

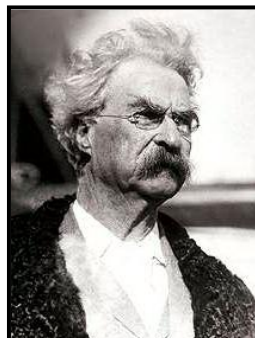
Freedom Across the River

A Critical Review

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Mark Twain

Freedom Across the River

Have you ever thought of spending a night in a forest listening to the roaring monsters? Or thought of spending a weekend on a peak of a mountain or spending a night alone in a tent in a remote desert? It is a fantastic thing to live in an adventure once in your life. The time of adventures is out of life calculations. You'll get fun, extraordinary enjoyment although you might be afraid at the beginning. You'll realize that life is simpler than we think. So a lot of writers and novelists try to present these feelings because they know that most of the people can't afford doing that. Since it may be difficult, hard and crazy. As a result, they attempt to depict the atmosphere of the adventure and present the motives which might provoke a man to attempt the adventure, breaking the rules of life security. Mark Twain, unlike others, attempts to present the adventure as a trial to make a change in life and discovers a new land and new people. Twain, in his masterpiece (**The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn** 1885), gives us this meaning though with a new conception because it isn't an ordinary adventure across the river but it is a journey through social life in a new world, where people try to dissolve on its land to form a certain social life and make a society. Twain presents all people on the new land as raw-materials. They haven't yet reached the stage of maturity. The relations between the characters in that work of art appear in irritable and unstable types. There is a great struggle and aggression among them. Thus there is the father and his son, the lady and the servant, the revenge feelings between the two aristocratic families and a lot of similar situations that carry this meaning. When we see the relation between Huck and his father, we can understand to a great extent how the society suffers from the bad social ties because the relation between the father and his son is one of enmity, so we see Huck's father treat him in an aggressive manner and doesn't pay him any attention or care, considering him as a mere bargain from which he gains money. So Huck finds himself in an early stage of his

life, alone within the society, thus he decides to escape when he realizes that there are no ties that might make him stay and grow up on this land.

His relation with Miss Watson, the conservative woman who attempts to help him, gives him what he has lost of values, morals and ethics. There was nothing great enough that might make him believe in the world around him. He became afraid of this world and pushed himself to get into an adventure in another place across the river where he may find the world with which he always dreams. The relation between Jim and Miss Watson carries a lot of consistency. She deals with him as a slave or a statue that could be sold and bought although she is pious and respectable in her religious values. So from the beginning to the end we can find ourselves sympathizing with Jim and his fellows because of whites' hatred of the blacks in this new world. Jim became a prey and a victim in all situations. Everybody attempts to catch him and he turns to a criminal regardless of acting good or bad. The feelings towards him arouse pity and pain. Twain managed to present slavery crisis in the new world – which is considered the dream-world – where mercy is absent from the hearts of the society members who became no more than hunters who chase the black preys with guns and swords of hatred and injustice. Jim also tries to escape when he loses hope to find the feeling of humanity and the feeling of safety. It was impossible for him to accept the role of a criminal because of his skin color, so he decides to get into an adventure as a trial, thus he escapes to rescue himself from suffering and misery. Jim and Huck's adventure across the river is an attempt to escape from the world of darkness to the world of enlightenment so as to reach the new land and break the status of ignorance, foolishness and hatred of the others. On their way to this land of which they often dreamt, they encountered so many things. The adventure carries a lot of hardships. Huck and Jim are victims of the world from which they escaped when they felt negligence and couldn't find the way to survive. It is difficult to live when you lose the feeling of love and safety, so both of them feel the lack of stability. They decide to

escape and the fate put them together on one boat which carries them among the islands, the forests, and the cities across the river. They were friends although there is a great difference between them. They live together. They have parted for some days but meet again through the journey. They became one thing and their meeting, by accident after each of them missed the other, carries a lot of meanings of love and hope. They dreamt of each other and of the freedom they seek although Huck's vision of freedom differs from that of Jim. For Huck, freedom means the roots that fix him in the new land while for Jim; freedom means the confession of his humanity. However, there is a common factor between the two; that is that each one of them rejected his reality and moved to change and became more energetic in his attempt to draw his future. They have the same dream and the same hope. The nobility of their dream attracts the reader and makes him wish to be with them on their boat, in the forest, on the island or even in the hut. The author managed to depict with words a lot of portrays so we live with their footsteps, their whispers in the dark and their fears of the fate. "Mark Twain" presents to us the issue of social stability and concentrates on the importance of social life in making a good society. The family is thus the axis of social life, so he presents some models of the relations within the families. At the beginning, the struggle between Huck's father and his son carries a lot of aggression. Huck loses the warmth of fatherhood and his father looks at him with the eyes of a merchant who sells and buys. Huck attempts to find some way to live with in this bad environment, but when he realizes that there is no way to continue this life with such a father, Huck decides to escape. On the other hand, Twain depicts a lot of images especially of the relations of revenge between the two families and how love between the young lady and the young man from the other family failed to end the revenge feelings between the two families. There are also struggles for money in different situations among the gang members in the steamer. There are also the old lady and her husband who try to catch Jim, so as to take the reward money. There is also the

desire for richness within the society that extends even from the father to the other characters like a fever. The language of money gets the members of society in a condition of war against each other. All people attempt to catch Jim because of his color and the money too. So the feeling of lack of maturity in society makes us feel that there are a lot of things that must happen in this world to regain the natural vision of social relations and the stability of society. So the characters in Twain's works suffer from loneliness and fear. Their feet walk in heavy steps on the ground, so there isn't any way to understand each other and there are no social ties or rules that can be able to govern and guide them. The ideas which the society can be based upon need to be re-activated in their human essence. The society appears suffering in a lot of social miseries and is classified in itself into some groups which seem separated from each other. Each group lives far from the other not in place but rather in the way of thinking and the way of surviving. Mark Twain attempts to give us a hint of the possibility of reforming the society when everybody on the new world gets rid of the traditional way of thinking and surviving. They come to the new land with a heavy burden of the false traditions and customs which make them suffer on the new land, in spite of its width, richness and prosperity. People there still live in a traditional way as if they decided not let go their status of foolishness in their way of looking at life. The author attempts to look for a dim of hope among people to seek after. There are many clouds in the sky that hide the sunlight, but he reflects the spirit of hope which pushes Huck and Jim to go on their adventure towards dawn even in the darkness because they believe that there is a land of freedom. At the end, they reach their hope; Jim became free and Huck managed to escape from the weakness and the loneliness and his character which increased in maturity. He got the experience of life. The wisdom which helps him understand the society and survive peacefully.

We can make a comparison between Jonathan Swift's "Gulliver's Travels" and Mark Twain's "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn". Both novels are adventures but Gulliver

attempts to discover the land and the people with strength and power of mentality but Huck attempts to do that with the power of soul and enlightenment. Both of them attempt to get over the hardships but Huck is crushed with the reality which was a great stone in the temple of ignorance; he couldn't destroy it but he managed to jump over it to reach the true land where people can live in equality without any bias, where there are no race or ethnic discriminations. Across the river, Huck, learns and understands more. He learns the difference between right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, love and hatred, joy and sadness, poverty and richness, and life and death. When he finds the true meaning of life, everything around him becomes clear. Mark Twain stimulates us to make an adventure against reality when we show rejection and need to look for a new way of surviving.

By : Ahmed Mohamed Mostapha Salama