

Huck and Racism (In Honour of Professor Fumio Miyahara On the Occasion of His Retirement)

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<https://doi.org/10.15017/1354649>

出版情報：英語英文学論叢. 47, pp.65-76, 1997-02. 九州大学英語英文学研究会
バージョン：
権利関係：

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The most controversial aspect of *Huckleberry Finn* is the burlesque in the final chapters where Tom Sawyer frees Jim who has already been freed by Miss Watson's will. Leo Marx argues that this evasive comedy is inconsistent with Huck's moral maturation and his heroic resolve to liberate Jim from slavery. This line of argument is based on the premise that Huck's moral maturation is linked to his abandonment of racism. It is true that Huck, while living together with Jim on the raft, becomes aware of his humanity and sympathizes his struggle for freedom. But Huck feels sympathy only toward Jim, not toward slaves in general. He was born and brought up in a racist society and naturally permeated with stock racist ideas. Therefore, once he leaves the raft and reenters the racist society, he forgets almost all about Jim's innate nobility and easily complies with Tom's request for the absurd adventure.

Twain passed his boyhood in a racist society as Huck did. When he looks back on his early years in Hannibal, Twain cannot help recognizing that the happiness in his boyhood was sustained by the nation's most shameful system. There is always a shade of self-justification in his criticism on the slavery in his hometown. It is hard for him to wholly deny slavery, which is equal to denying his free and happy boy's world. Huck's uncertain attitude toward Jim reflects Twain's own ambivalent feeling toward his boyhood.