

**Rejection of the Assumption of Human Rights In America**  
**In “*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*”**

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**Abstrak**

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mendekonstruksi sebuah novel karya Mark Twain yang berjudul *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Novel ini dipilih karena orang-orang Amerika berpikir bahwa mereka adalah orang-orang yang mengakui hak asasi manusia, sementara novel ini menggambarkan sikap buruk dan kejam orang-orang Amerika terhadap orang-orang negro. Melalui episode-episode di dalam *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, gambaran kemanusiaan orang-orang Amerika didekonstruksi.

Teori dekonstruksi dari Jacques Derrida digunakan sebagai pisau analisis. Dekonstruksi bukanlah suatu sistem pemikiran tetapi merupakan usaha taktis yang didesain untuk membuktikan ketidakstabilan bahasa.

Dari penelitian ini diperoleh gambaran perlakuan keji masyarakat Amerika terhadap masyarakat kulit hitam, yang diwakili oleh Jim. Asumsi pertama berupa asumsi bahwa masyarakat kulit hitam atau Negro merupakan barang untuk diperjual-belikan.

Masyarakat, bahkan mereka yang berasal dari golongan atas, -baik secara sosial maupun keagamaan, secara mudah membeli dan menjual orang kulit hitam demi mendapatkan uang. Kedua, mereka berpikir bahwa Negro bukanlah manusia. Asumsi ini dapat dilihat melalui bahasa yang mereka gunakan dan tindakan mereka menempatkan budak. Yang ketiga, mereka menjadikan kaum kulit hitam sebagai objek prasangka, keyakinan bahwa kaum kulit hitam adalah pelaku kriminal. Poin-poin di atas menjadi gambaran dekonstruksi tentang orang-orang Amerika dan keyakinan mereka sebagai bangsa yang menghargai hak asasi manusia.

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Kata kunci: dekonstruksi, hak asasi manusia, orang negro.

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**Introduction**

The terms post-modernism and post-structuralism often heard and give images of conditions ‘after’ as expressed in the words ‘post’ in those terms. Combinations of ‘post’ and

'modernism' and 'structuralism' sign occurrences happen after the arrival of modernism, refers to new conditions; and structuralism, refers to settled, well-organised, structured condition. Through the logic meaning of those words, we think about conditions of a new era react against stability of any fields of life. For Jean-Francois Lyotard, post-modernism condition is a condition when we do not believe anymore in 'metanarration' of history, so focus our attention on the development of 'new knowledge' which help us to destroy the power of the narrations. (Sim, 2002:65).

However, there is no standard term for the world post-modernism. It happens since post-modernism does not require agreement, unity, and wholeness. There are three outlines of post-modernism thought (Noris, 2003). The first is the thought which revise modernity thought. The thought tends to come back to pre-modern thought pattern, for example: New Age metaphysical. The second is the thought deals with literature and linguistics worlds by deconstructing the pictures of the world to anti pictures of the world. The thought aims to deconstruct any pictures of the world, like: self, God, aim, meaning, the truth of real world, and else. The third thought wants to revise modernism without being thought through but doing necessary refinement.

Another term often used is the term deconstruction which first introduced by Jacques Derrida. Preposition 'de-' before the word construction gives opposite meaning, so the word deconstruction means a condition when something constructed, built, composed, ordered, structured, organized, destroyed by other condition. Deconstruction is an act of a subject to scatter an object that consists of many substances. For Derrida, deconstruction is not a thought system but a tactical effort designed to prove language instability and loose foundation being groundwork to most of our theories. (Sim, 2002: 59). According to him, meaning of a word defined through its difference. Differance or difference is the key to meaning, presents the pictures of meaning, produces indifference.

When deconstruction applied to a literary work, we actually deconstruct many thoughts in life which is very complex. It happens since literary work grows in the frame of cultures, as states by Rubin 'Literature, as is well known, grows out of culture's (Rubin, 1979: 199). The function of literary work is as a 'mirror of life's. It is also stated by Harry Levin that, 'Literature is the expression of society, as speech is the expression of man's (Levin, 1973: 56). Jacques Ehrmann said, 'Literary texts, however, can also reveal their structural relationship contemporaneous with political, economic, social realities's (Ehrmann, 1970: x). Those statements show how literary works being reflections of facts that have ever been existed and developed in the society but those will be deconstructed. That is why,

deconstruction applied on literary works is a deconstruction of the pictures of the world, as anti pictures of the world.

The next discussion is the effort to deconstruct Mark Twain's novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The novel chosen for American think they are the people confess human rights, while the novel describes bad attitudes and cruel behaviour of America to negroes. Through *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, the pictures of American humanity deconstructed through its episodes.

## **Theoretical Review**

### *The outlines of Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

*Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* tells about a boy who escape from his father and foster parents, Widow Douglas and Miss Watson. Huck escapes from the brutality of his own father who is known as a town drunkard. He also escapes from Widow Douglas and Miss Watson who, according to him, give so many rules so that he can not live as free as he wants. It is told that the father is a drunkard who is impossible for him to educate his son, it is never told in the novel who is the mother of this boy, it makes Widow Douglas and Miss Watson take Huck for their son to civilize.

And what might have been a simple tale of adventure-a boy of thirteen or so runs away both from his violent alcoholic father, and from the 'civilizing' influences of his hometown, is joined by Jim the runaway slave, and travels with him on a thousand miles of river, until they arrive at the Phelps plantation in Arkansas-deepens into a richly comic, profoundly moving study of American humanity. (Twain, 1991: p. xx)

After many days his escapades to Jackson Island, Huck meets Jim. Jim was the negro slave of Widow Douglas and Miss Watson. Jim escape for he heard that he will be sold. Jim thought he met Huck's ghost when he first met Huck, for Huck left a sign as if he had been killed.

As Huck and Jim look for freedom, even in different meaning, both have escapades together. The aim of Huck's escapades is only to be able to live as free as he wants without any regulation from Widow Douglas and Miss Watson, his escapades is only a game of boy who is weary of life. Huck only wants to have adventures to make his imagination of idealized life come true. For Jim, escapades means run away from slavery institution. He does not want to be sold away to Orlean so that he will be far away from his wife and children. Jim wants to run through a free state in order to get a job, have some money, and buy back his wife and children so that they may life together as a family.

The same condition of Huck and Jim who want to run away from the society make them have adventures together. At the beginning of their adventures, they try to live in Jackson Island, supposed to be an inhabited island. It comes to the day when Huck finds the truth that people try to get awards if they are able to catch Jim for Jim accused to kill Huck. Knowing that, Huck comes back to Jackson Island and tells Jim that people are running after them.

Soon after, they sail through Mississippi River to save their life. Both agree to go to Cairo, Illinois. However, they face many troubles in their journey. When they almost reach their destination, a fog suddenly comes and makes them separate. Even when they meet again and decide to continue their journey on the water, many bad lucks come over them, especially for Jim.

Through many incidents experienced by both, we can see the treatment of society to the black, in this novel represented by Jim. Mark Twain, with his ability to write, makes this novel the pictures of reality in America at that times.

#### *About Mark Twain and His Expression*

Mark Twain was born Samuel Langhorne Clemens in Florida, Monroe County, Missouri, November 30, 1835. He never finished his elementary school but he got education from his observation of people and events common to a sleepy frontier town located on the western bank of the Mississippi river. Samuel grew up in Hannibal from 1839 to 1853. Hannibal was a frontier town of less than 500 inhabitants. The inhabitants, a large share of whom Samuel came to know well, ranged on the social scale from poor whites and slaves to the group Huck Finn called 'quality folks.'s (Robinsonresearch)

In Hannibal, Clemens was not fond of study but Ferguson adds, 'a boy had little left to learn about the darker side of human nature and 'the facts of life's (23).

There, Leary describes:

*'he grew through boyhood, saw men maimed or killed in waterfront brawls, Negroes chained like animals for transportation to richer slave markets to the south. He had nightmares and walked in his sleep, and always remembered these things, the rude ways and tremendous talk and the terror.'s Growing up thus, Ferguson adds, 'a boy had little left to learn about the darker side of human nature and 'the facts of life's (23).*

Those incidents later were written in his works. His best books are generally recognized as masterly re-creation of American life in the period of his boyhood and his young manhood. Mark Twain, as is said by a critic, 'though styled the 'King of Humor's was

often quite serious.’s He was one of the closest observers of human nature and institutions, places and things that ever lived. Even in his most humorous books we find that he has made accurate transcript of the things which impressed him.

‘In most of his work, Mark Twain used many traditional components as a satire attacking the society in which he was born and brought up.’s As a matter of fact, his society establishes a civilization upon repression, hypocrisy, terror, greed and murder. Such evil norms had been deeply rooted in the society, so that they became an accepted convention. Every member of the society also took them for granted. Apparently, the Southern aristocratic society was hypocritical’s

### *Twain Narration Technique in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Twain used narration style in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* with Huck as the narrator who used colloquial language. T.S. Eliot praises Mark Twain by saying, ‘one of those writers, of whom there are not a great many in any literature, who have discovered a new way of writing. Critics agree that languages used by Huck give freshness to reality expression, critics have praised Twain time and again for creating a narrative style in *Huck Finn* which uses vernacular or colloquial American English to revitalize the imaginative representation of reality.

The presence of Huck as the narrator gives description of child’s honesty to tell the readers all experiences in his adventures. Through *Finn*, Twain describes his character’s view and action. It seems as Kennedy ‘s statement:

In employing Huck as his narrator, Twain selects a special angle of vision: not his own, exactly, but that of a resourceful boy moving through the thick of events, with a mind at times shrewd, at other times innocent. Through Huck’s eyes, Twain makes a certain scenes, actions, and characters and – as only Huck’s angle of vision could have enabled Mark Twain so well to do – records them memorably. (Kennedy, 1976: 21)

Twain even separates himself from Huck by writing on the beginning line: ‘You don’t know about me, without you have read a book by the name of the *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, but that ain’t no matter. That book was made by Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly. It is of course composed by Mark Twain for children have higher value of truth than adults. No one, as he well knew, sets a higher value on truth than a boy. Truth is the whole of a boy’s conscious demand upon the world of adults (Trilling via Inge, 1984:

Wholly, Twain uses humorous style through Huck. It seems light but the humour laugh upon the society. Through this humour Twain criticizes his society.

'Laughter has often been a vehicle for social critique, and the comical note Twain and Chaplin strike can go very far in that direction, though satire is only one of its aspects, for Huck's verbal mimicry, conveyed through the rhythms of a colorful dialect, is delightful comedy for its own sake, too, like Chaplin's balletsteps and facial mobility's (Cambon, 1962: 196)

As stated by Pritchett, Huck's function as 'humorous norm's. Without him the violence of the book would be stark reporting of low life (Pritchett via Inge, 1948: 78).

Totally, the characters, languages, the forms and contents in the novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* become Twain's narration technique to reveal his society in his era.

'Narrative fiction is contained within language and takes most of own character from it; the form and content of the novel derive more closely from social phenomena than do those of other arts, except perhaps cinema; novels often seem bound up with particular moments in the history of society's (Zerrafa, 1973: 35).

## **Result and Discussion**

Deconstruction done by the writer here is by observing many episodes relate to any conducts to the blacks in America in the novel *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Blacks in the novel here represented by Jim. Any conducts to Jim represent any conducts to the blacks in America in that era. American society describes at that times represents any non blacks interacted with Jim. Huck, includes the white interact with Jim, eventhough there are many differences with the other whites.

### *Huck's Conduct to Jim*

The first conduct studied here is Huck's conduct to Jim. Huck was under the care-son of Miss Watson and Widow Douglas while Jim was their slave. Automatically, Huck was the master to Jim while Jim was Huck's servant. Huck's conducts to Jim before adventures are never told but there are relation mobility between them before and after adventures which result on how these characters interact to each other.

The first mobility happens between Huck and Jim before and along the adventures is the relation change from master-slave to friend-and-friend. After discovering Jim on the inhibited Jackson Island, Huck feels to have a companion, - not a slave. As he treat Jim as a companion, when he knows people try to catch after Jim to get a reward, he lets Jim know by saying, 'Git up and hump yourself, Jim! There ain's t a minute to lose. They's re after us!'s

(Twain, 1958: 54). Hucks saying strengthen their existence as a solid teat that wants to be together eventhough one to catch by people is only Jim, without Huck. However, with his native thought, Huck likes to play upon Jim that results bad for Jim. For an example, when Huck put a dead snake on Jim's blanket while Jim was sleeping. Huck wishes Jim will think the snake an alive one and get surprised of it. Huck does not realize that an alive snake really comes and bit Jim's leg. Or Huck's joke when a fog came and told Jim the fog was only Jim's dream.

Huck's jokes, however, makes him learn how he should behave to Jim, and raises a new relation mobility. Huck plays upon Jim by saying that the fog is only Jim's dream results on Jim's reaction that is really out of Huck's prediction. Huck learns that Jim also has a feeling that makes him irritate by Huck's deed, by then Huck learns to humble himself to the nigger. How Jim misses his family also makes Huck learn something new. Huck's conscience rising up as Jim often tells him about how he's d be glad to be together with his family but then they are to be separate because of the slavery. Huck learns how a nigger pay attention to his family, -something he does not get from his father, a white drunkard. From those happening Huck understands that Jim is a human being who has a fatherly feeling rather than a property as his society thinks. From Jim's story, Huck knows Jim is also a good husband for his wife as well as good father to his children. Jim also tries explicitly to be a good father for Huck by calling Huck 'honey's and chile's. One day, when Jim found Pap dead, he prevents Huck from knowing it, 'Come in, Huck, but doan's look at his face" it's too gashly (44), shows that Jim always cares of Huck's feeling. Lynn also describes Huck and Jim's father-and-son relationship as this: "He is identified even more unmistakably as Huck's father by the love that he gives him. As Huck is searching for a father, so Jim is attempting to rejoin his family, and he lavishes on the love-starved boy all of his parental affection's (p.215).

Further, these two characters always try to create a solid relationship. Whenever Huck knows the society try to conduct badly to Jim, he always try to care for Jim. They face happiness and sadness together in their journey. In the end of adventures, Huck learns that a Negro is not like the assumption he learns so far from his society.

From any relation mobility between Huck and Jim we see Huck's raising conduct to Jim, from a view on Negro as a slave, an object, a thing to a view more humanize the Negro. From a conduct of a friend to an ideal partner, even as a father, a keeper when needed.

In deconstruction assumption, 'nothing can both be and not be's, an existence always carries out the presence of something absent. The episodes in the novel show how Huck conducts, as a representative of whites, develops better, more humanise Jim, the

representative of blacks, as an assumption that there was bad conduct of Huck to Jim and to other Negroes in the past. Through deconstruction view appeared that Huck actually gave inhuman conducts to the blacks.

### *Society's conduct to Jim*

Before the adventures, Jim was Miss Watson and Widow Douglas's servant. So, Miss Watson and Widow Douglas's conduct represent society's conduct. Both want to civilize Huck but they are not civilized enough since they supposed Jim a thing. They are described as as pious women but they intend to sell Jim eight hundred dollars or one hundred sixty pounds and separate Jim from his family. The act of selling slave was not only planned by Miss Watson but done successfully by Duke and The King.

The Duke and The King are two characters in the novel represent persons who have power. They sell Jim to the Phelps for forty dollars, written in the novel: 'At other time, Jim is successfully sold by the King and The Duke to the Phelps when both lack of money. Huck tells this 'and make him a slave again all his life, and amongst strangers, for forty dirty dollars's (Twain, 1958: 178). The Phelps was described as pious family but they treat Jim inhumanly. It is told how Jim was kept in a locked up-faced-window hut, they keep Jim locked in the little hut down by the ash hopper, with its lone window boarded up. Leo Mark states, 'the Phelps represent the disparity between what people do when they behave as individuals and what they do when forced into roles imposed upon them by society.'s As individuals, they are pious but as a members of society they act as the common society, assume a Negro a material object.

'Take, for example, Aunt Sally and Uncle Silas Phelps, who consider themselves Christians, who are by impulse generous and humane, but who happen also to be staunch upholders of certain degrading and inhuman social institutions. When they are confronted with an escaped slave, the imperatives of social morality outweigh all pious profession's (Twain, 1958: 124)

Through language they use, too, we can see how they consider a negro. It is what Huck heard when the first time he met Aunt Sally:

'We blowed out a cylinder-head.'s

'Good gracious! Anybody hurt?'s

'No's m. Killed a nigger.'s

'Well, it's lucky; because sometimes people do get hurt's

(Twain, 1958: 185)

When Aunt Sally asked whether somebody killed, Huck says a Negro killed, meant that Huck assumed a Negro a man. However, Aunt Sally response was 'Well, it's lucky; because sometimes people do get hurt's, meant that the killed Negro was not people.

Another treatment of the society to Jim as a black is make him the object of prejudice. When people think Huck killed, they believe Jim was the doer, besides their prejudice to Pap. However, from the reward offered, we can see that they think Jim is more dangerous than Pap who was known as a bad behaved drunkard. Those who succeed in catching Jim would get three hundred dollars while they who could catch Pap would get two hundred dollars. From the difference of the reward, we guess people would try to catch one with the bigger reward. 'The Nigger run off the very night Huck Finn was killed. So there's a reward out for him – three hundred dollars. And there's a reward out for old Finn too-two hundred dollars. (Twain, 1958: 49). The hunting for Jim can be seen through this dialogue:

'Has everybody quit thinking the nigger done it?'s

'Oh, no, not everybody. A good many thinks he done it. But they's ll get the nigger prety soon, now, and maybe they can scare it out of him.'s

'Why, are they after him yet?'s

'Well, you's re innocent, ain's t you! Does three hundred dollars lay round every day for people to pick up? Some folks thinks the nigger ain's t far from here. I's m one of them- but I hain's t talked it around's (Twain, 1958 : 49-50)

We still can see people bad conduct to Jim in the end of the story. This part represented by Tom Sawyer plays a trick on Jim. The conduct, however, was opposed by Huck who learnt much from Jim through their journey, by refusing to help Tom Sawyer to tie Jim for a fun. Lynn describes as, 's . . the most telling indication of Huck's spiritual difference from the rest of the community, as well as a premonition of the stirring drama of liberation that lies ahead, is his refusal to help Tom Sawyer tie up Nigger Jim for fun (Lynn, 1959: 209). It is known later in the end of the story that Jim had been being freed by Miss Watson before she died.

Miss Watson and Widow's Douglas conduct to Jim is the picture of the common conduct of American society in general. They are the picture of people take the advantage of the black for their own sake. Human right was only a dream for Jim, the black, since the whites think him a property for them. Even the religious person like the Phelps also kept Jim in a hut as they think Jim a dangerous wild creature. They also tied Jim's leg with iron chain

as a crime in a dark dirty narrow hut. Their religiosity was only visible when Uncle Phelps invite Jim to pray along with them. The Duke and The King's inhuman conduct represent the conduct of people who have power to the blacks. Once they make Jim a model to play, like a puppet played by the puppeteers, on other occasion they tried to sell Jim for money.

## **Conclusion**

After observing American society's conduct to the blacks, represented by Jim, we can see many inhuman conducts. The first assumption is the assumption that the blacks or Negro is only a thing to buy and sell. Society, even the ones with high position,- on religiosity or social position, buy and sell the blacks easily for money. The second, people think a Negro not a person. The assumption can be seen through the languages they use and how they place their slave. The third, they make the blacks the objects of prejudice, believe that the blacks the crimes. Those points above are deconstruction pictures of American belief that they are the nation that regard human rights.

Through the novel, the readers get an understanding of American pictures, because *Huckleberry Finn* is one of those books which is a key book for understanding the United States . . . (Auden via Inge, 1984: 131). Many episodes in the novel describes the awful moral of American, 'the novel remains in American culture one of the works most challenging to racial bigotry, social and political hypocrisy, and moral compromise's (Inge, 1984: vii).

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