



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

The Route to Freedom: The Significance of the Mississippi River in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

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The antebellum period had witnessed some heavy waves of slaves escaping from the American Southern pro-slavery states to what was known as the “Free States” in the North. There were several routes for these slaves to take while pursuing their freedom; one of the major routes toward freedom was the Mississippi River. The present article tackles the very symbolism of the Mississippi River according to the American author Mark Twain together with other authors. The article will, then, seek to analyze the different symbolisms of the Mississippi River in Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; this including the dangers facing both Huck and Jim every time they stopped at the river's banks. In the end, the article will conclude with the idea that the river did not only serve as a route toward freedom, but also it brought the two conflicting races together; thus helping Huck to get away from civilization and Jim to escape captivity. The current article will attempt to answer the following research questions: to what extent were freedom and the Mississippi River appropriately linked? Why was the Mississippi River, in particular, employed as the symbol of freedom according to many American authors, Twain included? Finally, how far have the Mississippi River been appropriately employed as to stand for freedom in Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*? The methodology used in the current paper is that of close-reading methodology exploring the symbolism of the Mississippi River through closely analyzing the text of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

Keywords: Freedom, Slavery, Mississippi River, American Antebellum, Captivity.

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Introduction

Prior to the American Civil War (1861-65), hundreds of thousands of American slaves were seeking refuge into the “Free States” in the North. The latter had possessed a strong economy as well as military which were firmly industrialized. The northern Free States as they came to be known, took it upon themselves to shelter in those slaves who were in need of help. These slaves came later to be labeled as “runaway slaves,” who besides being forced to live in slavery, destitution and captivity were facing the imminent threat of being “shot on sight.” At that time slavery was a serious matter, especially in the southern “pro-slavery” states where either the runaway slaves or those who might help them were officially and legally terminated.

This antebellum period, as many prefer to call it, was extremely and highly sensitive for both the North and South of America. In fact, it is widely and commonly believed that the issue of slavery ranked as the major cause for the outbreak of the American Civil War; where the northern industrialized states came out triumphant. In addition, the issue of slavery was so sensitive to the point where many American authors grew reluctant as to approaching it. Mark Twain was among the few American authors who had ventured to write of such inappropriate topic at the time.

Mark Twain wrote *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in 1884, where he approached the issue of slavery in a smart way. Indeed, the reader to Twain’s novel understands that the author did not make any judgments on the issue of slavery or freedom whatsoever. Rather, and pioneering the Realist movement, he held to the tradition of narration as well as description. So, instead of making a judgment on whether Jim had the right to be free or not, he simply narrated his adventure across the Mississippi River toward freedom.

Moreover, and regarding Huck helping Jim escape captivity, again Twain did not make any judgment on that despite the fact that white people were prohibited from helping runaway slaves to escape captivity. Indeed, not only were they prohibited by the state to help slaves escape, but also even the Church prohibited this act and considered it as a grave sin. So, Twain simply narrated and described the two conflicting races as they were both crossing the legendary Mississippi River breaking their way out toward freedom.

In the Hebrew Law of Hammurabi (1792-1750 BC) which was so similar to the Old Testament, offering any type of aid or assistance to runaway slaves was harshly dealt with; which was usually punishable by death:

If a man has found a lost slave or slave-girl in the open country and has brought them back to their owner, their owner shall give him two shekels of silver. If that slave will not declare the name of his owner, he shall bring him back to the temple authorities where his record can be examined, and they shall return him to his owner. If he has held that slave captive in his house and later the slave is found in his possession, that man shall be killed (Richardson 2000,49).

Before analyzing the symbolism as well as interpretation of the Mississippi River in Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the two major terms of “freedom” and “symbolism” must be made clear. Within the scope of study of the present article, the term “freedom” is approached from the perspectives of both mental as well as physical freedom. This is better demonstrated in the aforementioned novel through both Huck and Jim. The latter’s perception of freedom was restricted on merely reaching the free states in the north where he could achieve financial capabilities so that he could buy back his own freedom and be once again reunited with his wife.

However, for Huck his perception of freedom was somewhat different, in that he was physically not free since his very father relentlessly incarcerated and abused him for no other reason except that he could. Huck was further being abused by his Widow Douglas; his caretaker, this time he suffered mental abuse where his adoptive Widow would constantly nag at him; something which Huck hated very much. It was therefore different endeavors of both Huck and Jim why they were escaping in the first place; their very notions of freedom was clearly not the same. However, they both agreed that the one system they were escaping from was unjust and cruel.

Furthermore, the term “symbolism” must be made clear. In this article, symbolism will be approached from the perspective that it is “an artistic and poetic movement or style originating in the late 19th century, using symbolic images and indirect suggestion to express mystical ideas, emotions, and states of mind” (Oxford dictionary). Therefore, symbolism here stands for which thing that means what.

The two terms of freedom and symbolism (of the Mississippi River) will be closely and frequently approached in this article, where different perspectives of different American authors attempted to employ them in their writings. However, the overall focus will be on the very perspective of Mark Twain.

Literature Review

The current article provides an insight of how the Mississippi River might have served as a route to freedom to runaway slaves, especially during the nineteenth century reaching its peak during the American Civil War (1861-65). This insight will be provided through closely reading Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

In his book *Daily Life along the Mississippi*, George S. Pabis states that “for those who decided to flee the [Southern] region, the Mississippi River and its tributaries provided the highway to freedom. A few managed to escape out of Louisiana altogether by catching a ship to Havana” (Pabis 2007, 59).

Through this distinct declaration, Pabis clearly explains how the Mississippi River was the most famous route which was sought by runaway slaves, fugitives and asylum seekers to escape unharmed from the southern states to the northern ones. As a natural flowing route, the Mississippi River resembled a living mechanism which brought life back to those who were doomed to be dead.

In another reference to the Mississippi River as a route to freedom, Schilling, argues that not only the Mississippi River was so significant in providing runaway slaves with a chance to pursue their freedom, but it was also as essential as any other character in Twain’s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*: “the Mississippi River is as essential as any character: it serves as a playground for children, a highway to freedom for one man, and the road to a living hell for others”. (Schilling 2014, 127).

There were probably other routes that were used by smugglers to get runaway slaves to safety, however; these routes were not as shorter and hardly-tracked as that of the Mississippi River. According to Buchanan, the steamboats which navigated the Mississippi River carried with them atrocities of slavery and racism. Yet, at the same time they carried with them chances and pathways to freedom (Buchanan 2004, 5).

As a matter of fact, most writers and authors all do agree that the Mississippi River was not just like any other river in the U.S. Instead, the river resembled a major vein pumping life into the veins of Americans. Smith illustrates how the giant Mississippi River contributed in American commercial life, the fact which attracted millions of people to its waters. The river served, simultaneously, as a channel of slavery and a path to freedom (Smith 2007, 3).

In the end, all these writers do share Twain's view on the importance of the Mississippi River. Aside from its gigantic capacity in promoting commercial as well as agricultural life, the Mississippi River played a very crucial role in the direct results of the American Civil War (1861-65), with runaway slaves making it through upstate in the North.

Background of the Mississippi River

The Mississippi River is considered the second longest river in all of the North American continent. With a total length of 3,730 km the river passes through ten large U.S. states, namely in the north including; Minnesota, Wisconsin, Iowa all the way to the south covering Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi and Louisiana. Thus, dividing the entire country from the north all the way to the south. Its strength is so majestic that it "testifies to the power of nature" (Pabis 2007, 2).

The Mississippi River plays a vital role in the U.S. economy. The American agricultural system depends so much on the massive amounts of water the river supplies, especially in the southern states where the local economies are mainly agricultural and which depend mostly on the constant and prolific water supply of the river almost all year long. In addition, the river supplies the local economies with considerable amounts of different kinds of fresh water fish with more than 375 different species, such as; smallmouth and largemouth bass. The diversity and richness of the fauna the river sustains are numerous and diverse, there are many other species of animals; most famously is the notorious American alligator.

Furthermore, the river had long been existent to have sustained the very lives of the early Native Americans. Indeed, Native Americans had long been dependent on the riches of the Mississippi River where they established entire villages on the river's banks. They depended heavily on fishing, farming and hunting; this including using the river as the major route for navigation. In fact, not only had Native Americans populated the Mississippi River, but also provided significant aid to the runaway slaves; usually by offering them shelter: "In Arkansas and Texas, slaves fled frequently to Native American communities. In the upper South, people in mountainous upcountry areas supported groups of runaway slaves. Along the rivers, free black farmers and lumbermen cutting wood for steamboats also aided fugitives" (Buchanan 2004, 105).

During the American Civil War the Union had imposed its control over the river, where their massive military and commercial barges navigated the river's main stream as well as its tributaries. Thus, helping to win the war in their favor. Not only did the river serve as the main route for transporting the military barges, but also it guaranteed permanent fresh water supply for the Union army; the fact which meant the opposite for the Confederate states in the south, who beside losing most of their lands to the Union army they lost the major supply of their fresh water.

Symbolism of Rivers as a Route to Freedom by other Writers

The Mississippi River has long been considered a vital flow of water; a significant artery that the entire U.S. nation feeds off of it. Besides being one of the major and essential life suppliers in the U.S., the Mississippi River was not really absent in the major historical events in the U.S. Starting from the earliest Native American-European wars all the way to the American Civil War, the river played a major role in helping one side win over the other. There are many books, essays and articles which have talked prolifically about the Mississippi River. For the sake of limitation in the methodology of the present study, only a few will be mentioned and dealt with.

In fact, the Mississippi River was the major route toward freedom, yet it was not the only route. There was another major river which runaway slaves used to reach

the upper Free states, which is the Ohio River. The latter was as significant, for both the runaway slaves and slave traders, as the Mississippi River itself. It is true that both the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers were different, yet both were as important when it came to symbolizing freedom.

The major work of fiction which involved the symbolism of the Ohio River, is Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). Even when the two novels part ways in terms of themes since Twain approached the issue of freedom in a somewhat comic manner, whereas Stowe did it from a religious perspective; yet the two authors agreed in their novels upon the importance of the symbolism both rivers represent. Perhaps the geographical and general nature of the rivers gave both authors the impression that they are best the symbol of freedom.

Similarly, the events in Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* take place in the American antebellum, simultaneously with *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* during the 1840s. And just like Twain, Stowe uses the mighty Ohio River to symbolize the place where heaven or freedom is separated from hell; where for instance when George and Eliza who were both slaves took the steamboat, the Ohio River was pretty much their sole route taking them to freedom.

Moreover, Stowe mentions and describes the mighty and majestic Mississippi River in her novel saying: "The Mississippi! How, as by an enchanted wand, have its scenes been changed, since Chateaubriand wrote his prose-poetic description of it, as a river of mighty, unbroken solitudes, rolling amid undreamed wonders of vegetable and animal existence" (Stowe 1852, 68). Thus, the author agrees upon the idea that just like the Ohio River, the Mississippi River was the symbol of freedom for the runaway slaves; whereas it was a nightmare for the slave traders who just could not keep control over the large flowing river and its numerous and complicated tributaries.

Thomas C. Buchanan (2001) explains how the Mississippi River symbolized freedom for both runaway and free slaves, while it gave the slave traders constant agony and suffering:

The Mississippi River system was a source of continual frustration to antebellum slaveholders even as the waterway helped make many rich. The proliferation of steamboats on the Mississippi River system in the 1820s and 1830s gave southern merchants and planters opportunities for considerable profits but also created a mobile class of slaves and free blacks that moved with ease through the economic arteries of the southern economy (798).

Therefore, the Mississippi River was nature's gift for both runaway slaves as well as slave traders. The latter were monitoring and supervising large shipments of working slaves, while runaway slaves profited from the gaps in the river's route and which the slave traders could not possibly watch over all of them. In addition, runaway slaves were also faced with endless challenges while embarking the dangerous route of the Mississippi River; where many of them did not survive the trip either by being caught by the slave traders and shot on sight or simply because they could not stand the long backbreaking trip to the North.

In her novel, Stowe stresses the horrifying meaning to slaves of being sold or moved down the river. She explains how 'Negroes' were born to be accustomed to be sold, while this 'selling' was considered to be the most merciful means of punishment. Stowe continues to explain that what terrified slaves the most, that is more than whipping and torture, was to be sold down the Mississippi River. Stowe, then, explains that slaves were passing down those horrifying stories to each other; that those who went down river usually did not return (Stowe 1852, 50).

Thus, adding to the whipping, lashing, tortures and all kinds of physical and psychological abuses which were systematically practiced against "negro" slaves;

the idea of being sold or shipped down river where slavery was fully endorsed and practiced, gave slaves nightmares. In this sense, the river serves as a separator; upriver meant safety and the way to freedom, whereas downriver meant to be trapped deeper into slavery and harsh treatment.

Symbolism of the Mississippi River in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Throughout the entire novel of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the reader understands that Twain did not present the Mississippi River to have only one symbolism; at least regarding the two main characters of Huck and Jim. For Huck, escaping was merely from his abusive father and the “sivilizing” of Widow Douglas; thus for him the alleged western civilization was sickening him. For Jim, on the other hand, was a totally different matter. Being a slave “negro” he could not afford to reject the western civilization. Instead, his sole mission was to buy his own freedom so that he could buy back his wife and be together once again.

In fact, according to Twain the Mississippi River was not just some large river. As it may have divided the American nation both geographically and morally, the river instead resembles “the body of the [American] nation” (qtd in Pabis 2007, 2). Therefore, and according to Twain, the Mississippi River holds the very meaning of freedom and democracy which constitute the very essence upon which the American nation was built. So, besides being it the symbol of freedom, it is a safe haven where both Huck and Jim could journey together; in a time which seemed impossible.

Route to Freedom

Before claiming that the Mississippi River was the ultimate symbol and route to freedom. The concept of freedom is in many ways similar if not identical to the concept of liberalism. Freedom is defined as “the power or right to act, speak, or think freely” (Oxford Dictionary). Whereas, liberalism is defined as “a general set of ideas that appeal to personal freedom, equal worth, government by consent and private ownership of property as core human values” (Frost & Ericson 2002, 217).

As it has been mentioned before that the Mississippi River made an ideal place for those slaves to escape their masters (slave owners). In the meantime, the river gave nightmares to the entire slave trade; where slave owners could not control the large flowing river together with its endless tributaries. Like any other runaway slave at the time, Jim also took the familiar route trying to reach the Free states in the north. Jim realized well how dangerous the trip might be, yet his objective was far greater than his fears of breaking the man-made laws.

Jim’s utmost endeavor to embark the Mississippi River was to reach Cairo, Illinois and reach the Free states in the north to buy his freedom: “We judged that three nights more would fetch us to Cairo, at the bottom of Illinois, where the Ohio River comes in, and that was what we was after. We would sell the raft and get on a steamboat and go way up the Ohio amongst the free States, and then be out of trouble” (Twain 2005, 97).

The Ohio River is the only body of water which runs north, it meets and flows in the Mississippi River in the town of Cairo. The latter functioned as the linking bridge between the north and south, in that it helped many farmers and merchants to ship their goods more easily using the natural flow of water that passed by thirteen states; mainly Missouri and Kentucky. In addition, the town of Cairo was commonly known to be the ideal place where slaves would take the Ohio River northward toward the Free states.

By embarking the dangerous Mississippi River route, Jim was after freedom alone. He did not care whether there was something wrong with the western civilization. In fact, as a “negro” slave, Jim would never possibly think of going against the western civilization rules. As any other slave, he would expectedly do whatever his masters were to tell him. Quite unexpectedly, and terrified to be sold

away from his wife, he followed his instincts for once and decided to do something about it; since "Miss Watson would sell him South, sure" (Twain 2005, 91).

Furthermore, as any other slave at the time, Jim is presented in the novel as a second-class creature whose humanity is either questionable or definitely less than that of the little boy Huck. The latter, and despite his young age, realized well that his self was worth far more than Jim's when he declares that "he [Jim] had an uncommon level head for a nigger" (Twain 2005, 91). This sense of superiority is witnessed several times in the novel, for instance when both Huck and Jim are on the raft aboard the Mississippi River, suddenly they enter in a foggy spot.

Both Huck and Jim were terrified that they could not see a thing amidst the fog, however it was then when Huck decided to play a trick on Jim's wits; when the fog cleared away, and Jim asked Huck if he had seen the fog. However, Huck told him that none of that happened and it was just a daydream Jim was having. Of course, Jim was confused how all that was just a daydream, that it was so plain; however, Huck tells him that "it don't make no difference how plain it is; there ain't nothing in it. I know, because I've been here all the time" (Twain 2005, 101).

In fact, this was not something new at the time, since "negro" slaves were treated as a property owned by the white people just like cattle and other objects. In Twain's novel, the same tradition goes on when Jim could not have possibly dared to go on a trip across the Mississippi River had he not been in the company of Huck; "Jim's voice is [thus] muted...[where]The voice of an escaped slave [Jim] is placed alongside Huck's voice" (Messent 1993, 435). Nonetheless, both Huck and Jim realized this well and against all odds, Huck continued to accompany Jim to the Free states where freedom was awaiting.

Similarly, like in Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Jim is terrified of the idea of being sold south (New Orleans). Actually, it is the reason why Jim escaped in the first place; because he overheard Miss Watson saying she was going to sell him down in New Orleans. Then, being a "negro" slave he understood the meaning of being shipped downriver; thus he prefers to risk his life and might die than to live the nightmare of living downriver: "en I hear old missus tell de widder she gwyne to sell me down to Orleans" (Twain 2005, 54).

Escape from Civilization

Because Huck was constantly being abused physically by his drunkard and jobless father, he got sick of it all and decided to escape his father's mistreatment. Huck's father's mistreatment to him gives the impression that he was some sort of a "white slave," in the way he was both physically and psychologically mistreated so much like most of the "negro" slaves were experiencing at the time; what makes it worse is that this mistreatment was not from any person, it was from his own biological father.

Twain describes Huck's horror at his drunkard father's cruel behavior with him as a kid. The reader, then, learns how Huck's father looked so wild while chasing him down with a clasp knife trying to kill him for seemingly no good reason. As a young kid, Huck could not really fathom why his very father would try to kill him. He, then, decided not to go back again to this violent and dangerous father no matter what (Twain 2005, 37).

Furthermore, Huck was later adopted by a woman named Widow Douglas, yet even after seeking refuge at Widow Douglas's Huck received more abuse; at least in his own perspective. According to Huck, Widow Douglas was constantly abusing him mentally; that is by keeping nagging at him all the time and also by ordering him to do this and that. At first, the reader to the novel finds out that Huck was presented to be a rebellious character who did not have enough knowledge of the world and thus decided to go rogue against all customs.

None of it all true though, since the young Huck, and despite his young age, understood well how hypocritical the American society came to be. It all started when Huck suddenly craved a cigarette, he was then harshly rebuked by the Widow; yet “she took snuff, too; of course that was all right, because she done it herself” (Twain 2005, 4).

In addition, Huck was all fed up with the contradictions he observed while staying at the Widow’s; in times when the Widow’s Bible preached equality and good treatment to all human beings with no exception whatsoever, he saw how the white people “fetched the niggers in and had prayers” (Twain 2005, 5). This of course disturbed the little Huck, thus, allowing him to finally make up his mind and flee.

In fact, it is no coincidence that Twain chose a little boy to be his character who went rogue. With all the atrocities going on at the time, the system of slavery was growing to be threatening; thus the entire nation was on the verge of an open Civil War, it was simply inevitable. That is why Twain sought to arouse the people’s conscience, not by directly criticizing the system of slavery since he knew it was too deep-rooted to be removed by words. Instead, he smartly involved a young boy whose soul was not yet corrupted by the western civilization and who took it upon himself to stand in the face of the whole community. Now this may seem strange, how can a little boy have a greater conscience than most of politicians and churchmen combined together; yet Twain deliberately implies that a non-corrupt soul can see the truth amid all the chaos. Twain, brilliantly, did so by inserting comedy in a Realistic novel.

Toward the end of the novel, Huck expresses his resentment toward the western fake and hypocrite civilization in general. When Aunt Sally was planning to adopt Huck, the latter throws away the warm environment of a possible family Aunt Sally could offer; for no reason other than being sick of what he perceived as hypocritical and disgusting “sivilizing” mission of the west. Huck ends the novel with the following words: “But I reckon I got to light out for the Territory ahead of the rest, because Aunt Sally she’s going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can’t stand it. I been there before.

Huck would think of leaving everything behind and set out for an adventure away from all the things that were sickening him. Things got really worse when his father abused him; well he literally tortured him and locked him up with the pigs. It was then, when he decided it was time to flee. His pure soul and untainted sense for adventure equipped him with all what was necessary for his journey toward freedom and away from the fake civilization:

I thought it all over, and I reckoned I would walk off with the gun and some lines, and take to the woods when I run away. I guessed I wouldn’t stay in one place, but just tramp right across the country, mostly night times, and hunt and fish to keep alive, and so get so far away that the old man nor the widow couldn’t ever find me anymore (Twain 2005, 34).

As a young boy, journeying alone would only add more risks and troubles than what he already had; that is why when he met Miss Watson’s Jim he “was glad to see him” (Twain 2005, 52). Therefore, taking that raft on the Mississippi River was Huck’s ticket out of the troubles he was having. Despite when he realized the gravity of embarking the majestic river, yet he also knew well that it was dangerous for everybody else; thus his chances on the Mississippi River to escape the fake civilization were worth trying.

Furthermore, Huck survived the dangerous adventure aboard the Mississippi River, he was sound and safe and got rid of his father’s abuse now that he has been dead and all. When Aunt Sally was intending to adopt him, Huck surprisingly

refuses and decides instead to go west for more adventure. As if the journey on the Mississippi River with Jim did nothing but opened more his eyes and only realized that he had no place in the western civilization. That is why he preferred to venture to the Wild West than live in a hypocritical society: "Aunt Sally she's going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can't stand it. I been there before" (Twain 2005, 338).

Therefore, the reader to the novel definitely understands that Twain deliberately created a young character embodied in Huck, in order to reject the American western ideals. Perhaps, Twain felt it was not time yet to openly wage war against those ideals which tore apart the entire nation for so long. That is why, he chose a little boy (Huck) to represent a person who went rogue rejecting society's ideals.

In addition, and after reading the novel, one learns that assisting a runaway slave meant a serious crime; let alone accompanying him personally in a journey toward the Free states. Yet, toward the end of the novel, Huck gets away with it. He is excused after all what he had done, simply because no one would trial a child. Instead his "aunt's been might uneasy" about him (Twain 2005, 320). Not only this, but Aunt Sally had decided to adopt him for her son. This could be Twain's smart way of tackling the serious issue of slavery in a reckless and unserious way; and Huck was the best one who could do the job.

Safe Haven

As it has been referred to previously in this article, that both Huck and Jim had a greater chance on the Mississippi River to reach the northern Free states; however the journey was not all that peaceful since Jim was facing the threat to be shot on sight or in the best case scenarios he would be captured by bounty hunters and which meant endless troubles for him. Whereas, for Huck, by helping a runaway slave meant for him equally severe even or even harsher consequences a white person could face. The punishment for Huck who had helped a runaway slave for the first time could mean "a maximum fine of \$1000 and two years in the state penitentiary. A second offense brought twenty years in prison; and a third offense translated to a life sentence" (Missouri's Early Slave Laws).

Nonetheless, the raft on which Huck and Jim were sailing meant a safe and comfortable home for both. While on the Mississippi River both characters escape numerous hardships, very often when they stop at the river's banks for the necessary sustenance; just like the imminent threat they faced when almost Jim was sold by the two rascals King and Duke. Coming back to the river, and despite its dangerous high waters and strong currents, the reader learns that the river resembled nature's grace on the two where no serious harm befell them.

While drifting on the river, both Huck and Jim seem to have a good time, despite the dangers they faced. Indeed, despite all the dangers they faced, both Huck and Jim were still able to watch the stars in the sky. In spite of the fact that they were facing imminent death, yet and for the first time they felt free away from the fake and loud civilization. The weather seemed to be in their favor most often while journeying down the river, and for several days no harm befell them. The river was like safe haven for them both (Twain 2005, 78-79).

In the novel, Twain easily provided both Huck and Jim with some final peaceful moments. This was clearly Twain's way of giving solace to his two major characters, especially after all the hardships they had experienced while reaching the Mississippi River. Every time, the two would reach the land; they were constantly harassed and chased. So, a logical assumption would safely deduce that both Huck and Jim deserved to live in a safe haven even if that meant for a short period of time: "I never felt easy till the raft was two mile below there and out in the middle of the Mississippi. Then we hung up our signal lantern, and judged that we was free and safe once more" (Twain 2005, 136).

The moments of freedom lived on the river by Huck and Jim were temporary and did not turn out the way they planned, yet those moments were surely the most peaceful both characters could possibly have experienced. In a time when everybody set out looking for Jim and Huck trying to capture them, they were enjoying nature's bliss on the river while they still could. Thus, those moments, despite being short, were the true safe haven for both Huck and Jim where they could literally do anything they wanted.

It is true that journeying across the Mississippi River for a white boy and a runaway slave at that time meant endless enormous troubles, and due to their insufficient experience they did not realize that "Mississippi steamboats were no haven of liberty" (Buchanan 2004, 53). However, and quite astonishingly, not only did the two survive the dangerous trip but also found their desired physical as well as mental freedom. Therefore, it could be that the Mississippi River was dangerous and not safe for so many people, yet for Huck and Jim it was definitely their desired safe haven.

The Mississippi River as a No-man's Land

Besides being it a safe haven for Huck and Jim, the Mississippi River was also considered by the two as a no-man's land. Every time they stopped at the river's banks, they would face numerous dangers; either kidnapping or killing. However, every time they went back on the river they were pretty much free to do what they wanted with no disturbance at all.

Whenever on the river, both Huck and Jim were safe away from the dangers of being caught and killed. At each nightfall, both fugitives got back on the raft and allowed the current to take them wherever it pleased; anywhere was acceptable as long as they were not caught. And even with the mosquitos' bites, they still could find joy in journeying on a raft with the fine weather nature offered them (Twain 2005, 141).

Based on the quote above, being naked meant that Huck and Jim were free on this no-man's land. On the Mississippi River rules of the western American civilization do not apply on both characters. Thus, when Huck and Jim were often naked, it was their way of saying that they were free; that they were the masters of their own destiny and no one was there to stop them. Even when they let the current take them wherever it wanted; basically to the unknown, yet the two were happy and satisfied in a place where there were no manmade rules.

Furthermore, by being naked both Huck and Jim are rebelling against the western American societal norms; and that is wearing clothes. The western civilization was reflected in western clothes which were designed according to societal norms. By stripping naked, Huck and Jim are identifying themselves as not belonging to the western civilization, that their souls were not as yet infected and thus chose to be naked, just the way all human beings are born; naked and untarnished. Thus, being naked indicates that this strip of water (Mississippi River) was definitely a no-man's land which belonged to no one except Huck and Jim at the time.

In addition, not only that Huck and Jim were physically free in their no-man's land, but also they were mentally free. Clearly, the two did not care which direction the current was taking them. Instead, they were living and enjoying the moment by dangling their legs and talking about anything they wanted; taboos included. In fact, the very situation they were in; that is that a white boy travelling with a runaway "negro" slave was an unusual sight at the time especially that they were still in the south. This bizarre and rare moments could not have possibly been lived unless they were on a no-man's land; the thing which the Mississippi River was the ideal place offer.

The reader to the novel would definitely understand that when Huck and Jim are on the raft on the Mississippi River, it seems as though they were home. Since they were not bothered anymore by the western civilization, they two are so comfortable and relaxed to the point where it seems they are ready to abandon the entire campaign of going upriver reaching for the Free states where freedom might be attained. Thus, the Mississippi River provided them with the very things they were pursuing in the first place; that is freedom of the body, mind and soul. Judging by the peaceful and happy state both characters were in while on the river, one could easily claim that perhaps for once they could find the ideal peaceful moments one could possibly have.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, the Mississippi River served well as the safest route to freedom for Jim. Were it not for the river, Jim would not have probably made it far as a runaway slave. It is true that Huck provided a lot of assistance for Jim, yet one should not forget that when Jim decided to escape it was never in his intention that Huck would be accompanying him in his journey across the river. In the end, the Mississippi River served well for Jim by delivering him away from being shipped further south where the cotton fields and massive plantations caused nightmares for slaves like Jim. Thus, making that decision to escape and embark the Mississippi River turned out to be in of Jim, more than he could possibly have imagined.

As argued before, Jim's major objective by taking the trip across the Mississippi River was to reach the town of Cairo where a steamboat would take him due north to the Free states. Unfortunately, due to bad weather Huck and Jim pass by Cairo and miss their desired destination; thus instead of taking them north, the raft returned farther south to where slavery was being practiced to the maximum.

This may seem as a sad ending, that the journey was futile from its start; however, had Jim and Huck not taken that journey across the Mississippi River, Jim would certainly be sold in Orleans for sure. Instead, his daring journey on the river helped Jim buy him more time and by the time the two were brought back to Missouri they already found out that Jim was freed two months ago in Miss Watson's will: Old Miss Watson died two months ago, and she was ashamed she ever was going to sell him down the river, and *said* so; and she set him free in her will" (Twain 2005, 333).

The Mississippi River also served as a route to freedom for Huck, freedom from his abusive drunkard father, from the "sivilizing" of Widow Douglas and from all the hypocritical double-treatment he observed in the western civilization where he was brought up. By taking that trip across the river, Huck learned that there is actually a way out for his dilemma; that he did not have to run to a cave every time the widow or anybody else would sicken him to death. After his journey on the Mississippi River, Huck realized that he could find a true solution to his dilemma and really get rid of the fake values which the western civilization was built upon.

Moreover, what makes the Mississippi River the ideal route to freedom lies in its nature. Generally, rivers are out of human control wherein those who sail in them fall rather in their mercy. That is why anyone who intends to embark a majestic river like the Mississippi can do nothing but pray for good wind, otherwise that person might experience the power of nature unleashed upon them. Therefore, by nature

rivers are rogue; they can produce strong currents and drown the biggest of ships or they can simply be peaceful where a little bird can sit on them. It is why the Mississippi River serves as the ideal symbol of freedom, because of the way it separates the whole nation into half; at the same time if used properly it can serve as the linking bridge between the north and south.

Apart from being a majestic river separating the American nation into two; north and south, and for playing a significant role in the commercial as well as agricultural life, the Mississippi River was a place that brought conflicting races together. Truly, the river attracted runaway slaves, smugglers and bounty hunters. All these people hurried riverward each for different reasons; runaway slaves in search of potential freedom in the north, smugglers who were trying to attain possible wealth by investing in a temporary crisis, while bounty hunters were trying to get the leftovers that might make them some profit in a faltering economy.

Thus, the river resembled a sanctuary for all the parties mentioned above. It was obviously a matter of life or death for runaway slaves to make onboard one of the steamers which were moving up and down the river. Whereas, for smugglers it was a risky but profitable business. While, for bounty hunters the river was a place where they could get by in a staggering economy where chances were not abundant.

Finally, and based on the analysis mentioned above, it is safe to declare that the Mississippi River mostly serves as the route to freedom for both Huck and Jim. For Huck the river serves as an escape far away from the fake civilization which was sickening him to the bone. Whereas, for Jim the river is mostly the safest and straightforward route to the Free states where freedom could possibly be attained.

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مسیر آزادی: اهمیت رودخانه می‌سی‌سی‌پی در ماجراهای هاکلبری فین اثر مارک تواین

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دوران قبل از جنگ شاهد فرار امواج سنگین برخی از بردگان از ایالت‌های جنوب آمریکا که طرفدار برده‌داری بودند به مناطقی در شمال معروف به «ایالت‌های آزاد» بوده. مسیرهای مختلفی برای این بردگان وجود داشت که به دنبال آزادی خود بودند. یکی از مسیرهای اصلی به سوی آزادی، رودخانه می‌سی‌سی‌پی بود. مقاله حاضر به نمادگرایی رودخانه می‌سی‌سی‌پی به نوشته نویسنده آمریکایی مارک تواین همراه با سایر نویسندگان می‌پردازد. پس این مقاله به دنبال تحلیل نمادهای مختلف رودخانه می‌سی‌سی‌پی در *ماجراهای هاکلبری فین* تواین خواهد بود. این شامل خطراتی است که هاک و جیم هر بار که در کناره‌های رودخانه توقف می‌کنند با آن روبرو هستند. در پایان، مقاله با این ایده به پایان خواهد رسید که رودخانه نه تنها به عنوان مسیری به سوی آزادی عمل کرده است، بلکه دو نژاد متضاد را با همراه کرده. بنابراین به هاک کمک کرد تا از تمدن و جیم برای فرار از اسارت دور شود. مقاله حاضر سعی خواهد کرد به سؤالات تحقیقاتی زیر پاسخ دهد: آزادی و رودخانه می‌سی‌سی‌پی تا چه حد به طور مناسب به هم مرتبط بودند؟ چرا از نظر بسیاری از نویسندگان آمریکایی، از جمله تواین، رودخانه می‌سی‌سی‌پی، مخصوصاً به عنوان نماد آزادی استفاده شده است؟ سرانجام، چقدر رودخانه می‌سی‌سی‌پی برای آزادی در *ماجراهای هاکلبری فین* تواین به درستی به کار گرفته شده است؟ روش مورد استفاده در مقاله حاضر روش‌شناسی نزدیک‌خوانی است که نمادگرایی رودخانه می‌سی‌سی‌پی را از طریق تحلیل دقیق متن *ماجراهای هاکلبری فین* بررسی می‌کند.

واژه‌های کلیدی: آزادی، برده‌داری، رودخانه می‌سی‌سی‌پی، دوره پیش از جنگ داخلی آمریکا، اسارت.

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