community was agreed to one thing--the awful sacredness of slave property. To help steal a horse or a cow was a low crime, but to help a hunted slave . . . carried with it a stain, a moral smirch which nothing could wipe away."¹⁴ Most people would not chance this moral smirch. Instead, they would conform to the rules of slavery. Huck knows that society around him feels just the way that Twain's notes describe. The society on the shores of the Mississippi is afraid to do anything but conform, no matter how corrupt the action. When Huck

¹³Blair, p. 110.

¹⁴Blair, p. 144.

condemns himself that he has not been "brung up" to their way of thinking (p. 180), he is unconsciously pointing out that the "damned human race" is guilty of conforming to the evil institution of slavery. Huck's characteristic of self-condemnation for his own wrongs gives powerful force to his implied criticism of humanity's wrongs. Since he is such a strong critic of his own actions, his moral comment about corrupt conformity is much more emphatic than any other spokesman could make. In his innocent, but powerful way he is condemning misguided conformity and asking man to make decisions for himself. Man should decide that the color of the heart is more important than the color of the skin. If he would, he would no longer conform to the corrupt practice of slavery.

When the white man bases his judgment on the color of the heart instead of the skin, he will destroy his notion of white supremacy that Huck is rebuking. Many times Huck speaks in behalf of the Negro and frowns upon the white man's notion of supremacy. He remarks about Jim, "he had an uncommon level head" (p. 65). He "knowed most ever'thing" (p. 40). This man that the South considered hardly higher than an animal is shown to be full of love and compassion. Jim loves his family dearly, wanting to rescue them from slavery and help his "po' little 'Lizabeth!" who is "plumb deaf en dumb" (pp. 131-132). His fatherly guidance toward Huck and his shedding

of tears after realizing the boy is not lost are just some of the reasons why Huck says Jim's feelings are as deep as those of "white folks."

I see Jim before me, all the time, in the day, and in the night-time, sometimes moonlight, sometimes storms, and we a floating along, talking, and singing, and laughing. But somehow I couldn't seem to strike no places to harden me against him, but only the other kind. I'd see him standing my watch on top of his'n, stead of calling me, so I could go on sleeping; and see him how glad he was when I come back out of the fog; and when I come to him again in the swamp, up there where the feud was; and such-like times; and would always call me honey, and pet me, and do everything he could think of for me, and how good he always was; and at last I struck the time I saved him by telling the men we had small-pox aboard, and he was so grateful, and said I was the best friend old Jim ever had in the world, and the only one he's got now (p. 179).

To read about these qualities of Jim, his loyalty, love, and unselfishness, one must agree that Huck is saying abuse of the black man should stop because human beings are superior to one another only in what they do, what they say, and what they feel for others. Huck sees the notion of white supremacy as an atrocity.

Huck does not stop, however, when he speaks out against slavery. He comments further on an ill common to all men, no matter what color their skins be. That ill is deceit. Yet, before elaboration of the point is made, it must be established that Huck himself tells "stretchers" (p. 3), lies to protect himself. These tales, however, are his only defense against the treacherous world; furthermore, the "stretchers" he tells never bring harm to anyone

else as those told by the king and the duke bring. Huck does not have the ability to tell that kind.¹⁵ His innocent hero characteristic, an eagerness for universal good will, does not allow Huck to participate in any kind of harm towards others. His "stretchers" are harmless in comparison to the deceit of some persons in the book. Two such persons receiving the well-deserved criticism of Huck for their lying are the king and the duke. "It didn't take me long to make up my mind that these liars warn't no kings nor dukes, at all, but just low-down humbugs and frauds" (p. 106). When the king and the duke are pretending to be the relatives of the Wilks sisters, Huck scorns the king for having "got off some of his usual rubbage" (p. 153). When Miss Watson, an ardent proselytizer for piety and good manners, decides to break her word to Jim (she cannot resist a slave trader's offer of eight hundred dollars) and sell him down the river away from his family (p. 38), she pronounces the polite lies of civilization that suffocate Huck's spirit.¹⁶ He dislikes civilization's deceitful way; therefore, Huck both implies and speaks out his disapproval of the deceit that brings harm to others. He comes to the following decision about the question of truth:

I says to myself, I reckon a body that ups and tells the truth when he is in a tight place,

¹⁵Hoffman, pp. 346-347.

¹⁶Marx, p. 433.

is taking considerable many resks, though I ain't had no experience, and can't say for certain; but it looks so to me, anyway; and yet here's a case where I'm blest if it don't look to me like the truth is better, and actuly safer, than a lie. I must lay it by in my mind, and think it over some time or other, it's so kind of strange and unregular. I never see nothing like it. Well, I says to myself at last, I'm agoing to chance it; I'll up and tell the truth this time, though it does seem most like setting down on a kag of powder and touching it off just to see where you'll go to (pp. 156-157).

In spite of the fact that telling the truth is sometimes "like setting down on a kag of powder" (p. 157), Huck has declared that truth is better than deceit. The boy sneers at deceit just as he sneers at other horrible vices.

Another vice utterly despicable in Huck's eyes is greed. Continuously he meets it and sickens from it. One incident sharply contrasts the greed of one of the nicest men in St. Petersburg with the innocent unselfishness of Huck. Knowing Pap will torment him until his six thousand dollars, money he and Tom found in a robber's cave in Tom Sawyer, finally is available to Pap, Huck offers it to Judge Thatcher. The judge, to be correct about the matter, writes something on a piece of paper and says to Huck: "That means I have bought it of you and paid you for it. Here's a dollar for you. Now you sign it" (p. 16). Huck signs it and leaves. He is then left with nothing but a dollar to provide for himself while the old judge in his legal beneficence has no reluctance in acquiring a substantial sum which potentially may never be reclaimed. Judge Thatcher and a boat owner, among countless others, expose

the greed that is so rampant among the "damned human race" in Huckleberry Finn. The boat owner will not even think of saving the lives of men on the Walter Scott until Huck leads him to believe a rich old uncle will freely reward him for his efforts (p. 64). Scene after scene alerts the reader to the possibility of greed as social motive--a possibility abundantly realized later in the two pseudo-noblemen, the king and the duke, during their numerous episodes.¹⁷ Escapades of camp meetings accompanied by tear-filled lies (pp. 111-112), the selling of subscriptions to papers not really existing (pp. 111-112), falsely advertized sideshow entertainment (pp. 128-129), along with the embezzling trickery of the Wilks estate (pp. 137-157) illustrate how greedy human beings can really be. As Huck looks on, he says, "it made my heart ache to see them getting fooled and lied to so" (p. 153). Viewing the greed of the king, the duke, and many others, the plain-spoken, observant Huck, a moral youth of innocence, makes powerful reproaches since he himself is free of the greed he points out. His comments are also made more emphatic because his human warmth and good will let him empathize with the wronged. For another reason strength is gained in his reproaches. He knows that life can exist without the presence of greed because in his idyllic setting with Jim there was none; therefore, he scornfully criticizes the ill. Not only does

¹⁷Stone, pp. 148-149.

Huck reproach greed, but he also exposes the moral inadequacy of romanticizing the past.

Huck shows that the deceptive romanticizing of historical events is wrong, for he finds these events to be false, evil, and inhumane. Tom Sawyer's games of robbers based on books as sources, accompanied by Huck's mixed awe and disgust at the complicated sport, have been discussed already under corrupt conformity. Tom certainly succumbs to this ill. Rather than thinking for himself, he must follow in the footsteps of "the authorities" (p. 206). But now, Tom's games of robbers and thieves can be used to show what the innocent Huck, confronting the world with infinite good will, is saying about the deceptive romantic accounts of past events. Tom believes robberies and murders to be breathtakingly exciting. The books he has read have led him to believe this through their deceptive romantic approach. To him, his pretended ambushes of "Spaniards and Arabs" with their "di'monds" (pp. 12-13) are the height of enjoyment. Huck knows better because he encounters real robbery and murder which the men on the Walter Scott initiate, and the Grangerfords, the king and the duke, and Colonel Sherburn continue. His experience shows him that what the books romanticize is in reality very ugly and disgusting. Tom is sadly confused about his simulations of historical events being admirable. Referring not only to Tom's make-believe, but also to the

world's realistic robberies, murders, and other horrid crimes, Huck suggests that these events seem to be romantic and glorious, for "history and literature have thrown a mantle of appeal over them. Essentially, however, they are nothing less than cruel invasions of human dignity."¹⁸ Huck implies that such horror should not be glorified and romanticized because it is really ghastly; however, he does not stop with a condemnation of the deceptive romanticizing of past events. He goes on to criticize man's idolatry of the aristocracy who are often as romanticized as historical happenings. Viewing life about him, Huck implies that worship of aristocracy for aristocracy's sake is wrong.

Aristocracy in Huck's day must have been idolized, for when Huck describes Colonel Grangerford as being well born, he takes time to say that Widow Douglas thinks that is awfully important (p. 89). At this moment he does not imply that the adoration of aristocracy is bad as he does in various other spots throughout the book. His most effective criticism comes when the king and the duke have boarded the raft. Upon Jim's classifying these men as "rapscallions," Huck takes the opportunity to say, "kings is kings, and you got to make allowances. Take them all around, they're a mighty ornery lot" (pp. 129-130). When Huck and Jim have taken books from the wrecked Walter Scott, their reading gives Huck a chance to say more about the

¹⁸Stone, p. 151.

aristocracy: "I read considerable to Jim about kings, and dukes, and earls, and such, and how gaudy they dressed, and how much style they put on, and called each other your majesty, and your grace, and your lordship, and so on, 'stead of mister" (p. 65). These aristocrats he talks about "just lazy around," or "fuss with the parlyment" (p. 66), or "lose a lie, every time" they open their mouths (p. 130). Through comments such as these, Huck is saying that an aristocrat is no better than anyone else; therefore, he should not be idolized. Huck may scorn the idolatry of aristocracy partly because pretense and fakery often accompany the aristocrat. Whether this be the case or not, there is one form of pretense and fakery that he thoroughly dislikes. It is silly sentimentality.

Silly sentimentality is needless in Huck's eyes. When Judge Thatcher talks to Pap about temperance and Pap says he will reform, the judge cries, his wife cries, and Pap cries. They shake hands, "one after the other, all around, and cried" (p. 20) while she kisses his hand. It seems that all these tears will surely bring a change in Pap, but it is that night in the judge's own home that Pap, being drunk, breaks his arm in two places; therefore, the tears, an outward pretense of sentiment, seem to have obtained nothing. This must mean that the tears that are so openly displayed before others are nothing more than make-believe. At the camp meetings Huck attends with the king and the

duke, the people cry frantically, sling themselves upon the straw, "just crazy and wild" (p. 111). At the Wilks home when the king and the duke "bust out a crying so you could a heard them to Orleans, most," the crowd starts "sobbing and swabbing." Huck replies, "I never see anything so disgusting" as "all that soul-butter and hogwash" (p. 138). This fakery that he views does not correspond with his desire for universal good will. Silly sentimentality does not exist in his idyllic setting with its perfect brotherhood between him and Jim. Having seen life on the river raft where there is no such ill, Huck readily detects that it is a hindrance to human beings' perfect brotherhood on land; consequently, he condemns silly sentimentality. Huck, however, is not saying that sentiment is bad. It is the silly outward show for its own sake that is uncalled for. Huck himself experiences true sentiment. With his eyes watering a little as he stands behind the door watching Mary Jane Wilks cry before a coffin, Huck verifies that sentiment has a place when it is real and not an outward show of silliness. The young innocent views silly sentimentality along with many other ills as an unadmirable characteristic of the "damned human race."

Other vices in society such as greed for sensation, man's corruption in business dealings, drunkenness, and submission to mob spirit are reprimanded in Huckleberry Finn by the innocent hero Huck. The people's pushing and

crowding to see poor old Boggs' dead body (p. 121), their detailed diagrams in the dirt to show newcomers just how Boggs has been killed (p. 122), or their crowding into a show where ladies and children are not admitted (p. 127)--all show humanity's greed for sensation. The king and the duke behave in Huckleberry Finn as Twain believed many men do in business deals.¹⁹ False advertizing (pp. 126-127) and deception (p. 112) are only a few of their tricks. Drunkenness, repeatedly seen in Pap and others as well, brings beatings, murders, and robbery. All of these things Huck effectively scorns in his innocent way. While watching drunken men on the Walter Scott, Huck says, "I was glad I didn't drink whisky" (p. 59). With such a remark he scorns drunkenness; furthermore, he rebukes the submission to a mob spirit with its terrible callousness and unconcern when he tells that the whole town of Bricksville is "squirming and scrouging and pushing and shoving to get at the window and have a look" (p. 12) at poor dead Boggs, who has been viciously murdered by Colonel Sherburn. These and many other ills are shown through Huck Finn, the innocent hero.

Volumes can be written expounding Twain's many jabs at the flaws within civilization; however, only a limited number of the jabs can be given here. Nevertheless, it is meant for the reader to realize his method of satire through

¹⁹Blair, p. 270.

these limited examples. Lionel Trilling has said about Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, "One can read it at ten, and then annually ever after, and each year find that it is fresh as the year before, that it has changed only in becoming somewhat larger."²⁰ Huck's observations, his innocent eye, continually expose new ills of the "damned human race." As he says, "A body can see and don't see at the same time" (p. 195); therefore, Huckleberry Finn, Twain's spokesman, can help open our eyes to our shortcomings that we human beings cannot always see by ourselves.

Twain believed that man has hideous ills. No writer has directed fiercer scorn at humanity, the "damned human race," than Twain. Probably because he loved the individual person so much, he wanted human beings in general to hold to high standards. When he looked at Helen Keller with her accomplishments, a servant, the backwoods bumpkin, Huck Finn, or any other individual, his heart would grow warm with concern; but when he looked at humanity as a whole, his heart grew sickened. He hated the ills he saw in humanity: hypocrisy, pretended piety, inhumanity to one another, corrupt conformity, deceit, greed, among countless other wrongs. This popular, frequently visited man, who, upon occasion, was even daring enough to break the social code, wanted to help purge humanity of its ills. Being a

²⁰"Introduction to Huckleberry Finn," The Art of Huckleberry Finn, ed. Hamlin Hill and Walter Blair (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1969), p. 502.

warm, concerned man whose heart could be touched by a noble act of Joan of Arc, a smiling face of a child, or even the soft distressed cry of an animal, Twain hoped desperately to lead humanity to a state of perfect brotherhood. When he looked at animals about him, he saw characteristics of good living that he wished humanity would attain: the cat's independent spirit, a dog's eternal gratitude for being made prosperous, and each animal's sense of brotherhood with its own kind. In Twain's opinion, man could learn much about perfect brotherhood from animals if he would. Concluding that such learning would be a most improbable happening, Twain employed innocent heroes in his writing to lead humanity to a better standard of morals through the scorning of social ills. Huckleberry Finn is one of these innocent heroes; therefore, Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is filled with dynamic satire.

To have effective satire in his book, Twain needed a spokesman who qualifies as an innocent hero. Twain's device for purging humanity of its ills, Huck Finn, does qualify as an innocent spokesman. He confronts the world with infinite good will and expects it to deal with him in the same spirit. His pure heart--his innocence--seeks earnestly to carry out his inner desires, the virtuous actions stemming from a sound heart. In any spokesman other than an innocent hero such as Huck, society's set patterns and codes in life often shut out the sound heart

and leave in its place merely an ill-trained conscience that condones slavery, hypocrisy, and numerous other ills. It is these set patterns and codes that Twain uses Huck to speak out against. Helping Huck to better qualify as an innocent hero, Twain has him spend part of his time in an idyllic setting of perfect brotherhood while on the raft with Jim. Therefore, Huck can readily detect humanity's ills when he scrambles to the unidyllic shores of the Mississippi River. Using his flat-spoken candor, Huck, the moral man viewing immoral society, exposes the fraud and folly he witnesses. Making no attempt to mask anything, Huck ironically speaks out about the appearance of life. When he reports what he sees along with what he feels as his sound heart and ill-trained conscience battle within him, he is pointing his finger at the ills of the "damned human race" that Twain hated so badly. In this way Twain is using Huck to help purge humanity of its ills as the boy functions in the three-part structure of the novel.

In the beginning chapters of the novel, Huck flees from physical danger as well as the social ills epitomized by Pap, Miss Watson, Widow Douglas, and other controlling forces. Huck's plan is to transport the Negro slave Jim up the Ohio River to safety. Wanting to plunge into stronger satiric description of the society of the prewar South, Twain relinquishes Huck and Jim's quest for freedom on the Ohio when he brings the king and the duke into the

story. Huck's function, once they take control of the raft, is observation of social ills while he is a captive innocent. He observes and delivers powerful satire towards the towns of the Mississippi banks. Again and again he reveals the dominant culture as decadent and perverted. In Chapter 31, however, he escapes these men and faces a moral crisis. He must decide on a course of action for his runaway slave. His sound heart finally tells his ill-trained conscience that Jim's freedom is more important than any of society's rules. With this decision he is gradually working himself free of society's perverted value system. Throughout the book, but especially in the middle chapters where as the captive observer and in the moral crisis where he reports the struggle between his innate desires and society's conventions, the innocent hero Huck delivers strong satire towards humanity's ills. In the last section, though, involving Tom Sawyer's escapades, Huck's satiric comments are fewer in number and less bitter. It is primarily during Huck's captivity and the moral crisis that he most powerfully reveals social ills. In his innocent way he forcibly scorns hypocrisy, pretended piety, self-pleasing interpretations of the Bible, inhumanity, corrupt conformity, the notion of white supremacy, deceit, greed, deceptive romanticizing of historical events, idolatry of aristocracy, silly sentimentality, and countless other vices that belong to the human race. Twain desired

to make jabs at the flaws within civilization, and he did just that through his innocent hero Huck in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. It is for us, the readers, to look at these jabs made by Huck, to recognize the falseness of our own values, and then to make changes wherever needed within our own characters. If many readers do so, a big change, Twain's dream, will occur within the "damned human race."

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