

Jim's Superstitions as Survival Weapons: The Free Will of an African-American

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Mark Twain scholars unanimously agree that Jim is superstitious. Jim's superstitiousness, though, tends to draw criticism, because it often accentuates his gullibility and comical figure. When Jim encounters Huck on the Jackson's Island, he mistakes Huck for a ghost and cries out "Doan' hurt me—don't! I hain't ever done no harm to a ghos'" (51). In "Minstrel Shackles and Nineteenth-Century 'Liberal-ity' in *Huckleberry Finn*," Frederick Woodard and Donnaræ MacCann refer to Jim's terror-struck remark, and assert that "Jim speaks to the ghost in a typical addle-brained manner" (143). Shelley Fisher Fishkin suggests that Jim's "superstition with gullibility and ignorance needs to be evaluated in the context of how superstition was used by whites as a means of maintaining power over the slaves" (*Was Huck Black?* 84). Yet she does not question Woodard and MacCann's assertion that Jim is a superstitious and credulous black, terrified of ghost.¹

Jim looks comically in panics over the ghost, though it is possible that Jim purposely acts as such, with the aim of arousing Huck's pity or laughter. Kneeling down and putting his hands together before Huck, Jim skillfully appeals to Huck for his benevolence. Jim, thus behaving, wins sympathetic response from Huck—a white ghost or a white boy armed with guns: Huck comforts Jim by persuading him

that he is not dead and does not intending to hurt him. Bearing in mind that Jim's successful tact, it is clear that he may be superstitious, but not slow-witted.

This chapter purpose is to show that Jim, though superstitious, is not inevitably credulous; and Jim's superstition plays a critical role in his survival.

1

Jim is practically benefited from believing in supernatural beings. Jim earns money through hair-ball divination. He rises to a distinguished renown in the black community on account of his witch-riding anecdote. Jim is not a susceptible victim of Tom's mischievous prank, but always calculates to use superstition to his advantage.

Miss Watson gives slave servants Christian lessons, ordering them to pray in the closet. While compelled to be a pious Christian by his mistress, Jim secretly does magic with a hair ball when Miss Watson and the widow Douglas are asleep at night. Daniel G. Hoffman notes in his essay "Jim's Magic: Black or White" that his divination with a hair-ball is "voodoo belief . . . of incontestably African origin" (51). Whether Jim believes in voodoo or not, it is obvious that Jim, by devoting himself to the superstitious rituals and beliefs, implicitly opposes Miss Watson's Christian doctrines, many of which are used to justify slavery from the pulpits in the Old South.² Then the superstitious Jim appears to be a more rebellious tough slave than the gullible one that critics assert him to be.

Jim is renowned for listening to the hair-ball spirit and fortune-telling. When Huck visits Jim to consult about how to deal with Pap, Jim foresees in his hair-ball oracle: "Dey's two angels hovering' rou'

'bout him. One uv 'em is white en shiny en den de black one sail in en bust it all up. A body can't tell, yit, which one gwyine to fetch him at de las'" (22).

And right after Jim's reading, Pap appears before Huck in almost "black" and "white," in accord with the Jim's prediction of "black" and "white" angels hovering around Pap:

He was most fifty, and he looked it. His hair was long and tangled and greasy, and hung down, and you could see his eyes shining through, like he was behind vines. It was all black; no gray; so was his long, mixed-up whiskers. There warn't no color in his face where his face showed; it was white; not like another man's white, but a white to make body sick, a white to make body's flesh crawl—a tree-toad white, a fish-belly white. As for his clothes—just rags, that was all. He had one ankle resting on t'other knee; the boot on that foot was busted, and two of his toes stuck through and he worked them, now and then. His hat was laying on the floor; and old black slouch with the top caved in, like a lid. (23)

Twain portrays Pap with "black" and "white" as having "long and tangled and greasy" hair and whiskers of "black" hanging down, and a "fish-belly white" face showing through the hairs (23).³

Huck must be awe-struck with the preciseness of Jim's predicting, not only for Jim's wording of "black" and "white" in characterizing Pap, but for Jim's allusion to Pap's failed reform. Soon after Jim's prediction, Pap is sheltered by the new judge at his house, and promises to reform and be temperate. But that night Pap sneaks out of the

room thirsty for alcohol and is found nearly frozen to death in mud from overdrinking in the morning. Again Jim seems to predict Pap's future exactly; Pap promises to follow a "white" angel, that is to say, to reform and be through with alcohol, but then the "black" angel or temptation "[sails] in and bust it all up." And coincidentally, Huck is nearly killed by Pap, in delirium tremens, who chases him, calling him "the angel of death."

Jim describes Pap's future correctly, not because he has an ability of fortunetelling, but because he has a keen intellect to forecast the likely future based on acquired information and his experience. Jim piercingly reads the human mind and the situation, and most of time his analysis is correct. When Jim sees the slave trader hanging around Miss Watson, he correctly predicts that Miss Watson is easily tempted to sell him to the trader, in view of her character and her situation. For Jim, it is easy to foresee that Pap will fall to destructive life, accounting Pap's nasty and alcoholic days, as the new judge finally understands after helping Pap reform: "a body could reform the old man with a shot-gun, maybe, but he didn't know no other way" (28). Jim also warns Huck at the end of hair-ball oracle that he may "git hung." Jim's augury is going to prove sound judgment, when Huck runs away back to the former vagabond, who is tempted to lead a similar life as his father.

And even Huck grants Jim's smartness to judge the situation. When he and Jim narrowly evacuate from the wrecked Walter Scott in the storming, Huck honestly expresses that Jim's judgment was right in resisting to embarking on the Walter Scott, and says

He said that when I went in the texas and he crawled back to get

on the raft and found her gone, he nearly died; because he judged it was all up with *him*, anyway it could be fixed; for if he didn't get saved he would get drowned; and if he did get saved, whoever saved him would send him back home so as to get the reward, and then Miss Watson would sell him south, sure. Well, he was right; he was most always right; he had a common level head, for a nigger. (93)

Huck admits Jim's cleverness, but never imagines Jim's tremendously calculating tactics when he interprets signs and omens. Jim carefully rephrases his speculation to sound like mysterious fortune-telling through supernatural signs and bad luck. Jim intentionally talks in an ambiguous way to strike listeners as credible and awesome, as his talk of "black" and "white" angels. On top of his piercing insight, Jim has the remarkable gift of story-telling to beguile Huck into accepting his words with awe.

2

Jim's superstition is more than a ploy to get advantages; it is his personal weapon to outwit the whites and reach freedom, particularly when he is in a risky situation, partnering up with the dubious white boy. After leaving his owner and joining Huck, Jim consistently relies on supernatural beings to take control of his raft voyage and travel partner for his benefit.

When Jim is reunited with Huck on Jackson's Island, Jim is anxious that Huck may betray him. Jim cannot easily trust Huck, especially because of his bitter experience with Miss Watson, who promised not to sell him, but broke her word. Jim keeps his submissive

and timid attitude toward Huck, by answering Huck in respect “No, sah” (52). And he hesitates to tell the fact of his running away, even after he finds Huck is not a ghost or dead, either:

“How do you come to be here, Jim, and how’d you get here?”

He looked pretty uneasy, and didn’t say nothing for a minute.

Then he says:

“Maybe I better not tell.”

“Why, Jim?”

“Well, dey’s reason. But you wouldn’ tell on me ef I ‘uz to tell you, would you, Huck?”

“Blamed if I would, Jim.”

“Well, I b’lieve you, Huck. I—I *run off*.”

“Jim!”

“But mind, you said you wouldn’t tell—you know you said you wouldn’t tell, Huck.” (52)

Jim repeatedly beseeches Huck not to inform on him. At this moment Jim is terrified of Huck, not because Huck is a ghost, but because Huck is a white boy armed with gun, and used to live with Jim’s rightful owner, Miss Watson. Huck has no alternative but to cooperate with Jim. however Jim has deep suspicion that Huck may ally himself to Miss Watson if chance offered.

Indeed Huck is near to betray Jim in Chapter 16. Jim carelessly unveils his hidden intentions to “get an ab’litionist to go and steal” if their master would not sell them (124). Jim’s statement “most froze” Huck, because it awakes him to the distressing reality: “Here was this nigger which I had as good as helped to run away, coming right out

flat-footed and saying he would steal children" (124). Huck says to himself that "My conscience got to stirring me up hotter than ever, until at last I says to it, 'Let up on me—it ain't too late, yet—I'll paddle ashore at the first light and tell'" (124). Jim might deepen his suspicion on Huck, when seeing off him starting for shore in attempt to inform on Jim. Therefore Jim remarks in gratitude and probably in surprise to see Huck save him from slave-hunters: "de ole true Huck; de on'y white genleman dat ever kee' his promise to old Jim" (125).

Cox also points out in "a Hard Book to Take" that "The possibility that Huck will abandon or betray Jim is, after all, at the very center of the whole journey—and the two fugitives can never believe in each other sufficiently to annihilate it" (391).

Since the shocking reunion with Huck, Jim has been concerned with Huck's betrayal, at least until Jim realizes Huck is the "on'y white genleman" to keep his promise to the slave. Keeping eyes on the white boy's possible treachery, Jim is impelled to maneuver Huck with his supernatural story-telling, more effectively than in St. Petersburg.

Right after being reunited with Huck, Jim purposely tells of natural signs and bad luck. As Huck and Jim comfortably shelter in the cavern during the storm, thanks to Jim's timely prediction from the birds, Jim says boastfully: "Well, you wouldn't a ben here, 'f it hadn't a ben for Jim. You'd a ben down dah in de woods without any dinner, or gittn' mos' drowned, too, dat you would, honey. Chikens knows when it's gwyne to rain, en so do de birds, chile" (60). Thus Jim, interpreting signs, exhibits remarkable ability to predict near future.

Jim teaches Huck of how frightful the curse of the dead is, while they live together in Jackson's Island. In the apt setting of a gloomy storming night, Jim tells a dreadful ghost story from his youth, which

Twain removed from the novel when *Huckleberry Finn* was going to press. Jim says that he was ordered from his former master, a student doctor, to warm the corpse in the dissecting room of medical school and found the awful-looking dead bodies lying with their knees raised on the table.

These corpses to be dissected are the token of the whites' hidden impieties. The corpses remind one of ominous grave robbers Injun Joe and Muff Potter who digs out the newly planted corpse at midnight, and sell it to young Dr. Robinson. Dr. Robinson wants to employ the body for the study of anatomy. Indeed most of the cadavers at medical schools were obtained illegally by grave robbers, owing to the scarcity of them. Hence the numerous reports on body snatching circulated in 1870's and 1880's, according to Victor Doyno.⁴ So while narrating frightfully how a dead man before the fire snaps open his eye and moves his legs and toes, Jim deftly warns Huck that the dead man must be buried in peace, otherwise they would haunt around.

Jim's stunning ghost story is omitted, but his warning of the dead man's curse is persuasively presented when Jim and Huck find the murdered man in the floating house. Jim warns Huck not to talk about the dead man that they found in the floating house, because "a man that warn't buried was more likely to go a-ha'nting around than one that was planted and comfortable" (63). Thus threatening Huck, Jim prevents Huck from finding out that the dead man is his father. James M. Cox hints that Jim keeps silent about Pap's death, in fear that Huck would find it unnecessary to escape from his brutal father any more and break off his partnership with the fugitive slave. True or not, it is certain that Jim successfully seduces Huck into accepting his guidance in their voyage through his gifted story-telling about the

dead and its bad luck.

But often Huck shows his doubts about Jim's supernatural divinations. Huck instinctively perceives that to accept Jim's words is to accept Jim's leadership and to obey him. So Huck rebuts Jim's lesson of not talking about the dead man:

“Now you think it's bad luck; but what did you say when I fetched in the snake-skin that I found on the top of the ridge day before yesterday? You said it was worst bad luck in the world to touch a snake-skin with my hands. Well here's your bad luck! We've raked in all this truck and eight dollars besides. I wish we could have some bad luck like this every day, Jim.” (63)

Retorting Huck, Jim only warns that “Don't git too peart. It's a-comin'” (63). And right after Jim's caution, curiously enough Jim is bitten by a rattlesnake right on the heel. Huck blames himself for “to not remember that wherever you leave a dead snake its mate always comes there and curls around it” (64). Huck lays the dead rattlesnake, intending to spite him. Huck probably wants to show up his supremacy in his dangerous power balance with the runaway slave. Witnessing Jim in pain, Huck is impelled to reproach himself for not obeying Jim's admonishment over the snake-skin.

However it is dubious that snake-skin's curse or Huck's dead snake calls its mate snake to bite Jim.⁵ Jim must be acquainted with snakes crawling into blankets at home by accident, and therefore knows well how to cure snake bites, for he is an experienced slave who has survived in the harsh circumstances.⁶ Still overcome by his guilty conscience, Huck is led to believe in the awful curse that is imposed by Jim. At last

Huck says “I make up my mind I wouldn’t ever take ahold of a snake-skin again with my hands, now that I see what had come of it” (65). To Huck, Jim responds that “he reckoned I would believe him, next time” (65), and enforces Huck’s obedience to Jim’s guidance. Jim further scares Huck by saying that the awful bad luck of handling snake-skin continues. By doing so, Jim skillfully awes Huck not to resist against his omens or his order.

Thus Jim successfully establishes full leadership over Huck. Since the snake-skin curse, Huck greatly relies on Jim’s judgment to choose their course of journey. Huck says in Chapter 15:

We judged that three nights more would fetch us to Cairo, at the bottom of Illinois, where the Ohio river comes in, and that was what we was after. We would sell the raft and get on a steamboat and go way up the Ohio amongst the free States, and then be out of trouble.” (99)

Huck is determined to head for a free State after talking with Jim, because he believes that he is “out of trouble” there. However the free State has a significant meaning to Jim, not to Huck. Obviously Jim navigates the course of journey for the sake of his emancipation, and Huck follows him.

It is uncertain whether Jim does believe in supernatural power and beings. But at least there is no doubt that his practice of superstitious magic and prophecy or his pagan belief attest to his ambition to oppose the Southern Christian churches, which teach slaves to obey the white masters⁷.

Jim employs his superstition as an effective instrument to evade

the institution of slavery and win his freedom. Jim predicts possible dangers—bad luck in Jim's wording, and proves that he has remarkable ability in settling his course of journey by his own judgment. Thus Jim shows his strong determination that he will navigate his future by his own free will, free from white masters and even Huck.

3

Jim grows so self-confident that he is convinced of engineering his future as he wishes it to be, especially after he succeeds to become independent, however temporarily, by skillfully maneuvering Huck, Tom, Miss Watson and his fellow blacks. Jim's devotion to reading bad signs or possible dangers suggests that he has complete trust in his intelligence, by which he believes that he can even change his enslavement that he was placed into at birth. To sum up, Jim's superstitiousness is a tribute to his full reliance in his judgment and himself, that is to say the power of his free will. After all, Jim is knocked off his feet for his self-confidence in the fog episode of Chapter 15.

Right after Jim and Huck lay their course to the northern free States, white solid fog encloses them, and separates them as if to block their settled route. After their desperate chasing of each other unseen through the fog, Huck finds Jim asleep on the raft, fatigued. Huck plays a malicious prank on Jim; he convinces Jim that he was not lost in the fog, but only dreams of it. Then Jim begins to "interpret" his dream of mysterious fog, "because it is sent for warning." (104) Jim augurs from his dream:

. . . we are going to get into with quarrelsome people and all kinds of mean folks, but if we minded our business and didn't talk

back and aggravate them, we would pull through and get out of the fog and into the big clear river, which was the free States, wouldn't have no more trouble. (104)

Jim's dream-interpretation well manifests his assurance that he can manage to reach free States if he behaves cautiously, avoiding the dangerous whites whom he could possibly encounter on the route to Cairo. Jim's augury is right again, because Jim and Huck indeed come across the slave hunters in the next chapter. However Jim's dream-interpretation is exposed to be nothing but Jim's guessing and well-reasoned analysis on the circumstance, when Huck reveals his hoax.

Pressed by the unexpected exposure, Jim condemns Huck for "trash" (105). Jim's utterance shows that he used to have frequent contacts with poor whites, that could promote genuine friendships or hatred with them. Jim has the habit of drinking liquor more or less, as is apparent when he takes Pap's whisky to ease his pain of snake's biting. Jim's drinking attests that he has traded with poor whites for liquor. Eugene D. Genovese notes in *Roll, Jordan, Roll: the World that Slaves Made* that "a bustling trade developed between slaves and déclassé poor whites"; slaves sell their plunder from their masters to poor whites, who pay them in liquor, but "poor whites would encourage slaves to steal and then cheat them in trade. . . . it was probably the slaves who dubbed the poor whites "trash" (22). On the other hand, Eugene argues that the illicit trade between poor whites and blacks could promote particular friendship that had developed despite racial barriers. Thus Jim, long before meeting Huck, has harbored the ambivalent effusion of love and hatred, or trust and distrust for whites, whether poor and rich, including his owner Miss Watson.

Through his illegal association with the white boy, Jim begins to trust and care him, and is all the more offended by his unfaithful lie.

Moved by Jim's human indignation, Huck is willing to "go and humble myself to a nigger," because he feels sorry and resolves to play no more mean tricks on Jim (105). Jocelyn Chadwick-Joshua argued in *The Jim Dilemma*:

In many ways, this section is the turning point of the novel. Jim is no longer invisible, and his 'silence' is clearly under his control. This decisive encounter signifies the redefining of the slave/master, white/black relationship to one of the caretaker-guardian/charge and adult/child, consequently amplifying Jim's manhood. Of equal significance is Huck's realization of this shift in their relationship. (56)

Like Chadwick-Joshua, critics overly emphasize the epoch-making unity of the slave and the white in the literature, and tend to overlook the significance that Jim exposes his true self; he has long concealed his resentment and mistrust toward the whites, putting on the mask of the superstitious and gullible slave in order to outwit them.

The fog incident forces him to betray his conflicted attitude towards white folks, and shows that he has limits in controlling his emotion and his doom even with his gifted ability. Jim warned that the bad luck of snake-skin do not come to end, and thus prepares to deal with the hazards he would face. Even so, Jim fails to go up at Cairo owing to the unexpected fog. Moreover Jim is unmasked by the Huck's unexpected fib that shows Jim is only human, not a supernatural prophet. Jim is talented in forecasting the weather and is well-

prepared, but there exist unpredictable occurrences he can not master. Drifting deeper into the South against his free will, Jim comes to comprehend the absurdity and unreasonableness of the river voyage and life; he confronts the limitation of human free will.

Now let us turn, for a while, to *Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer Among Indians*, an unfinished novel, started soon after *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, because we can observe that Twain linked the superstition to human's free will again in the incomplete story. In *Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer Among the Indians* Jim appears only in the first three chapters of the story. Instead of Jim, Brace Johnson turns up to join Huck and Tom on the uncultivated desert. Brace is an experienced and independent man and has "the steadiest eye you ever see" to read tracks and clues to follow "the Injuns" who kidnap Jim and Flaxy (60). Brace becomes the only reliable guide for Huck and Tom to survive and reach the destined "the Injun" tribe in the wilderness.

It is noteworthy that Johnson grows superstitious; he relies on superstition, when navigating his journey in the atrocious wilds, avoiding possible dangers, as Jim does in the river voyage. Brace has "the Injun" religion that has two gods, a good one and a bad one, though he despises them. Brace teaches Huck and Tom that he particularly cares about the bad god, for "all the troubles come from the bad god, who was setting up nights to think up ways to bring them bad luck and bust up all their plans" (61). Brace's remark and attitude toward the bad god of pagan religion resembles that of Jim who argues to Huck that good-luck signs "ain't no use to a body," and only wants to "know of bad luck's a-comin' to keep it off" (55). Brace makes it a rule to mortify the flesh on Friday and Sunday, for purpose of propitiating the bad god. When erroneously violating his rule—eating

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antelope meat on Friday, Brace warns somberly:

“It's my mistake, boys, and all my fault, for my carelessness. We're in for some bad luck, and we can't get around it; so the best way is to keep a sharp look-out for it and beat it if we can—I mean make it come as light as we can, for of course we cant beat it altogether.” (62)

And every now and then Brace says: “well, it hasn't come yet, but it's coming” (63). Brace's statement reminds one of Jim's warning about the bad luck when Huck touches the snake-skin: “Don't git too peart. It's a-coming.”

Brace reckons the bad luck or jeopardy coming for them, because of his careless mistake. Brace's apologizing remark is based on his conviction that he can engineer the circumstance and his future as he desires to be, if he can carefully avoid the bad lucks and dangers in his course. As it were, Brace supplies the leadership role in their journey with Huck and Tom, as Jim grips the full command in the river trip with Huck. Like Jim, Brace has nothing to rely on but himself and his pagan belief, through which he manages setting his course steady in the Western waste. Then it is not coincidental that Jim and Brace are superstitious in their voyages. Their practice of the supernatural augury connotes Jim's and Brace's trust in the power of human will; only the individual steers his own routes of life.

The most striking similarity between Jim and Brace is that they both predict bad luck, but cannot avoid it. In *Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer Among the Indians*, Tom is lost and nearly dies in a ghostly white fog, although Brace, well-experienced traveler, cautiously leads

him and Huck, while trying to avoid possible disasters. Tom describes how he goes astray in the mysterious white world of fog: “if I did hear voices I misjudged the direction and went the other way, because you know you can’t really tell where a sound comes from, in a fog (69). Tom’s description of the fog resembles the fog scene in Chapter 15 of *Huckleberry Finn*:

I threw the paddle down. I heard the whoop again; it was behind me yet, but in a different place; it kept coming, and kept changing its place, and I kept answering, till by and by it was in front of me and again and I knowd the current had swung the canoe’s head down stream and I was all right, if that was Jim and not some other raftsmen hollering. I couldn’t tell nothing about voices in a fog, for nothing don’t look natural nor sound natural in a fog. (100)

In either fog of *Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer Among the Indians* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, humans lose their senses of sight and hearing, so that their wisdom and nationality become useless: they are powerless in spite of their endeavors. Thus fog teaches Jim and Brace in the respective stories that there is the erratic and unmanageable might that humans cannot resist against. In *Among the Indians*, after the frightful fog incident, it is revealed to the readers that Brace cannot avoid the worst disaster; Peggy is abducted alive and humiliated by “the Injuns,” as Jim in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* Jim drifts further into the hot-bed of the slavery against his will.

Now returning to Jim in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, it is apparent that he comes to realize the limits of his ability or will power

through the fog. Jim, in his great disappointment, blames the snake-skin curse for their passing by Cairo and his misjudgment. Jim tries to find fault with himself or humans' careless mistake, and still works out a new plan for recovering from his failure. However a few chapters later, Jim stops talking about the supernatural signs and predicting, while at the same time he stops engineering his voyage for freedom: he simply drifts down the river, obeying his travel mates, the king and the duke. Since his abandoning of predicting, Jim shows no will to improve his future, as if he settles to accept his fate and whites' control.

Jim may be superstitious, but not gullible. Jim shows remarkable ability in reading omens—predicting possible dangers from his well-grounded wisdom—and skillfully steers his safer course for liberation. Jim's superstitiousness testifies to his strong will and his desire to have his own choice of life. Jim tricks whites with his gullible mask, but if stripped of it, he is aggressive and independent, as is intolerable for slaves in the Old South. Jim solely wishes to run away from whites' reign. Yet his attempt is above and beyond his ability, however intelligent he is. In addition to authorities and its overshadowing influence, Jim confronts the overwhelming power of mighty nature and fate. Shortly after he despairs of his own volition, he quits employing superstition—a sole weapon for his resistance against his cursed fate.

Notes

- 1 Woodward and MacCann stress the Jim's portrayal and utterance comes from minstrel materials. Shelley Fisher Fishkin admits that "Woodward

and MacCann's argument has some merit. Twain's fondness for minstrel shows is well-documented, and it is fair to assume that some minstrel material worked its way into the novel." (82). On agreeing with Woodward and MacCann, Fishkin develops his new interpretation of Jim's superstitiousness.

- 2 Terell Dempsey attests: "Churches were instrumental in maintaining the institution. . . . Slaves were brought to church, where they were told that God wanted them to obey their masters" (10). Twain himself witnessed that the slavery was approved and sanctified from the pulpit, and Mark Twain's mother believed that "the wise and the good and the holy were unanimous in their conviction that slavery was right, righteous, sacred, the peculiar pet of the Deity and a condition which the slave himself ought to be daily and nightly thankful for" (*Autobiography* 39).
- 3 Twain show unique use of color terms in the story. Typical of uneducated boy, Huck employs simple color terms and, with them, expresses the tint of what he actually sees on his eyes, while narrating the story. Of those colors Huck confines his use to almost "white" and "black." The following is the frequency of the color terms portraying the hue, though the number does not include colors in idioms such as "turn blue" or "yellar fever": "black" is 33 times, "gray" 13, "blue" 13, "red" 9, "pale" 6, "green" 4, "yellow (yaller)" 3, "blown" 1, "silver" 1. The figures above suggest that Huck tends to handle predominantly "black," "white" and their related tones of "gray," "pale," and "silver." For more detail, see "Mark Twains' Color" of Yuko Yamamoto.
- 4 Victor Doyno points out in the 1996 edition of *Huckleberry Finn: The Comprehensive Edition* (Fawcett Columbine) that all the corpse lying on the table with their knees raised, and the raised knees suggest that the corpses were obtained illegally, for to avoid detection, grave robbers embalmed their corpses before shipping them not in coffins, but in small boxes or barrels which required the knees be bent.
- 5 Walter Blair and Victor Fisher note in the 2002 University California edition of *Huckleberry Finn* that Huck's remark of "wherever you leave a dead snake its mate always comes" is folk belief, and incorrect (400).

- 6 Blair and Fisher disclose that the 1867 edition of *Gunn's New Family Physician*, one of the books owned by the Grangerfords in Chapters 17 prescribes the treatment of drinking whisky when bitten by the rattlesnake. Michael Patrick Hearn, referring to the Blair and Fisher's discovery, comments "Actually, this treatment is dangerous for the victim" (107), but it seems best and reasonable way for Jim to ease his pain and wait for healing when he has no remedy in the woods.
- 7 Terrell Dempsey refers to the connection of religion and slavery in Hannibal in *Searching for Jim*:

Religion played a crucial role in Hannibal's slave culture. . . . Slave owners were comforted from the pulpit and told slavery was the will of God. Slaves were brought to church, where they were told that God wanted them to obey their masters. A popular New Testament lesson told how the Apostle Paul had instructed a runaway Christian servant to go home and be a good slave. Dissent was not tolerated. In the Hannibal of Sam Clemens's youth, people who opposed the slavery opposed the will of God. (10-11)

Jim, a pagan devotee, shows his irreverence for the church and the "will of God" to be "a good slave," or rather his pagan belief manifests his determination to oppose slavery.

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