

Trabajo Fin de Grado

Stereotypes about African Americans in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) and *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845): A Narratological Approach

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Abstract

Mark Twain and Frederick Douglass were two authors of the South of the US in the 19th century, a context in which slavery was legal. African Americans were considered inferior and deprived of freedom in those states. Different stereotypes of African Americans reinforced the institution by supporting its morality and making people believe it was a normal labor system. Douglass as well as Twain supported with their *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) respectively that slavery was an immoral institution. The former is an autobiography written by a runaway slave that managed to escape from slavery and joined the abolitionist cause. The latter was written by Twain, a white Southerner, and was a fiction in which humor and adventures combined to treat the issue in a detached manner. This undergraduate dissertation aims to compare the two novels to show how, although their purposes were different, they supported an abolitionist ideology. In order to do so, the narratological devices used will be analyzed. This analysis will seek to determine the presence or absence of different African American stereotypes to see the role they have in each case. Both novels are relevant, well-known classics that offer proof of the suffering of a community that still has to fight for equality with whites. Ultimately, this dissertation will prove that these classics deserve to be critically analyzed and compared from a contemporary perspective, but never disregarding the context in which they were written.

Keywords: Abolitionism, racist stereotypes, Frederick Douglass, Mark Twain, narratology.

Resumen

Mark Twain y Frederick Douglass fueron dos autores del Sur de EE. UU. del siglo XIX, un contexto en el que la esclavitud era legal. Se consideraba a los afroamericanos inferiores y se les privaba de libertad en esos estados. Diferentes estereotipos de los afroamericanos reforzaban la institución, respaldando su moralidad y haciéndole creer a la gente que era un Sistema laboral ordinario. Tanto Douglass como Twain apoyaban con sus obras, *Narrativa de la vida de Frederick Douglass* (1845) y *Las aventuras de Huckleberry Finn* (1884), respectivamente, que la esclavitud era una institución inmoral. La primera, es una autobiografía escrita por un esclavo fugitivo que consiguió escapar de la esclavitud y se unió a la causa abolicionista. La segunda, fue escrita por Twain, un sureño blanco, y era una ficción que combinaba el humor y las aventuras para tratar el problema de manera distante. Este trabajo final de grado trata de comparar ambas novelas para mostrar cómo, aunque sus propósitos eran diferentes, respaldaban una ideología abolicionista. Para ello, se analizarán los recursos de narratología utilizados. Este análisis pretende determinar la presencia o ausencia de diferentes estereotipos afroamericanos para ver la función que tienen en cada caso. Ambas novelas son clásicos relevantes y reconocidos que ofrecen evidencia del sufrimiento de una comunidad que todavía tiene que luchar por su igualdad con los blancos. En última instancia, este trabajo demostrará que estos clásicos merecen ser analizados y comparados de manera crítica desde una perspectiva contemporánea, pero sin ignorar el contexto en el que se escribieron.

Palabras clave: Abolicionismo, estereotipos racistas, Frederick Douglass, Mark Twain, narratología.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The current situation of African Americans in the US is characterized by suffering and discrimination. Racism persists in society, and its presence in literature proves it. As Bennet and Royle argue, literature spreads stories that shape people's thinking about reality, that are part of real life and that "make our worlds" (32). Thus, literature plays a key role in shaping points of view and stereotypes about different social groups. Those stereotypes, despite being subjective and inaccurate, are powerful and people believe them because they are simple and easy to understand. In the case of African Americans, stereotypes have always been present throughout history, thus, also in literature. This fact generates problems for the social group represented, limiting in real life their job and educational opportunities, resulting in oppression (Taylor et al. 213). According to Taylor et al., the root of African American stereotyping is in the institution of slavery developed in the US, when the behaviors that a good slave might have were idealized, generating racist stereotypes (214).

This dissertation compares two novels, *The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) by Frederick Douglass and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) by Mark Twain, which show different stereotypes of African Americans in the US from two different perspectives. These are two important American novels recognized as exponents of the suffering of African Americans in the first half of the 19th century within the institution of slavery in the South of the United States. The former is a slave narrative that depicts the African American unique conscience and tries to offset the negative image of this social group (Gallego Durán 119). Also, it is an autobiography, whose author belongs to the social group of African Americans and tells his experience of suffering under the racist institution of slavery. Twain's text is a fiction, although, according to Guerin et al., it has historical and biographical influences (64). Furthermore, the author, despite being a white southerner, subverts the common theme—in the 19th century—of the evolution of a white character because of a relationship with a black one (Abernathy 1).

By comparing these two narratives, this dissertation aims to analyze and discuss the different representations of African Americans in the first half of the 19th century, before the American Civil War, a time of slavery. This will be done from two points of view, the one presented in Mark Twain's novel—from a white child's perspective—and the one that is described in Frederick Douglass' autobiography—with an African

American slave as focalizer. This dissertation further seeks to explore how the situation of this ethnic group was in the South of the US before the 13th Amendment was ratified in 1865, comparing the view of slavery from Huck's perspective —characterized by the tension between what was considered immoral and what he felt as immoral— and from Frederick's —who shows the immorality of the institution, as he suffered it. Finally, this text will try to show how some traditional stereotypes about African Americans were fulfilled in Twain's novel and broken in Douglass'. That is, how those conceptions that were spread by these novels have influenced later representations of this ethnic group in literature.

All this will be achieved by looking not only at the themes but also at the narratological choices in both texts. In order to fulfil these aims, this dissertation will resort to narratology and ethnic studies as tools for analysis in order to understand how both Twain and Douglass succeeded in representing slavery as immoral. This owes to the fact that, as this dissertation will show, narratological choices influence the creation of stereotypes, in this case of African Americans, which are transcendent and meaningful for subsequent representations. Although these two classic American novels have already been thoroughly studied, they have not been compared and analyzed in these terms to achieve the previously presented aims.

This dissertation is structured as follows. In the next section, I provide an overview of the basis of narratology and ethnic studies of African Americans on which I have based my study, as it will be necessary in order to understand the critical analysis comparing the two novels. The second section will also contain a contextualization of the time when these texts were published, since, as Keen explains, “narrative situation describes the nature of the mediation between author and reader” (33). Therefore, it is necessary in order to analyze a narrative to know the context of the time when it was written, since the impressions of a text can vary depending on the context of the reader (Keen 46). After the compared analysis of the two novels, I will provide some final conclusions.

2. CONTEXT AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Theoretical Framework

According to Keen, narratology “refers, in its classical sense, to the structuralist analysis of the nature and function of narrative” (6). This conception was the basis of what Selden et al. called, when looking at the evolution of literary criticism, “new criticism”—concerned with the text without considering the context or the meaning, only the form. On the other hand, Bennett and Royle presented “reader-response criticism,” a newer approach that opposed the idea of analyzing a text as an individual entity: “Texts cannot but be part of the world” (Bennett and Royle 32). Therefore, how a person sees the world is reflected in the narrative through different elements that constitute the text.

To begin with, the elements expected in a text depend on the conventions of the genre or subgenre in which that text is classified. According to Keen, the narratives that fit a group of texts in which narratological characteristics are shared belong to the same genre or subgenre, although, in some cases, a narrative can combine conventions of different genres (71, 87). The choice of genre is connected to the intended purpose of the text. Therefore, genre is important to conceive a story and create expectations in the reader that help to follow the story. One of those elements is time, which implies a happening: “Without an event or an action, you won’t have a narrative” (Abbott 13). The order in which those events occur is also relevant for the conception of the story. As Bennett and Royle remark, a story attracts when it has equilibrium between “digression and progression towards the end” (55). Moreover, in a narrative, there is a dual conception of time in stories to take into account when analyzing literary texts. Keen distinguishes “discourse time,” the space that an event occupies in the narration, from “story time,” the time that those events actually would last—being “duration the relationship between story time elapsed and amount of discourse time expended” (92).

As Bennett and Royle point out, literary texts are universal, have a historical context, contribute to the understanding of the reality in which they are set, and are part of the in-process history (113). The main element of a text that shows those aspects is the plot: “a set of events related by causation” that are narrated (Keen 74). According to Abbott, people are constantly connecting their lives to a “masterplot” that follows certain structure, and “the more specific the masterplot, the greater its practical force in

everyday life,” since it creates a sense of community among the society in which it is spread (46-47). Accordingly, the plot needs to follow a structure, having “beginning, middle, and end” (Keen 3). However, in each narrative, the plot has a specific manner of showing the story, which determines the understanding and sensations it produces for the reader.

The element of the text that tells those plot events is the narrator, which is defined as an instrument, a construction, or a device wielded by the author (Abbott 68). There are several types of narration depending on the position and knowledge of the narrator. According to Abbott, the most useful elements to discern one type from another are “voice, focalization and distance” (69). If the narrator is a character of the story, it is “homodiegetic”, and if it is not a character, then, it is “heterodiegetic” (Genette 244-245). Besides, if the homodiegetic narrator is the protagonist of the story, it is called “autodiegetic,” and makes the narration subjective and more persuasive (Genette 251). Focalization is the perspective the reader encounters. There are two types according to Genette: internal —through the character—, and external —focused on a character (10-11). Therefore, the narrator can use a character’s perspective, or else, tell the events “through reports of their speech and actions” (Keen 33). Characters mirror actual people and engage in the “plot actions” (Keen 58; Bal 115); thus, they reflect real thoughts. Furthermore, the manner in which characters relate to each other represents the social relationships that can be seen in real life. A narration can show the predominant ideology of the time when the story is set (Bennett and Royle 177). Ideology is represented from a certain distance, giving “more or less the illusion of mimesis” (Genette 164). Thus, the “implied author” is the projection of the ideology that the real author suggested —actually, the ideology that the reader interprets the author to have— influenced by historical knowledge of the context and the author (Keen 36).

In addition to narratology, the theoretical framework of ethnic studies will also be a focus throughout the analysis to be carried out in this dissertation, in this case, to understand the image and stereotype of African Americans that these novels portray. The image of this community that different authors have depicted in literature differs. On the one hand, in the 19th century, white authors, either abolitionists or proslavery, portrayed African Americans stereotypically, depriving them of humanity (Van Deburg XI). Being “stupid, lazy, comical, childlike, or oversexed” were the most common

stereotypes associated with black people, portraying this social group as inferior (Levy 268; Talley and Rajack-Talley 54). According to Green, whites that promoted slavery, to justify it, created the stereotype of the “Sambo”: a careless person who relies on the figure of the “master for direction,” a “happy slave”; and the stereotype of the “Mammy,” a woman who took care of white children and loved them more than her own (560-561, 563-564). Moreover, white people thought that “Divine Providence” had commended them “the guardianship and the education of the colored race” (Van Deburg 29). Another stereotype created was “Uncle Tom”: a submissive Christian slave that was dignified, and prayed for those that were not accomplishing their master’s needs (Levy 271). Proslavery authors presented these stereotypes because, for them, slavery was an established institution, a method of labor that was started by “Afro-American bondsmen themselves,” and was justified since blacks fit “the indurance of labor in hot climates” (Van Deburg 8). Even scientists measured anatomical differences to define this race as inferior, contributing to the production of the “savage” stereotype, which justified the bad treatment and murder of slaves —as they were “less sensitive to pain than whites” (Green 563). Although it may seem surprising, white abolitionist authors portrayed African Americans with the stereotypes used by proslavery authors (Levy 272). This is due to the fear of “a black rebellion” that both had, as Van Deburg claims (XI). Stereotypes of African Americans relieved whites, making them feel superior, with no feeling of a menace towards their status (Van Deburg 24). Therefore, all these representations contributed to denying “black slaves the will and ability to direct their own lives” (Van Deburg 39).

On the other hand, it is unavoidable to mention W.E.B Du Bois when talking about African American literary critics and theorists. He developed the concept of “double consciousness,” which was about seeing his ethnic group through the eyes of others that did not belong to it and feeling the “two-ness —an American, a Negro; two souls” that this implied (846). Also, he made propaganda to fight racism: “Until the art of the black folk compels recognition they will not be rated as human” (853). As Bennett and Royle put it, “racism is an effect of language,” since people use synecdoche to preconceive this ethnic group, “blacks” (80); thus, the best manner to fight it is through texts. Langston Hughes also had that belief, and supported the equality of status of white and black people’s literature: “I am ashamed for the black poet who says, ‘I want to be a poet, not a Negro poet,’ as though his own racial world were not as

interesting as any other world” (1143). Similarly, Toni Morrison was an advocate of the disconnection of art quality and race. She exposed that African American art has been judged diversely throughout history, but always considered inferior to Western art—or has had to adapt to Western canons to be considered high art (1677). That valuation of African American culture is currently highlighted by a philosophical initiative called “Kawaida” that supports the equal value of the different existing cultures in the world (Karenga 245-248). These actions taken to endorse black culture were and are needed because of the repressions and suffering this social group has faced.

2.2. Context

The historical context of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), is that of 19th century US, a time when slavery was legal in the South. Slavery provoked African Americans to question daily their existence as humans (Haymes 173). Blacks, for supremacist white culture, played “the role of imitation” (L. Gordon 8). Western culture considered itself universal. Thus, education had to be based on that culture, and only educated people were considered human. Whites took that idea as a justification for not considering blacks as human beings, as “literacy had been turned into a very real enslaving weapon against them” (Mullane 27). On the other hand, slaves thought that “being human is not something one becomes through education but, rather, is what one already is” (Haymes 191). Nevertheless, the thoughts of African Americans were inexistent in the mind of white people. For them, slaves had the same status as animals, which justified the violence they used against them (Green 563). That violence, in many cases, ended up in death. They used different manners of murdering African Americans. The most common was lynching, considered by whites a heroic act, when it was a primeval act (J. Gordon 214).

While the authors of the two texts share the same historical context, they belonged to different social classes and ethnic groups. Frederick Douglass was a runaway slave who had been oppressed and deprived of freedom since his birth. His *Narrative* is, in fact, his autobiography, in which he writes about the different situations he faced as a slave and how he escaped to be finally free. On the other hand, Mark Twain, despite being also an inhabitant of the South—although, from another state—, was a free white man who dedicated his life to different jobs. He lived the reality of

slavery in a different way. In his *Adventures*, he treats it from the innocent perspective of a child, and in a humorous way.

3. ANALYSIS

3.1 Genre and Purpose

The genre that both Twain's and Douglass' narratives belong to is the *Bildungsroman*, since they show personal development, "self-knowledge" of the narrators, they "tell one life story, but not two," and "follow a chronological pattern" (Keen 39, 69, 92, 98). In both, there is a main character who morally and intellectually grows, and moves geographically, which is connected to his interior state —another characteristic of this subgenre (Gallego Durán 124). In Douglass' *Narrative*, the events of his life are told linearly. Moreover, he discovers the tool for his freedom, literacy: "From that moment, I understood the pathway from slavery to freedom" (Douglass 39). Thanks to that intellectual development, he reaches a higher social status, as he manages, in the end, to become a free man. Besides, he escapes towards the Northern Free States as he progresses. In the same way, Twain's *Adventures* presents plot events chronologically and a part of the protagonist's —and narrator's— path towards maturity. The protagonist is a thirteen-year-old boy, who travels with Jim, a runaway slave that is fleeing down the Mississippi river. Huckleberry progressively develops a critical view towards slavery, which contributes to his moral improvement. In addition, Jim also evolves as the novel progresses. As they travel geographically, Jim moves closer to the desired freedom that he finally achieves legally as his owner dies: "old Miss Watson died two months ago", "and she set him free in her will" (Twain ch. 42).

Another genre that both novels share features with is the slave narrative. In *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, this genre is completely adopted, and followed more acutely, since there is an account of the exclusive conscience of an African American slave whose goal is "to counteract the negative images" of his social group (Gallego Durán 119). Furthermore, it is an autobiography, as it tells the experience of slavery from a subjective point of view, recalling actual events Douglass lived in his flesh. Telling the truth about his experience and recreating the self in that context is valuable in slave narratives (Stone 194). Moreover, the novel also fits the "authentication conventions" characteristic of the genre, which gives veracity to the

work (Gallego Durán 132). These conventions were needed in this genre because of “the attacks in the pro-slavery press on the authenticity of slave narratives,” which claimed that the events narrated were an invention of the abolitionists (Stone 198). That is the reason why Douglass, an ex-slave, highlighted in the first publication of the *Narrative* that it was “*Written by Himself*,” and used an “introduction by Lloyd Garrison and Phillips,” white authors, to confirm it (Stone 198-199). On the other hand, in Twain’s novel, the conventions of the slave narrative are altered. The theme of the African American escaping towards freedom and the account of slavery are pushed into the background. The slave consciousness is superficially portrayed, and the main plot focuses on the white protagonist, Huckleberry Finn. For that reason, there is no need of fulfilling the authentication conventions. The genre of the slave narrative is hidden underneath another subgenre, the Picaresque, whose “central figure is a kind of antihero, the pícaro,” who experiences many adventures, “involving many pranks and much trenchant satire” (Guerin et al. 38). Huckleberry is a pícaro, and the account of his adventures outweighs Jim’s —the African American slave.

To understand the similarities or differences in the conventions fulfilled, and the choice of genres and subgenres, it is necessary to know the context of both authors —already discussed in the previous section— and the purpose they had when writing these narratives. In the case of Douglass, he used the conventions of autobiographical writing to provide a real account of happenings under the institution of slavery as an African American that had achieved freedom and literacy. He uses subjectivity and fits the conventions of the slave narrative because he wanted the white reader to sympathize with him as a slave and, thus, with slaves in general —as he and his voice were representative of African Americans. Douglass wanted to be respected as a human being, disrupting inhuman African American stereotypes portrayed by those who supported slavery. He explicitly clarifies the intention of his autobiography: “hoping that this little book may do something toward throwing light on the American slave system” (Douglass 106). Therefore, Douglass’ autobiography functioned as propaganda for those who had the authority —whites— to change the situation of slaves, so that they become abolitionists, considering the African Americans humans. To achieve that purpose, he mixed the previously mentioned genres’ conventions to enhance his message and move people’s feelings, proving that the only obstacle between African Americans and their intellectual equality to whites was the slavery system. At that time,

knowledge was seen as an instrument to reach morality, citizenship, and prosperity, which was denied to African Americans to justify their inferiority (Mullane 27).

Twain's situation was different. He was a white Southerner, and although he used some conventions of the slave narrative and, as in Douglass', those of the bildungsroman, his main goal was not to explicitly support the abolitionist cause. He used sensationalism to make the story appear unreal, "something of a thriller," but taking into account his context of "the Frontier America" —a violent context — it becomes more probable to be based on facts (Guerin et al. 61). He focused on that cruel environment experienced by a pícaro, making a humorous, satirical novel to entertain white people, and depict Southern society of the 19th century. The critique towards the institution of slavery lies underneath the surface, which probably responds to the author's intention not to be involved in controversy.

3.2 Plot and Time

In the plot of both Douglass' and Twain's narratives, the "story time" differs from the "discourse time." In *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, the "story time" lasts from the beginning of the life of Frederick Douglass, presenting his ancestors, to the moment of his life in which he ends the writing of this autobiography, "April 28, 1845" (Douglass 106). That beginning's exact date is not clear because, as a slave, he did not know his age, but it can be inferred that it was in 1818 since Douglass states: "hearing my master say, some time during 1835, I was about seventeen years old" (15). However, "discourse time" can only be measured by the length of the text. Therefore, there is a selection of moments of his life that he considered relevant enough for his purposes to include in this autobiography. Additionally, some selected moments that Douglass tells seem to be more relevant, as the discourse they occupy is longer than the actual time they last. Thus, he compacts the less painful or relevant extensions of time: "The year passed off smoothly," "I will give Mr. Freeland the credit of being the best master I ever had, *till I became my own master*" (75; emphasis in the original). On the contrary, he expands and elaborates on his feelings, thoughts and most traumatic moments as a slave: "I was so terrified, I have never seen any thing like it before" (19); and he omits those moments in which he could harm someone that has contributed to his freedom, as in his escape. Thus, there is a clear selection of those events that convey

his purpose when writing the plot, and this determines the weight they have in the discourse.

Likewise, in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the story time, lasts from the ending of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*: “the way that the book winds up is this: Tom and me found the money that the robbers hid in the cave, and it made us rich” (Twain ch.1); to the ending of Huckleberry Finn’s adventure with Jim, when Jim is freed and Huck will be adopted by Aunt Sally against his will: “she’s going to adopt me and sivilize me, and I can’t stand it” (Twain ch. 43); while the discourse time cannot be measured but in chapters: 43. As in Douglass’, in Twain’s book, the narrator highlights and develops on his worries, questions the slavery system, evaluates the morality of his actions, or in general the interaction he has with the runaway slave Jim: “I see I was weakening: so I just give up trying, and up and says: ‘He’s white’” (ch.16). In contrast, Twain compresses those action events that are not related to the protagonists’ consciousness or relationship with slavery or with Jim: “So now the frauds reckoned they was out of danger, and they begun to work the villages again” (ch. 31). Those compressed actions that the narrator summarizes do not induce reflection or intellectual growth. It is clear that Huckleberry’s evolution is what the discourse space emphasizes, and that personal progress is only possible when he questions slavery and relates with a person who is escaping from that institution.

The structure of the plot in both novels is pre-established by the conventions of the genres and subgenres they belong to. Twain’s narrative has an “episodic plot” (Guerin et al. 10). There are multiple stories embedded in the main one, which unifies them: the escaping trip down the Mississippi River. The first seven chapters of the story begin by introducing the main characters and narrating the escape of the protagonist from his harsh situation. Then, the guiding thread of the plot is presented when Huckleberry encounters Jim: “Pretty soon he gapped and stretched himself and hove off the blanket, and it was Miss Watson’s Jim!” (Twain ch. 8). From that moment, they stick together travelling through the river to reach Cairo, from where Jim would take the Ohio River towards a free state —because there, abolitionists helped runaway slaves to reach the Northern states (Guerin et al. 62). The hero of the story is Huckleberry, although he is a pícaro, which is shown in his adventures in the towns next to the river that he enters. Each adventure starts when they encounter other characters and the action is set. Huckleberry gets separated from Jim, pretends to be another person for his

profit, and experiences the brutality and evil of some people, but also the goodness of others. When the adventure ends, the trip continues and Huckleberry joins Jim again on the river. The final chapters are devoted to the unplanned meeting of Huckleberry with Tom, the epic “final rescue” of Jim, and the final resolution when Jim is officially free. Once again, the structure shows that the most relevant plot events in the novel are the ones that present slavery as an issue, the ones that involve Jim and Huckleberry, and the ones that unify the embedded stories. Thematically, humor, action, and thriller are mixed in a story of a white child who joins a black slave to escape the considered civilization in the South of the US at that time.

Turning to Douglass’ autobiography, plot is based on the theme of bondage, personal growth and the idea that literacy is the key to success, improvement, and attainment of humanity and freedom (Gallego Durán 124). It can be said that the turning point in the book is the moment when he apprehends that knowledge is the tool for his freedom: “Learning would *spoil* the best nigger in the world” (Douglass 39; emphasis in the original). The structure of the plot in Douglass’ *Narrative* is based on the alternation of telling traumatic events he saw that happened to other slaves —“He then said to her, ‘Now, you d—d b—h I’ll learn you how to disobey my orders!’” (19)— those painful happenings he experienced —“My awkwardness was almost always his excuse for whipping me” (59)— those impositions slaves faced in general —“The men and women slaves received, as their monthly allowance of food, eight pounds of pork, or its equivalent in fish, and one bushel of corn meal” (21)— and his reflections on them —“I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing” (45). The portrait of suffering throughout the plot fulfils the purpose of reaching the heart of those that read it. However, there is a turn of events when he attains freedom and independence. The plot starts to be about happy events such as his wedding: “THIS may certify, that I joined together in holy matrimony Frederick Johnson and Anna Murray, as man and wife, in the presence of Mr. David Ruggles and Mrs. Michaels” (Douglass 95), but again preserving the telling of his thoughts and feelings. This contrast of the events prior to his escape with the ones after achieving freedom and literacy, present a portrait of slavery as all evil contrasted to freedom as goodness, highlighting the immorality of slavery.

3.3 Narrator and Implied Author

Both *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* present an autodiegetic narrator. However, the narrative voice is different. In the former, Douglass is the narrator of his own story, who presents his autobiography. The implied author coincides with his persona. Douglass, by introducing the authentication conventions —through the letters previously mentioned— aims to be considered a reliable narrator. He tells events that happened to him in real life and comments on them. However, when talking about others' experience in slavery, he uses impersonal sentences: "It is reported of him, that while riding along the road one day, he met a colored man" (28), and third person, as if he was an omniscient narrator: "He was immediately chained and handcuffed" (28). Furthermore, when describing masters he also uses those tenses: "he spoke to his slaves with the firmness of Napoleon and the fury of a demon" (54). This use of the passive voice and the third person could have two purposes: the first would be to detach himself from the happenings and depictions —in case the master protests and claims the incidents and behaviors to be untrue, in which case, as a white man, his opinion would have more credibility, and Douglass would be considered an unreliable narrator; and the second, to show that they were not occurrences and views that only himself knew about, but they were generally known to have happened —so that it would seem more truthful, with several witnesses.

Furthermore, he used generalizations: "Slaves are like other people, and imbibe prejudices quite common to others" (29). The purpose of generalizing could be to show that in general, he was representing the whole community of African Americans under the institution of slavery, that his knowledge about it, having experienced it, was universal and representative. That specific quotation shows that African Americans and white people are alike: imperfect, human beings that tend to have prejudices, representing the humanity of slaves and the imperfection and mistakes that are universally committed by the whole of humankind. Moreover, when Douglass uses generalizations referring to white people, he portrays the extended belief that slaves were inhuman objects: "It was a common saying, even among little white boys, that it was worth a half-cent to kill a 'nigger', and a half-cent to bury one" (33), portraying again the universality of those radical beliefs which indoctrinated even children to accept slavery as a normal and good institution. Throughout the text, the narrative voice repeatedly tells his experiences to be equal to those of other slaves, giving the sense of

universality too: “It was very similar to that of the other slave children” (34). This generalization protected the author in real life, distancing him from the people mentioned, and at the same time allowed the story to be representative of the whole community’s suffering under the institution of slavery, an ideology which is portrayed through the comments and thoughts of the narrator.

Those comments represent the ideology of the author and his support of the abolition of slavery: “I was now about twelve years old, and the thought of *being a slave for life* began to bear heavily upon my heart” (44; emphasis in the original). With this affirmation, he approximated that moment to the present of the reader when the novel was published, connecting to the narratee through feelings. Besides, he used actual titles of books that supported his ideas and made him realize his situation and that he could escape from it: “got hold of a book entitled ‘The Columbian Orator’,” “every opportunity I got, I used to read this book” (44). Therefore, he explicitly shows his ideas, how he realized them, and the cause he is supporting, that slaves were deprived of knowledge—a human characteristic—to preserve the institution: “I have found that, to make a contented slave, it is necessary to make a thoughtless one” (87). Thus, the only way to abolish slavery was to unite for the cause, being aware of it through reading—a human right they should not be deprived of: “freedom and power are mutually dependent” (Mullane 26).

The narrative voice in Twain’s novel also supports a representation of the whole institution of slavery as cruel and unethical. That narrative voice belongs to Huckleberry, a pre-adolescent that does not understand what happens as an adult does. He only reports everything that he sees and listens to, filtered by his naive point of view, which creates a parodic distance between the hypocrite reality and his truthful conception of it. For instance, when Jim and he encounter the “King” and the “Duke”, although they were found together, Huck says: “the first thing that come out was that these chaps didn’t know one another” (Twain ch.19). His use of non-standard grammar is proof of the vernacular he uses and his lack of education. He belongs to a low social class, but still, he is superior to African Americans and talks accordingly. Thus, for instance, when his conscience tells him that he has to apologize to Jim, he shows certain reserve to “humble [him]self to a nigger” (Twain ch.15). Then, it is clear that the narrator is conscious of the social status each person has, because he was indoctrinated by adults and the general beliefs they had at that time: “She was of the first aristocracy

in our town; and pap he always said it” (Twain ch.18). Huckleberry’s innocence was corrupted by his experiences with adults, he had to use different strategies to confront the grim reality: “they quit shooting,” “I knowed I was all right now,” “I got my traps out of the canoe” (Twain ch.8). Sometimes he had to lie to guarantee not only his survival but also that of Jim: “He’s white” (Twain ch. 16). All this characterizes him as unreliable, a pícaro, but at the same time innocent.

Furthermore, this narrator uses the first person plural when referring to himself and Jim, a fact that shows how he considers the African American as a person that shares a friendship with him as if they were family: “By that time everything we had in the world was on our raft” (Twain Ch. 11). Apart from that, the common use of reported speech shows that the narrator considers more important his conversations with Jim, since he reproduces them in detail. Besides, those talks and accounts of happenings are accompanied by the comments and thoughts of the narrator. The implicit author is evidenced by the parodic distance between the hypocrisy of reality and the narrator’s innocent misunderstandings of it. According to Guerin et al., the main goal of Twain’s voice —the implied author, in other words— is criticizing aristocracy (63). Although, indeed, the representatives of aristocracy are not portrayed as benevolent or friendly to the narrator, neither are others that do not belong to that social class. Thus, the focus is on the critical thoughts of the narrator, and his moral crises, in which he finally decides to be against the socially-considered morally correct and manifests his love for Jim —allegedly, a bad slave, because of escaping: “What’s the use to do right when it’s troublesome to do right and ain’t no trouble to do wrong,” “It was Jim’s voice nothing ever sounded so good before” (Twain ch.16, ch.18). Mason holds that the implicit author shows racism as an unimportant issue for which there is nothing to do, since there is a humorous tone in the novel (47). Nevertheless, humor is used to ridicule those who saw slavery and African Americans’ captivity as normal or moral, and to be coherent with the subgenre of the picaresque used. It is a humor that shows the absurdity of treating human beings as animals. As Nilon claims, the implied author shows Jim as the representative of the lack of identity and self-esteem of African Americans in the South due to slavery and the hardships experienced when escaping (27). In addition, “Twain is uncomfortably aware of the increase of lynching in the South” (Nilon 24). This fact is implicitly shown through the last chapters when, being aware of Jim’s right to freedom, Tom continues torturing him, influenced by books

—proof of the power of literature and the ideologies shared through the stories. Therefore, slavery and the situations African Americans had to go through to be free reveal the underlying ideology of the text, that slavery was absurd, immoral, and contributed to the suffering and deprivation of humanity to those who were humans, but not considered as such —African Americans.

3.4 Focalization and Characterization

The main focalizer in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is the protagonist and narrator, as already mentioned. The story is shown through the eyes of Huckleberry, and his perception varies from the reality perceived by the narratee when reading the story. Huckleberry is a preteenager, still immature, and innocent. Although he has started to be corrupted by the society he lived in, he preserves the innocent view of a child that has not interiorized the ideology and culture of adults. He was starting to be ‘sivilized’ by Miss Watson, but he returned to his old habits when living with Pap again: “My clothes got to be rags and dirt, and I didn’t see how I’d ever got to like it so well at the widow’s, where you had to wash, and eat on a plate” (Twain ch. 6). Then, when he escapes from that situation in which he was constantly abused by his unstable father, he had to survive alone, with no adults. However, he encountered Jim, the adult, father figure he needed at that time.

It is true that, even when escaping, Jim needs a white person to survive, but on many occasions, it is shown that the decisions Jim supports to be better for them to survive are the ones obeyed and executed: “I said we didn’t want to be climbing up and down,” “Jim said if we had the canoe hid in a good place, and had all the traps in the cavern, we could rush there if anybody was to come to the island,” “so we went back and got the canoe and paddled up abreast the cavern” (Twain ch. 9). Conversely, according to Mason, “Huck has internalized the view that blacks are children all their lives long” (38), but he listens to Jim’s advice., and as the previous example shows, Huck listens to Jim’s advice, and they discuss the decisions to make as equals. It is also true that when Huck thinks about Jim, he does it under the widespread ideology of the assumptions and stereotypes of African Americans as inferior: less clever because they are black, and born to be slaves. However, Huck realizes and admits that Jim does not

fit those stereotypes: “he was most always right; he had an uncommon level head for a nigger” (Twain ch. 14).

Huckleberry shows two selves: his true self, what he thinks and believes to be correct and moral, despite interiorized stereotypes and imposed morality—that supported that slaves were not human—and the self he pretends to be in front of other whites that supports those imposed beliefs. Huck’s true self sees African Americans as human beings, not only Jim, but also others he did not want to damage: “I felt dreadful glad I’d worked it all off on to the niggers, and yet hadn’t done the niggers no harm by it” (Twain ch.27). Huckleberry shows his disagreement, or at least his perception of slavery and African Americans’ treatment as nonsensical. For him, what is socially considered to be morally correct is not right. In contrast with that view perceived from Huckleberry’s thoughts, Huck presents the self he pretends to be in front of those who support slavery: “I won’t let no runaway niggers get me if I can help it,” “would a runaway nigger run SOUTH?,” “They’ve took my nigger” (Twain ch. 16, ch. 20, ch. 31). He calls Jim “nigger”—as racist society called African Americans contemptuously—, supports the detention of runaway slaves, and favors the objectified conception of African Americans as belongings. In front of his friend Tom—although both are children—he shows signs of his true self: “Tom wanted to tie Jim to the tree for fun, but I said no” (Twain ch. 2). However, he hides those signs of disagreement with African Americans treated as objects with other excuses, because he is unable to firmly contradict Tom’s decisions, as he considers him a superior.

The reason why he acts in that manner in front of proslavery white characters is to protect Jim and himself from others that can damage them, or get them apart because of being against the dominant system. Furthermore, Huckleberry experiments an evolution. The closer he gets to Jim, the more he sees him as a person, until at the end, he affirms: “I knowed he was white inside” (Twain ch. 40). Contrary to what Mason interprets—that there is a “refusal to associate anyone ‘black’ with human” (37)—this means that he considers Jim a person, and in his naivety, this is the only way he finds to describe it. Despite being influenced by the stereotypes supporting the black race as inhuman, Huckleberry sees the fact that African Americans are equal, human beings.

In Twain’s novel Jim fits many stereotypes of African Americans. The fact that he can represent a father figure for Huckleberry leads Mason to consider that Jim fulfils the Mammy stereotype (37). However, as Green explains, the stereotype of the Mammy

presents a woman that controls her family with a bad temper (564). Jim is neither a woman nor has a bad temper. Instead, he is a runaway slave and, for the 19th century-proslavery reader, he would be considered a childish man that needs a master, fitting the Sambo stereotype. In the world of the novel, for white proslavery characters, Jim would fit the stereotype of the Savage, as he is escaping the system. Therefore, the conception of Jim fulfilling different stereotypes depends on the point of view of those who simplify him because of being an African American. The fact that Jim can fit a variety of stereotypes shows that the link of African Americans to stereotypes is subjective and illogical. Twain's novel shows all those possibilities of spreading views of African Americans to show that reality cannot be portrayed by any stereotype. Jim is superstitious and his vernacular use of English is not considered standard or elevated—which confirms the idea of deprivation of education that whites impose on slaves supported by Douglass—but he is intelligent, has a goal—reaching freedom—and is a good person that helps others. Proof of this is that, at the end of the novel, he helps to save Tom, sacrificing his freedom to save a child that had made his life difficult. Therefore, Jim is depicted as a morally good person that deserves freedom.

On the other hand, the main focalizer in Douglass' *Narrative* is himself. As Gallego Durán puts it, “[w]riting itself makes it possible for the slave to empower himself against a hostile society” (129). The world portrayed by Douglass is biased as already analyzed in the previous section. The narratee sees through his eyes except for the first two letters and the moment in which he gets married, where other perspectives are included. He portrays a society in which he is excluded and has to fight to be accepted (Gallego Durán 123). The depiction that Douglass makes of himself, and by extension of African Americans, dismantles the traditional stereotypes of the Sambo, Uncle Tom, or the Savage. According to those stereotypes, he would be considered a Savage since he escapes from slavery, betraying his master, and rebelling against the system. Douglass, through writing—using a narrative voice in good Standard English, and respecting the conventions of the slave narrative, the bildungsroman, and the autobiography—portrays himself as an intelligent and civilized human being, as what whites considered a civilized person. He uses the tools that white, Western culture used to promote negative stereotypes of African Americans in order to debunk them. Douglass is proof that those widespread stereotypes are a fallacy. He shows not only himself but also the rest of African Americans that share his condition as human beings.

Some ignore that their situation can improve and that they deserve to be treated as humans: “Many [...] think their own masters are better than the masters of other slaves [...] when the very reverse is true” (Douglass 29). This is due to the imposed ideology of whites as superior that even the slaves had interiorized. Moreover, they were deprived of knowledge, of literacy, which made them ignorant of their rights.

African Americans are also depicted as innocent, defenseless victims of slavery. Therefore, a new stereotype of the African American as a victim arises with this novel. This was done for the narratee to feel guilty about the situations of suffering those people were facing, and to inspire a wish to help them by abolishing slavery. In addition, by building this stereotype, Douglass was debunking the classical stereotypes of happy slaves. Through the small parts of discourse devoted to dialogues of other African American characters with whites, it can be seen that they were not liars, disrespectful or dull; instead, they were punished for the mere fact of being sincere: “‘What, does he work you too hard?’ ‘Yes, sir’”(Douglass 28). In addition, Douglass further exploits the power of the narrative to subvert other popular beliefs that had been spread, such as the fact that slaves sang if they were happy or because they were lazy: “Slaves sing most when they are most unhappy. The songs of the slave represent the sorrows of his heart; and he is relieved by them, only as an aching heart is relieved by its tears” (24).

4. CONCLUSION

As we have seen, both Douglass’ and Twain’s narratives follow the conventions of the bildungsroman, since there is a development on the protagonist and the slave narrative. However, while in Douglass’ *Narrative*, the conventions of the latter are fulfilled accurately, in Twain’s *Adventures* they are not, and the genre lies underneath. This fact can be explained by looking at the purpose of each text. In Douglass’ autobiography, the intention is to subvert African American stereotypes to persuade white people to support the abolition of slavery; in contrast, in Twain’s picaresque fiction, the goal is to entertain white people, subtly introducing the issue of slavery without risking to be involved in controversy.

Secondly, plot events are chronologically told, following the conventions of the genres and subgenres discussed. The hero of Twain’s story is Huckleberry, although he

is a pícaro. Many adventures start when Huckleberry and Jim encounter other characters. However, the main story and theme that unifies the rest is the escape down the Mississippi River. Furthermore, discourse time expands when Huckleberry is with Jim, and in those moments the protagonist experiments personal growth. Therefore, the presence of the critique towards slavery, despite being implicit, is strengthened and highlighted throughout the plot. On the other hand, Douglass recounts the main events of suffering he experienced or saw and his thoughts to inspire the reader's sympathy. There is a clear selection of the events told and discourse time (duration) employed in them. Thus, the issue of slavery is portrayed as evil and inhuman, and contrasted with freedom, which only can be achieved through literacy.

Thirdly, the narrator of both Douglass' and Twain's novels is autodiegetic. In the case of Douglass, he is the author, narrator, and implied author. He tells the story using generalizations, impersonal constructions and third person to create a sense of universality and protect him from those white masters he names, or the affirmations of him to be a liar. He is reliable and wants the narratee to believe his story. Moreover, he advocates for the cause of the abolition of slavery, supporting his ideas —explicitly shown through his comments— with actual writings, which gives more veracity to the *Narrative*. Twain, conversely, detaches himself from the narration, since he presents a fiction. The narrator chosen is a 13-year-old child, unreliable for his lack of maturity, that tells what he sees or listens. He uses different strategies to highlight his friendship with Jim, such as the use of the first person plural. This shows the familiar relationship between a white child and a runaway slave, proof of the view the implied author reflects of African Americans as human beings, which is the focus of the ideology portrayed in the book. Humor reinforces the absurdity of slavery and all those that see it as morally correct, or normal. Again, as in Douglass, there is a sense of universality, in which Jim is representing all those who suffer the institution of slavery.

Finally, the focalizer in Twain's *Adventures* is Huckleberry, who despite having interiorized the stereotypes about African Americans and the imposed system of slavery as normal, shows his view of slaves as humans, which is highlighted through his relationship with Jim. Huckleberry undergoes an evolution. Although his false self shows proslavery ideologies in front of those who are in favor of the institution, his real self believes that slavery is not right. Also, as Jim fulfils different African American stereotypes, the subjectivity of stereotypes is brought to the fore. So, if there is not a

single stereotype that Jim, as a single person, can fit, neither will exist a stereotype that can represent a whole community. On the other hand, Douglass, in the mere fact of writing his autobiography, depicts himself as an intelligent writer. He uses the main tool of propagation of negative African American stereotypes —that deprives them of humanity and contributes to the support of slavery— to debunk them. Douglass portrays a new stereotype, the African American as a victim, to make the white reader aware of the immorality and meanness of slavery, so that readers start to take action in the abolitionist cause.

To conclude, in both cases, widespread stereotypes about African Americans are shown to be wrong; there is a realistic approach towards slavery, presenting it as immoral; and African Americans are depicted as equal to whites, as human beings. The two novels show African American characters as representative of the whole community, and in different manners, as this dissertation has shown, how they managed to make visible the severity of an unfair institution. However, Twain, as a white author, was afraid of the “black rebellion” and despite presenting an abolitionist text in essence, still depicts the African American in a stereotyped manner. On the other hand, Douglass dismantles those stereotypes but creates his autobiography with a sense of what W.E.B. Dubois would years later call “double consciousness.” His narratological choices and his creation of the stereotype of the victim are caused by that focus on the white reader. In addition, he fulfils the conventions considered high art in Western culture, looking for the approbation and acceptance of whites, which shows that he had not achieved the status of human being equal to whites yet. He was free of slavery, but not of racism, an issue that still nowadays exists. Therefore, racism is reflected in both texts, giving visibility to the historical suffering and discrimination towards African Americans. Literature, in the novels analyzed, is proved to be a weapon against slavery, but nowadays, it is still a necessary weapon against racism, so that people realize its presence and join the fight against it.

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