

**University of Pardubice  
Faculty of Arts and Philosophy**

**Two Views of American Slavery: The Character of Jim in Mark  
Twain's Novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and the Character of  
Kunta Kinte in Alex Haley's Novel *Roots***

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## **Poděkování**

Na tomto místě bych rád poděkoval doc. PhDr. Bohuslavu Mánkovi, CSc. za jeho radu a pomoc při psaní této diplomové práce a své rodině za veškerou její podporu.

## **Abstract**

This thesis deals with American slavery, methods applied by Mark Twain in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and by Alex Haley in *Roots* to portray it, and the characters of their respective works, Jim and Kunta Kinte.

The first part presents historical information about the system of slavery in America. The following parts discuss methods used by Twain and Haley to write their works. Subsequently, Jim's and Kunta's developmental and spiritual attributes are analyzed.

The final chapter compares the methods and the characters of the two books and concludes by showing similarities and differences between methods of their authors and between their characters.

## **Keywords**

slavery; Twain, Mark; Haley, Alex; Jim; Kinte, Kunta; comparison

## **Souhrn**

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá americkým otroctvím, metodami, které použili Mark Twain v *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Alex Haley v *Roots* k jeho zobrazení, a příslušnými postavami jejich děl, Jimem a Kuntou Kinte.

V první části je nastíněna historie amerického otroctví za účelem poskytnutí všeobecných informací o tomto systému. Následující části uvádějí metody, použité Twainem a Haleym k napsání jejich prací. Poté jsou udány atributy týkající se Jimova a Kuntova vývoje a duchovní stránky.

Závěrečná kapitola se zabývá porovnáváním zmíněných metod a postav, a činí závěry o podobnostech a rozdílech mezi autory a mezi postavami.

## **Klíčová slova**

otroctví; Twain, Mark; Haley, Alex; Jim; Kinte, Kunta; porovnání

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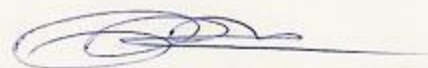
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## 1. Introduction

The period of American slavery is one of the most brutal episodes in the history of mankind in terms of the behaviour of one group of people towards another. Therefore it is worth exploring how this is reflected in literary works. Two characters in books by authors who deal with the topic are used to analyse the impact of slavery on literature.

The first character, Jim, can be found in Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The book was chosen for numerous reasons – its author is considered to be a master of his epoch; the main character, and narrator, is a child, which postulates an uncorrupted viewpoint; and the book was written in the postbellum era, thus a certain level of reflection should be ensured.

The second character, Kunta Kinte, plays an important role in *Roots*, by Alex Haley. The book represents an unprecedented idea – a black author tries to track his ancestry in the form of a cross between a historical account and a work of fiction. Needless to say, the search leads through slavery and must mention it in some form. The distinguishing factor is perceived in the distance between the slavery period and 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the book was written.



## 2. Methodology

The first part of the thesis presents an outline of the history of black slaves. It is mainly sketched through the perspective of black authors since there is a high likelihood that white authors could be biased against delicate parts of the period of slavery in America. The period is full of oppression and exploitation of slaves and white authors could attempt to make the injustices look more trivial than they were.

The above mentioned authors produce reliable material because the book used (Franklin, John H., Moss, Alfred A. (1994). *From Slavery to Freedom : History of African Americans*. 7th ed. New York: Knopf. 680. ISBN: 0-679-43087-3.) is often revised and updated, which is demonstrated by its 7<sup>th</sup> edition.

On the top of that, this part, which should be perceived more as an introductory one, is not the main topic of the thesis and thus materials used to support it are regarded as sufficient.

The next item, authors' methods of writing comparison, uses secondary literature to describe the book's crucial features. Since it would be difficult to compare authors that are separated by such a long time period, this comparison is split into two parts. One part deals only with Alexander Haley's methods and the other with Mark Twain's methods. The Haley part includes a short biography of the author, because he is not as well-known as Mark Twain. From this reason, there is no Twain biography included either.

Subsequently, the comparison of the two characters is arranged in the same way for the reason that is mentioned in the previous paragraph and because it is difficult to find character qualities similar enough to be comparable. This means that each character is scrutinized separately. These parts are placed after analyses of their respective authors.

The side-by-side comparison of both the methods and the characters is done in the last part of the thesis that thus completely summarizes this work.

### 3. Historical Background

#### 3.1. Pre-slavery Period in America

In order to explain the system of slavery in the New World, it is essential to provide historical background on the continent. Africans are mostly connected with the United States' slavery period only, but there were some indications in 1920s and 1970s that there were more ancient African-American relationships. A few scientists believed that Europeans had not been the people who discovered America:

[...] when professor Leo Wiener published *Africa and the Discovery of America*, scholars advanced the view that Africans inhabited the New World before Columbus. Wiener and several scholars who followed him [...] said that numerous evidences of trade and other contacts between Africa and the New World indicate that Africans, not Europeans, were the pioneers of the transatlantic West. (Franklin and Moss, 30)

This idea was later of little concern to slaveholders and advocates of the slavery system just as it may not be acceptable for present scholars “because the arguments are not convincing [...]” (Franklin and Moss, 30)

Another newly discovered and startling fact about black pioneers – the modern name, African-Americans that is widely applied nowadays, cannot be used yet – is that they came to America with conquerors from Europe and thus the term African-Europeans would be more appropriate.

As long as evidence by Franklin and Moss (30) is considered authentic then there must have been numerous occurrences of such explorers, or better assistants of explorers, in the past: As early as 1501, Spain relinquished her earlier ban and permitted Africans to go to Spanish lands in the New World. Thirty Africans, including Nuflo de Olano, were with Balboa when he discovered the Pacific Ocean. Cortés carried blacks with him into Mexico, and one of them planted and harvested the first wheat crop in the New World. Two accompanied Velas in 1520. When Alvarado went to Quito, he took 200 blacks with him. They were with Pizarro on his Peruvian expedition and carried him to the cathedral after he was murdered. The Africans in the expeditions of Almagro and Valdivia saved their Spanish masters from the Indians in 1525.

Even if the point at which blacks inhabited America is still being debated in academia, this quotation provides a more reliable argument since it comes from a historical period which provides more immediate evidence.

There were Africans even with the French when they gained their part of the New World: “Africans were with the French in their explorations of the New World.” (Franklin and Moss, 31) It is surprising, then, that there is no mention of Africans accompanying the English on their conquests: “[...] it is not without ironic significance that they [Africans] were extensively engaged in the task of opening the New World for European development.” (Franklin and Moss, 31) This perhaps partially shows a change in the way of thinking of the English between the exploration of America and the period of slavery – firstly, they were not interested in blacks but afterwards they became the most frightening nightmare of the African continent.

A possible explanation to this is that the English, just like other nations, were not interested in installing a system of slavery from the beginning, but blinded by their greed, they changed their opinion. The primary interest could be a curiosity of the world, desire to find the shortest naval trade routes, etc at that time. But once new lands were found, more practical thoughts must have come into the minds of the people of that time – the exploitation of natural resources.

Such thoughts raise further questions about labourers who would exploit the resources. Franklin and Moss say to this that when labour is necessary, it is better when it is cheaper. They add that the first suitable and available source of labour was Native American slaves. But the Europeans showed excessive inhumanity in the employment of Native Americans, which together with this people’s great susceptibility to European diseases and their simple economic background, meant their near extermination. It also eliminated them as workers in the economic system that the Europeans established. (31)

Naturally, the search for labour had to continue or the exploitation, mainly agricultural, would have been retarded by an insufficiency of workers. It may seem unusual, but the search focused on using poor whites of Europe:

In the first half of the seventeenth century, they brought landless, penniless whites over to do the work of clearing the forests and cultivating the fields. When the supply of those who voluntarily indentured themselves for a period of years proved insufficient, the English resorted to more desperate means. Their desperation is clearly seen in the emergence of the wide-spread practice of kidnapping children, women, prisoners, and drunken men. (Franklin and Moss, 32)

But even these pseudo-slaves had their flaws in terms of slaving:

Many of them ran away, and since others of their ilk were migrating into unsettled lands, it became increasingly difficult, as well as expensive, to apprehend them once they had fled. (Franklin and Moss, 32)

By virtue of this situation another search for workers began. Instructed by the above mentioned failures, plantation owners decided to use blacks:

Blacks, from a pagan land and without exposure to the ethical ideals of Christianity, could be handled with more rigid methods of discipline and could be morally and spiritually degraded for the sake of stability on the plantation. In the long run, African slaves were actually cheaper. (Franklin and Moss, 32)

In fact, the last sentence of the above quotation is the chief reason for black slaves since during this period everything succumbed to economic development – low costs and high yields.

### **3.2. The “Black” Slave Trade and the Middle Passage**

As Franklin and Moss say, the official slave trading business started in 1517 when Bishop Bartolmeo de Las Casas permitted Spaniards to import Africans. Then, the Spanish king, Charles II, licensed Flemish traders to take slaves to Spanish colonies, mainly to the West Indies. Later this monopoly was held by Dutch traders at other times by Portuguese, French, or English. (33) From this point on, this thesis will deal with events that are connected only with England and the United States and their relationships with slaves, the slave trade and the institution of slavery.

Long before the inauguration of the slave trade by Sir John Hawkins, there were many English merchants interested in trade between the New World and Africa. Interest in slave trade increased so much that there were many individuals and organizations involved, like the East India Company, by the middle of the seventeenth century. This resulted in the King’s chartering the Royal African Company that held the monopoly on the slave trade for a decade and that dominated English slave trade for almost half a century. Because of growth in the number of independent slave traders, this company’s profits decreased until it gave up the slave trade in 1731. (Franklin and Moss 34)

Another milestone for the slave trade occurred after the War of the Spanish Succession (1701 – 1714), which secured the exclusive right to take slaves to the Spanish colonies for the English. At that time, England sold two-thirds of all slaves brought to the New World in foreign colonies. English planters objected to that, but the situation showed how much this trade became an important factor in England's economy. (Franklin and Moss, 35)

An illustration of how important the slave trade could have been to the English colonial economy can be found in estimated numbers of imported slaves. This topic is widely discussed by Franklin and Moss:

In 1861 Edward E. Dunbar made estimates of the number of slaves imported into the New World, and these figures were widely accepted during the following century. He estimated that 887,500 were imported in the sixteenth century, 2,750,000 in the seventeenth, 7,000,000 in the eighteenth, and 3,250,000 in the nineteenth. In 1936 R. R. Kuczynski estimated that 14,650,000 Africans had been imported into the New World. In 1969 Philip D. Curtin challenged these estimates. Basing his findings on exhaustive studies of records of slavers, records of slave importations, [...] Curtin estimated that 241,400 slaves were imported in the sixteenth century, 1,341,100 in the seventeenth, 6,051,700 between 1701 and 1810, and 1,898,400 between 1810 and 1870. His estimate of the total number imported between 1451 and 1810 is 9,566,100. Curtin's figures were in turn challenged by J. E. Inikori, who insisted that the evidence 'very strongly suggests a substantial upward revision [...] Declining to give a total figure for the entire slave-trading period, Inikori pointed out that while Curtin's estimate for British exports between 1750 and 1807 was 1,616,100, his own research led him to conclude that the figure was at least 2,365,014. It is obvious that Inikori would place the total estimates much higher than the 9,566,100 estimated by Curtin. (41)

Most interesting is how many Africans were affected by the slave trade:

In view of the great numbers that must have been killed while resisting capture, the additional numbers that died during the Middle Passage [the name for trade routes from Africa to America], and the millions that were successfully brought to the Americas, the aggregate approaches staggering proportions. (Franklin and Moss, 41)

This, for sure, brings another issue – forced migration must have left a distinct trace on the African culture as a whole. To get more precise numbers of the number of people uprooted from their environment, calculations should be based on the following ratio:

“[...] one trader who arrived at Barbados with 372 of his original 700 slaves [...]” (Franklin and Moss, 37) In fact, this quotation suggests that the above mentioned 9,566,100 are 53 per cent people involved. The “staggering proportions” then get equally staggering figure of 18,049,245. It is not only staggering in the sense of enormous but also in the sense of shocking – people who could have been workers or thinkers simply disappeared. Such an idea is also expressed by Franklin and Moss: “It is to be remembered that traders would have none but the best available natives. They demanded the healthiest, the largest, the youngest, the ablest, and the most culturally advanced.” (41-42) If there had not been the slavery, Africa wouldn’t surely have been the pitiful continent which it is nowadays.

### **3.3. American Slavery**

According to the Franklin and Moss, the start of slavery in English colonies is marked by the year 1619, when twenty Africans disembarked from a Dutch frigate in Jamestown, Virginia. In fact, they were not slaves but “indentured servants” who were to be given land in the same way it was being assigned to whites after their period of service had expired.

This approach changed after a few decades when Virginians needed more labourers. They saw what neighbouring islands in the Caribbean had already recognized – that the blacks could not easily escape without being identified, that they could be disciplined, even punished, with impunity since they were not Christians. The legislative approval of slavery began and by 1640, some Africans had become bondservants for life.

The statutory recognition of slavery in Virginia came in 1661 and in the following year, laws were issued that claimed that children born in the colony would be held in bond or free according to the condition of the mother. As a result of these laws, the slave population started growing, at first slowly, but by 1756 there were 120,156 blacks and 173,316 whites, with blacks outnumbering whites in many communities.

Such a situation was, on one hand, appreciated by many Virginians since they had many labourers. On the other hand, they became worried about insurrections. These fears were not baseless because after two years, blacks showed they were not satisfied

with the situation and started plotting against plantation owners. In 1687 plots for several rebellions were uncovered before they were accomplished, which resulted in the strengthening of the slave code. Examples of the enforced code include a master's permit for slaves off plantations; the halter for rape or murder; lashing for robbery and maiming and branding or whipping for petty offenses, such as insolence and associating with whites or free blacks. (Franklin and Moss, 56-59) A similar pattern of development could be seen in every Southern colony.

On the contrary, there was a more moderate policy applied in the Middle colonies:

Slavery was never really successful in the Middle colonies. Their predominantly commercial economy, supplemented by subsistence agriculture, did not encourage the large-scale employment of slave labor, and many of the slaves that cleared through New York and Pennsylvania ports were later sent into the Southern colonies. Even where there were extensive agricultural enterprises there was no desire for slaves, for the Dutch, Swedes, and Germans cultivated their farms with meticulous care and seemed to prefer to do it themselves. There were those, moreover, who had moral scruples against using slaves. Thus, many in the Middle colonies welcomed the arguments against slavery that became more pronounced during the Revolutionary period. (Franklin and Moss, 65)

This kind of independence from slaves resulted in their small numbers and created a specific slave status – people from these colonies were not afraid of rebellions so the slave code was not too tough.

Something similar was to be seen in colonial New England, a region often also referred to as the Northern states. According to Franklin and Moss even though Northern masters appreciated the profits of slavery, they did not treat slaves severely or apply the harsh codes and they did not glut their colonies with slaves to the extent they would be fearful for their safety. (67) This region was the main source of abolitionistic ideas which produced disagreement between the industrial North and the agricultural South and was one of the causes of the Civil War.

### **3.4. Blacks in The Revolutionary War (1775–1783)**

According to Franklin and Moss, blacks were excluded from the army from the beginning of the war because of the fear of rebellions, but this ban was later

removed. From May 1775 until November 1775, when General Washington ordered that blacks not to be enlisted, free slaves fought against the British. (72-74)

British reaction to this was that Lord Dunmore – the governor of Virginia – issued the proclamation:

“I do hereby [...] declare all indentured servants, Negroes, or others (apertaining to rebels) free, that are able and willing to bear arms, they joining his Majesty’s troops, as soon as may be [...]”As a result, slaves were flocking to Dunmore and were promised good treatment, which made the Continental Congress approve reenlistment of free blacks on January 16, 1776. (Franklin and Moss, 75)

The war also started liberalization of the policy towards enlisting slaves. They were allowed to join the army in exchange for white draftees and, as in any undertaking that involves a large number of people, most of the blacks will forever remain anonymous, even though there were many who won recognition from their contemporaries. (Franklin and Moss, 75-77)

### **3.5. Blacks in the Civil War (1861 – 1865)**

Franklin and Moss claim that when everyone, including President-Elect Lincoln, learnt it was too late to settle the dispute with the South by words, blacks were eager to offer their service to the Union, but they were rejected. (198-199)

Slaves fleeing the South wanted to join Northern forces, but they were treated as a property and they were or were not returned to their owners, depending on each military commander’s discretion. This uncertainty surrounding this issue was solved by the Confiscation Act of August 6, 1861, which said that any property used against the United States would be captured wherever found. In case of the slaves, they should be freed to work on loyal plantations as paid workers. The Northerners were also enthusiastic about providing education for those blacks. There were 1,000 people teaching blacks in the last year of the war. (Franklin and Moss, 199-202)

An important day for slaves came in the autumn of 1862, when Lincoln permitted the enlistment of some blacks, thus, making them equal with white citizens in a way. However, there were many who objected to this and thought that the right should be reserved for those whose citizenship was unquestioned. Though, after



gathering a few regiments, this experiment was considered a success. (Franklin and Moss, 203)

Voices for abolishing slavery, which were constantly heard during the war, received support from Lincoln, who signed a bill setting free all slaves in Union-held territories on July 17, 1862. This bill was officially issued on September 22 as the Emancipation Proclamation. (Franklin and Moss, 207)

Recruitment of black soldiers in the South started in the Spring of 1863 by Adj. Gen. Lorenzo Thomas, although this was made officially possible two years later. When slaves in an area were enlisted voluntarily, their masters got 300 dollars, if sufficient recruits were not obtained in 30 days, slaves were taken without compensation to their owners. (Franklin and Moss, 203)

Slaves in the South had especially difficult life when the Union troops were advancing. Planters, then, moved to safety in the interior, punishing their slaves severely for any insolence or disobedience. As a result many slaves refused to work or to submit to punishment. (Franklin and Moss, 210-211)

The war also drained the white male population, which meant difficulties for the agricultural economy of the South. It also gave more chances for rebellions to the region's population of slaves. The situation went so far that in 1865, the Confederate Senate officially agreed to begin enlisting slaves. However, the enlistment was slow and it was too late for the Confederacy, was destroyed by an onslaught of Union forces and by its own disorganization. (Franklin and Moss, 213-214)

The end of the Civil War marked a victory for the abolitionists who did so much to shape public opinion and then moved it to action. But it was a real milestone for blacks who gained the most important thing in life – freedom.

Paradoxically, the end of the war was also a victory for the South. To be sure, it had suffered military reverses and lost much. But it had been delivered from the domination of an institution that had stifled its economic development and rendered completely ineffective its intellectual life.“ (Franklin and Moss, 218)

However, the end of the war and abolition of slavery changed little for former slaves. As Crowther mentions:

Some moved to the North but there were not enough jobs there and many suffered prejudice from Whites. Those that stayed in the South often worked on the plantations where they had been slaves. They were paid for their work, but had to buy food and clothes. Wages were low and they got into debt, which meant they had to stay there trying to pay off debts which became larger each year. (496)

## 4. About Alex Haley

Alexander Murray Palmer Haley, the oldest of three sons (George and Julius), was born to Simon and Bertha (Palmer) Haley on August 11, 1921, in Ithaca, New York.

At the age of fifteen, Alex Haley was graduated from high school. He attended college for two years, then in 1939 he enlisted in the United States Coast Guard as a messboy. While in the Coast Guard, he began writing short stories, however, the first of his stories were published after eight years. Approximately thirteen years after entering the Coast Guard, Haley became a journalist. He retired in 1959 and embarked upon a new career as a writer for *Reader's Digest* magazine and later was associated with *Playboy* magazine, where he inaugurated the "Playboy Interviews" feature. Soon he was recognized for his insightful and in-depth interviews. His interviews of Malcolm X lead to his first book, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X: As Told to Alex Haley* (1965). In 1976, he published *Roots: Saga of an American Family*, for which he received the 1976 National Book Award, in 1977 Pulitzer Prize, and the Spingarn Medal from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored. As a result of his popularity, the American Broadcasting Company produced *Roots*, a twelve-hour televised miniseries based upon his novel in 1977. In 1989, Haley became the first person to receive an honorary degree from the Coast Guard Academy.

Alex Haley died on February 10, 1992. On February 15, he was buried in Henning, Tennessee. (Wynn)

## 5. Creating *Roots* – Official Version

This part deals with the process utilised by Haley in his creation of *Roots*. Haley being an African-American lies at the crux of the process. Moor puts this idea into perspective:

The great drama of the book, it should be recalled, is that Alex Haley, a living nonfictional African-American man, was for the first time among his people apparently able to bridge the great historical abyss of the Middle Passage [...] (6)

The realisation suggests the basic premise for comparing Haley and Twain: while one author, Haley, experiences all aspects of blackness and the other author, Twain, perceives blackness from the other side, which is possibly biased against blacks.

The premise of a black author bridging “the great historical abyss” is the main foundation for *Roots*, for it is the family heritage he received in his childhood which it is built on: “The stories Haley heard as a youth in the 1920s and 1930s inspired him in 1964 to investigate his maternal ancestry.” (Wynn) Such stories were certainly interesting enough but they merely provoked young Haley’s curiosity.

As Haley himself says in *Roots*, the very first impulse for the actual literary processing of his family’s history came when he was sailing the Pacific ocean on a cargo cruiser carrying ammunition. Just like anybody aboard the ship, he had to fight more with boredom than with enemy bombers and submarines. He had read every book available and started liking the idea that it is possible to write something anyone could read. (Haley 2, 597-598) What he lacked was an original idea.

Inspiration came to him when he saw the Rosetta Stone – the main source for decoding hieroglyphs. He stresses this point as an analogy – comparing what was known with historically unknown facts, his inherited stories with what is really hidden behind them. (Haley 2, 599) With years long passed, his childhood curiosity evolved and broadened as a sophisticated and passionate adult interest. Haley, an experienced journalist, had no difficulty starting his search for answers about his ancestry. .

Haley employed words uttered in the above mentioned stories as the very first evidence for his investigation, fully aware of the fact that the stories had been told through generations in his family and that they had undergone certain changes. Surely, he did not have any idea what these words really meant, but he must have understood

that these words were the only keys to reach his aim. As Wynn claims, he decided to consult linguists at several universities, who told him what language these words belong to and in which village they originated – Juffure, in Gambia, West Africa.

This is a weak part of Haley's story, because the linguists' location of the village seems to be too accurate. Doubtlessly, the language was used in a wider territory than in the village. Moreover, this is the first foretaste of critical views, because of which the "book-about-my-ancestors" image of Haley's work suffered a lot. But this will be dealt with in a different part of the thesis (chapter 6.3).

The most interesting move of Haley's writing progress took place – he travelled to his ancestor's village, where he met a person who provided him with pieces of information confirming his search results:

[...] he met the *griot*, who gave an oral account of seven previous generations in Mandinka tribal history, back to sixteen-year-old Kunta Kinte, [...]. Haley's fact-finding mission verified the oral history preserved by his maternal ancestors. (Wynn)

Such a coincidental meeting is as suspicious as finding the exact location of Kunta Kinte's place of origin. Nevertheless, because of the face-to-face nature of the meeting, Haley could devote a large part of the book to Kunta Kinte's life in Africa that included customs of the village he lived in and names of his parents, brothers and other relatives.

On the top of that, there are other elements in *Roots* that are well written because the inspiration for them was obtained through the first-hand experience. An example of this type of inspiration is mentioned by Haley. I took place when he was travelling by freight ship back to the United States. He tried to endure the journey inside the cramped underdeck of a ship wearing almost nothing:

I went down to Liberia, and I got on a freight ship called appropriately enough the *African Star*. She was carrying a partial cargo of raw rubber in bales. And I got on as a passenger. I couldn't tell the captain or the mate what I wanted to do because they couldn't allow me to do it. But I found one hold that was just about a third full of cargo and there was an entryway into it with a metal ladder down to the bottom of the hold. Down in there they had a long, wide, thick piece of rough sawed timber. They called it dunnage. It's used between cargo to keep it from shifting in rough seas. After dinner the first night, I made my way down to this hold. I had a little pocket light. I took off my clothing to my underwear and lay down on my back on this piece of dunnage. I imagined I'm

Kunta Kinte. I lay there and I got cold and colder. Nothing seemed to come except how ridiculous it was that I was doing this. By morning I had a terrible cold. I went back up. And the next night I'm there doing the same thing. Well, the third night when I left the dinner table, I couldn't make myself go back down in that hold. I just felt so miserable. I don't think I ever felt quite so bad. And instead of going down in the hold, I went to the stern of the ship. (Haley 1)

This quotation describes the conditions in which slaves travelled to America and the influence on human beings when they are treated like cargo. It also implicitly provides more information about why the author was able to create impressive details which his writing so credible. In a way, it shows how Haley created his work – the first-hand experience of a black citizen transformed into the literary reconstruction of genealogical matter. Gojda states that perceiving this, some American critics even included *Roots* in the non-fiction genre. (Haley 3, 7)

In considering this important point, the issue of why almost two thirds of *Roots* are devoted to Haley's forefather, Kunta Kinte, arises. Gojda thinks that Kunta's time period is the most distant and inaccessible, therefore it should be the shortest part of the book. He also assumes that Haley had a reason for devoting such a long section to Kunta because the character was the first of his kin to set foot American soil. Thus, the character is perceived not only as a physical beginning of the chain of the African generation in the US, but also as a source of spiritual continuity of the kin, its memory and self-understanding. (Haley 3, 7).

In further endeavoring to illustrate his link to Kunta, the author even described his ancestor's thoughts while he was being kidnapped. Haley mentions his journey to meet the *griot* and a halt during which he explored ruins of a fortress that once served as a slave trade point. There he imagined the savagery that must have taken place. (Haley 2, 605) The first-hand experience is therefore the source of Haley's thoughts on empathy with the place.

Back to the inspiration of the book, there was still much more left to discover after the meeting with the *griot*. Haley decided to link the time period of Kunta's kidnapping, which the *griot* told him – the time when the King's soldiers came (Haley 2, 607) – with another part of the family's heritage: his grandmother's statement, that

“Kintay” was taken to a place called “Naplis”. From this information, he deduced the year 1767 and Annapolis, Maryland. (Haley 2, 610-611)

Wynn continues with his next step: “Haley conducted research in the Library of Congress and in Great Britain, where maritime records were available for slave ships.” Obviously, he tried to find ships which could possibly have carried his ancestor to the American colonies. Such a search must have been an enormous effort considering the huge number of incoming slaves (mentioned in the chapter 3.2). Haley adds that he doesn’t remember anything more tiring than his never-ending seven-week search through hundreds of boxes and folders of old records. He finally managed to find a ship called *Lord Ligonier* that left Gambia in 1767, and whose destination was Annapolis. (Haley 2, 611)

At this point, he had nothing more for his book than Kunta’s idyllic life in the village and the ship which possibly brought his ancestor to Annapolis. Now, he employed another crucial piece of data from his family history: rumours that Kunta was sold to “massa John Waller” and then saved by William Waller after being treated badly. Haley claims that he went to Richmond, Virginia and searched through legal documents which were written after September 1767 when the Lord Ligonier landed. Later he found a contract bearing the date of 5th September 1768, in which John Waller transferred some of his fields and a black slave called Toby to his brother. (Haley 2, 613)

The discovery of the name Toby, which was Kunta Kinte’s slave name, was the last part of a puzzle because it both confirmed the orally preserved history of Haley’s family and proved the existence of his first ancestor. This meant the end to any exploration in archives and libraries for Haley. It also meant finally sorting collected materials as well as writing the book itself, because the history of Kunta’s descendents had already been preserved in the family stories

The last point, that needs mentioning is how the author describes his book. At the very end of *Roots* he asks himself the question, how much of *Roots* is work of fiction and how much of it is based on facts. (Haley 2, 614) Depending on the date of publication of the book, there must have been some critical reviews of it and its veracity must have been questioned. As a result, the questions appeared in the book itself. Of course, the questions would be useless without being answered. Haley does so

in a very clever way. He claims that, according to his best belief, mentions concerning the family tree come from the oral history of his family, verified by the help of common documents. These documents, as well as many details about a characteristic lifestyle and cultural history, come from intensive studies in many libraries, archives and other centres on three continents.

Another thing he explains is that every dialogue is necessarily a fictional mixture of what he knows that happened with something that is based on his exploration, because at the time when the story of the book had taken place he was not born. (Haley, 614) In fact, he says his novel is built around the core of the family genealogy, which seems logical. The heavier blow the method gets when its principles are undermined by a criticism of researches who doublecheck it, as it is shown in one of the following chapter (6.3).



## 6. Critical Perception of *Roots*

### 6.1. Fiction vs. Non-fiction

It is not surprising that *Roots* was reviewed so many times, because it meant a complete change of viewpoint on blacks for the whole culture of the contemporary Americans, both white and black:

Alex Haley's *Roots: The Saga of an American Family*, first published in 1976, generated extraordinary reviews and spectacular sales, here and abroad. The mini-series based on the book captured more viewers than any series before it. And Haley won a special Pulitzer Prize for telling the true story of a black family from its origins in Africa through seven generations to the present day in America. (Cashill)

Then, it is usually nothing more than a question of time than words of praise as well as flaws either in a factual or a methodological part are found.

Criticism concerning whether the book should be classified as a non-fiction piece was voiced. On this matter, Pavlovsky partly agrees with Gojda:

Although critics generally lauded *Roots*, they seemed unsure whether to treat the work as a novel or as a historical account. While the narrative is based on factual events, the dialogue, thoughts, and emotions of the characters are fictionalized.

In fact, Pavlovsky offers two different viewpoints on *Roots* – fictional and non-fictional. The fictional viewpoint operates with a hypothetical plot, characters, time periods and can place the story in any country or universe. Basically, there are no limitations in this viewpoint, only the limitations of an author's imagination. What is important then is the impact on readers. If the result of the author's effort is thought provoking, highlights a burning issue or draws readers into the story in any other way, the book is considered a success, which is the case of *Roots*, for it "celebrates resiliency, the triumph of human spirit over cruelty, and the strength of family connections". (Pavlovsky)

On the other hand, works of fiction lack something that can be readily described. It is a feeling that can only be summarized by claims that it is not uncertain if such things ever happened or that those types of characters or plots are to be seen even in other books. In short, a new fictional novel is just another in the line, no matter how great it may seem.

When considered from a non-fictional perspective, the above-mentioned weak points become less relevant for Haley's work, for one third of the book describes the real history of his family. *Roots* uses the biggest strength of non-fictional novels – it provides exact dates where possible, uses names and mentions real historical events. In order to increase or perhaps validate the book's authenticity, Haley does more. At the end of the book, *Roots* includes a chronological account of the book's creation. This last part changes the gist of the story completely. What could be perceived as a work of fiction is transformed to reality in the end. The notable thing is that even the narration shifts to first person, intensifying the image. Reaction to the non-fictional side of *Roots* reached spectacular proportions. In her criticism, Pavlovsky mentions the opinion of Vernon Jordan, executive director of the National Urban League, the oldest and largest community-based movement devoted to empowering African Americans to enter the economic and social mainstream: “[*Roots* was called] the single most spectacular educational experience in race relations in America”.

Not surprisingly, Haley considers his product fiction, a mixture of fact and fiction. Therefore, he confirms findings that the book takes the best of fictional and non-fictional works. Pavlovsky claims the same in other words: “Most critics concurred and evaluated *Roots* as a blend of history and entertainment.” and intensifies this claim by quoting *Newsweek*:

Instead of writing a scholarly monograph of little social impact, Haley has written a blockbuster in the best sense—a book that is bold in concept and ardent in execution, one that will reach millions of people and alter the way we see ourselves.

It is interesting, then, that the biggest praise, or perhaps the most obvious overpraise, comes only from organizations or people that have much to do with promoting the black population: “Some black leaders viewed *Roots* ‘as the most important civil rights event since the 1965 march on Selma,’ according to *Time*.” (Pavlovsky) Reasons for such one-sided publicity are discussed in the following part.

## **6.2. *Roots* and Its Impact on Blacks and Whites**

As stated in the previous chapter, *Roots* had an incredible impact on a huge number of readers and viewers because it provided them with both the readability of

fictional books and the image of non-fictional works. However, the type of impact of the book had was not consistent between the black and the white population in the United States.

In the first place, the reason for the unequal impact was caused by Haley himself. As it was written before (chapter 5), he used his experience of blackness to create *Roots*. What seemed to be a great prerequisite becomes a chief drawback when racial ideas are considered. The best description of what is wrong was found by Moor: “For historians the basic problem with Haley’s book was that it was, from the start, too compromised by its author’s own imaginings to be recognized as history.” (7) In other words, he did not see, or did not want to see, what the real role of African natives and African-Americans was in historical events he intended to depict in his book:

In Haley’s tale, it is the whites who enter the forest and enslave the blacks, not Arab slave traders, not other blacks. Since Kinte is unconscious through the period of transaction, the reader has no picture of African participation in the slave market, nor of any Portuguese or Hispanic involvement in the slave trade. (Cashill)

This way of interpreting history was the reason for archetypization – the black characters are those who suffer from exploitation by the system, which is represented only by the white characters, who are, in most cases, cruel and emotionless.

Such behaviour, of course, has its causes which can be consequently traced to the past. When Haley started working on his piece, he succumbed to what is easily and concisely identified as a peer pressure:

In the last decade, people with “multicultural” (a term often interchangeable with multiracial) backgrounds, both within and outside the academy, have become more numerous and outspoken on the absence of literature which either coheres with their experience or reflects their own backgrounds. (Azoulay)

Even though this is related to “the last decade”, the quintessence of the opinion surely grew mature when Haley was writing the book. His intention was thus more meeting the demand which resulted in writing the above mentioned literature, a myth for African-Americans. At the very least, *Roots* includes what is essential for the myth – the main heroes who are struggling against white villains: “[...] *Roots*’s white characters are almost without exception villainous, [...]” (Moor, 8). The heroes are also

the most significant feature of the book since they are used as a medium of the African culture and identity, which in fact provides the African background.

The point, when the book is seen as written in favour of the African heritage image, is further expanded by a seemingly hidden motive:

Alex Haley has, among many other ancestors, two Irish great-grand parents [...], an English-descent great-great-great grand grandfather, the despicable Tom Lea, and Cherokee great-great grandfather named Hillian. [...] Alex Haley could have identified any of these non-African ancestors as his root, but as a matter of practice and American social mandate, that is hard to imagine. (Moor, 15)

It is questionable how much he was influenced by the “American social mandate” or by his own desire to stress Africanness since the aforementioned fictional feature of highlighting a burning issue surely played the cardinal role. What the quotation says should be perceived more as a co-reason, for Haley only followed his ancestry to Africa in his book because he tried to draw attention to racial affairs which are still topical – especially when the fact is considered that Ku Klux Klan website is still working on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2008 (<http://www.kkk.bz>). At the very least, the affairs are more topical than a story of an Englishman, who came to the colonies to earn money, which would lack the tension, the excitement of the uprooted African and his descendants. Readers would not have been interested in a piece that condemns itself to oblivion.

Secondly, the impact on whites must be considered because what was perceived by the black population as needed and appraised, the white population could, on the other hand, consider *Roots* offensive because it depicted them as the main cause of the slaves’ suffering and slavery itself – even though this is not historically correct. This situation actually did not happen, even though the offensive undertone did not pass unnoticed. But first of all, the general impact on whites must be mentioned. This can be done by the following commentary on a TV-series based on the book:

Of even greater impact was *Roots*’s televised serialization, broadcast by the ABC network on eight consecutive nights in the early winter of 1977. [...] Over the course of those nights, some 130 million Americans, or nearly three in five, and of all races and ethnicities – indeed more than 100 million of whom must statistically have been white – had seen some or all of the show. (Moor, 6)

Quite obviously, the white viewers constituted the vast majority. If they had been offended by the series, they would not have watched “some or all of the show“.

On one hand, some part of the white population certainly did not mind the upsetting features of the series and called *Roots* an unmitigated success, thus applauding a book model that “embodied more than a decade of work, and was filled in every paragraph with wit and tears, humility and pride, terror and grace” (Moore, 6).

The remaining part of the population had, on the other hand, inadequate remarks about its correctness:

Nancy Reagan, for one – wife of the then ex-governor of California – termed it “inflammatory”, and suggested that America had made so much progress correcting racial injustices that it was a mistake to open those old wounds. (Moore, 6-7)

But she was wrong since the most important essence of her message, “the old wounds”, is still up-to-date nowadays, not even much progress has been made to correct the injustices from the end of slavery:

The North hoped quickly to forget the Civil War but did little to help the Blacks. The effects of this are still felt today, and black Americans have fewer advantages than Whites. On average they get less education, earn less money, have less respect and die younger. Blacks and Whites often find it difficult to trust each other, and many people think that this problem is getting worse rather than better. (Crowther, 496)

As is clearly visible, Haley touched a very sensitive point of American history that is not completely dead and buried. Both Moore and Crowther supported this notion of *Roots*’s effect, in a way, by showing that past actions should not be forgotten even though they may be perceived as outrageous. In fact, especially Moore used Reagan as a tool for displaying a kind of guilt of the whites – the more she rejects the obvious the more shame she exposes.

Haley, however, refused to transfer this into his book, for its main focus was the myth for African-Americans. The following quotation is crucial not only for proving the myth theory – white characters are not what matters the most, they are just a part of the background – it also simultaneously explains the lack of critical materials for this thesis and provides evidence for general approval from white Americans:

[...] reason for *Roots*'s critical nonexistence may be that most scholars, particularly those many on the Left, have been uncomfortable with the unchallenging character of the book's politics: for though *Roots*'s white characters are almost without exception villainous, they are all also, without *any* exception, dead. *Roots* situates American crimes of race all comfortably in the past, and when the family narrative stops in about 1921, one is left with an American success story in the classic mold: the Palmer-Haleys are a respectable, nonurban, male-directed, middle- and merchant-class, nuclear-extended, and indeed Ivy League-educated Black family, [...] (Moor, 8)

From this, two things can be deduced. Firstly, he avoided explicit confrontation of slaves and the white villains in the present. The slavery "injustices" are a matter of fact, they happened, but the people that caused them no longer exist. This distance is really comfortable since it morally separates any acts done by the whites, which in its result does not encourage blind racial hatred, and thus the book is generally accepted by them. It may seem hypocritical, but it is this kind of non-offensive policy that distinguishes *Roots* from any other literature by black authors.

Secondly, he evokes family values. Haley's ancestors are depicted as the select few who are excellently educated, respected and have a flawless family background. These are qualities that all families would like to possess, no matter if its members are white or black. In fact, the author tried successfully to find a unifying element. He shows that everybody pursues the idea of a happy and rich life, which puts *Roots* in a different light. The piece can be seen as an adventurous journey from a miserable life, represented by Kunta's slave-life which lacks freedom in any way, to the rich and happy present-day life. Such an attitude attracts readers and, in the case of the TV series, viewers across generations and races without any further division.

### **6.3. Attacking the Foundations**

As it was mentioned before, *Roots* is a mixture of historical events which form a core and fictional dialogues which serve as a coating. The core, the description of the family history, was attacked in the first place:

In the late 1970s, two leading genealogists, Gary Mills and Elizabeth Shown Mills, decided to follow up on Haley's work through the relevant archives in Virginia, North Carolina and Maryland. They found that

Haley, like most amateur genealogists, made mistakes. But they found, too, that his transgressions went well beyond mere mistakes. (Cashill)

In fact, this implies that he deliberately changed facts to fit his story. Even though this direct accusation would be excused by Haley's inability to search evidence in a proper professional way, Cashill lists exact mistakes the genealogists found, which are sufficient enough to impeach, if not destroy, the historical core, the bridge that was used as the basic idea:

In fact, as the Mills discovered, the man that Haley identifies as Kunta Kinte, a slave by the name of Toby in the possession of the John Waller family, could not have been Kunta Kinte or Haley's ancestor. Toby had been in America as early as 1762, five years before the Lord Ligonier arrived. Worse for Haley, Toby died eight years before his presumed daughter Kizzy was born. (Cashill)

This completely excludes Haley's linking point, Kunta/Toby, from the story since he could not have passed his heritage to Kizzy, because she was not his biological daughter as it is declared in the book. They could not have even met thanks to the decade that passed between Toby's death and Kizzy's birth. Those findings consequently neutralize one third of the book in which Kunta's life in Juffure is portrayed, simply because it has nothing to do with Haley's ancestors' family, who probably lived in a different village and the story told by the *griot* was thus necessarily about someone else's forefather.

The *griot* is another point that needs discussing. As Haley mentioned, he was the pivotal source of information for the part of the book that deals with the life of Kunta Kinte and his family in the Gambian village. But this person was not reliable in many ways:

British journalist Mark Ottaway believes, however, that Haley's single oral source, Kebba Fofana, was not a *griot* at all and may just have told Haley what he wanted to hear. There is no question that a real *griot* would be as sound a source as many a written document but Fofana did not have these flawless credentials. The impact of Fofana's account on Haley was so great that he apparently failed to go beyond it to find corroboration in other oral tradition and paper documentation. (Cauthers, 221)

Whether Haley first constructed the Kunta-Toby relationship and then overheard the *griot* or whether he used the fabled story to produce Kunta is quite debatable.

In both cases, he is found guilty of a fraud. The mistake he makes is that he did not try to verify the reliability of the so called *griot*. It results in depreciation of the book's major source of power, for the utilization of the *griot's* false account turns the most appraised part of the story into a pile of lies.

The latter version, however, is probably the correct one because Haley claims that he first went to the village and met the *griot* and then searched through the archives. When he found no evidence of Kunta, he must naturally have created it to get the link. Cauters' "what he wanted to hear" is very important then. Essentially, it explains that Haley coached the false *griot* to tell him a story he could use in *Roots*. Haley subsequently made an attempt to provide this seemingly concrete evidence to corroborate his family's oral history.

Moreover, *Roots* gets an aftertaste, because Haley committed a crime against the idea he tried to promote, the literature for blacks: "Nobile also revealed that Haley's editor at Playboy magazine, the very white and Jewish Murray Fisher, did much of the book's writing." (Cashill) Not only does this discredit African-American literature written by an African-American for African-Americans, it also hurts the overall perception of first hand experience mentioned in chapter 5 since it is impossible to ascertain which parts of the book were written by Haley and which were created by Fisher. Haley's description of the voyage among rubber bales in the cargo hold of the *African Star* just like any other book's depiction of how the black characters feel together with the false *griot* and non-existing genealogical core can be perceived as a betrayal of readers. It is rather surprising then that:

Despite these controversies, the public image of *Roots* doesn't seem to have suffered. It is still widely read in schools, and many college and university history and literature programs consider it an essential part of their curriculum. (Pavlovsky)

The above mentioned accusations seem to have had no influence on the public opinion. A possible reason for it is the insufficient general publicity *Roots* receives nowadays. There is another important feature of the literary piece that is more connected to the



legal sphere which could both explain this state and contribute to adverse effects on the book.

#### 6.4. Court Cases

As was mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, the wider public does not know much about literary background affairs. However, there is a serious drawback from the perspective of scholarly quarters that explains it:

In 1978, Courlander sued Haley in a U.S. District Court in New York for copyright infringement. The suit cited 81 passages that had been lifted from Courlander's *The African*, as well as the plot and certain characters. Haley's defense fell apart when, during discovery, the plaintiff's lawyers found three quotes from *The African* among his typed notes, notes that he had apparently failed to destroy. (Cashill)

The obvious thing is that many other flaws of Haley's authorship were just minor offences compared to this. The real substance of this case, in fact, is that *Roots*, presented as non-fictional or factional from the beginning, takes significant parts from *The African*, which is essentially a work of fiction. Such a fact puts *Roots* completely in the fictional genre. Moreover, it shows how ridiculous Haley is for lowering himself to plagiarism.

The development of the case is very interesting because it influenced public opinion and Haley's image for the next 18 years. The judge in the case was a person of the highest importance - he started shielding the public from the real situation: "The last thing the judge wanted to do was to undermine a newly ascendant black hero." (Cashill) Obviously, the judge himself did not want to destroy the myth. In fact, he employed the "American social mandate" (Moor, 15) to protect Haley's reputation: "Ward [the judge] thought that Haley had become too important to black people to be torn down in public." (Crouch) In other words, Haley and his characters were made heroes for African-Americans, who were denied the truth because they could not absorb it. This paternalism at its very worst together with Haley's plagiaristic and wrong approach to creativity are surely one of the biggest literary betrayals of the last century.

Strangely enough, both sides of the pleading were able to reach a settlement which meant an unfortunate victory for lies:

[...] he [the judge] counseled Haley and his attorneys that he would have to contemplate a perjury charge unless they settled with Courlander. They did just that to the tune of \$650,000, or about \$2 million by 2005 standards. In return, Courlander agreed to keep quiet about the suit, which he did until he died in 1996. (Cashill)

This settlement gave Haley almost one and a half decades of peaceful promotion of his fabrication without any opposing voices and hardly any attention from the media. Even the media tried to patronize Haley although he was proved to be more a villain than a hero:

The New York Times had exactly this to say about the controversy: “Two weeks ago, the charges about the authenticity of *Roots* and the integrity of Mr. Haley were raised anew in an investigative article by Philip Nobile in the Village Voice. Members of the Haley family have rebutted the accusations.” And that was that. (Cashill)

In other words, the Times did not inform about the trial, which had to find enough evidence to show the real situation, and presented the investigation as something annoying which was nothing difficult because of the flawless public image Haley had managed to establish. Moreover, the newspaper tried to plant the idea that the members of the Haley family had convincing documents or arguments to defend their family heirloom’s credentials, but did nothing to at least sketch any details. Unfortunately, the article succeeds in one point – it makes the scandal look unimportant and petty. Cashill’s “And that was that” then creates a huge fullstop behind the general public knowledge on this matter, which will not hopefully pass unnoticed in the future.

On the other hand, even people other than the Haleys can be blamed for maintaining the hoax:

Those at Doubleday who published *Roots* had a best seller and were not interested in people knowing it was phony baloney. David Wolper Productions created the most successful miniseries of its time and was not interested. (Crouch)

The above mentioned people are equally responsible for deceiving readers and viewers but their reasons are pragmatic, for they wanted to get some money from the lie, which is justifiable when the fact that publishers and producers are on their post to do just that.

The overall image of both Haley and *Roots* has suffered much and keeps being aggressive against criticism, but the one-sided publicity brings more positive aspects:

Since *Roots* has brought millions of black tourist dollars to Gambia, one Gambian said to me, “Yes, it is a lie but it is a good lie.” The book remains an opportunistic insult to black people, and no amount of excuses will change that harsh fact. (Crouch)

The positive, though, is related only to the real world, the literary world, and on the contrary, agrees with the last sentence. Not just black people perceive it as an insult. *Roots* is insult to all its readers and their intelligence.

## 7. Kunta Kinte

### 7.1. Introduction

First of all, it is necessary to summarize the criticism concerning the creation of *Roots* itself. In chapter 6, it was shown that there were serious accusations raised against the credibility of the book. This resulted in conclusions that *Roots* is a work of fiction that is meant for the black population even though the white population can find certain features to enjoy and learn from it as well. The genealogical core of the book was determined to be deliberately altered and Haley's authorship was undermined.

Regardless of these facts, Kunta Kinte must be judged as a separate item, a character who possesses some qualities that determine his value within the literary world. The best way to do this was expressed in McCauley's article by Chris Haley, Alex Haley's nephew:

It isn't important if I am related to this man named Kunta Kinte, or what the ship he came over on was named, or if it arrived in America on a Monday or a Thursday. Something like that did happen to an awful lot of people. *Roots* represents all African-Americans with enslaved backgrounds, and whose stories, equally heroic and tragic, never will be known.

In other words, he suggests drawing a line between all debates concerning the creation of the book and what it represents – stories of so many people whose history was condensed into a character that includes all aspects of being a slave at his or her time period. This idea is put on the literary level and further developed:

To some extent, Kunta, his wife Bell, his daughter Kizzy, her son Chicken George [...] are archetypes – people who represent not only their own struggles, but, in this case, those that the ancestors of most African Americans have faced. (Millspaugh, 12)

*Roots* as a representative story starts with its most important archetype, Kunta Kinte, who is dealt with accordingly.

Millspaugh reveals possible drawbacks that can result from creating archetypes: “In the hands of less skillful writers, archetypal characters often become stick figures.” (12) This is caused by too much effort to adhere to the type. To some extent, the type defines what role the character will play within the story and limits its development.

Luckily, Haley is only limited by the fact that Kunta must stay alive. The reason for this single barrier is that the model for it is very broad since it is derived from millions of slaves in whose lives a lot of affairs had to happen. The outcome from this is that Kunta's lifetime is loaded with events ranging from being kidnapped to marriage. Millspaugh agrees with this: "Haley's characters are, however, vividly real, brought to life by the descriptive detail and emotional truthfulness he gave them." (12) In fact, it is descriptive detail and emotional truthfulness that make Kunta, just like other characters in the book, so distinct. This idea can be further developed by demonstrating these features directly through Kunta Kinte.

## **7.2. Kunta's Evolution**

For the purpose of this work, the description of Kunta's personality will focus mainly on his life in Africa when all major characteristics appear for the first time. Chapter 7.2.4 briefly concludes whether he has changed the characteristics.

### **7.2.1. Early Childhood**

In the first place, it is necessary to mention Haley's overall style of creating characters. As it was written in chapter 5, he used his blackness to build the storyline of *Roots*. This characteristic, no matter how much it can be engaged to describe or create a character, is too vague to be applied to Kunta.

There is, however, another point of view that renders characters of the book:

Haley's basic technique is to let his characters reveal themselves to readers through their thoughts, words, and actions. He could have simply told us that Kunta is proud, independent-minded, analytical, religious, patient, persistent, and loyal to African traditions. [...] But these lists of descriptive words would not have had nearly as much impact as letting the characters define themselves. (Millspaugh, 15)

This means that Kunta can be scrutinized according to what he thinks or does and that these actions can be subsequently compared to detect whether there is any difference between them in the numerous stages of Kunta's life.

Kunta's life starts with his birth in Juffure in 1750. Haley, according to the previously stated methodology, describes the atmosphere of the village – women are making breakfast and Islamic prayers are heard and other village routines are

introduced. Binta, Kunta's mother usually attends to him during her work. (Haley 2, 13-16)

At this stage, Haley describes the setting in which Kunta is placed. In fact, he provides routines which will influence the main character and thus shape his personality. Naturally, there are no thoughts of Kunta and only his actions, consisting of crying and feeding. Actually, it is a start to this character, who is still a child without any experience and is too young to have any opinion on the reality which is all around him. In other words, he is a blank sheet of paper that starts being written on by the social environment.

The very first sign of Kunta's mental evolution comes after he hears a story about his grandfather. He sees other children look at him and links this with his own observation of the respectful behaviour to his grandmother Yaisa. (Haley 2, 21) This shows one of the most important of his qualities – his analytical thinking. In this way, readers get his opinions on everything, which makes them familiar with Kunta and which makes them sympathize with him. Moreover, this is a tool for better familiarization with the story because the environment is new and Kunta's deductions and conclusions help him, together with readers, find his place in it.

Another insight into Kunta can be gained through the passage where he is present at his grandmother's funeral procession, too scared to cry. Later he is calmed by his father, Omoro. (Haley 2, 27) Such behaviour indicates two things. The first one is that Kunta has an emotional side. He does not simply analyse matters around him, he is also affected by them to such an extent that he is unable to do something about it. The other reminds the reader that he is still nothing more than just a child who expects his parents to provide a solution to every miserable situation.

On the other hand, he also tries to be more mature than the child. Kunta manifests it on his peers. When they have a conflict, he turns around and leaves, showing his dignity and self-control. (Haley 2, 29) Doing this, he applies knowledge he was given by his mother and proves that he is able to learn as well as demonstrate qualities that will characterize him later – a pride in being who he is and a strong will. This also implies the next stage of his life, becoming a man and a school attendance.

### 7.2.2. Becoming a Young Educated Man

This part of Kunta's life starts with his being introduced into goat herding by Toumani, one of the older children. He is made responsible for goats and for gathering wood for village fires. (Haley 2, 36) In fact, this gives the main character another important feature. From this point on, he is given responsibilities and thus he proceeds to a more significant position in the cultural system of the village. Haley successfully tries to emphasize Kunta's increasing field of action because the responsibility he has is connected with the power to decide, which enriches the character's attributes.

The other important feature of this stage of Kunta's is a regular school attendance. Haley describes Kunta's education by mentioning the herders' coming to the school, represented by the *arafang*, Brima Cesay, who sets the basic rules for his pupils and starts with reading the *Qur'an*. It is also mentioned that final exams consist of reciting a text from the *Qur'an* and writing in Arabic. (Haley 2, 37) As a result, two points can be made.

Firstly, this completely changes the opinion on the entire cultural system of the Africans expressed in this:

[...] most Americans--black and white--had few media images to counter the Tarzan version of Africans and the *Gone with the Wind* depiction of African American slaves. Beginning in 1914, [...], and for much of the twentieth century, Englishman Edgar Rice Burroughs' portrayal of primitive black savages and superstitious cannibals reigned almost without challenge. (Bundles)

The system should be perceived as roughly the same as the one which can be found in any developed countries. It is shown that some Africans were educated in what they needed most – to read, to write and to believe in Allah, who stands for the spiritual side of every human. The question should be asked why Africans were considered to be savages and cannibals when they were well educated in their time and place.

Secondly, it demonstrates that Kunta, after finishing school, is not an uneducated labourer who just shares his simple childish viewpoints. He is or will be a fully realized and intelligent man, whose train of thoughts is worth dealing with, and who is aware of all the implications, reasons and consequences of happenings around him.

In this period of his lifetime, Kunta develops the ability to solve miserable situations. His little brother, Lamin, is tumbled on his back by one of Kunta's peers and he comes to protect him. (Haley 2, 53) Kunta does not seek the protection of his parents any more. He is mature enough to deal with situations on his own. He realizes that he has changed and feels deeply perplexed and astonished by his behaviour to the classmate. (Haley 2, 53) This also proves a certain development of his analytical mind because now, he can analyse his own behaviour which is always more difficult than to examining someone else's.

Kunta's education ends with final exams which consist of the *arafang's* questions about his ancestors, a mathematical calculation, writing in Arabic and reading the Qur'an. (Haley 2, 84) Kunta's education is thus considered over. He proves that he can really do the above mentioned things and that he is not a child any more. Simultaneously, the exam marks another important moment in his life – his training to become a mature and independent man.

### **7.2.3. The Maturity Training**

Kunta's training starts rather violently. Omoro pulls a white cape over Kunta's head and makes him sit down on a stool. Kunta feels terrible fear and cannot sleep throughout the night. In the morning, he is glad that he cannot see *kankuranga* dancers that drag him out of the hut. (Haley 2, 86-88) In fact, Kunta's behaviour is only a symptom of concerns about separation from his family and a new unfamiliar environment that he supposes will make him a man. Through this, his human nature is revealed since many people are afraid of the new environment, which is another point in the story when readers sympathize with him.

In the course of his training, Kunta is taught how to walk without any noise, how to orientate himself using the stars, how to hunt, *sira kango* – the secret language of men, how to wage a war and how to wrestle. He also undergoes *kasas bojo*, a phimosiectomy, that purifies boys and enables them to become fathers. (Haley 2, 90-105) These skills enrich Kunta in a different way than school did. They are more useful for his independent life. Moreover, they will be the most important thing for his survival as a slave and for his absorption of the values he is supposed to transmit to his descendants.



#### 7.2.4. Slave Life

The final part of Kunta's life can be briefly summarized by Millspaugh:

Soon after his arrival in Maryland, Kunta is sold to a plantation owner. He remains determined to regain his freedom. He tries to escape three times. Each time he is captured. After his third attempt, part of his right foot is cut off with an axe. Kunta is put under the care of another slave, Bell [...] After many years, Kunta and Bell receive permission to marry. In 1790, Bell gives birth to a baby girl [...]. (14)

Seemingly, he does not show any development of his personality, but it is not so. The quotation mentions a substantial quality – Kunta misses his former life and tries to find any possible way which could help him to return to it. Of course, this is made impossible after his mutilation and he ends up is tied to the land of slavery.

As a result of this permanent tie to the environment, Kunta develops a special philosophy:

Decades later, he grows weaker, more fearful, less rebellious; yet even then, his knowledge of his proud ancestry prevents him from truckling to “massa”. Though he understands the resignation displayed by slaves born in America [...] he makes his personal dignity “a shield between him and all those who called themselves ‘niggers’”. Thus, Kunta's family forces him to act differently from most people: he must live up to his name. (Hijiya, 550)

In other words, he modifies the respectful behaviour to his grandmother he saw when he was a child. Now, he feels that he is a person who should be respected. This makes him act accordingly and appear in this way in everyone else's eyes. When this kind of “dignity” is combined with other qualities, his role for the rest of his life is made clear – he should spread the atmosphere that can only be described as Africanness.

The end of Kunta's life is perhaps the most interesting. In fact, he is too heroic character to die and Haley does not let him do so. Kunta is simply abandoned in the story and the storytelling is passed to his daughter, Kizzy. Naturally, he is a common human being that has to die one day but in *Roots*, readers are spared from being explicitly told so.

### 7.3. Kunta As a Religious Man

As it was mentioned before (chapter 6.2), *Roots* was written because Haley tried to satisfy the hunger for black mythology. This tendency is also reflected in the book's hero, Kunta. A clue to what this tendency is aimed at must be stated to discover its features inside the main character. The best description is what Crouch says in his fierce criticism:

[...] One is that black Americans, primarily because of the influence of Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam, became obsessed with being a "lost" people in America, people who had "no knowledge of self." Younger black people were told they were not Americans, but victims of Americanism. Their true identity, Malcolm X said, was African and Islamic. The truth had been hidden from them by the white man, who was the Devil.

Thus, the main idea he emphasizes is that the African-American origins are Islamic. Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam also add the dash of passive, or hidden, aggressiveness by projecting the white as devils who try to hide this truth.

But there is also a side that disapproves and refutes such claims. Elia quotes James Michener, a novelist, who reviewed *Roots*:

To have Kunta Kinte, or one of his fellows praying to Allah while chained in the bottom of a Christian ship is an unjustified sop to contemporary developments rather than true reflection of the past [...].

In fact, he finds features of Allah's teaching and considers them non-authentic as well as tributary to Malcolm X's narrow-minded fantasy.

Nevertheless, Haley connects Islamic doctrine with Kunta from the very beginning of his life. Elia mentions this by claiming that "[...] Kunta Kinte's birth in 1750 in the Mandinka village of Juffure, [...] is seen as an omen of good fortune" which is further reinforced by the statement in the book that a birth of the firstborn son prognosticated a special blessing from Allah. (Haley 2, 13) This indicates that the character was born in the Islamic environment and foretell his importance for both his descendants and moslem ideals. These ideals seem to favour the firstborn child to be male, which is why the author makes his hero a boy. He tries to support these ideals as much as possible even though a girl could play her role in the story much in the same way. The fact that the inferior role would not affect contemporary tendencies in a positive

way played a significant part in the author's mind and, in fact, it supports Haley's non-conflicting method of writing as it is mentioned in chapter 6.2 where Moore states and uses it to describe the book's impact.

The environment in which Kunta is educated is also depicted as Cashill describes:

[...] Kinte grows up in a peaceful, sheltering community along the Gambia River in West Africa. He is well schooled in math and writing and the Islamic faith. At age 17, Kinte is snatched from his youthful idyll by the evil, club-bearing "toubobs," or white people.

Again, this testifies to the overall intention to show the Islamic parts of the book in the best light, even though Juffure was not this idyllic paradise. Cauthers mentions this in her review and criticizes the aforementioned (chapter 6.3):

Ottaway raises an equally serious question about Haley's depiction of Juffure and the circumstances of Kinte's disappearance. He found that Juffure in 1767 was not, in fact, the isolated, simple, idyllic village of the book, but a trading post familiar with white men [...] and in continuous contact with a nearby British post. Moreover, [...] the Europeans were in Juffure only under the sufferance of a powerful local king who forbade them taking slaves in the area. Haley ignored these details because of his need to link the Kunta Kinte story with a slave ship sailing to Annapolis, Maryland, in 1767 and because he wished to portray an Eden in Africa with "our culture in its pristine state." (221)

It is no wonder that the author transformed the real village because it would completely suppress the environment that is swarming with Islamic ideals, peace and kindness, such necessary attributes to nourish the iconic hero.

Moreover, the story then gets a more mythical look when the hero is stolen and taken into something that seems to be Hell, apparently full of the white "Devils". Seen from this perspective, the Islamic part of the story is expressed as heavenly with a properly Moslem hero, violently made to descend into the Christian underground. It addresses the deeply rooted joy of a fight between Good and the Evil.

The next issue is easily derived from the preceding paragraph and the course of Kunta's story – he is kidnapped by slave traders, overcomes horrors of the Middle Passage and emerges in a completely different world. After such a journey, Kunta's

opinion on his religion is expected to be different from the one before the Middle Passage. Common sense would advise abandoning a religion which allowed such a fate to happen, but Elia disagrees with this:

And since the obvious must at times be stated, let us mention that, traumatic as the Middle Passage proved to be, it did not bring about cultural, spiritual, and religious amnesia among the slaves. Chattel on a southern plantation, Kunta nevertheless performed his Muslim prayers.

Haley does not let his hero forget because of the mythical look. Even though those prayers could be considered only the last remnants of Islamic values, it is not so. Kunta keeps even customs which could be fatal for him. *Roots* gives the pain in his hungry stomach and the disgust of pork, which is lying on a plate, as an example. (Haley, 188) It shows his extraordinarily strong will to keep his customs because “[...] it is named in the *Qur’an*, this dietary restriction must be observed by Muslims, and cannot be pushed aside [...].” (Elia)

In order to help Kunta, Haley additionally sends a Messiah, perhaps to assure him that he is on the righteous path:

[...] Bell [...] without prompting from him prepared halal food for her future husband, never using pork in her cooking, despite the fact that this was the most common, and at times the only available animal meat in the slave community. [...] Bell’s cooking, in addition to revealing her unquestioning love, also shows a familiarity with the dietary dictates of Islam, a familiarity which itself indicates the existence of practicing Muslims in the United States: Bell had learned about the pork taboo while a slave on a previous plantation. Clearly, the religion had survived in various southern locales. (Elia)

Implicitly, this contributes to the gist of Kunta perceived as the Islamic hero. He is shown that he is not the only Moslem in this new environment, that he is only one of many, a tiny drop of a massive tidal wave of Islam. It is also easier for him to join the life on the plantation since he has found a kindred soul.

Moreover, as it is written in the quotation, Kunta will marry Bell, which provides another details about the character. The Islamic service from Bell – she gives him a pork-free meal without asking a single question – and the marriage as well as her knowledge of the pork taboo suggest that Bell accepts the subordinate role of women in Islam. The fact that Elia speaks about “revealing her unquestioning love” only

intensifies this viewpoint because she loves what Kunta represents in terms of freshness and purity – the Islamic doctrine – although it seemingly employs a romantic vision of the world. Haley thus strengthens Kunta’s Islamic position as an example worth following and makes him the central element within something that, with Kizzy’s later arrival, becomes a family.

But the role of Bell, who became a part of Kunta – in a certain sense – thanks to the marriage, does not end:

Bell is also a rootworker, as Kunta himself became aware of, when she nursed him back to health with “Allah’s herbs,” following the brutal amputation of his right foot in retribution for his attempt to escape. (Elia)

This offers two things. Firstly, it supports the theory of Bell the Messiah because she heals the main hero, but this time explicit reference to Allah is made, which, secondly, provokes this thought: Kunta, the proper Moslem, is cured by Allah through Bell after the attempt to escape from dissenters. This explanation resembles martyrdom and consequent salvation, which is in accordance with one of the pillars of Islam: “True belief in the Oneness of Allah is incomplete without worshipping Him faithfully. He is the Creator and the Owner of His creatures. He grants them His grace.” (Al-Balagh) Haley acknowledges this fact in the book by presenting Kunta’s thoughts about his mother’s methods of healing using Allah’s herbs that ceded from the ancestors while Bell treats him much in the same way. (Haley 2, 218) He thus projects himself into the creature that is given “His grace”.

But Haley also managed to imprint the African identity in Kunta even though he inadvertently affirmed the long-announced Islamic side of Kunta. There is a situation described in *Roots* in which Kunta moves his left hand to scratch a pile of hard dirt where the toubob’s foot has been, closes his eyes and invokes evil spirits to curse the womb of the white man and his family. (Haley 2, 189) He is not the kind of a fanatic worshipper of Allah as it may seem at all. Actually, he performs a rite which did not originate from Islam and which, on top of that, seems to be in direct contradiction with Islam: “Islamic doctrine is rooted in the pure belief in the Oneness of Allah and that there is no one but Allah, no one like Him, or opposite Him, or equal to Him.” (Al-Balagh) Kunta’s activity thus proves his belief in other gods than Allah. Elia attempts to provide explanation:

[...] it is generally assumed that Islam is a highly regulatory religion that seeks to eradicate pre-existing cultural beliefs. Historical evidence, however, proves otherwise, for wherever these beliefs did not directly conflict with Islam, they were embraced by the new religion.

Obviously, the evil spirits are a part of an original African religion and were absorbed by Islam but it still does not completely solve opposition to the doctrine. One of two possibilities is that Kunta does not profess ultra-Islam and thus does not uphold all the rules, which is a weak argument when it faces Kunta's almost fatal pork diet. The other option is that he considers those spirits to be of a lower level than Allah and, as a result, they do not challenge Allah's privileged position. In this case, Kunta can comfortably practise African customs without any problems.

On the other hand, Elia claims that “[...] when anything is specifically prohibited by Islam, a pre-existing cultural acceptance of it was to be eradicated [...]” and points to the text where Kunta tries to make a dirt idol but fails to finish it because he finds a hair from a pig. (Haley 2, 189) Kunta obviously prefers the *Qur'an* to African religions, but is not willing to completely abandon his ancient African foundations – he attempts to use them but at the point where they clash with Islam, he quits and returns to his Moslem conviction that prohibits any contact with swines because they are seen as foul:

According to Middle Eastern religious mythology, pigs are polluted, symbolically carrying the sins of humanity. [...] But practicing Jews and Muslims still uphold the taboo. (Elia)

These qualities of the protagonist again demonstrate both non-conflicting style of Haley's writings and the too obvious scheme to satisfy the need of black literature. He rather violently mixes Kunta's Islamic and African side to demonstrate and stress the best of both in order to make his hero more accessible to a wider range of potential readers. This approach is sufficient enough only for those who seek entertainment or surface knowledge because when deeper meaning is scrutinized, controversial, if not contradictory, points of the religions appear.

## 8. Creating Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

This chapter deals with influences on Twain's book like the author's complicated personality and his special kind of humour. It also comments on the structure of the book, because there is seemingly no plot in it.

### 8.1. The Influence of Twain's Personality and Opinions

As it is in many other books by various authors, no matter whether they are considered to be classics or not, even in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, much of its author's personality is implicitly included.

The premise suggest a substantial impact on the book's structure. Baldanza observes which of Twain's qualities were inserted in the book: "That this failure in planning his plots had a temperamental basis is corroborated, perhaps, by Twain's virulent antipathy to the total work of such a careful planner as Jane Austen." (347) He suggests that it is namely Twain's temper that influenced the book and, as a matter of fact, that Twain was working on his books only when he was in the right, productive temper. Simultaneously, Baldanza states what effect the temper had – not much developed. That Twain need not have known how the plot is going to evolve and that he may not have reached the climax he had intended for the book from the very beginning is the first thought that comes to mind. A drawback of this style, besides the shifting climax, is at hand. The book, when explored with focus on the plot, can be characterized as chaotic or unsorted thus without any message. A support of the theory is expressed by Twain himself in the preface of *Huck Finn*:

Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot. (Twain, 4)

The prefatory remark must be treated cautiously since Twain is also famous for his tongue-in-cheek humour, of which this is an obvious example. His humour expresses serious issues in a subtly mocking way. In other words, Twain admits that it is useless to seek the plot, because, seen from Baldanza's perspective, there is almost none.

Twain's humor is often considered as vulgar and strongly racially biased:

Twain assured the California readers who were still following his restless course across the country that the “black & jolly rascals” in Key West’s “nigger quarter” were especially valuable to the maritime industry, because storm-tossed sailors with a delicate sense of smell could follow their fragrance into port. (Pettit, 89)

Without a doubt he expressed many of his opinions in this way. His opinion concerning African-Americans is no surprise since he was reared in a Southern society that nourished unhealthy social feelings towards its black population. Unfortunately, his humour, if it is humour at all in this case, was also versatile but even more offensive at the same time: “Mark Twain insinuated that it would be better to leave American society divided permanently into its three logical classes: men, women, and ‘niggers,’ in that order.” (Pettit, 90) He simply expressed his opinion on both women’s suffrage, and their position in the society, and the perpetual inferiority of the black people. It is no wonder then that many readers and critics consider *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* racist rather than funny when they find such patterns in someone who is labelled like this:

[...] Twain, like Charles Dickens and Sholom Aleichem, is a national writer--that is, one able to be read with delight and profit by the widest possible social range: children, university students, common readers, and professors. (Pinsker)

What “the widest possible social range“ expects are sound viewpoints worth thinking about. The danger appears that they get low-class information disguised in wit and pun, which is the most malicious way to spread racism.

Fortunately enough, Twain’s attitudes to slaves changed, though not significantly:

On the contrary, his exposure to men of wider intellectual horizons in Europe, the Middle East, and the Eastern states made it inevitable that he would revise some of his more outspoken racist views. [...] That he failed to go even farther during this period probably speaks at least as much for the society and times in which he lived as for Clemens himself. (Pettit, 96)

From this statement, the following can be derived: first, Twain’s personality evolved from antisocial behaviour towards blacks to its more acceptable form, which influenced



the book; second, a corroboration of the negative influence of slavery safeguarding South. It also partly relieves Twain of the racist label he is sometimes assigned.

But the plot is the issue that is analysed. Baldanza provides a theory that justifies its absence in the book and condemnation to a chain of mutually independent actions:

But many other critics, [...], argue that the structure of *Huckleberry Finn* is determined by the interplay of sets of symbols – civilization and the frontier, gentility and barbarism, freedom and bondage, and the like. These ideas certainly play a major part in the development of the book because they are, in a certain sense, what the book is about; [...] (347)

If such an approach is invoked, it is surprising that a symbol can be found that holds the book together and, in a way, serves the plot. It is necessary, however, to find a symbol that occurs throughout the book or at least in its major part. This can be done by the following:

*Huckleberry Finn* is surely such a work, which is also to say that that is simultaneously its blessing and its curse. For if Twain's novel is reduced to an idyll on a raft, an Edenic vision of boyhood so powerful that it lodges itself into our collective unconscious, [...]. (Pinsker)

Pinsker allocates symbolic meaning to the Edenic vision of boyhood, powerful enough to imprint itself "into our collective unconscious", which is only its importance expressed in other words. Needless to say, the raft does not exist in nothingness and it is, or should be, closely associated with the river. This definition of the river then provides a completely different meaning when put into context:

Throughout Twain's novel, Huck and Jim move forward down the river, and Huck continues this forward movement beyond the novel's ending. The river likewise continues to flow after they leave it; for both Huck and the river, this is a oneway trip. (Entzminger, 110)

The meaning is that if the idyllic raft or the river itself is the symbol for boyhood then the movement forward down represents Huck and Jim's growing old and gaining experience. This explanation is reinforced by the fact that the movement continues even after the book is over, just like the life of the two characters. The statement is strongly supported further in the quotation. The life itself is one way trip, nobody can travel

against the time back to the boyhood as well as Huck and Jim do not drift against the stream.

Moreover, when the previous quotation is considered separately, the river resembles the plot, for it is the plot that moves characters forward and continues to flow no matter how much the characters play their roles in the book.

The following feature of Twain's was mentioned in the very beginning of this chapter – he was writing when he was in the right, productive temper, which implies that the period of writing *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* includes a few separate stages. Walter Blair had the final word on the affair, dealing with the book's genesis from an angle of tangible evidence like kinds of paper or ink and thus had the best opportunity to set the book to a proper time:

Almost certainly, Twain started his novel early in July, 1876, and completed it slightly more than seven years later, [...] Twain's own statements also indicate that he wrote the novel during more than two periods. These include statements about his customary ways of writing; statements, general and specific, about the writing of *Huck*; and statements about the amount of work which he did during the summer of 1883. (2)

Blair also states why it took so long to write the book because he mentions something that can be labelled as the standard procedure Twain used for all his books. Twain's words describe the process:

Ever since then, when I have been writing a book I have pigeonholed it without misgivings when its tank ran dry, well knowing that it would fill up within the next two or three years, and that then the work of completing it would be simple and easy. [...] A like interval had occurred in the middle of other books of mine. (Blair, 3)

What needs explanation most is the “dry tank”. It can be easily identified as a comparison to his mind and inspiration. Twain's mind collected stimuli just like the watertank that gathers raindrops to water flowers when it is needed. When it was full of the stimuli it had gathered, it transformed them into ideas – scenes, situations, characters, etc., which were subsequently applied in the books. When Twain had used all ideas he had in mind, which can be then referred to as exhausted or “dry”, he had to

give it some time to recover, to “fill up”. After some time, another harvest of new ideas was in progress and he was able to finish his masterpieces with almost no difficulties.

This writing technique has a particular drawback, here observed by DeVoto in Baldanza:

He wrote on impulse, and when impulse was in circuit with the deeper levels of his phantasy things went well, but when the circuit was broken he could only improvise. Improvisation was responsible for the worst and commonest blemishes in his books – [...]. (349)

Twain’s improvisation can be described as follows: There are two, more or less unconnectable, ideas that need some kind of bonding agent which is not a part of the original ideas. Then Twain has to improvise, invent the bonding agent to get a seemingly complete work, “trusting to luck, providence, or his demon to make it good.” (DeVoto in Baldanza, 349) Needless to say, such a forced connection of the prearranged ideas for the book, realized through improvisation, very often results in flat and second-rate fillers, the “blemishes”.

A voice defending the structure of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, compares it with *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, stating, “[...] the reason of its [*Huckleberry Finn*’s] great superiority to *Tom Sawyer* is that it is, for the most part, a consistent whole.” (Vogelback, 268) The critic refers to the fact that *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* was written as a sequel to *Tom Sawyer* and thus Twain wanted to avoid making the improvisational blemishes, even though he did not succeed completely. An effort not to make the blemishes is also vaguely embedded in this: “Is *Huckleberry Finn* a racist text or a profound critique of racism? Did Mark Twain botch the ending?” (Pinsker) Especially the second question indicates the suspicion, albeit a slight one, of an improvised text. On the other hand, the two questions, when perceived as a whole, obviously try to launch a discussion which allows opposing opinions on each. The former focuses on racist issues that depend on a standpoint of each debater, but the latter “charges” Twain with deeper motives, which is highly likely in the symbolic work. The purpose of the seemingly artistic failure, the blemish making, may therefore be in disguising a message, Twain wants readers to get and unscramble.

Another feature of Twain’s is closely connected to the step-at-a-time and when-in-temper writing:

In 1887, Clemens wrote that his habit was “to keep four or five books in process of erection all the time, and every summer to add a few courses of bricks to two or three of them; but I can’t forecast which ... it is going to be. It takes seven years to complete a book by this method.” (Blair, 3)

Obviously, it gives a second dimension to Twain’s production because he did not just create one book and had a rest for some years, waiting for ideas to come to him. When Twain harvested his ideas, he could decide which books to put them into. This procedure reveals ways of the aforementioned “demon” that drives Twain to make memorable pieces because it enables him to choose the “brick” he has received from his “tank” and put it to the book which requires least or no bonding agent. The most demonstrative example is this:

The final draft of *Huckleberry Finn* was intimately bound up with the writing of ... *Life on the Mississippi*. In working more or less simultaneously on both long-unfinished books, he lifted a scene intended for *Huckleberry Finn* – about Huck and the raftsmen – to flavor the other book; but the great gainer from his trip was not the memoir but the novel. The relative pallor of *Life on the Mississippi*, Part 11, is due in a measure to the fact that so much lifeblood of reminiscence is drained off into the veins of *Huckleberry Finn*. (Blair, 21)

This is an example of a transfer of ideas that reveals much about Twain’s way of building the novel. The quotation suggests the exchange of material between the pieces which results in the relative bloodlessness of the *Life on Mississippi* and a briskness of *Huck Finn*. The situation appears to be rather contradictory. It should be vice versa because the former work consists of Twain’s travel notes from Mississippi and thus it should have been as realistic and vivid as life itself. The latter, a work of fiction, should have been below it on the scale of the realism.

A tendency can be tracked that, in agreement with the demon theory which puts ideas to suitable works, Twain attempted to shift realistic points from his travel notes to *Huck Finn* to make it more recognizable as a realistic piece while the scene implanted from the novel should make the travel notes more enjoyable for readers and soften its realistic visage.

Logically, another type of laying bricks into literary pieces must be observed. It is shown in the next example, where the loan is from an older novel:

He had written descriptions [...] in his representation of Obedstown in Chapter I of *The Gilded Age* in 1873, in the brief picture of Hannibal “drowsing in the sun” in *Old Times on the Mississippi* in 1874 in an early portion of the *Autobiography* dictated in 1877, and in an unfinished novel about Tupperville or Dobberville written before 1880. The last of these contains the dilapidated houses on stilts, the fences leaning in every direction, the dust and the mud, the whittlers and spitters who were aroused from somnolence by a dog fight – all details of the masterful description of Bricksville in *Huck*. (Blair, 21-22)

The description was used for the first time in the unfinished novel where Twain did not think it would have much use perhaps because he did not intend to finish it, so he decided to implement it in the book he was not working on at that time, but which was presented to the public.

As is clearly visible from the examples provided, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* consists of Twain’s temper and humour. The temper, however, is the most crucial because it introduces symbolistic elements and idea bricks in the work.

## **8.2. The Implicit Structure of *Huck Finn***

Baldanza tries to find a unifying component, unlike many critics who are satisfied by claiming that there is none, which may not be visible at first glance: “Let us rather try to see whether the very *élan* of his improvisation did not often carry him forward through a form which is implicit in his method.” (349) It has been already mentioned in the previous chapter that the component is one of the symbols in the book. The explanation, however, can be considered unreliable since opinions on a particular symbol differ from a critic to a critic. The unquestionable evidence of a structure making theory must be found.

Firstly, it is necessary to mention E. M. Forster’s survey of Marcel Proust’s *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*: “[...] the book is chaotic, ill constructed, it has and will have no external shape [...] it hangs together because it is stitched internally [...]” (Baldanza, 349) In fact, he lists qualities of Twain’s book in the first part. The similarity, when connected with the second part of the quotation, indicates that *Huck Finn* is therefore structured internally, too.

Moreover, there is a profound theory of what the structure consists of:

I propose to show that without advanced planning, and spurred by momentary impulses, Mark Twain – in all probability unconsciously – constructed whole passages of *Huckleberry Finn* on an aesthetic principle of repetition and variation. (Baldanza, 350)

The terms “repetition” and “variation” require explanation. Baldanza mentions a few examples of a repeated situation in the book, but for the purpose of this thesis, only the major kinds will be discussed. The very first example has much to do with the key feature of *Huck Finn*:

An example of the latter is Tom’s gratuitous insistence on having a rattlesnake to keep Jim company in the Phelps’s cabin, which recalls, solely for the aesthetic pleasure involved, the great to-do earlier in the book over the rattlesnake skin and over Jim’s being bitten in the heel. (Baldanza, 351)

Repetition here highlights the humorous aspect. It evokes the affair from the early period of the book and uses it again. It also exercises the reader’s sense of humor in this way, for without knowing the background, the situation ceases to be funny and pulls the “stitches” from the story. In this case the repetition exploits a maximum from the situation and thus makes itself a valuable device. Neglecting it can cause readers miss the book’s most enjoyable feature:

The Graff-Phelan casebook pinned its hopes on race and gender, but those choices also came at a considerable cost, for among my worries is a suspicion that students leave this volume without the foggiest idea that *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is funny. [...]; but if students do not come to appreciate [...], the way he raises the level of rough-and-tumble Southwestern humor to the condition of high art, they have largely wasted their time. (Pinsker)

The second major example of the repetition theme is abandoning, which serves another purpose:

Bill and Packard would have made a clean getaway if they had not returned for Turner’s share of the money, thus giving Huck and Jim the chance to take their boat, and consequently abandoning them ironically to the fate they had reserved for Turner. (Baldanza, 351-352)

It supplies a moral dimension, a quintessential quality in which the evil get what they deserve. The above-mentioned repetitions are possibly the reasons why *Huck Finn* is read by children as well as why it can be disapproved as unsuitable for them. The

positive for children is the humour and the same role plays the transmission of moral values for adults.

The second term, variation, then “[...] gives a sense of freshness and surprise, [...]” (Forster in Baldanza, 351), which are no less important ingredients. Repetition without variation would only use the same pattern and make the book boring and predictable. Because of variation, the reader knows that something unexpected is about to happen and seeks a distinguishing element that will put the repeated in a brand new position.

As a result of these two techniques, the book does not progress in several independent circles. The construction of the story more resembles a spiral connecting the beginning and the end of the book, with events in it which are the same yet so different.

### **8.3. Racial Influences**

The racial issue cannot be omitted from the creation of *Huckleberry Finn*. This issue was briefly mentioned in chapter 8.1, but it is too topical to be that brief. The questions whether Twain intended the book as a criticism of racism or if he wanted to mock the black population appear regardless a historical epoch.

What has changed from the time of the book’s being published is sides that are upset because of the racial undertone. Oakley gives an example of an early reaction from the resentful white population:

In the 19th century, many American libraries banned it because, as one of them put it: “It deals with a series of adventures of a very low grade of morality; it is couched in a rough dialect, and all through its pages there is a systematic use of bad grammar and rough, coarse language.”

The phrases “rough dialect, bad grammar and rough, coarse language” refer to Jim’s black English vernacular deliberately depicted as something improper, which spoils the book completely. Thus the quotation may show the attitude of society at the time more than it proves the racial bias of the book itself. But what it primarily presents is an attempt to prevent the public from reading about an unacceptable issue of the time – a white boy travelling together with a runaway slave as Twain tried to depict them: Huck

and Jim, equal companions on the same level. It does not appear to be a racist theme at all.

This non-racist opinion is further supported by Twain's belief:

According to William Dean Howells, his longtime friend Samuel Clemens rejected the popular opinion that the wounds of the Civil War were too fresh and emotions too high to "philosophise the events of the great struggle" in the pages of fiction. (Sloan, 159)

In other words, he wanted to discuss the slavery situation immediately and relieve the South from a possible frustration of free slaves, which should result in a peaceful coexistence of the white and the black. It is difficult to see from libraries' exaggerated reactions that he succeeded. In fact, libraries ran into a pitfall of anticipated response he arranged – the most frustrated shouted at their loudest.

Opposing voices concerning *Huck Finn*'s racism come mostly from present day African Americans, who have become the offended side instead of the 19<sup>th</sup> century whites. The big problem is described in the following:

The Birdville school district superintendent will apologize [...] to a student offended by a lesson on *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, [...] Those were the agreements reached [...] between school officials, 17-year-old Ibrahim Mohamed, his parents and a coalition of activists offended by the teacher's repeated use of a racial slur that is in the text of the classic 1884 Mark Twain novel. [...] his parents say they will now go through a process of requesting that the book be removed from the district's curriculum. The concern centered on a lesson that prepared students to read the book, with Jim, a runaway slave. Jim is referred to as a n--- throughout the book. (Brown)

In the particular case, the constant use of "nigger" seems to play the crucial role, which makes the book look appear to promote racism. The teacher, however, should not be blamed for it, since she only used an authentic wording of the text. Logically, the next ones responsible for use of the "slur", are the publishers of the book. They can be excused easily, because they must not change the original text. The final delinquent is Mark Twain, even though his time period in general has much to do with the word used. The word was commonly uttered by members of slave society at that time. Virtually, it is nobody's fault that "nigger" survived to clash with the contemporary anxiety of correctness that causes even the non-use of the n-word in full by Brown.



Moreover, Twain attempts – unintentionally – to deal with the problem directly as it is implicitly stated by Graff and Phelan, because he exposes the word so casually:

We recognize the pain Twain's book may inflict, but again we believe that the best way to deal with the issue of racism and censorship is to make it part of the reading and discussion. (Pinsker)

The school officials, the Mohameds and the activists are thus more responsible for enraging the blind racial hatred for they let the problem simmer below surface, which Twain wanted to avoid from the very beginning.

## 9. Jim

It is necessary to mention something about a technique that introduced this character into literary life. It is different from what has been written about Twain's methods so far. Jim is not the result of any harvest of ideas: "The original of Jim, he [Twain] writes in his *Autobiography*, was 'Uncle Dan'l, a middle-aged slave' on the farm of Mrs. Clemens's brother John Quarles." (Hoffman, 52) This is the reason for what mentions Sawicky in the following chapter. Twain simply recorded a typical behaviour he witnessed.

### 9.1. Jim – A Cunning Opponent

The impression gained from meeting Jim for the very first time in the pages of *Huck Finn* is that he is not particularly clever. It is shown in the situation when Huck escapes with Tom Sawyer and they meet him at night in widow Douglas' garden:

Pretty soon Jim says: Say – who is you? Whar is you? Dog my cats ef I didn' hear sumf'n. Well, I knows wat I's gwyne to do. I's gwyne to set down here and listen tell I hears it agin. (Twain, 18)

It is also possible to refer to him as a jester because an intelligent human being would either go to check what the sound was or shrug and continue in an interrupted activity. Jim, however, did what he did and demonstrated the qualities which are expanded here:

Matthews observes that Jim, [...], displays "the essential simplicity and kindness and generosity of the Southern negro." This general impression of Jim has been challenged only very rarely in the century since the novel first appeared. (Robinson, 361)

Jim's qualities ensured a relative lack of interest from the side of some critics, who were obviously satisfied with simple-minded Jim, as if they only read a few pages of the book, and attributed him a "stock character" label. (Sawicki in Robinson, 362)

However, the aforementioned critics did not consider the true nature of slaves' behaviour that led them to possibly desultory conclusions:

[...] the slave was obliged, for his or her survival, to retreat behind the mask of a docile, gullible, pliant "darky" who suffers all manner of indignity with silence and a simpleminded smile. (Robinson, 363)

According to the survival technique, slaves were hiding their true personality. Jim applies the mask very well while he is still in slavery territory, as it has been shown. But Twain sends Jim out of the territory, which makes the character look stock, onto a raft with Huck to delete this label. On the raft, there is a quite different situation. Jim faces only one white boy and starts acting differently:

Huck does not regret the dirty trick he played on Jim so much as he regrets the epithet – “trash” – that Jim delivers to him [...] Huck does not want to “take back” his own cruel joke; he wants Jim to take back the insult. (Hurt, 42)

Jim feels that he is being treated badly, but decides to pursue a course of action instead of suffering another indignity. He exposes the kind of behaviour that would be unacceptable in the previous environment, because the insult, “trash”, would mean severe punishment for him., Huck tries to introduce the slavery on the raft by his request and put Jim back to his inferior position. This situation embodies a force game between Jim and Huck. The game then says much more about Jim.

The very first quality of Jim’s is mentioned by Cox: “[...] surely Jim is shrewd, as shrewd as Huck, [...]”. (Robinson, 365) It is the quintessential premise for Jim to be an equal opponent to Huck, because “the two fugitives can never believe in each other” (Cox in Robinson, 366) and because he knows that “Huck will abandon or betray Jim.” (Cox in Robinson, 366) This more or less justifies the word “opponent”, since it may seem that the two are good teammates who try to find a better place to live in together. For Jim, however, the situation is different than for Huck:

Jim’s circumstances could hardly be more perilous. He is a runaway slave in slave territory; and he is a leading suspect in what is perceived to be Huck’s murder. For white people who know him, he is the object of angry pursuit; for those who do not - [...] - he is an object of suspicion and heartless grasping after quick profits. (Robinson, 366)

Huck wants only avoid being recognized and sent back to widow Douglas or his father, while Jim would be lashed if not killed if apprehended. Jim is fully aware of this and he uncovers his shrewdness only to an extent that it does not endanger his escape. He must carefully merge the above-mentioned dignity with a hunger for freedom represented by the escape. The result is outwardly visible in the form of the insult and Jim’s happiness when he is in the presence of Huck:

Huck is the living proof that Jim is not a murderer. And Huck gives him eyes and ears, information, an alibi, and some small leverage when the inevitable disaster strikes. On those subsequent occasions when Jim welcomes Huck back to the raft, this desperate need, and the sense of breathless relief, provide the warmth in what usually passes for unmingled outbursts of affection. (Robinson, 367)

From this angle, he only misuses the boy. He is a mere tool which should enable Jim to escape from being re-enslaved. Playing this game means a lot of things to Jim. Especially that he must make Huck feel that it is the boy who is their leader and prevent him from any situation which would make Huck stop the escape. The latter is shown when Huck and Jim find a dead man in a hut:

“It’s a dead man. Yes, indeedy; naked too. He’s ben shot in de back. I reck’n he’s ben dead two er three days. Come in, Huck, but doan’ look at his face – it’s too ghastly.” I didn’t look at him at all. (Twain, 61-62)

The dead man was Huck’s father. Jim therefore lies in a very clever way so that Huck does not recognize him.

The situation also shows another feature of the game played on the raft – Jim and Huck deceive each other: “There is safety, he [Jim] knows, in their readiness to be deceived.” (Robinson, 370) Jim therefore does need not to be ashamed of any unfair behaviour, because Huck deceives him in return.

This implicitly provides another quality of the slave character – he is attentive:

These abrupt, radical reversals are evidence of the boy’s wavering marginality, and speak clearly to his restlessness in the ambiguous ties that bind him to Jim. Jim cannot fail to observe this ambivalence in Huck, [...]. (Robinson, 369-370)

The observation is closely connected to the fact that Huck is his information centre. Jim does not have many chances to get news as a runaway slave. He must be able to read Huck correctly to anticipate his next move.

So far, Jim has been depicted as a rather unfriendly participant of the raft voyage. This, of course, is not quite right:

They stay together because it appears that they can use one another in relative safety – a safety to be matched by neither of them with any other companion. And this is so because there is between them, arising out of

their desperate secrets from a hostile, encroaching world, a balance of the power to betray, an equality in suspicion and fear, and therefore a tenuous bond of mutual protection. (Robinson, 368-369)

Both characters can provide shelter to each other, no matter how much it is based on the negative aspects described so far. The ability to provide shelter is, in fact, the element that makes them stay together. For Jim, but as well as for Huck, this is a new position. Jim, as a slave, was never obliged to provide it; he was more used to being protected as a property. On the raft, however, he does perform more like a guard of the physically weaker boy.

On the other hand, the bond of providing protection proves to be too weak an element to last and unify them even off the raft:

Huck and Jim need each other long before they learn to respect or love one another; and once their needs are satisfied – when Jim is freed from slavery, and Huck is freed from fear of Pap – they separate, immediately. (Robinson, 368)

In the situation when they do not need protection, which is indicated in the quotation, Jim's dignity and Huck's sense of slavery prevail. Once off the raft, they start concerning themselves only.

But the separation has a more destructive effect on the character of Jim than on Huck:

Many well-meaning readers are understandably disturbed by the characterization of Jim before and after his idyllic adventures on the raft, [...]. Why, [...], does Twain make Jim return to his former, degraded status as a minstrel clown, the butt of Huck and Tom's cruelly demeaning jokes? What they then go on to demand is [...] a dignified Jim, the magnificent personage who taught Huck some very uncommon lessons for that time and place[...] (Pinsker)

According to this, Jim should have continued to evolve from the dull slave past the cunning and cautious deceiver to become a fully realized, "dignified" and "magnificent" human being, as the progress on the raft suggested. Instead of it, Twain resets him to the stocky character that is affected by others rather than influencing them. Without any reason, Twain also makes Jim undergo some kind of amnesia. He forgets everything he could have learnt about himself. This kind of disease-like rupture is evident from what is stated about Jim's counterpart from the raft:

[...] the novel's problematic ending centers on our sad realization that whatever humanizing lessons Huck might have learned on the raft simply melt into nothingness when Tom Sawyer arrives at the Phelps plantation. (Pinsker)

Simultaneously, this marks the point from which Jim's evolution returns to his beginnings and passive role. It also an explanation about the cause of the process: "Unfortunately, the ending of Twain's novel, where Jim is re-captured and both he and Huck become pawns in Tom Sawyer's fantasy of daring rescue, [...]" (Entzminger, 106)

At this point of the story, Tom is the only one who knows that Jim is a free man, yet he still makes him a mere toy. Tom personifies society: "[...] the ending indicates the near impossibility of completely freeing oneself of the social scripts that reject unacceptable identity choices." (Entzminger, 107) It is Tom who decides who is what. He does not give Jim the right to choose his identity, because he finds a free Jim to be unacceptable. Therefore Jim cannot escape slavery even though he is legally free:

[...] a post-Civil War legal statute under which freedmen deemed "vagrant" could be arrested and hired out to plantation owners for almost indefinite periods of time. (O'Loughlin, 218)

When this is considered, it is clear that Twain uses Jim as a general example to demonstrate the cruelty of slavery. This is also the explanation to the rupture, because too evolved Jim would evade the destiny of a majority of slaves, which would spoil the effect Twain intended.

## **9.2. Jim's Spiritual Aspect**

### **9.2.1. Spirituality as a Device for Promoting Jim**

Jim also possesses a third dimension – a spiritual side of his persona, just like Kunta Kinte. This aspect of Jim is, however, more complicated, unlike Haley's character, where the spirituality was focused on promoting Islam and original African religions. The purpose of Jim's belief is quite different:

Recent critics have observed that much of the superstitious lore in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* centers around Jim, the Negro slave. Edgar Branch observes that "To Huck and Jim the reality of the

supernatural lore has less to do with Christian orthodoxy than with the portents, luck, and magic formulations of a spirit realm.” (Hoffman, 47)

According to this, Jim is the agent and the accelerator that supplies the overall spirituality in the book, which makes him more equal to Huck in terms of how characters are important for the story. Branch also suggests that Jim helps to blend Christian religion with superstitions that represent something that could be identified as a pagan religion, or folklore. The Christianity seems to be of a less importance than folklore.

R. W. Frantz recognizes the importance of Jim and helps to structurize the fields of his influence: “[...] superstition in Jim’s mind, and his role as Huck’s tutor in the ways of spirits, spells, divinations, and omens [...]” (Hoffman, 48) The perception of Jim as a tutor shows him as a prompter and a source because his knowledge concerning the supernatural elements seems to be inexhaustible. He is able to provide meanings of omens as well as to prompt Huck on how to work with them to avoid their unpleasant consequences.

Secondly, by performing the tutor’s roles, Jim nourishes the adventurous nature of the raft and Jackson’s Island anabasis. This is made clearer by Branch, who claims that “[...] the main force of superstition in the novel is to keep alive a sense of the malevolence at the heart of things.” (Hoffman, 47) The story would not have been so adventurous if Jim and Huck had not been facing evil omens, evil spirits and evil spells which use “[...] the fearful human responses to the powers of evil.” (Brownwell in Hoffman, 47) The responses are thus one of the essences that spice the novel.

The importance of Jim and his spirituality is emphasized because not all the menacing items are real:

[...] he is the victim of his own credulity, persecuted by his own superstitions of witchcraft, the butt of his own pretensions as a seer (when he reads a false prophecy from the hairball). (Hoffman, 48)

From this point of view, Jim is apparently driven by his dullness because he fakes the prophecy that later victimizes him.

On the other hand, the crafty inventions allude to a deeper, camouflaged meaning: “[...] and his interpretation of his ‘dream’ (when Huck has tried to fool him

after their separation in the fog) is not only accurate but bespeaks his dignity as a human being.” (Hoffman, 48)

As a matter of fact, spirituality not only promotes Jim from unimportant characters to the major ones, it also promotes him as a human being. It is because there is a certain evolution visible at his reactions to the superstition themselves. At first, he believes in his own invented prophecy. Then he uses the dream to interpret it as he needs it to fit his objectives. But the evolution does not stop with those two stages: “When witches re-enter the book on the Phelps farm it is no longer Jim who believes in them, but Nat, the slave, who is still in the bondage from which Jim has freed himself.” (Hoffman, 48) He has obviously learnt from his mistakes on the journey with Huck, becomes a free man and leaves superstitions for slaves, figuratively represented by Nat.

### **9.2.2. Components of Jim’s Spirituality**

As was stated in the previous chapter, Jim is Huck’s superior in the field of superstitions. The necessary question that has to be asked is where he gained the knowledge. Franz tries to answer it: “This is as it should be, for the Negro lore, hardly one generation removed from Africa, far exceeded the folklore knowledge of the whites.” (Hoffman, 48)

The explanation would be satisfactory if there was not a deficiency – there is no sign of any reference to what generation of slaves Jim belongs to. It is also reflected in this: “As Richard M. Dorson has pointed out, Mr. Frantz offers no documentation for his assumption that Jim’s lore is predominantly derived from African Negro tradition.” (Hoffman, 48) The origin of Jim’s superstitions seems to be forever lost or, at least its African roots are denied because of insufficient evidence.

However, there is another way how to track the origin:

It had been many years since he [Twain] had lived in a superstitious frontier community, and in his own not-too-reliable memory this folklore became associated with the slaves he had known in his boyhood. (Hoffman, 52)

This shows that the primary source for Jim’s spirituality is not any reality-based transfer from Africa to the USA but the memories from his childhood and the region in which Twain lived at that time. The relatively foggy ideas on how to identify the



background of the superstitions are then caused by the “not-too-reliable memory”, because what arises from the quotation is the opinion that Twain accidentally predicated multiple folklores to Jim. The accident then causes ambiguous features of the superstitions to confuse the scholars – Jim professes to adhere to neither the African religion nor any other.

Jim seems to be a clergyman of a mixture of religions. This statement is complicated by this assertion:

The derivation of superstitions is often shrouded in mysteries, but in the case of the beliefs in *Huckleberry Finn* it is not hard to show that Twain attributed to the Negro almost all of the superstitious lore of a region in which Negro and white beliefs are in many cases identical. (Hoffman, 48)

Actually, Twain condensed the lore into Jim from the region, but the statement expresses that the lore itself is the same for whites and blacks. This phenomenon is connected to the fact that numerous generations of Southern children were reared in a close contact with slaves:

In both books the only whites who are superstitious are either young boys or riff-raff like Pap – the two categories of white folks most likely to have picked up the lore of the slave quarter. (Hoffman, 49)

But who influenced who is not the purpose of this text, which is why this item is closed with the conclusion that slaves influenced their white masters in general and vice versa.

What is topical is the region and its basic religion. With prevailing Christianity, Jim should be aware only of Christian related superstitions. This image is concretized by the witches’ case as it is presented by Hoffman who contrasts his ideas with Puckett:

Yet the witch beliefs in *Huckleberry Finn* are without exception of European origin. “The Negroes,” writes Puckett, “portray in a modified form the England of three centuries or so ago, in so far as [witches] are concerned.” The African witch was characteristically a succubus or a wife-stealer. (Hoffman, 50)

The English belief that suppresses the co-existing African one supports the white superstitions only theory but there is a notion of the aforementioned multiple folklore because of the “modified form” of the witch beliefs. It implies that blacks have changed them to fit their old ones.

The hint grows stronger in the following:

[...] snakes “play a large role in Negro signs,” according to Puckett they “possibly represent a remnant of former voodoo snake worship.” [...] Handling the “sheds” (skins) is an omen of good luck, not bad, in African tradition; [...]. Fear of snakes appears to be a Christian rather than a voodoo doctrine, [...]. (Hoffman, 51)

As the second level of mutual dependence, it is possible to claim that it is the African tradition which is modified by Christianity. Hoffman tries to suppress the African aspect of the belief by the claim about the bad and good luck, but it can never be reliably proved if the appearance of snakeskins in *Huck Finn* is based purely on Christianity.

On the contrary, his explanation suffers when it is considered that both Twain and the African voodoo speak explicitly about skins not snakes. The Christian fear of the snakes therefore cannot be applied that self-confidently because there is an abysmal difference between a living snake and a dead skin, and therefore no ultra-orthodox Christian is afraid of skins.

In order to finalize the structure of Jim’s spirituality and to furnish the second extreme, the absolute opposite to the white English belief must be mentioned:

If Jim’s witchcraft and omens are European, however, his divination with the hairball of an ox is recognizably a voodoo belief. This is the only superstition in the book of incontestably African origin. (Hoffman, 52)

Jim’s knowledge of superstitions is concluded to come from the region of Twain’s childhood. As there were two main force spheres, Christianity and the original African religion, Jim contains them both in a mixed form because of Twain’s incorrect perception of them as one.

## 10. Conclusions

### 10.1. Authors Comparison

In order to compare Mark Twain's and Alex Haley's approaches to the creation of their respective books, it is necessary to mention their backgrounds. They are completely different in terms of upbringing and therefore they have a huge influence on shaping the authors in alternative ways.

First, the difference between the techniques used is that Twain, as a Southern writer, supplies a white opinion. His opinion is not quite African-American friendly, which is clearly visible from his anti-black humour, even though it evolves into a softer form. Haley, on the other hand, is the black author that uses his experience. Because of this, he offers the black view of the slavery through the insight into his characters. He mainly employs family background and relationships to reach it. As a result, the authors are highly appreciated by readers, because the readers can find characters they can sympathize with, or more precisely, have some fun with them.

Second, Twain does not attempt to address anything in a "serious" way and to shift *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* away from fiction at all. This is evident from the very first lines of the book, where Huck refers to the other book: "You don't know about me, without you have read a book by the name of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, [...]" (Twain, 13) On contrary, Haley tries to achieve non-fictionality and authenticity of his work through the last part of *Roots*. In this part, he describes the genesis of the book and, which is the most important, includes himself in the story and switches the narration into the first person. This effort of his, however, is erased thanks to the scrutiny of the historical core of *Roots*. It proves that the authenticity of the book was artificially constructed to fit Haley's objectives – to provide mythology for African-Americans. The effort is also further questioned by the real authorship, or co-authorship, of *Roots*. Perceived from this angle, both books are on the same level in terms of the genre.

As the next point, the racial undertone of both works must be compared. Twain manages to upset both whites and African-Americans. The former strongly disagree with publishing the book that includes the black person who is placed on the same level of humanity as the white boy. The latter find the word nigger outrageous, no matter

how much the word is in the place to arouse discussion. Twain seems to give the racial undertone a deeper meaning. Haley, fully aware of contemporary racial correctness, sets the opposite course. He avoids using offensive tones in his book. If there is any racial offence, Haley puts it in the past, where it does not hurt anybody, no matter if the person is white or black. The only drawback is that in order to make blacks more recognizable as the victims of slavery, he changes the history inappropriately. The authors handle the issue differently to reach different aims. Twain, without any shame, exposes the delicate theme to help the frustrated society of the USA, whereas Haley tries to avoid it in order to be read by the widest spectrum of readers. This is, without doubts, because of getting the highest profits,

Lastly, the approach of the authors towards the books' structures is included. The structure of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is complicated. It is vastly influenced by Twain's inability to plan and the when-in-temper writing. From this perspective, the book has an undeveloped plot. However, the structure can be given either by the symbols the book harbours or by the repetition and variation scheme. The two methods are difficult to grasp, which results in many interpretations of the meaning Twain tries to convey. The structure of *Roots* is determined by the fact that it is the archetype-centered historical account. Haley condensed the lives of many slaves into the main characters/narrators, which then results in the descriptive form of the plot. The structure is also influenced by the characters' revealing to the readers. It means that the plot is simply given by the characters' life, which is, on the other hand, more or less implicit. The structure makes the most crucial difference between Twain and Haley. The former encodes a profound ideas to make the readers think about the slavery period, which in its result creates the seemingly disarranged structure of *Huck Finn*, while the latter focuses on an emotional aspect, arranged by the relative simplicity of the plot, and thus offers the readers experiencing the blackness at all stages, ranging from Kunta's unbound life to Haley's revealing the roots.

## **10.2. Characters Comparison**

The characters of Jim and Kunta can be compared from the viewpoint of their evolution in their respective stories. Jim starts as a simpleminded and rather humorous adult. These qualities make him appear as a stocky character to many critics but Twain

intends to change it and puts him on the raft that creates a nonstandard and experimental environment. After Jim proves what abilities are in him, Twain takes him from the environment and returns him back. Kunta does not experience such experiments from his creator. He starts as a child and develops as he grows older. This means that he demonstrates his qualities gradually, at different stages of his life. The evolution is therefore more implicit than in Jim's case because of the life-like scenario. Kunta's life progress, however, is limited to African ground. After his kidnapping, he is put into an environment tests his qualities. The African part of his life, then, resembles a training-ground. The basic difference between these two is that Jim evolves to cease to be a stock character, while Kunta evolves to become an archetypal character. In other words, the former tries to get out of the pattern, the latter tries to fit himself into the pattern.

Second, there is a divergence in what qualities the characters develop. Jim demonstrates the moral strength to actively defend his dignity against racism, proves that he is a shrewd trickster who is fully aware of circumstances and happenings around him. He is able to use these qualities to pursue his aim – evasion from the hostile world that encompasses him. But, because of the growing attributes, he overlaps too much, which makes Twain reset him to the original form Kunta displays analytical thinking, feelings, personal dignity, self control, responsibility, autonomy and survival abilities. The foremost attribute is Kunta's education because it changes readers' opinions on African natives. In general, all the aforementioned qualities are given to Kunta to make him a respectable person. When he reaches the state, Haley stops him and lets him pass the respectability image to his daughter. The observed attributes of each character corroborate the purposes the authors intended for their books. Twain designed them to expose questions concerning the effect of the slavery on slaves. Therefore Jim does not evolve, he only removes the mask of the simple jester to show his true self and is simplified again. On the contrary, Kunta develops his personality step-by-step to be absorbed by the readers more easily and to become the venerable legend.

Finally, there are also the spiritual aspects of the characters, which provide their third, metaphysical dimension. Jim's metaphysical dimension consists of superstitions which are based on white English folklore and African tradition. This attribute represents a milestone for Jim, since it makes him very important for the story. Kunta,

on the other hand, professes Islam with the indistinctive parts of the original African religion. The structure of his religiousness reflects the tendencies that influenced Haley and provides a cultural insight into Africa's development. Moreover, the division of Kunta's belief appears to be of great importance for both characters. It specifies Jim's African traditions, which, in its result, makes him a conglomerate of three religions.

To conclude, the characters are completely distinct as for their genesis, place of evolution and aim of evolution. The only unifying element is found in their religiousness because, at one point of their stories, they believe in a higher power which leads their steps.

## Resumé

Tato diplomová práce se soustřeďuje na objasnění rozdílů mezi tvůrčími přístupy Marka Twaina a Alexe Haleyho, a rozdílů mezi postavami Jima a Kunte Kinte v jejich dílech. Práce je inspirována jak nehumánností amerického otroctví a jeho vlivem na literární postavy, tak rozdílem mezi vnímáním tohoto období bílým a černým autorem. Tento rozlišující faktor je posílen faktem, že Twain mohl otroctví vnímat osobně s minimálním časovým odstupem, zatímco Haley zprostředkovaně a s odstupem velkým.

Po úvodní kapitole následuje kapitola zabývající se metodologickým přístupem zkoumání. Nastíněna je tak, mimo jiné, struktura diplomové práce. Jako následující kapitola je pak určen náčrt historie otroctví. Analýza autorských přístupů a postav je realizována rozdělením do kapitol, které se zabývají Haleyem a jeho postavou, a kapitol, které rozebírají Twaina a Jima. Jako důsledek relativní neznámosti Haleyho jako autora, je zde rozhodnuto o zařazení jeho biografie. K vlastnímu porovnání autorských přístupů a postav je určena závěrečná kapitola.

V první části 3. kapitoly, zabývající se historickým pozadím otroctví, jsou uvedeny historicky řádně nedoložené údaje o možných kontaktech obyvatel Afriky s Amerikou. Tato část také zmiňuje dobovatelsko-průzkumné pokusy prvních Evropanů a poskytuje tak doložené informace o prvních černých služebnících na kontinentě. Pozornost je pak zúžena na anglický vliv na využívání přírodních zdrojů jejich části Nového Světa, který je faktickým důvodem pro použití nejprve místních domorodců jako pracovní síly a konečným využitím Afričanů. Jejich výhodami pro otrockou práci je možnost použití přísnějších metod pro udržení jejich disciplíny a jejich dlouhodobá finanční dostupnost.

Následující podkapitola uvádí počátky obchodu s otroky v Americe v roce 1517. Tento obchod byl nejprve ovládnán mnohými obchodníky, jako například East India Company, po Válce o Španělské dědictví (1701 – 1714) si však právo dovážet otroky zajistila králem ustanovená společnost, King African Company. Výsledkem tohoto vývoje jsou odhady o množství otroků dovezeném do roku 1810 ve výši až 10-ti milionů osob. Množství Afričanů, ovlivněných obchodem s otroky, je ale mnohem větší vzhledem k více než padesátiprocentní úmrtnosti „nákladu“. Otrokářství tak mělo pro

africkou kulturu devastující účinek, protože byli unášeni pouze ti nejzdravější, nejsilnější a kulturně nejvyspělejší.

Podkapitola 3.3 určuje začátkem skutečného otroctví rok 1619 v Jamestownu ve Virginii, kdy na území této britské kolonie vstoupilo 20 Afričanů, kteří nebyli považováni za otroky v plném slova smyslu. Tato situace ale se s nedostatkem pracovní síly rychle změnila a vyústila v legální uznání otroctví v roce 1661. Množství otroků rychle narůstalo zejména na Jihu, protože ostatní kolonie byly založeny na jiném druhu ekonomiky. Morální důvody proti používání otroků a jejich relativně malé množství na Severu později přispěly k začátku Občanské války mezi Severem a Jihem.

Části 3.4 a 3.5 se zabývají Válkou za nezávislost (1775–1783) a Občanskou válkou (1861 – 1865). Otroci byli vždy přítomni na obou válčících stranách a to díky tomu, že jim byla přislíbena jejich svoboda. Občanská válka však znamenala zlom, protože v případě vítězství Severu by došlo ke kompletnímu zrušení otroctví. Tento slib válku velkou měrou pomohl ukončit, i když pro bývalé otroky se příliš nezměnilo.

Jak už bylo uvedeno, tato práce obsahuje biografii Alexe Haleyho, která se nachází ve 4. kapitole.

V následující kapitole je uvedena oficiální verze vzniku *Roots* jak ji zmiňuje autor v knize samotné. Jako první stavební kámen díla jsou uvedeny příběhy, které se v Haleyho rodině předávaly z generace na generaci. Vlastní literární proces začíná Haley po shlédnutí Rosetské desky, kterou viděl jako analogii k rodinným příběhům, pokračuje setkáním s *griotem* ve vesnici Juffure v Gambii. Toto setkání se mělo odrazit v podobě detailního a rozsáhlého popisu Kuntova života v Africe společně s Haleyho postupem „zažij a napiš“. Na základě *griotem* poskytnutých informací měl Haley objevit námořní dokumenty, potvrzující cestu a prodej Kuntovy plantážníkovi, od kterého se odvíjela jemu již známá rodinná historie, jak je uvedena v knize. V závěru této kapitoly je uvedena Haleyho obrana postupu vytváření knihy neboť už tehdy musel čelit pochybnostem o jeho základech.

6. kapitola ve své první části zmiňuje pohled na *Roots* jako na součást literatury faktu a literatury románové, a nachází jejich silné stránky zkombinované v této knize. Tyto rysy potvrzuje i autor, který charakterizuje svoje dílo jako „faction“, tedy jako směs „fact“ a „fiction“, faktů a fikce. Ve druhé části této kapitoly jsou rozebrány hlubší motivy, které vedly Haleyho k napsání *Roots*. Zdůrazněno je především autorovo



černošství, které mění historická fakta ve prospěch černé populace a je důvodem k typizaci postav. Důvodem, nebo spíše tendencí, která ovlivnila Haleyho samotného, je touha po mytologii pro Afroameričany, která je tak silná, že tento autor pomíjí i své irské a domorodé kořeny. Vlivem oné tendence by pozitivní ohlasy měly přicházet pouze od afroamerické populace. Není tomu tak díky Haleyově nekonfliktnímu stylu psaní, který podíl bílých na otroctví a jejich vinu umisťuje do minulosti. Všímavějším čtenářům a divákům, *Roots* byla převedena do seriálové podoby, však neuchází dráždivý podtón, vinící bílé z krutostí otroctví. Haley se tak dotkl citlivé kapitoly dějin USA, jeho záměrem jsou ale příběhy jeho rodiny a vnímání rodiny a jejích kvalit, což přitahuje pozornost lidí napříč národem.

V podkapitolách 6.3 a 6.4 jsou postupně vyvráceny silné stránky literatury faktu, o kterých Haley tvrdil, že zastupují pravdivé elementy *Roots*: rodinná genealogie, spojení Kuntý/Afričana a Tobyho/otroka, a samotný Haleyho podíl na knize. Navíc je zpochybněn hlavní zdroj, *griot*, což činí podstatnou část *Roots* nevěrohodnou. Je také prokázáno, že se Haley dopustil plagiátorství, když zkopíroval 81 pasáží z *The African* Harolda Courlandera.

Kapitola 7 a její podčásti zkoumají vývoj Kuntý jako literární postavy, nezávisle na výsledcích metodologického přístupu autora. První a zároveň nejpodstatnější rys Kuntý je jeho označení za prototyp všech unesených Afričanů. Díky teorii A. Millspaugh, která říká, že postavy v knize se čtenářům o představují postupně svými myšlenkami, slovy a činy, jsou pak uvedena jednotlivá období Kuntova života, ve kterých získává další atributy jako analytické myšlení, důstojnost, zodpovědnost, vzdělání, dovednosti k přežití, ale také emocionální stránku. Právě tyto kvality činí tento prototyp opakem ostatních, které jsou většinou dosti strnulé.

Část *Slave Life* krátce shrnuje zbytek Kuntova života, který se odehrává na plantážích Severní Ameriky. V něm Kunta projevuje silnou touhu vrátit se ke svému stylu života v Africe. Po jeho zmrzačení začíná využívat vlastností, které se v mládí naučil a mění své chování. Stává se respektovanou osobou, která se snaží žít život hodný váženého jména Kinte. Šíří tak atmosféru afričanství, atmosféru, která mu jako hlavnímu hrdinovi knihy znemožňuje zemřít. Kunta v knize neumírá, je „jen“ opuštěn a ústřední role vypravěče přechází na jeho dceru Kizzy.

V poslední části věnované Kuntovi je vyzdvížena jeho náboženská stránka, která je dána mytologickou podstatou knihy, oslavující Islám. Umístění této doktríny v knize je zpochybněno jako oběť soudobému vývoji, přesto, anebo právě proto, jsou její rysy vtisknuty Kuntovi už od narození, kdy je prvorozený syn vnímán jako požehnání Alláha. Dále je uvedena už zmíněná historická upravena faktů neboť Haley zobrazuje Juffure jako islámský ráj, přestože tomu tak nebylo, a to proto, že by to poškodilo vnímání Kuntovy jako ikonického hrdiny. Ten je vytržen ze svého idylického, muslimského prostředí, Juffure, a je umístěn do pekelného, křesťanského prostředí nevěřících. Kunta však jako správný hrdina stále věří v Alláha a vykonává své modlitby. Aby vytrval, je mu poslán mesiáš v podobě jeho budoucí manželky Bell. Ta Kuntovi umožňuje podržet si jeho náboženství a zapojit se do života na plantáži. Role Bell je ale mnohem větší, protože po Kuntově zmrzačení se stává nástrojem Alláhovy vůle, který ho má vyléčit a odměnit jako pravověrného muslima. Na závěr této kapitoly je uvedena asimilace původního afrického náboženství, poněkud násilně podřízeného Islámu.

Kapitola 8 poskytuje ve své první části vysvětlení vlivu Twainovy osobnosti na plánování struktury knih, způsob, jakým jsou psány, a humor, který je v *Huckleberry Finnovi*. Je zjištěno, že zápletky knihy je dána souhrou symbolů. Mezi těmito symboly hraje hlavní roli symbol řeky, která posouvá hlavní postavy příběhem a zároveň i jejich životem. Neméně důležitým faktorem je Twainův humor. Je uveden vývoj od jeho silně protičernošské povahy až k společensky přijatelné formě, která je použita v knize.

Významným rysem Twainovy tvorby je shledán postup, kdy tento autor píše na etapy, často oddělené i několika lety, ve kterých čeká na inspiraci. Výhodou tohoto způsobu je snadné dokončení díla po novém přísunu nápadů, které Twain často přesouvá z jednoho díla do druhého za účelem dosažení lepšího efektu na čtenáře. DeVoto však nachází i nevýhody v podobě improvizace, která přichází na řadu v případě, že onen přísun nových nápadů je nesourodý s těmi starými, a označuje ji za příčinu poskvrn *Huckleberry Finna*.

Druhá část 8. kapitoly se zabývá estetickým principem opakování a obměny, vyzorovaném v románu Marcela Prousta *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*, který podle E. M. Forstera vykazuje stejné vlastnosti jako *Huckleberry Finn*. Výsledkem je spirálovitý vývoj děje, který zastupuje zápletku knihy.

Třetí část rozebírá zda Twain zamýšlel tuto knihu jako políček rasismu nebo spíše jako zesměšnění černého obyvatelstva. Díky dobovým reakcím knihoven, mínění W. D. Howellsa a současným tendencím je dosaženo závěru, že je tento příběh pokusem o uvolnění frustrace z volných otroků za použití drsných, ale v žádném případě rasistických, prostředků.

Devátá kapitola ve své první části nabízí názor na vývoj postavy Jima. Ten je vnímán nejprve jako jednoduchá až komická figurka stereotypní povahy. Při hlubším zkoumání je tento stereotyp odhalen jako maska, kterou otroci používali jako techniku pro přežití. Tato technika je potvrzena, když je Jim umístěn na vor, kde přestávají platit pravidla otrokářské společnosti. Začíná ukazovat svou pravou osobnost a demonstruje vlastnosti jako bystrost, manipulátorství, klam, všímavost a schopnost poskytnout ochranu. Jimova poslední vlastnost je vnímána jako prvek, který udržuje jeho spojenectví s Huckem. Když je tento prvek odstraněn, Huck a Jim se rozcházejí. Pro Jima to však má devastující následky. Vrací se do pozice ze začátku knihy, do jednoduchého postavy, přestože už legálně není otrokem. Podle O'Loughlina tato situace zrcadlí historický vývoj, kdy otroci ve skutečnosti nikdy nebyli volní. Jim je tedy opět společností donucen nosit masku, která mu pomáhá přežít.

Druhá část, věnovaná Jimově duchovnímu aspektu, uvádí, že veškerá spiritualita v *Huckleberry Finnovi* se hromadí výhradně kolem této postavy, což zvyšuje její důležitost pro děj knihy. Jim totiž poskytuje zdroje a vysvětlení všech nadpřirozených jevů. Tam, kde nejsou, je Jim schopen si je vymyslet, což činí příběh dobrodružnějším. Tento Jimův rys navíc naznačuje i jistý vývoj jeho osobnosti, protože nejprve věří i svým vymyšleným pověrám, aby se nakonec poučil a nechal je otrokům, reprezentovaných Natem z Phelpsovy farmy.

Na závěr je prokázáno, že Jimova spiritualita nemá základy v africkém folkloru, ale v kombinaci Twainovy nespolehlivé paměti a regionu, kde byly pověry černochů a bílých téměř identické. Na konkrétních případech je pak dokázáno, že ve výsledku je Jimova spiritualita složena z křesťanských pověr a afrického folkloru.

Závěrem lze konstatovat, že Twainův a Haleyho přístup se liší jako rub a líc jedné mince. Haley se pokouší, neúspěšně, navodit autentickou atmosféru a nekonfliktně popisuje otroctví zevnitř. Struktura knihy je jednoduchá, aby byl příběh snadno uchopitelný širokému spektru čtenářů nebo, v případě seriálové podoby, diváků.

Twain nabízí na otroctví pohled zvnějšku na zcela nevážné úrovni, která může až pobuřovat. Snaží se ale rozpoutat diskuzi a vyslovit hlubší myšlenky, což lze vnímat jen velmi obtížně díky komplikované struktuře knihy a symbolickému významu.

Porovnání Kuntů a Jima vyznívá podobně jako porovnání jejich duchovních otců – jsou rozdílní ve smyslu jejich geneze; místa, kde se rozvíjejí, a cíle vývoje. Kunta se vyvíjí v Africe, aby se stal prototypem postavy, zatímco Jim demonstruje své atributy na americkém území, aby dokázal, že není stereotypní postavou. Je ale nalezen společný prvek – oba, alespoň v jednom bodu svých příběhů, věří ve vyšší sílu, která je vede

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