

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLMOUCI

PEDAGOGICKÁ FAKULTA

ÚSTAV CIZÍCH JAZYKŮ

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

The Image of Slavery in the Work of Frederick Douglass and Mark Twain

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Studijní program: Specializace v pedagogice

Studijní obor: Anglický a německý jazyk se zaměřením na vzdělávání

Akademický rok: 2016/2017

Ročník: 4.

Prohlašuji, že jsem závěrečnou práci vypracoval samostatně a použil jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

V Olomouci 17. 6. 2017

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vlastnoruční podpis

I would like to thank Mgr. Petr Anténe, Ph.D. for his support and valuable comments on the content and style of my final project.

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain and *Narrative of Frederick Douglass* by himself are compared to recreate the image of slavery in the mid-19th century American South. The resonating ideas of both authors are presented to show that the existence of the institution of slavery did not prove harmful only for the slaves, but also for the slaveholders. The theme of family disintegration is explored in the first part, as well as the crisis of relationships. Subsequently, the perversion of Christianity is investigated as the tool of justification for the evils of slavery, eventually leading to self-deception and the fall of morality. To conclude, the concept of knowledge is inspected as a tool of manipulation, way of achieving freedom, and the importance of critical thinking is discussed, on the background of blind acceptance of stereotypes.

INTRODUCTION

In a society, that allows a person to own and exploit another one, which the American slave-holding South still was by the mid-19th century, it would be expected that if a truthful image was to be drawn to describe the functioning of such community by the members of both of the opposing camps, the two of them would unquestionably have to be sharply contrastive. Published in 1884 and set before the Civil War, Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is considered to be one of the finest pieces of American literature. When placing the work of this white author, who grew up in a family owning black servants, next to *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* written by a former slave (1845), a great deal of analogies is to be noticed.

It is the aim of this thesis to highlight the resonating ideas of Twain and Douglass concerning the corruptive forces the institution of slavery exerts on the population and to analyze its impact on the social, spiritual and mental aspect of the human nature. Moreover, the focus of attention will be centered around the agreement of both authors on the fact that the degradation of personal character resulting from the mechanism of slavery did not include exclusively African-Americans, but it also affected a considerable part of the white population.

Disintegration of the family, as well as the crisis of human relationships, are regarded as the direct implications of enslavement and these issues are dealt with in the first part of this thesis. Subsequently, the concept of deliberate misinterpretations in religious views for the sake of profit – leading to perversion of moral values as opposed to the effort of achieving noble ideals through self-recognition – is explored. In the final chapter, knowledge is discussed as the decisive element in the struggle for dominance, the tool of liberation and the dangers are identified that lie in the uncritical acceptance of stereotypes and dogmatic ways of thinking.

1. RELATIONSHIPS UNDER THE EFFECTS OF SLAVERY

In the *Narrative*, Frederick Douglass expresses his belief that the institution of slavery has a damaging effect on both slaves and slaveholders, claiming that the most notably affected sphere are relations, especially those in terms of a family. A common practice of separation of slave family members as a tool of easy manipulation with the masses undoubtedly contributed to the destruction of bonds within the black community. Douglass adds, however, that even the unity of a slave owning family is often put into jeopardy when slave masters become tempted to commit adultery with their female slaves. Slavery is depicted as an unnatural state of being, harming the whole society which has become the strongest argument in favor of its outlawing. In this part of my work, I would like to examine various family and community relations in both *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, as well as explore the idea of slavery having a dehumanizing effect on both slaves and their masters through their reciprocal interaction.

1.1 THE CRISIS OF RELATIONSHIPS IN THE WORK OF DOUGLASS

Throughout the course of the *Narrative*, perversions of family structures leading to child birth are witnessed by the reader, where either slave owners try to ensure an increase of their slave servants through practices other than purchase or they simply succumb to their sexual temptations with their servants, thereby harming the family of their own. Mr. Covey is said to have bought his woman slave Caroline for *a breeder*, hiring a married man to live with her in order to conceive a child, which would automatically become his property. At the same time, it is made clear that Frederick himself was fathered by a white man, a fact not unusual, but given the time and place hardly acceptable regarding the mutual coexistence of a white man and a black woman within a family. Whereas Mr. Covey represents the social class of poor slave owners for whom “breeding” or impregnating slave servants was the only way to increase their number, his motive thus being sheer profit, the fact that Frederick’s birth is owed to similar circumstances seems less obvious. Although it is suggested Douglass’s father might be Master Anthony – one of the poor overseers – insufficient evidence is given to state whether his birth has been a consequence of coincidental outburst of passion between Anthony and Harriet or a result of Douglass’s master’s calculated planning.

If we are to examine the idea of the corrupting effect of slavery on family life, the starting point must inevitably become the author's family itself. Our knowledge of Douglass's background is limited by what he himself offers in his autobiographies and by what he relates within the course of the *Narrative*. Whether the briefness in this matter can be attributed to Douglass's unreliable memory as a child or the account of his parents is blurred deliberately, has been a subject of many reviews. The reader first learns about Harriet Bailey, Douglass's mother, from the opening page. Subsequently, the author adds:

*"My mother and I were separated when I was but an infant—before I knew her as my mother. It is a common custom, in the part of Maryland from which I ran away, to part children from their mothers at a very early age. Frequently, before the child has reached its twelfth month, its mother is taken from it, and hired out on some farm a considerable distance off, and the child is placed under the care of an old woman, too old for field labor. For what this separation is done, I do not know, unless it be to hinder the development of the child's affection toward its mother, and to blunt and destroy the natural affection of the mother for the child. This is the inevitable result."*¹

Douglass's mother's name is mentioned very early in his recollection and the context in which it appears demonstrates the common practice of breaking natural ties of affection by which slave owners maintain their power over their slaves. Throughout the following chapters, Douglass elaborates on the idea of family and community bonds providing slaves with mutual friendship, love and joys of life, causing their dissatisfaction with the lack of it from the part of their masters. An example can be drawn from the Sabbath school establishment – an almost family-like organization – boosting confidence of its members to such proportions that it led to formulation of the collective escape plan. Looking back at other members of Douglass's family, they too are depicted through the injustices of slavery – that includes aunt Hester, a victim of the worst whipping scenes within the *Narrative*, grandma Betsy who had been left to her fate in a hut in a forest at her old age, Douglass's younger brother brutally beaten up by Master Andrew or even Douglass's wife's cousin killed by his owner's wife.

¹ Douglass, Frederick, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: an American Slave*, p.15-16.

By admitting that his father was most probably a white man, perhaps his own master, Douglass places himself among the unluckiest slaves who in his own words *"invariably suffer greater hardships, and have more to contend with, than the others"*² at the hand of their masters and their mistresses. Illegitimacy of their existence combined with the suspicion of the slightest signs of attachment from the side of their masters and fathers, at the same time, were the source of the worst kind of punishment. Attention is drawn by Douglass to such awkward situations which occur when members of master's family are confronted to these mulatto children and the master is often just forced *"to stand by and see one white son tie up his brother, of but few shades darker complexion than himself, and ply the glory lash to his naked back."*³ Similar scenarios are chosen by the author to show how the principles of a slave owning society conflict with the traditional concept of both white and black family.

Despite Douglass himself being of mixed-race origins, his hardships and physical maltreatment doesn't seem to reach the extreme conditions that are portrayed earlier. Naturally, to say he didn't suffer physically would require dismissing frequent periods of famine and frostbites caused by clothing shortage in winter, no whipping, however, or torture by his early masters were reported. Douglass's treatment by them doesn't correspond with the fate that he claims *invariably* awaits slave owners' mulatto children. What reasons are at hand when explaining such inconsistency in his statement? Captain Anthony's wife is for some reason absent from the story and with his own children already grown up and moved away there might have been no reason punishing young Frederick, provided that he was Anthony's son. Furthermore, not being strong enough to work in the fields, he was lucky to live away from the plantation with his grandmother and thus remained protected from violence there. An interpretation worth considering is that rather than portraying cruelty towards himself, Douglass attempts to highlight another common practice of slave owners – intimidation by the punishment of a slave's vicinity. The most violent scenes of whipping, torturing or even killing servants frequently include an eyewitness standing by being exposed to a feeling of desperation caused by inability to change the situation. The young fright-stricken Douglass watching his aunt being whipped serves as a good example, or slave spectators present when Demby was shot to death by Mr.

² Douglass, p.17.

³ Douglass, p.17.

Gore. Since slaves were unable to testify at court, this proved to be a very powerful tool at the hands of slave masters helping them to fuel fear among their servants.

At the same time, similar tactic becomes a double-edged sword when applied to people who are related too closely – such as family members or lovers – as it is best described by Brian R. Warnick of Ohio State University:

“In the case of Douglass, seeing injustice performed on someone he loved was the most infuriating experience of his captivity, and infuriation can bring motivation to change. This helps us to understand one possible reason for the tactic of separation.”⁴

Hereby, Douglass draws up a manifesto: development of bonds between slave servants proves undesirable as it served as a breeding ground for resistance against their owners and subsequently against the institution of slavery itself. Especially maternal ties were considered threatening, as the relation between a mother and her son is one of the strongest, thus the birth of the idea of separation. Moreover, it completes the reader’s concept of the horrors of slavery consisting of humiliation of human body, as the aspect of psychological distress is added. The consequence of such strategy among the black population was, as Nelson Mlambo suggests, its *“fragmentation”* and *“perpetual rootlessness.”*⁵

Undoubtedly, violating close relationships as a method of oppression and domination maintenance had devastating impact on the African-American population. In his criticism of slavery, Douglass offers a viewpoint from much broader perspective. He suggests that practices ensuring functioning of a slave owning society necessarily affect community and family values of its creators – white slave masters. We must bear in mind he wrote the *Narrative* to educate white audiences, therefore the notion of slavery being harmful to white society counted as one of the strongest arguments in the abolitionist debate. What he considered degrading for white population can be observed on the following set of examples.

⁴ Warnick, Brian R., *Oppression, Freedom, and the Education of Frederick Douglass*, p.32.

⁵ Mlambo, Nelson, *The literary representation of the resilience of the slave family and familial relations in Frederick Douglass’ autobiography*, p.258.

As it is commonly known, the most vulnerable beings to pressures within society who are able to sense the slightest disproportions within human ties and get easily confused by them are children. In the late 19th century, a great number of them must inevitably have during their adolescence come to question the inequality between slaves and their owners, they must have pondered why some people are free while others only live to serve. Children are less prejudiced beings than adults, which leads them to create bonds easily regardless of race. Douglass assumed that it would naturally conflict with their idea of justice if they would form inter-racial friendships not being able to see any difference between themselves and the Afro-American children apart from the color of the skin and still be aware of how differently they are treated.

From Douglass's account we understand that Colonel Lloyd's grandson Daniel – nothing is known about his age so that he can still be considered a child – became fond of Frederick: *"He became quite attached to me, and was a sort of a protector of me. He would not allow the older boys to impose upon me and would divide his cakes with me."*⁶ Here, the reader is left in darkness by the author to decide how Daniel really felt about their different social status. The kindness towards young Douglass, which is going to be discussed later, is, however, clearly stated. There is another passage in the book where the author made his friends, boys from Philpot Street, feel uneasy about his destiny:

*"I would sometimes say to them, I wished I could be as free as they would be when they got to be men. "You will be free as soon as you are twenty-one, but I am a slave for life! Have not I as good a right to be free as you have?" These words used to trouble them; they would express for me the liveliest sympathy, and console me with the hope that something would occur by which I might be free."*⁷

At this point, it is rather complicated to state to what extent the sentimental children fellowship was a deliberate Douglass's creation to serve the abolitionist cause. The crucial matter is that it does not seem difficult to accept situations such as this one indeed occurred. The aim of this thesis is not to adopt the standpoint of either those who consider some episodes of Douglass's life to be the product of fabrication or those who attempt to

⁶ Douglass, p.34.

⁷ Douglass, p.43 – 44.

verify them. In my opinion, the legacy created under such conditions is what matters – the author’s message which challenged the common idea of that time that African-Americans are not able to participate in social life. Their capability of experiencing emotions, sharing kindness and the fact that their actions can be explained was Douglass’s main asset.

Making one step further, hidden in the undertone of the *Narrative* there lies the probability that the Southern children will once themselves hold slaves. Colonel Lloyd’s grandson Daniel will be put into the position of power. He grew up in a family with the tradition of possessing hundreds of slaves; his adolescence, therefore, would help to foster in him the desirable qualities of a good slave owner. But alas! Will not the experience of once becoming attached to a slave – young Douglass – clash with the belief of enslaving people being righteous? Will the reminiscence of his childhood not gnaw at him, eventually bringing him to collapse under the burden of guilt? Or will his vision become blurred by public opinion, keeping him ignorant towards human suffering? Is their relationship also “*doomed to separation*” as Toni Morrison remarks on the account of Twain’s slave Jim and young Huckleberry Finn which “*is (or used to be) typical of the experience of white/black childhood friendships?*”⁸ The reader might be brought by the author to such deep contemplations. To observe the whole process of character evolution under the conditions of slavery and evaluate the results would require an extensive psychological survey into human mind, which is hardly possible given the time Douglass stays with the description of one character within the *Narrative*.

Apart from the author himself, the characters which appear in Douglass’s autobiography are presented as two-dimensional with the exception of Mrs. Sophia Hugh – sister-in-law of Colonel Lloyd’s son-in-law. She seems to be the only one to undergo some degree of development. Through her, the reader is allowed to witness a dramatic change of behavior attributed by the author to “*the blighting and dehumanizing effects of slavery.*”⁹ Never having owned a servant before, through marriage she finds herself in the position of holding one for the first time. On Douglass’s arrival to his service at the Hughs, she is presented as an innocent affectionate being. Subsequently, her husband initiates her to the ways of maintaining power within a slave-master relationship and as a result she begins acting

⁸ Morrison, Toni, Introduction to *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, xxxv.

⁹ Douglass, p.38.

contrary to her nature of a kind-hearted woman as she ceases instructing Douglass. Eventually, Sophia becomes crueler in her treatment of Frederick than Mr. Hugh himself.

In chapter IX, Douglass states that “*adopted slaveholders are the worst*” since they lack “*the ability to hold slaves.*”¹⁰ The worst human qualities are imputed to them. Born a poor man, inheriting slaves through marriage, Thomas Auld qualifies for being one of them.

While it is unclear with the character of Thomas Auld whether his meanness and evil nature are products of his inability to manage slaves or have their roots in his personal characteristic – little detail is given concerning his development prior to Douglas’s service – it is suggested that the acquirement of the slaveholder status clearly marks the inception of Sophia Hugh’s moral decay. Simple as it might sound, what may become Douglas’s main argument in the abolitionist debate resonates here. Individuals externally forced to act against their beliefs, who adopt behavior of others without considering how perverse it may be, inevitably risk corruption of their own character.

1.2 THE CRISIS OF RELATIONSHIPS IN TWAIN’S ADVENTURES

Douglas’s belief that the corruptive force affecting relationships within a slave owning community leads to degradation of its white members is, in my opinion, to a certain extent shared by Twain and dealt with in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. To accept the attitudes of the human society despite their immorality in an attempt of self-integration or to refuse their twisted values and risk damnation, such are the alternatives Huck Finn has – another young boy whose adolescence is marked by moral confusion persisting within the slave holding environment. Refusing to adapt to a life of social conventions his foster family follows, finding it difficult to undergo what he understands under the process of *sivilising* and last but not least frightened by his thuggish father, he makes an escape, finding the least expected companion in the slave Jim.

Owing to the complexity of Huck’s character Twain managed to achieve, especially the way the youngster interacts with people near him and how his inner thoughts are presented, we are able to explore his social, ethical and spiritual dilemmas which, as it will later be discussed, to a large extent puzzled the author himself. To understand how the institution of

¹⁰ Douglass, p.54.

slavery was perceived through the eyes of Huck and also Twain, we must be fully aware of the social conventions given the time and place the story is set in that inevitably shaped their opinion. In order to illustrate the self-evidence with which Afro-American servants were held in the towns like Hannibal, Missouri, Twain's own recollection comes at hand:

"In my schoolboy days I had no aversion to slavery. I was not aware that there was anything wrong about it. No one arraigned it in my hearing; the local papers said nothing against it; the local pulpit taught us that God approved it, that it was a holy thing, and that the doubter need only look in the Bible if he wished to settle his mind—and then the texts were read aloud to us to make the matter sure; if the slaves themselves had an aversion to slavery they were wise and said nothing. In Hannibal we seldom saw a slave misused; on the farm, never."¹¹

Growing up in prejudiced society where racial stereotypes are universally accepted, fostered by people who never lie such as Aunt Polly and Widow Douglas, there was no reason for Huck – as there was for Twain – to question the subordination of black servants to their masters, as this had been set in their consciousness from early childhood. It is little wonder that Tom and Huck tended to underestimate Jim's intellect and his superstitions made him an object of their ridicule in the early chapters. However, several incidents on the raft, involving their escape from the wrecked steamboat, made Huck to come to a conclusion that there was a great deal of practical knowledge in Jim and found him to have *"an uncommon level head for a nigger."*¹² There is the contempt for the Afro-Americans based on their intellectual inferiority hidden in that very statement, a quality Huck had been inoculated within the process of his conventional upbringing, but at the same time, it reflects his surprise at the invalidity of this widely accepted truth as he expresses admiration for Jim's skills.

Their relationship develops further following their separation and subsequent reunion on the river due to heavy fog. Having tried to make a fool of Jim pretending they never got lost Huck is taught a lesson of humanity. Such demonstration of emotional maturity in a black man surprises Huck and makes him feel ashamed. It is not until this point Huck realizes his ambivalence towards his companion. Jim's friendly, almost father-like approach makes the

¹¹ Twain, Mark, *Autobiography of Mark Twain: An Introductory Reader*, p.212.

¹² Twain, Mark and Elliot, Emory, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, p.71.

boy want to accept him as a friend, but at the same time he realizes he's helping a runaway slave. Guilt gnaws at him as Jim talks about his intentions as a free man and an old saying crosses Huck's mind: *"Give a nigger an inch and he'll take an ell."*¹³

In Huck's inner conflict, some of Twain's own ambivalent feelings towards Afro-Americans may be reflected. Douglass's confidence of intellectual deficit in Afro-Americans being a result of their restricted access to education rather than their genetic disposition was to a large extent shared by Twain. In this context, it is worth mentioning that Twain supported *"possibly as many as five black scholars through Yale Law School."*¹⁴ However, like the protagonist of *the Adventures*, the author himself felt the gap between the white and the black man caused by social conditions within the society. Twain's attitude towards black Americans is best described in Richard's and Rita Gollin's essay *"Huckleberry Finn and the Time of Evasion:"*

*"Twain remained ambivalent, as is clearly evident in his treatment of Jim. He felt bound to encourage merit whenever he found it, most especially among blacks; and he asserted that it was the white man's duty to seek out the unique individual beneath the black man's stereotyped appearance. Even so, he could not always do so himself, and he felt superior to most of the black men he encountered."*¹⁵

As soon as the King and the Duke sell Jim, Huck decides to write a letter to Miss Watson, for he believed it to be better for Jim to be a slave at home, *"as long as he'd got to be a slave."* Having realized he would be held responsible for assisting Jim with his escape, however, which he had still considered *"a lowdown thing"*¹⁶ to do, Huck hesitates. Fear of stealing from an innocent woman for which eternal damnation could be earned finally makes him write the letter for it to be torn again later as Huck's intimate feelings towards Jim shift the balance.

The passage of Huck's coming to a decision to save Jim belongs to the most powerful moments of the whole book. The need to face his infantile fear of punishment for getting

¹³ Twain, p.82.

¹⁴ Petit, Arthur G., *Mark Twain & the South*, p.126.

¹⁵ Gollin, Richard and Rita, "Huckleberry Finn – and the Time of the Evasion", p.8.

¹⁶ Twain, p.191.

into mischief and meet the expectations of his foster family is cast aside by the urgency to help someone who has become a father figure to him – someone who took other people’s child under his wing and treated him like his own despite having done so meant risking the possibility of seeing his own children again. Huck’s capability of a mature reflection based on principles of humanity is proven and he decides to stake his own reputation, challenge his social obligations and reject his inherited piety.

So far, the transformation in Huck’s view of Jim has been described. Through their interaction the image of Jim is found unfitting the stereotype of a black slave. Ignorant, as they were considered, Jim seemed to possess a good deal of practical knowledge. Their lack of humanity contrasted sharply with his feelings for his family and protective behavior towards Huck and later also Tom. With absent mother, desolate father and unfitting foster parents, Jim is the closest to the idea of a parent to him as their bond strengthens. *“A father whom, unlike his own, he can control”*¹⁷ as remarked by Toni Morrison. It is no wonder that Huck takes responsibility for his well-being, claiming he is holding Jim’s fate in his hands which, as they are both painfully aware of, for a fugitive slave could be sealed by literally anybody. Despite having dispelled some widely held myths, Huck never doubts he is in the position of power over Jim – a child in control of an adult, which in Douglas’s terms may be parallel to the unnatural superiority of a weak slave-master in charge of a self-confident slave such as Frederick himself. Regardless of whether Huck’s image of Jim is accurate or it could be blurred by his desperate need of a close friend, it is imperative to realize how insecure the foundations of Huck’s dominance based on racial prejudice appear and how easily he can become an object of manipulation if we interpret some of Jim’s deeds and actions differently – in more selfish terms. He is, after all, as Harold Beaver points out, a fugitive slave.¹⁸

In order to demonstrate the perils Huck was not aware of, an example can be drawn from how Jim’s control over Huck was established. An early successful attempt of Jim outsmarting Huck takes place on Jackson Island where he is discovered and forced by Huck to explain the purpose of his presence there. Prior to confessing he had run away, Jim made Huck promise he would not tell anyone, relying on his word of honor which Jim knew was held in high

¹⁷ Morrison, xxxvii.

¹⁸ Beaver, Harold, “Run, Nigger, Run: ‘Adventures of Huckleberry Finn’ as a Fugitive Slave Narrative”

regard among the moral virtues. Of course, Huck is stunned by the news but refusing to go back on his pledge, he decides not to turn Jim in, particularly after being told about his intended sale by Miss Watson. As a matter of fact, with no evidence apart from Jim's word, even the possibility for the story to be a product of fabrication cannot be excluded.

Several other incidents could be interpreted as motivated by Jim's effort to establish authority over Huck and use him as his guardian on the way to freedom. Eliot mentions Jim's self-proclaimed indispensability as Huck is "*beholden to Jim for his food and shelter*"¹⁹ in the cave episode. Cassander L. Smith claims that Jim's self-interest could have been one of the reasons he didn't let Huck know the drowned man in the House of Dead was his father.

*"If Huck knew Pap was dead, he would change his mind about running away from home. Jim, then, loses Huck's help in his own escape effort. Huck can go places and get supplies and information without generating much attention."*²⁰

If his selflessness and his paternal relation to Huck are read as feigned to serve his escape plan, Jim's incautious expression of happiness and the mention of the future he plans for him and his family as their raft reaches what they believed was Cairo must be understood as a major flaw in his tactics. His following "*de only fren' ole Jim's got*" speech would be a flattery to save the situation and remind "*de on'y white gentleman dat ever kep' his promise to ole Jim*"²¹ of the treaty made on Jackson Island.

It is neither the point of this work to make Jim guilty of taking advantage of the boy's feelings nor to perceive his deeds as motivated purely by altruism. It is meant to draw attention to how those seemingly degrading incidents regarded as being proofs of Jim's superstitions (belief to be ridden by witches) and ignorance (acceptance of Huck's counterfeit quarter) turn out to be, as Cassander L. Smith suggests, ways for him to gain respect and profit. They demonstrate how the underestimation of common sense hidden behind the racial stereotype can lead to the possibility of being easily deceived, in other words, how through the blind acceptance of these stereotypes the room could be opened to manipulation. The fragility of Huck's power over Jim is revealed which in many ways

¹⁹ Elliot, Emory, Introduction to the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, xxvi.

²⁰ Smith, Cassander L., "Nigger" or "Slave": Why Labels Matter for Jim (and Twain) in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. p.191.

²¹ Twain, p.83.

resonates with Douglas's argument against slavery as, in some cases, being the representation of an unnatural state where a weaker individual controls the stronger one. For many slaveholders, such awkward position became the source of frustration inability to deal with which may have lead to their excessive cruelty and decay of their own character like in the case of Miss Sophia Auld.

Having elaborated on Jim and Huck's relationship, I would hereupon like to focus on the concept of family – an institution responsible for the ideological development of an individual, bearing moral values and shaping the future intellectual world – and the possible effects of slavery on its functioning. For I believe Twain was convinced that if a change should come in the eyes of the masses regarding their perception of slaveholding, it would be a particularly slow and difficult one due to the burden Southern children of that period had to bear in form of prejudice and deep-rooted traditions handed down from their parents. A number of families Twain chose to describe in *The Adventures* serve as an example of moral decay, twisted values and passionate but insincere piety.

In chapter XVII, Huck is invited to stay with the Grangerfords at their residency. At first he is amazed by the splendor of the place and hospitality of its dwellers, he admires their house as well as their noble behavior. He feels very comfortable in their presence partially for the remote resemblance they bear to Huck's foster family. Particularly young Buck Grangerford – in the way he shows considerable romantic courage and holds firm to the family honor – is very much like Tom Sawyer. Hidden under their style, however, piece by piece, the putridity of their moral and religious principles begins to uncover before Huck's eyes. He learns about the long-lasting conflict the Grangerfords had with the Shepherdsons, the cause of which is long forgotten but since neither part is able to solve it, numerous lives had been lost on both sides. Their everyday life makes them face such absurd situations like the one described on Sunday's visit to church where both families heavily armed with guns attended a preaching about *brotherly love*. To make the stereotyped image of an aristocratic clan complete, a deceased young lady has to be mentioned who spent her life mourning and writing poems for the dead and the Shakespearian love affair between two members of the rival families.

The Grangerfords are representatives of Southern aristocracy whose riches were built on slave labor of hundreds of African-Americans. However Twain's depiction of them might

seem exaggerated, their purpose is to serve as a warning against values like family honor and sense of style being given priority over humanity. The Grangerfords are what the combination of adherence to his relatives' principles and romantic notions he adopts from reading adventure novels can make of Tom Sawyer – a self-centered inhumane scheming individual with dominance over many. It was hardly believable for Twain that such morally corrupt society – members of which were motivated by cruelty disguised as honor – would be able to approach slave servants differently than in terms of property. He was convinced that the mere act of slavery abolishment as an institution couldn't have brought better conditions for most of the Afro-Americans living in the South.

As mentioned earlier, there are similarities between the Grangerfords and the family to which Tom Sawyer and Miss Watson belonged who also tended to stick to their codes which they considered highly moral. Miss Watson is presented as a deeply religious woman for whom the message "love your neighbor as yourself" seems to be of utmost importance. Regrettably, later we learn that the reason for Jim's escape from Miss Watson was her toying with the idea of selling him to New Orleans which would mean separation from his family. This appears to be at variance with her Christian charity of which Huck becomes aware and moreover he sees similar disharmony between ideals and actions of Tom Sawyer. Judith Fetterley noted about him and Miss Watson *"that Tom, too, thinks of Jim in terms of money and covers up the reality of his actions toward Jim with the language of right and wrong. The two characters are thus connected through their mutual possession of the syndrome of moralism, aggression, and hypocrisy."*²²

The character of Tom Sawyer in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is the finest example of how the influence of Southern aristocratic values affects personality development. Formerly a young rascal causing all kinds of mischief, motivation for which have been innocent attempts to draw attention on himself and prove his own cleverness, slowly turns into an oppressive usurper driven by cruelty. The latter characteristic of Tom becomes evident in numerous situations throughout the course of *The Adventures* such as the idea of tying sleeping Jim to a tree, formation of a band of robbers for the purpose of thefts and murders and they would culminate with devising a plan for the liberation of an already free slave.

²²Fetterley, Judith, *Disenchantment: Tom Sawyer in Huckleberry Finn*, p.73.

Precisely the passage taking place on the Phelps' estate where Jim is arrested not only reveals in its complexity the two worlds of different principles represented by Tom and Huck but, most importantly, it shows us the implications Twain believed that such social division had on the future of slavery debate. Despite being his closest friend, Huck often disagrees with Tom's schemes but he finds himself unwilling to challenge them, like in the case of Jim's escape. Huck's plan is simple and straightforward while Tom's contains obstacles like cutting Jim's leg off, digging a tunnel with a case-knife or filling his room with snakes, spiders and rats. Huck is aware that Jim's freedom is placed in danger but he comments on Tom's ideas with remarks like *"he never paid no attention to me; went right on."*²³ The question than arises as to why he decides to follow Tom's plan instead of pursuing his own. The passive role Huck takes on has been an embarrassment for the reader who considered it his betrayal of Jim, the relationship they built up and his determination of helping him escape to the North. Some literary critics – including George Santayana and Leo Marx – attributed these contradictions in Huck's behavior to Twain's own inability to *"abandon the genteel tradition"*²⁴ of the South. Marx suggested that Twain avoided to support publicly the idea of Huck freeing a slave on his own.

*"Clemens did not acknowledge the truth his novel contained. He had taken hold of a situation in which a partial defeat was inevitable."*²⁵

Nevertheless, Huck possesses courage even to fight against injustice performed on slaves which he had proven earlier by saving Jim two times and preventing the family of Wilks sisters' slaves to be separated when the dauphin sold them. Then, what causes his hesitation at the Phelps' plantation? Was he trying to avoid loss of his face in the presence of Tom? He might have been comfortable supporting a runaway slave in the anonymity of the raft but will Tom wholeheartedly approve of such wicked behavior? Even though he doesn't always share his views fully, Marx explains it has to be kept in mind that Tom serves as a marker for Huck of what seems socially acceptable.

"The conflict between what people think they stand for and what social pressure forces them to do is central to the novel. It is present to the mind of Huck and,

²³ Twain, p.223.

²⁴ Marx, Leo, "Mr. Eliot, Mr. Thrilling, and Huckleberry Finn," p.207.

²⁵ Marx, p.210.

indeed, accounts for his most serious inner conflicts. He knows how he feels about Jim, but he also knows what he is expected to do about him. This division within his mind corresponds to the division of the novel's moral terrain into the areas represented by the raft on the one hand and society on the other."²⁶

There are two factors that need to be taken into consideration concerning Huck's hesitant approach during the concluding chapters. Firstly, Huck had been promised – to his own surprise – Tom's assistance on the liberation of Jim right on his arrival at the Phelps' place. Moreover, it was Tom who found the location where Jim was kept which served as a sufficient proof to Huck of Tom's being serious about the matter of stealing him. Huck found satisfaction with that idea and it partially compensated for the roughness of Tom's escape plan. Secondly, it is obvious Huck felt the authority caused by the difference in their social status Tom has over him and, at the same time, realized how little he can affect Tom's actions. However, as we tend to condemn Huck for his sudden hesitation caused by the respect for Tom's ways, we fail to admit consequences concerning Jim's freedom which challenging Tom's plans might have lead to. By all means, Tom posed a threat and Huck – not knowing that Jim is no longer a slave – must have found himself cornered in a similar way as when his and Jim's freedom on the raft was invaded by the King and the Dauphin and they were left at their mercy.

When approaching the precariousness of the situation in the final chapters from different perspectives (as Emory Elliott in his introduction of the *Adventures* notes), an interesting analogy with the position of the Afro-American folk after the Civil War is brought into focus. Although the plot of the book itself is situated in the Mississippi Valley in the 1840's, it has to be kept in mind that *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* were not published until 1884 which takes us to the Era of Reconstruction following the Emancipation Proclamation. This order may have brought the formal end of slave labor, nonetheless, it was far from bringing freedom for the Afro-American population. The word slavery was replaced by terms such as convict leasing or peonage and laws were introduced that led to movement restrictions of former slaves. As a result, the majority of them ended up living under the same conditions as before.

²⁶ Marx, p.212.

Placing the Phelps farm chapters in this context, there is a striking parallel between the position of Jim – by that time already set free by Widow Douglas, but unaware of the fact whose fate, therefore, is still in the hands of the boys – and the black people in southern states at the end of the 19th century. Tom had known all along that Jim was a free man, however, overwhelmed by his maliciousness, he decides to keep the news secret and torments both Jim and Huck with an unnecessarily complicated escape plan. Twain possibly modeled Tom's schemes on his belief of what the road leading from the formal emancipation of the slaves to their full freedom will look like. With Tom's suggestion that Jim's liberation should take at least eighty years and be finally completed by their children, Elliott comments on Twain's ability of being *prophetic*:

“When we add eighty years to 1884, of course, we have 1964 which was the high point of the Civil Rights Movement and the very time the ‘Jim Crow’ laws that were established in the South in the 1870s and 1880s were finally struck down.”²⁷

²⁷ Elliot, Emory, Introduction to the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. xxxiv.

2. TWAIN'S TWO PROVIDENCES AND DOUGLASS'S SLAVEHOLDING RELIGION

Within the course of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* we encounter repeated references to religion as well as the question of adherence to and betrayal of religious principles. Undoubtedly, both authors considered religion to play a vital role in the shaping of society, its consistency, but also, what is more important, its disintegration. Twain refers more generally to the emergence of extremist views shaped by deliberate misinterpretations of the Script and at the same time utters a word of warning about blind acceptance of religious dogma, whereas Douglass differentiates between *the Christianity of Christ* and *the Christianity of this land* pointing specifically at the latter for being a tool of oppression at the hands of the slaveholders, providing them with justification for their evils committed on Afro-Americans. By all means, both writers agree on the existence of some sort of a double standard concerning religious views which unease in the mind of their protagonists and corruptive forces in relations within the society seem to stem from.

Primarily, it is necessary to stress the role of religion which, by the end of the 19th century, was still perceived as representing the highest natural code of conduct intended to lead an individual to a moral life. Characters which are considered, or like to consider themselves, well-intended Christians appear in both books. Throughout the *Adventures*, common religious practices such as reading from the Bible, prayer before meals, psalm singing and Sunday church attending are mentioned. The ideals of people living by Christian principles materialize in the characters of Miss Watson and Widow Douglas. At least, that is the image created by Huck Finn and transferred to the reader in the opening chapters. Having described them as people who never lie, both respectable women who live to go to heaven become a model of human virtues. Even the fact that Huck was adopted by the widow serves as demonstration of her charitable nature. Although Huck is unable to identify himself with Miss Watson's "*help other people...never think about [yourself]*"²⁸ policy, both women become the marker of moral behavior, a standard on the background of which the boy's future decisions are going to be made, an indicator of what the society considers to be moral. Nevertheless, through Huck's observant eyes, certain inconsistencies concerning what the pious women preach and what their actions are unfold gradually. For instance,

²⁸ Twain, p.12.

Miss Watson would not allow Huck to smoke calling it a “*mean practice*” only to be caught “*snuffing*”²⁹ herself. Moreover, the thoughtfulness and charity towards her fellowmen attributed to her conflicts with the fact of her owning and, as the reader learns in one of the following chapters, intending to sell a slave. Although her faith, undoubtedly, leads her to believe, as it was generally understood among the Southern slaveholders, that caring about slaves, clothing and feeding them was a charitable deed. Eventually, Huck comes to a conclusion that there are “*two Providences*”³⁰ – one that brings sacrifices and spiritual gifts and the other one which an individual can profit from.

Before elaborating on Twain’s double standard of religious faith, an interesting aspect of the Christian virtue is worth mentioning. Attention is drawn by the author to the perils of Christian charity when displayed rather impulsively – without consideration that is – or for the sake of creating the desired effect for the others to be able to recognize it. In “Sentimental Liberalism and the Problem of Race in Huckleberry Finn” Gregg Camfield demonstrates what similar acts of charity may lead to on the example of the new judge, who took the character of Pap under his wings to reform him. Feeding and clothing him, talking to him about temperance, the judge makes the old man promise to become a different man. Camfield sums up that “*with minimal investment of time and no conception of the real difficulty of changing a person’s life, the new judge and his wife wallow in Pap’s tearful confession for their own pleasure.*”³¹ Twain, however, has the last word when he makes Pap exchange his new clothes for liquor and get drunk, dismissing his pledge. In a similar fashion, the blind believers are mocked in the religion camp-meeting passage, where the King interrupts the preaching, raising sympathy among the audience with his fictive story of a reformed pirate who had been robbed. The crowd eventually takes the bait and organizes a collection.

Most notably, the contradiction between beliefs and deeds of individual characters are to be observed on members of the high classes of society. Tom is an example of a well born young boy growing up in a morally and spiritually confusing environment. Being brought up to follow Christian principles, he got the rest of his education from adventure books. As a young rascal he devotes himself to such activities as organizing a group of thieves who would

²⁹ Twain, p.4.

³⁰ Twain, p.12.

³¹ Camfield, Gregg, “Sentimental Liberalism and the Problem of Race in *Huckleberry Finn*,” p. 104.

murder people; still, he objects if the group would operate on Sundays – the days reserved to church-going. Similar type of disparity is to be seen by the aristocratic family of Grangerfords. Initially, Huck is easily convinced about their moral quality and never doubts them being good Christians. However, they are engaged in a clan war with the Shepherdsons which makes them commit the sin of killing their brothers and behave improperly, carrying weapons to the church. Twain's deliberate mentions of such inconsistencies in ruling class characters lead to the conclusion that those in position of power often tend to interpret the Ten Commandments their way, they are allowed to bend the rules slightly to fit their needs without having their reputations as models of piety suffer.

To understand what a powerful tool religious faith became in the hand of the slaveholders it is important to take notice of Twain's references to the slaves' knowledge of the Scripture and their god-fearing nature. Jim is familiar with the biblical stories such as the one about King Solomon. And since the majority of slave servants were kept illiterate, their religious education was delivered to them above all by the white man. In the opening chapter, Miss Watson "*fetches the niggers in*"³² for a collective prayer and in the Silas plantation episode, Mr. Silas is said to visit Jim for the same reason. Starting from the assumption that the idea of white supremacy was based on the interpretation of the Bible, the reason to share prayers with slaves was not to show family solidarity, but the way of controlling them by confirming the legitimacy of their subordination.

Twain targets deliberate misinterpretations along with blind faith, both important constituents of the Southern Church. He uses the character of Huck to demonstrate how burdensome it is to find one's bearings in the environment of moral confusion, which such an extreme form of religion serves to create. As Norris W. Yates noted in "Counter-Conversion" of Huckleberry Finn, Huck never hesitates to help save the criminals on the *Walter Scott*, but when it comes to assisting a black friend to escape the bonds of oppression he is "*torn by the contradiction in a religious way of life that approves of both altruism and slavery.*"³³ Despite Huck and Jim's friendship growing intimate, the remains of the Sunday school teachings where he would be taught the 'proper' behavior towards a slave still resonate in the boy's subconscious mind.

³² Twain, p.4.

³³ Yates, Norris W, "The 'Counter-Conversion' of Huckleberry Finn," p.9.

Whereas the double standard of religion remains in the undertone of Twain's *Adventures* it becomes one of the major themes in Douglass's *Narrative*. Here, two forms of Christianity are placed against each other – one which the author identifies with representing the true ideals of humanity and the other one that allows, supports and benefits from people's enslavement. Once again, it is demonstrated how noble ideals can be deliberately misinterpreted by those in position of power to serve an evil cause, confusing weaker individuals so much they exchange their virtues for self-deception. Douglass refers to the impossibility of coexistence between true Christianity and slavery, thus the necessity for slaveholders to substitute it with a slightly altered system of values, a perverted form of Christianity which Douglass calls *the Christianity of the land*. Throughout the course of the *Narrative*, some of the characters are used to illustrate that their seemingly deep religious devotion does not prevent them from committing immoral deeds, moreover, that it provides them with an excuse for even crueler mistreatment of the slaves.

To observe the process of a true Christian straying from the path and betraying the noble ideals of his faith, the character of Mrs. Sophia Auld would serve as a perfect example. On their introduction and within the early stage of Douglass's service at the Aulds, he describes her as a model Christian, even without considering it necessary to describe her religious routine. She is portrayed as "*a woman of the kindest heart*" whose manners reflected great "*goodness*", a being of "*heavenly smiles on her angelic face*"³⁴ which was not reserved just for her close kin, but became her distinctive feature even during the treatment of her servant.

*"My mistress was, as I have said, a kind and tender-hearted woman; and in the simplicity of her soul she commenced, when I first went to live with her, to treat me as she supposed one human being ought to treat another."*³⁵

Douglass blames slavery for the decay in her character and, respectively, sees the twisted form of Christianity resulting directly from its institution.

"Slavery proved as injurious to her as it did to me. When I went there, she was a pious, warm, and tender-hearted woman. There was no sorrow or suffering for

³⁴ Douglass, p.38.

³⁵ Douglass, p.42.

which she had not a tear. She had bread for the hungry, clothes for the naked, and comfort for every mourner that came within her reach. Slavery soon proved its ability to divest her of these heavenly qualities. Under its influence, the tender heart became stone, and the lamblike disposition gave way to one of tiger-like fierceness.”³⁶

She becomes a slave of her faith, but it is vital to notice she does not adopt the slaveholder code of conduct by her own choice. There is the presence of a tutor – a person who instructs her into the machinery of slavery – her husband Hugh Auld. Douglass provides the reader with a similar example of initiation into the secrets of proper slave treatment elsewhere in the book. In chapter IX, Master Thomas Auld visits a Methodist meeting-camp in August 1832, an event which the author suspects of having the crucial impact on his master’s character change. Preceding his conversion, his dominating character traits were cruelty and meanness which were reflected in his treatment of the slaves who were frequently starved and forced to beg for food or steal it. The religious convention, however, never made him become any kinder or more humane as it would be expected from such a spiritual event. On the contrary, his viciousness towards his servants increased as he is said to have found “*religious sanction*” and “*support and for his slaveholding cruelty.*”³⁷ Such gatherings were not intended to encourage true Christian values, as Douglass suggests, but served to spread an extreme form of Christianity based on misinterpretations of the Holy Book which would allow violence on brothers and justification thereof. As a result, individuals like Mr. West or Mr. Fairbanks establish themselves in the position of “*class-leaders*” who would call black servants to prayers letting them hear what became of the word of God, but who would, at the same time, possess authority to close Sabbath schools and thereby deny them the opportunity to read the Bible.

Douglass promptly offers practical examples of how deliberate misinterpretations give slaveholders an excuse for cruelty inflicted on their servants. A passage from the Bible is used as a justification for whipping a young woman named Henny, “*He that knoweth his master’s will, and doeth it not, shall be beaten with many stripes.*”³⁸ Perversion of charity and goodwill in characters like Thomas Auld is reflected in their assertion that they “*hold*

³⁶ Douglass, p.42.

³⁷ Douglass, p.55.

³⁸ Douglass, p.56.

*slaves for the charitable purpose of taking care of them*³⁹ which, as Douglass's case proves, contrasts sharply with how badly they were actually fed and treated.

Perhaps the most elaborate of all deceptions the majority of Americans failed to see through at the time, was racial inferiority of the Afro-Americans being based on the interpretation of the Bible. The Curse of Ham, where black Africans are Ham's descendants, provided white elites with an alibi for the exploitation of slaves. In *the Narrative*, Douglass tackles this biblical reference in a very skillful way, claiming that the number of mixed race slaves, such as himself, is rising in the population, thus if *"the lineal descendants of Ham are alone to be scripturally enslaved, it is certain that slavery at the south must soon become unscriptural."*⁴⁰

In conclusion, both Twain, through the character of Huck Finn, and Douglass expressed their frustration with the inconsistency of Christian faith within the southern society and they attempted to redefine it through their own sense of righteousness and morality. By refusing to perform his civic duty of returning a runaway slave, Huck, for a moment, liberates himself from the corruptive force of twisted social and spiritual beliefs and, without even realizing it, achieves the noblest religious ideal of brotherly love. Douglass warns about the southern church profiting from the slave trade, offering justification of the sins committed on the African-Americans in exchange. Its failure to inspire to selflessness and moral behavior, however, coupled with the inability of its members to stand between true Christianity and the religion of the south will, as Douglass prophesizes, eventually lead to an identity crisis in the slaveholding society, accelerating its decline.

³⁹ Douglass, p.56.

⁴⁰ Douglass, p.17.

3. THE POWER OF KNOWLEDGE: TO DECEIVE AND BE DECEIVED

This part of my work aims to deal with Douglass's concept of knowledge being an instrument of power in the hands of slaveholders. At the same time, it provides a slave, as it is demonstrated in the *Narrative*, with the means of achieving freedom and suppression of it ultimately becomes a tool of revenge. Parallels will be drawn to exploration of similar topics in *Huckleberry Finn*, where Twain also focuses on the important distinction between formal and practical knowledge. The purpose of this section is to highlight the arguments of both authors suggesting that the mechanism of slavery intellectually degraded white population as much as it did the slaves.

First and foremost, it is important to realize Douglass challenges the commonly held belief that black inferiority results from the laws of nature or God's will, claiming that it was devised by the white slave-owner who uses several methods to maintain power over his servants. In the opening sequence of the *Narrative*, Douglass explains that deprivation of basic facts, including birth date and paternity counts as one of the strategies.

*"By far the larger part of the slaves know as little of their ages as horses know of theirs, and it is the wish of most masters within my knowledge to keep their slaves thus ignorant."*⁴¹

He was separated from his mother soon after he was born, which is described as a *common custom* and the following comment on the reason of such action is made by Douglass:

*"For what the separation is done, I do not know, unless it be to hinder the development of the child's affection towards its mother, and to blunt and destroy the natural affection of the mother for the child."*⁴²

Knowing very little about his mother and grandmother, the knowledge of his father was *withheld* from him. With the words of James Matlack, "*Progeny of the oppressors, lacking any roots or identity, how could young Douglass know or say who he was?*"⁴³ This young boy is, along with multitudes of fellow young African-Americans, thus deliberately robbed of

⁴¹ Douglass, p.15.

⁴² Douglass, p.16.

⁴³ Matlack, James, "The Autobiographies of Frederick Douglass," p. 21.

individual self and literally *"ceases to be a man"*⁴⁴. As a result, throughout the first chapters of the *Narrative*, he acts as a silent character, an onlooker who is forced to witness the horrors of slavery such as whipping of his aunt Hester. The intention for him undoubtedly is to become a passive and thoughtless figure that, numbed by hard labor, is unable to meditate about his hopeless condition.

Yet, in spite of his ignorant state and acquaintance with what Daniel J. Royer calls *"prevailing mythology,"*⁴⁵ God given inferiority of a black man, the seed of injustice of slavery was planted in Douglass's heart. From the time he was a child, Douglass proves a good deal of inquisitiveness which can be certified by his desire to know his date of birth.

*"A want of confirmation my own [birthday] was a source of unhappiness to me even during childhood."*⁴⁶

In addition, his was the gift of intuition which he relies on in his early attempts to analyze the seemingly meaningless slave choral singing at the Great House Farm.

*"To those songs I trace my first glimmering conception of the dehumanizing character of slavery."*⁴⁷

Curiosity and good instincts are essential prerequisites for achieving knowledge and since Douglass possessed both, his transformation from an ignorant subservient being to a self-sufficient educated person could be commenced.

The turning point in Douglass's life and on his way to enlightenment was his service at Hugh and Sophia Auld. While his new mistress tried to teach him to read, which seemingly appears to have been of great service to him, it was the lesson delivered by Mr. Auld explaining his wife the perils of slave literacy, which proved the most valuable experience. Master Hugh claimed that education would *"spoil the best nigger in the world...it would ever unfit him to be a slave...he would become unmanageable."*⁴⁸ Thus, part of the strategy devised by slaveholders to rule over black Africans was revealed to Douglass. As a matter of fact, this

⁴⁴ Douglass, p.87.

⁴⁵ Royer, Daniel J., "The Process of Literacy as Communal Involvement in the Narratives of Frederick Douglass." p. 368.

⁴⁶ Douglass, p.15.

⁴⁷ Douglass, p.24.

⁴⁸ Douglass, p.39.

happens to be the decisive moment where he becomes the agent of his own liberation. Not only he understands that the mechanism of enslavement relied on his ignorance, but also becomes able to perceive knowledge as a powerful tool on his way to freedom – or put in Royer’s words – *“a currency that could buy more than literal freedom.”*⁴⁹ Lisa Sun Lee comments that in Chapter VI, Douglass’s role changes from a passive observer into the one of *“controlling narrator”* noticing that *“the white people who speak through the first half, now become watchful of Douglass.”*⁵⁰

There is another side to this coin, however, marked by prophetic words of Master Auld that *“[knowledge] could do [a slave] no good, but a great deal of harm [as] it would make him discontented and unhappy.”*⁵¹ With all pieces of the puzzle concerning the mechanics of slavery having finally fallen into place, Douglass realizes all the consequences and begins to understand what desperate situation he finds himself in. The knowledge of freedom is described as something *“ever present to torment [him] with a sense of [his] wretched condition.”*⁵² Douglass admits that his education became the source of unhappiness, but at the same time, turned out to be the means of motivation towards a change. In other words, the mere process of obtaining knowledge does not suffice to set a slave free, but it may lead him to an active resistance against oppression. Harm can, therefore, only be done if an educated individual is to stay in thrall.

Douglass eventually becomes self-confident enough to be able to become the master of his own destiny. Achieving literacy marked his mental victory against the blinding conspiracy of the white slaveholders, but it was not until the fight with Mr. Covey that he gained physical dominance. Still, there were situations preceding their brawl when his growing confidence allowed him to challenge Covey’s power over himself. One of these moments occurred during Covey’s family prayers which were accompanied by singing. Knowing that Covey was an unskilled singer and being certain to be chosen in his stead, Douglass would sometimes remain silent when the command was given to start singing. Through the awareness of his master’s weakness, Douglass ignores his orders and manifests his sovereignty.

⁴⁹ Royer, Daniel J., “The Process of Literacy as Communal Involvement in the Narratives of Frederick Douglass,” p. 369.

⁵⁰ Lee, Lisa Yun, “The Politics of Language in Frederick Douglass’s *Narrative of the Life of an American Slave*,” p.56.

⁵¹ Douglass, p.39.

⁵² Douglass, p.45.

Up to this point, Douglass's role as the one of an apprentice – recipient and evaluator of knowledge – was discussed. By the end of the *Narrative*, his role is redefined to the one of the educator. By writing his autobiography, he informs the reader about the injustices from the point of view of an individual who suffered under the effects of slavery. But most importantly, he takes control over what details concerning his life in bondage he will reveal. In the introduction to the *Narrative*, Deborah E. McDowell draws attention to recent views of Douglass taking “*great liberty with the facts of his life...inventing details and incidents...to make the strongest possible case against the dehumanizing institution of slavery.*”⁵³ Moreover, not only he decides to publish some incriminating pieces of information, but at the same time he chooses to withhold some of it from the ears of the oppressors. Douglass deliberately suppresses the details concerning his escape. He explains his decision to do so in order to “*keep the merciless slaveholder ignorant of the means of flight*”⁵⁴ and allow other slaves to take the same path. In the course of the *Narrative*, he transforms from an individual robbed of his personal identity to what Lee calls “*protector*”⁵⁵ of his fellow Afro-Americans who is taking active steps towards the limitation of the power of white slaveholders.

The similar motif of withholding knowledge is present in the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, as Twain investigates the concept of cons and deceptions throughout the whole story. To name a few, the following are worth mentioning: Pap lies to the new judge expecting profit, Miss Watson hides her *snuffing*, the king and the duke trick people to get money and, last but not least, Huck hides Jim's identity by lying to slaveholders on the raft. Probably the most fascinating example of concealing a fact, however, occurs when Jim hesitates to reveal the truth about the dead man from the floating house being Huck's father. He does so no sooner than the end of the story, following his discovery of being a free man.

The question has to be asked, what leads Jim to hide the death of Huck's father? What could be gained through such strategy of silence? Of course, it might have been sympathy with the fragile mind of a young boy in the first place that stopped Jim from telling Huck. This explanation would support the idea of Jim's growing humanity. But is there a chance that Jim pursued his own interest, as critics like Beaver argue? Being a runaway slave, Huck

⁵³ McDowell, Deborah E., Introduction to *Narrative of Life of Frederick Douglass: an American Slave*, ix.

⁵⁴ Douglass, p.89.

⁵⁵ Lee, p.57.

provides him with a good alibi, turning into his protector. Knowing that Pap was dead could have made Huck give up on further journey, since the reason for it would no longer exist. Was Jim aware of the consequences? The task of answering this question is not an easy one.

The starting point must necessarily be a closer look at the character of Jim. Earlier in the text, the stereotypical depiction was mentioned, portraying him as the typical example of an ignorant slave guided by his superstitious beliefs. If a comparison is to be made between Douglass and Jim, the difference becomes even more obvious. Jim bears more resemblance with the slave named Sandy mentioned in the *Narrative*. He never questions white supremacy. His escape is not motivated with the idea of unjust position of a slave. He simply does not want to part from his family – or at least that is what the reader is told. However, had it been the intention of Twain or not, there are implications which suggest that his character is far more complex. He possesses a good deal of practical knowledge, the ability of insight and logical reasoning, only they are often lost among superstitions and conventional knowledge.

As the white man relies on slaves' ignorance, so is Jim able to take advantage of it and deceive others, which is best seen in the fortune-telling passage in chapter IV. Huck consults him about Pap's arrival, wishing to look into the future using Jim's hair-ball. Having compromised on a payment with a "*counterfeit quarter*", Jim explains the technological process of turning it into real money, so that "*anybody in town would take it in a minute.*"⁵⁶ Such moments serve as a reminder of dangers resulting from putting too much emphasis on deep-rooted beliefs, namely on innate mental inferiority of the black man.

The validity of conventional knowledge is put to the test again in chapter XIV, during which Jim and Huck's ideological dispute over the morale of King Solomon's story arises. Huck repeatedly attempts to convince Jim of the traditional interpretation which suggests that Solomon's decision to cut a baby in half was a part of his cunning plan that proved his wisdom. Jim, however, dismisses it for its immorality. It is not clear whether Jim "*missed the point*"⁵⁷ of Solomon's story, which would prove his inability to understand the full context and therefore show his mental inferiority. Then again, it is necessary to perceive Jim's attitude as a result of his cognition, based on knowledge gained through his life experience

⁵⁶ Twain, p.18.

⁵⁷ Twain, p.72.

and submitted to his capacity of reasoning. In comparison, Huck's comprehension of Solomon's decision is a mere repetition of Widow Douglass's traditional reading of this biblical story. No deliberation had been involved in shaping his opinion. In that respect, Jim's philosophy proves much more valuable, for what good the acceptance of facts is when they cannot be put in broader contexts? What good education is when morale and humanity fail? "*Blame the point*"⁵⁸ is uttered by Twain as he judges the emptiness of formal knowledge, "*Blame the point*" if wisdom becomes the tool of oppression.

Chapter XIV concludes with a heated discussion over mutual incomprehensibility of English and French where Jim once again proves that in spite of lacking formal education he has a strong sense of logic. Huck, once again, relies on the facts he had been taught. He props his explanation of why the Americans and the French do not understand each other with his belief of it being for the same reason why understanding between humans and animals is not possible.

"...ain't it natural and right for a cat and a cow to talk different from us?"

"Why, mos' sholy it is."

"Well, then, why ain't it natural and right for a Frenchman to talk different from us?"

Jim, however, challenges Huck's opinion with an argument based on the difference of species in people and animals being irrelevant when applied to Frenchmen and Americans, while both are humans.

"Is a cow a man?—er is a cow a cat?"

"No, she ain't either of them."

"Well, den, she ain't got no business to talk like either one er the yuther of 'em. Is a Frenchman a man?"

"Yes."

*"Well, den! Dad blame it, why doan' he talk like a man? You answer me dat!"*⁵⁹

Exposing the flaw in Huck's way of reasoning, he forces the boy to give up on the argument. This passage increasingly undermines the image of Jim as a stereotypical slave figure.

⁵⁸ Twain, p.73.

⁵⁹ Twain, p.74.

Furthermore, his speech can be interpreted as referring to the position of black people within the society. It provides sharp critique of judging people in terms of what Emory Elliott sees as *“surface differences among men such as language, manners, skin color and dialect”*⁶⁰ and on their basis regard some of them as inferior beings.

As a member of the underprivileged who was able to uncover the groundlessness of his position, Jim would constantly be on guard against any kind of misuse from his masters. Undoubtedly, making steps towards his protection could include deception from his part. Now, it is not the point of this work to confirm or to disprove theories concerning Jim taking advantage of the young boy’s growing confidence and attachment, using him as a tool of his escape, but rather to draw attention to Twain’s message of the white supremacy being deep-rooted to such extent that the complacency of white population left it vulnerable to all kinds of frauds. Thus, the institution of slavery has clearly contributed to the mental decay of the slaveholding society.

⁶⁰ Elliott, xxviii.

CONCLUSION

As mentioned earlier, both Twain and Douglass are representatives of different social classes, even the literary genres they use to convey their views are not identical – Douglass’s text is an autobiography, whereas Twain’s is a work of fiction. However, if the surface nuances between their tales are ignored, the two of them could not be more alike, especially with regard to portraying the hypocrisy of the slaveholding society. The striking similarity of ideas presented within *Adventures* and the *Narrative* even became my principal source of motivation for the completion of this thesis. Even though Twain’s book was published almost 40 years later, its plot covers the same period of American history as the *Narrative*. This era epitomized moral confusion. The effort to make the slave industry sustainable put pressure on numerous people, who were often forced to act against their beliefs, as it is suggested by both Twain and Douglass. Such behavior inevitably led to the corruption of their character.

Twain and Douglass agree on the absurdity of the intellectual inferiority of the African-Americans being inborn, claiming that the limited access to education for the slaves was to blame. Presence of a servant with a highly developed logical reasoning was scarce, but still possible. Both the *Narrative* and *Adventures* provide the reader with passages where a slave proves mentally equal to his master. The position of power is thus placed in danger which leads to the frustration at the inability to handle a slave. In order to maintain control, the oppressor is forced to resort to cruelty. Finally, the sanctuary is offered to him by the church devoted to what Douglass calls “slaveholding Christianity”.

In conclusion, such were the slave-owners’ tactics of maintaining power over their slaves. However, the authoritarian rule notoriously weakens intelligence, deprives people of the chance to challenge the traditional ways and limits the ability of reasoning. It forces an individual to conform to a stereotype and opens the door to manipulation.

Hereby, the aim of this thesis is fulfilled, to demonstrate how the institution of slavery negatively affected the social, spiritual and intellectual environment of the society, as well as to prove that the deterioration did not involve solely the slaves, but in many cases also their masters.

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ANNOTATION

Jméno a příjmení:	František Smékal
Katedra:	Ústav cizích jazyků PdF UP Olomouc
Vedoucí práce:	Mgr. Petr Anténe, Ph.D.
Rok obhajoby:	2017

Název práce:	Obraz otroctví v díle Fredericka Douglassa a Marka Twaina
Název v angličtině:	The Image of Slavery in the Work of Frederick Douglass and Mark Twain
Anotace práce:	Závěrečná práce se zabývá porovnáním knih Marka Twaina <i>Dobrodružství Huckleberryho Finna</i> a Fredericka Douglassa <i>Vyprávění o životě Fredericka Douglassa</i> za účelem vytvoření obrazu otroctví amerického jihu v polovině 19. století. Cílem práce je prozkoumat sociální, intelektuální a náboženské prostředí popisované v dílech obou autorů a zároveň zdůraznit jejich shodný názor potvrzující neblahý vliv otrokářství nikoliv pouze na otroky, ale rovněž na celou společnost.
Klíčová slova:	otroctví, rozpad rodiny, krize vztahů, náboženství, vzdělání, pověry
Anotace v angličtině:	This thesis deals with comparing <i>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i> by Mark Twain and <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass</i> by himself, in order to recreate the image of slavery in the mid 19 th century American South. The aim of this thesis is to explore the social, intellectual and religious environment described in the work of both authors and, at the same time, to emphasize their shared view of slaveholding having a corrupting influence not only on the slaves, but also on the whole society.
Klíčová slova v angličtině:	slavery, disintegration of family, crisis of relationships, religion, knowledge, superstition
Přílohy vázané v práci:	-
Rozsah práce:	31 s. (58 467 znaků)
Jazyk práce:	Anglický

RÉSUMÉ

Závěrečná práce se zabývá porovnáním knih Marka Twaina *Dobrodružství Huckleberryho Finna* a Fredericka Douglassa *Vyprávění o životě Fredericka Douglassa* za účelem vytvoření obrazu otroctví amerického jihu v polovině 19. století. Pozornost je věnována tématům rozkladu tradiční rodiny, narušení příbuzenských vztahů, úpadku morálky, zvrácenosti víry, to vše pod tíhou otrokářství. Prostor je dále věnován myšlence vzdělání jakožto nástroji manipulace, prostředku osvobození se z područí útlaku a zároveň je vyzdvihnuta důležitost kritického myšlení. Cílem práce je porovnat sociální, intelektuální a náboženské prostředí popisované v dílech obou autorů a zároveň zdůraznit jejich shodný názor potvrzující neblahý vliv otrokářství nikoliv pouze na otrocky, ale rovněž na celou společnost.