

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria  
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research  
University of Tlemcen



Faculty of Letters and Languages  
Department of English  
Section of English

**The Power of Omens, Signs and Superstitions: A Case Study of the Characters Huck and Jim in Mark Twain's Novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.**

Dissertation submitted to the Department of English as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for Master's degree in Literature and Civilisation.

**Presented by**

Amina CHAFAA BELAID

**Supervised by**

Dr Souad BAGHLI BERBAR

**Board of Examiners**

<b>Prof. Wassila HAMZA REGUIG</b>	<b>Prof</b>	<b>President</b>
<b>Dr Souad BAGHLI BERBAR</b>	<b>MCB</b>	<b>Supervisor</b>
<b>Prof. Mohammed KHELADI</b>	<b>Prof</b>	<b>Examiner</b>

**2023 - 2024**

## **Dedication**

*I dedicate this work to*

*my beloved parents,*

*vivacious siblings*

*and precious classmates*

*and finally, I want to thank my dearest self*

## **Acknowledgments**

*Many thanks to my beloved supervisor, Dr Souad BAGHLI BERBAR for her patience and invaluable guidance and support.*

*Special appreciation to the jury members, Prof. Wassila HAMZA REGUIG MOURO and Prof. Mohammed KHELADI, for their devoted time, effort and constructive feedback in evaluating my work.*

*I am also eternally grateful to all my teachers who enriched my academic growth.*

*Thank you all.*

## Contents

<b>DEDICATION .....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>GENERAL INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE: CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE OF SUPERSTITIONS IN 19 TH CENTURY AMERICA .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1.1. INTRODUCTION .....	5
1.2. HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND .....	5
1.2.1. <i>Society and Slavery in the Nineteenth century</i> .....	8
1.2.1.1. The Louisiana Purchase, the Annexation of Texas and the Mexican-American War .....	9
1.2.1.2. Life of White Man and Slave.....	11
1.2.2. <i>The Role of Religion and Superstition</i> .....	15
1.3. OMENS, SIGNS AND SUPERSTITIONS IN AMERICAN SOCIETY .....	18
1.3.1. <i>Defining Omens, Signs and Superstitions</i> .....	19
1.3.2. <i>Psychological Aspects of Belief in Superstitions</i> .....	22
1.3.3. <i>American and African Signs, Omens and Superstitions</i> .....	23
1.4. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SUPERSTITION, OMENS AND SIGNS IN THE LITERARY WORKS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY .....	25
1.4.1. <i>Superstitions, Omens and Signs as Literary Devices</i> .....	26
1.4.2. <i>The American Authors' Incorporation of Omens in their works</i> .....	28
1.4.2.1. Washington Irving.....	29
1.4.2.2. Ambrose Bierce.....	31
1.5. CONCLUSION .....	32
<b>CHAPTER TWO: IMPACT OF SIGNS AND OMENS ON HUCK AND JIM.....</b>	<b>33</b>
2.1. INTRODUCTION .....	34
2.2. CHARACTER ANALYSIS OF HUCK AND JIM.....	34
2.2.1 <i>Early Life and Background of Jim and Huck</i> .....	34
2.2.2. <i>Personal Characteristics of Huck and Jim</i> .....	36
2.2.3. <i>Belief in Superstitions</i> .....	38
2.2.3.1. Huck's Belief in Superstitions .....	38
2.2.3.2 Jim's Belief in Superstitions .....	40

2.2.4 <i>Reactions to Omens, Signs and Superstitions</i> .....	42
2.2.4.1. Huck’s Reaction.....	43
2.2.4.2. Jim’s Reaction.....	44
2.3. THE IMPACT OF OMENS, SIGNS AND SUPERSTITIONS ON HUCK AND JIM.....	46
2.3.1. <i>The Impact of Omens on Huck</i> .....	46
2.3.1.1. Huck’s Initial Skepticism towards Superstitions.....	46
2.3.1.2. The Evolution of Huck’s Attitude towards Superstitions.....	47
2.3.2.3. The Influence of Omens on Huck’s Character Development.....	48
2.3.2. <i>The Impact of Omens on Jim</i> .....	49
2.3.2.1. Omens and Signs as Jim’s Assets.....	50
2.3.2.2. Omens, Signs and Superstitions as Source of Guidance for Jim..	51
2.3.2.3. The Influence of Omens and Signs on Jim’s Relationship with Huck.....	51
2.3. CONCLUSION.....	52
<b>GENERAL CONCLUSION.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY.....</b>	<b>59</b>

## Abstract

This dissertation examines the significance of the elements of signs, omens and superstitions in Mark Twain's novel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, from a literary perspective by looking into the role of various omens presented in the novel and their effect on the main characters. Therefore, the sociocultural approach is used in order to enrich the interpretation of omens and their significance within the narrative. Thus, the work is divided into two chapters. The first chapter tackles the historical and cultural background of nineteenth-century America and focuses on society and slavery and the role of religion and superstition in forming and shaping the American character, and defining omens, signs and superstitions as the main folklore beliefs and the psychology behind believing in them. The second chapter takes the novel of Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, as the main source to study omens, signs and superstitions and their impact on the major characters. Therefore, this dissertation came up to the conclusion that omens and signs had impact on Huck that is appeared in his victory in fighting his deformed conscience whereas, for Jim, omens were the source of fame, reputation and guidance to his freedom. They also affected and shaped his relation with Huck and made them true friends.

# **General Introduction**

## General Introduction

---

The nineteenth-century events shifted the American nation and shaped its society. During this era, the country has witnessed economic, political and social change such as the Industrial Revolution that transferred its economy from an agricultural to an industrial one. Moreover, the American society was divided into three divisions including the economic elite, the Middle class and the working class. Those classes shared some values such as hard working and discipline. Yet, they were distinct from each other in their life styles, cultures and their opposed views on the issue of slavery. Another major change was the rise of democracy and the expansion to the West that led to the Louisiana Purchase, the Annexation of Texas and the Mexican-American War, that caused tensions between the Northerners who were against slavery and the Southerners whose economy depend on cotton and slaves.

Furthermore, religious and superstitious beliefs have played a significant role in the daily life of Americans and African-Americans. Indeed, Christianity formed the Americans' morals whereas Native Americans' religion is rooted in spiritual beliefs and practices like myths and legends that developed through time with the contact with Europeans. Moreover, African-Americans' traditions rooted in West-African and Muslim religions played an important role in gaining their freedom and civil rights. Thus, the American beliefs and traditions were influenced by omens, signs and superstitions.

The term superstition has always been associated with false religion such as fanaticism and idolatry which refer to bad or incorrect beliefs and practices of religion. Superstition beliefs are found at all levels of society and rooted in the traditions, and seek to give rational explanations to human fear of the unknown, uncertainty or doubt about certain phenomena which are the psychological reasons behind the belief in superstition. It is therefore necessary to examine the folklore of the two races, black and white; the Africans who came as slaves and the Europeans who settled in the new world, and the embracement of superstition in the works of literature during the 19th century.

The subject of omens, signs and superstitions in Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* tackled in this dissertation is chosen for several reasons. First, academic researchers have always focused on the issue of racism and the use of the term Negro in the novel which proves the racist attitude of the author towards African slaves and caused wide neglect of examining the theme of signs, omens and superstitions and its significance in the

## General Introduction

---

novel. Second, there are few researches and articles that analyse those elements and even if researchers conducted an analysis, there is still a knowledge gap which is ignoring the explanation of those elements by using folklore studies. Third, this subject has not been studied by focusing on both Huck's and Jim's characters in the same research. Thus, this research work aims at answering the three following questions:

- What are the 19<sup>th</sup> century major historical events behind Americans' embracement of superstitions?
- What is the significance of Omens, Signs and Superstitions on the American character and American works during the nineteenth century?
- How do omens, signs and superstitions affect Huck's and Jim's actions, reactions and perception of each other?

In order to answer the above questions, the novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is examined by applying an analytical descriptive method. This method helps selecting the passages that are related to the theme of omens, signs and superstitions and as evidence to investigate its impact on the major characters (Huck and Jim). Yet, firstly, it is important to delve deep into the culture and history of America by focusing on the role of religion and superstition in American society and examining the main races and their beliefs during the nineteenth-century. This analysis was done by using sociocultural approach. This latter is also implanted in this research as the main technique to define, interpret and explain this theme , its significance within the narrative and its impact on the personality of Huck Finn and Jim by exploring their motivations, actions and reactions towards omens, signs and superstitions.

Thus, the work is divided into two chapters. In the first chapter, it is necessary to start with looking into folklore in American society by giving the historical and cultural background of nineteenth-century America and focusing on society and slavery and the role of religion and superstition in forming and shaping the American character. Then, it will shift the focus on defining omens, signs and superstitions as the main folklore beliefs and the psychology behind believing in them with their significance in literature. The second chapter will take the novel of Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, as the main source to study omens, signs and superstitions and their impact on the major characters Huck and Jim by looking into their backgrounds, personalities, and the moral development that they faced during their journey, as well as the effect of omens, signs and superstitions on their relationship to each other.

# **Chapter One: Context and Significance of Superstitions in 19 th Century America**

### **1.1. Introduction**

The Nineteenth-century America experienced major growth and transformation. The country shifted from agriculture to industry, with a notable economic transition thanks to the Industrial Revolution. This latter led to the development of transportation, particularly the expansion of railroads that played a crucial role in facilitating economic growth, trade, and mobility. However, the real change was in the character of American individual that has been shaped during this era, where many significant economic, political and social changes have occurred. It was regarded as a turning point in the history of the New America that shifted the American states from agrarian to industrial; from a country that saw slavery as natural phenomenon to its abolition after a bloody Civil War. Also, this era marked a search for belief and conflicting interpretations of religious teachings in relation to social justice and the emergence of new philosophy, that is called Transcendentalism, and new practices that shaped the American nation.

### **1.2. Historical and Cultural Background**

The American population increased from 1.5 million in 1760 to 31.5 million by 1860, as a result of the territorial acquisitions of many territories such as Louisiana in 1803, Florida and Oregon (Gray 100). Also, there was an influx of immigrants from European countries as a consequence to the development of ocean transportation (Gray 100). Furthermore, railroads transformed trade, increased the production of cash crops, facilitated labor movement, and spurred the growth of various industries (Gray 100).

The Industrial Revolution led to the manufacturing of the first locomotive in 1830 that reached the staggering speed of twelve miles an hour and lost a race with a horse (Gray 101). Later in 1840, “there were roughly as many miles of railroad track as there were miles of canals: 3,328, all built in the previous twenty-five years and in 1860, there were more than 30,000 miles of track” (Gray 101). “This era was called ‘the age of the railroad’; what Walt Whitman called ‘type of the modern’, where new industries developed such as lumbering, mining and the production of machine tools” (Gray 101). Moreover, the invention of cotton gin increased the trade of slaves who lived harsh working conditions (Gray 101).

## Chapter One

---

This evolution divided society into three “new divisions” of classes which are the economic elite, the Middle class and the working class. Each one had its own culture and different views on the issue of slavery (Corbett, et al. 263). First, the economic elite are groups of merchants and manufacturers who came from the working class and encouraged the values of “hard work and discipline” which are regarded as the core of their culture (Corbett, et al. 265). Those values made them different from southern planter elites who “praised leisure” and Northern elites who inherited their wealth (Corbett, et al. 265). For instance, Peter Cooper, a new Northern manufacturer and the one who invented the steam locomotive in 1827 became later the wealthiest man in New York city (Corbett, et al. 265-66). They were traders of tea, sugar, pepper and mostly slaves (Corbett, et al. 264). Therefore, they were strong supporters of slavery (Corbett, et al. 265). As a result of their expended economic activities, they became the owners of banks, insurances and shipping. They also created “chambers of commerce” and “social clubs” such as The Philadelphia Club in 1834 in order to advance and develop their businesses (Corbett, et al. 265).

Second, the Middle class who were merchants of small factories and stores. They valued “cleanliness, discipline, morality, hard work, education and good manners” (Corbett, et al. 266). Moreover, their children attended school and they spent their free time in ‘reading’, ‘playing piano’ or ‘playing with toys’ (Corbett, et al. 266). Yet, this class tried to limit the number of children in the early nineteenth century because they saw that offspring required more money and attention. The women, on the other side, did not work. Their role was only to take care of their children and carry the needs of their husbands. This class was against slavery since it promoted leisure that contradicts their values (Corbett, et al. 266).

The third and last division is the working class in which the majority were immigrants from European countries such as Ireland and Germany. Yet, this class was the only one that the Industrial Revolution did not benefit. They suffered from harsh working conditions such as the long hours of works and low wages. Those conditions had negative effect on their children. The working-class children did not usually finish their years at school. However, their wives were not allowed to work outside the house but instead they did “piecework” at home to support their husbands (Corbett, et al. 267). They spent their free time in attending circuses, pubs where they tried to forget their hard times. Thus, the alcohol consumption was high among this class unlike the middle class who attempted to abolish alcohol (Corbett, et al. 267). They also saw the

## Chapter One

---

abolition of slavery as threat since free blacks would take their own positions in factories (Corbett, et al. 268).

Moreover, the significant political change in the early nineteenth-century America was the rise of democracy. In 1828, in the White House, crowds of folks celebrated the election of Andrew Jackson as the President of the U.S who won over four candidates including John Quincy Adams, John C. Calhoun, Henry Clay and William H. Grawford with 152,901 votes in the eighteen states. He was regarded as the “fighter and defender of American expansion” (Corbett, et al. 273). In fact, once in office, he began to exile the native inhabitants “beyond the boundaries of American civilization through the 1830 Indian Removal Act and “the displacement of the Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, Seminole, and Cherokee tribes of the Southeast” (Corbett, et al. 287). During the Age of Jackson, the rule of the majority replaced the “old forms of deference” that had its roots on elite ideas and principles, especially powerful financial institutions such as the Second Bank of The United States (Corbett, et al. 273-83).

Moreover, all white male adults who paid taxes or served a militia gained the right to vote in 1820s whether they owned a property or not (Corbett, et al. 275-76). Yet, women, free blacks and Indians were still marginalised by the American political system (Corbett, et al. 276). John Quincy Adams was the next president. who promoted the “American system of high tariffs, a national bank and federally sponsored improvements of canals” (Corbett, et al. 278). This latter imposed high taxes on imported goods that reached the half of their value (Corbett, et al. 279). Later, it led to split between those who support either the states’ rights or the federal government. The first category viewed that the federal government favored the North region over the South since the North had “an expanding manufacturing base” unlike the South who consumed goods more than the North and they depended largely on the trade of cotton (Corbett et al. 279-83).

By the early 1830s, the battle over the tariff took on new urgency as the price of cotton continued to fall. In 1818, cotton had been thirty-one cents per pound. By 1831, it had sunk to eight cents per pound. While production of cotton had soared during this time and this increase contributed to the decline in prices, many southerners blamed their economic problems squarely on the tariff for raising the prices they had to pay for imported goods while their own income shrank. Resentment of the tariff was linked directly to the issue of slavery, because the tariff demonstrated the use of federal power. Some southerners feared the federal government would next take additional action against the South, including the abolition of slavery (Corbett et al. 284).

## Chapter One

---

Thus, the rise of democracy resulted in negative consequences on the South. In the French Alexis de Tocqueville's work entitled *Democracy in America*, (1835-1840), he alerted people from the risks of democracy and described it as a "new type of tyranny" and an "unstoppable force" (qtd in Corbett et al. 294). This power has been given to the majority through public opinion and social norms and taken from the minority. Also, it tore the North apart from the South leading later to the brutal civil war.

Furthermore, the Transcendentalist movement flourished and the American Protestant Christians' beliefs changed during the early 19th century. This period was known as the Second Great Awakening where social reform movements appealed, especially the abolition of slavery and temperance (Green 4;25-10;44). The Awakening stressed individual choice in Salvation and a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and it was highly affected by the Market Revolution. While many preachers criticized individualism since it was compared to selfishness that is rooted in free market competition, others would travel the country to grow up their businesses. They valued sobriety, industry and self-discipline that were considered as the core principles of both the market economy and the impulse for reform. Moreover, the nature of the major 19th century reform movements were Protestant denominations like Methodists and Baptists. They believed in perfectionism, the idea that individuals and society were capable of unlimited improvement. Reformers had also different view of freedom; they saw that it is implemented in self-discipline and self-control. For instance, instead of being free to drink alcohol, people would be free from the temptation to drink it. Thus, they tried to limit and ban the consumption of alcohol (Green 3;20-7;00)

The biggest reform movement in the first half of 19th century was Abolitionism that wanted to end slavery by making slaves move to Liberia since America became wealthy enough to establish it as an independent homeland for slaves (Green 8;13-42).

### **1.2.1. Society and Slavery in the Nineteenth century**

Most scholars agreed on the fact that slavery was the cause of the brutal civil war that occurred in 1861. During the early nineteenth century, slavery was a "profitable enterprise" since the production of cotton increased as a result of the Industrial Revolution. Cotton and slaves were also the centre of the Southern economic, political and cultural landscape during the antebellum era, the years before the civil war, as South Carolina politician, James Hammond argued that "the North would never threaten the South because 'cotton is king'" (qtd in Corbett et al 333).

## Chapter One

---

The production of cotton after 1820 represented the “majority of all U.S exports” (Baptist 113). After 1800, U.S expansion to the West led to the Louisiana Purchase, the Annexation of Texas and the Mexican-American War, and caused debates over the “fate of slavery” in those regions and increased the tensions between the Northerners and Southerners (Corbett et al 301).

### **1.2.1.1. The Louisiana Purchase, the Annexation of Texas and the Mexican-American War**

In April 1803, President Thomas Jefferson sent explorers to the Louisiana territory that was under the French control in order to expand the U.S land and make it easy for the merchants to access the ports of China. Thus, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were tasked to find a river route across the North American Continent. This “Northwest Passage” would be a path that links St. Louis to the Pacific Ocean. They tried to draw a map of the territory by establishing “friendly relationships” with the native tribes through “introducing them to American trade goods and encouraging warring groups to make peace”. Lewis and Clark “took notes on geography, plant life, animals and natural resources of the region”, and they also studied the Indian tribes’ practices (Corbett, et al 302-5)

After 1819, John Quincy Adams and Luis de Onís signed a Treaty Called the Adams-Onís Treaty between U.S and Spain that gave Florida to United States and establish a border line between them through the Sabine River. Spanish Florida was seen as threat to America not because of the Spanish troops but rather from native tribes such as the Creek and Seminole. Those tribes welcomed the runaway slaves; they married and accept them as part of the tribe. As a reaction, General Andrew Jackson sent troops in March 1818 and defeated them. He also took control of “several Florida settlements”. During the invasion, the Spanish government demanded them to withdraw under the condition of allowing the U.S to purchase the colony under the Adams-Onís Treaty (Corbett et al 306-7).

Another Western expansion was in 1819, when Missouri, that was part of the Louisiana Purchase, wanted to be an independent state. After a year, enormous numbers of settlers, including slaveholders with ten thousand slaves, moved to Missouri which created a debate over the issue of slavery in this new state. The Northerners feared that admitting Missouri as slave state will grant them more votes in the House of Representatives and the Electoral College so they supported the Tallmadge Amendment that considers slavery as immoral and opposed to the nation’s founding principles of equality and liberty. This latter was created by James

## Chapter One

---

Tallmadge, a “New York representative” and “opponent of slavery” who proposed that after Missouri will become a free state, there will be no more slaves allowed to move to this state and the enslaved children who were born after the admission of Missouri as free state will be free at the age of twenty-five. Whereas, Southerners were against it, and they considered slaves as property and “a positive good for U.S” (Corbett et al 308-309). Moreover, the Missouri compromise of 1820 came to end this debate, by declaring Missouri as slave state and Maine as free state and drawing a line that separated free states from slave states except for Missouri (Corbett et al 308-309).

Moreover, the strong desire for expansion drove the U.S towards war with Mexico. This desire was fuelled by the concept of “Manifest Destiny” that explained the duty and the right of Americans to expand from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean, and the belief in the weakness of Mexicans. The dispute over the border between Mexico and the new independent Republic of Texas, where U.S claimed that the Rio Grande River is the border whereas Mexico argued that it was the Nueces River. Finally, in 1847 the U.S achieved its main objectives of the war which are controlling Mexico, New Mexico and California, and in February 1848, The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo marked the victory of U.S expansion. This treaty granted U.S citizenship to Mexicans in the new states. It also “assumed \$ 3.35 million of Mexican debts owed to U.S citizens and paid \$ 15 million” for the loss of Mexico’s land with the promise of protection from Indian tribes (Corbett et al 316-20).

Furthermore, the discovery of gold in California in January 1848 by James Marshall caused an influx of immigrants from different areas such as Easterners like the Chinese, settlers in Oregon and Utah, Peruvians and Chileans (Corbett, et al. 320). As a result, California imposed taxes on foreign miners in 1850 until 1858 when it stopped further immigration from China. During this period, known as “The Gold Rush”, immigrants opened “stores, saloons, libraries...” (Corbett, et al. 322). Also, “singers, musicians and acting companies arrived to entertain the gold seekers” (Corbett, et al. 322).

As the population in California reached “nearly 300.000” (Corbett, et al. 321). The area would be recognised as a new state but the issue of slavery was raised again with tensions between North and South (Corbett, et al. 322). The Southerners viewed the Northern abolitionists as a menace. For instance, the “The Free-Soil Party” with its slogan “Free Soil, Free Speech, Free Labor, and Free Men” (Corbett, et al. 324). This new political party was

## Chapter One

---

formed of anti-slavery Whigs and former members of Liberty Party. Its main goal was to end further flow of slavery. This issue was solved temporarily by the compromise of 1850 that admitted California as a free state. It also banned slave trade in the capital. Still, it later raised more tensions between North and South (Corbett et al 325-26).

### 1.2.1.2. Life of White Man and Slave

During the antebellum era (1800-1860), wealthy southern planters represented the “elite class” who are divided into two groups which are the aristocrats of the upper south and the elite of the Deep south (Corbett et al 346). Both had grown their wealth by producing cotton that depended on slaves. As an example, Nathaniel Heyward, a southern wealthy man from South Carolina. He was a rice planter, who in 1850 had “more than eighteen hundred slaves” and a wealth of more than \$2 million (more than \$80 million in 2024 dollars) (Corbett et al 346). Also, there were groups under this class who are “the yeoman farmers”, “small landowners” and the poor who worked as drivers and traders. The yeoman farmers were described by D.R. Hundley, a lawyer, banker and planter from Alabama in his 1860 book, *Social Relations in Our Southern States*, as

Certainly the Southern Yeomen are nearly always poor, at least so far as this world’s goods are to be taken into account. As a general thing they own no slaves; and even in case they do, the wealthiest of them rarely possess more than from ten to fifteen ... The Southern Yeoman much resembles in his speech, religious opinions, household arrangements, indoor sports, and family traditions, the middle-class farmers of the Northern States. He is fully as intelligent as the latter, and is on the whole much better versed in the lore of politics and the provisions of our Federal and State Constitutions (qtd.in Corbett et al. 348).

Therefore, the only way for becoming rich was the possession of land and slaves; this was every man’s dream. Yet, all the whites shared the belief of “white supremacy” and “bound by racism” (Corbett et al. 348). Another elite member was named Edward Lloyd V. He was a cotton planter and defender of slavery. He owned hundreds of slaves; one of them was Frederick Douglass. This slave escaped slavery in 1838 and “became abolitionist leader, writer, statesman, and orator in the North” Corbett et al. 347).

The White Southerners are also known for their “complex code of honor”. This latter dictated their beliefs and behavior which gave importance to the reputation and appearances and rejection of insults that could lead to “dueling” (Corbett et al. 346-349). The antebellum South was also a patriarchal society where men were for wars and women for chores. They linked the virtue with woman. For instance, Thomas Roderick Dew wrote in *Dissertation on*

## Chapter One

---

*the Characteristic Differences Between the Sexes* about the virtue of women, and characterized them by “feminine graces” that made them the “centre of attraction” and he also showed that women had the power to “make ten thousand swords leap from their scabbards to avenge the insult that might be offered to her. By her very meekness and beauty does she subdue all around her” Corbett et al. 351). However, southern women suffered from their harsh experiences such as “the trauma of childbirth”, “the loss of children”, and “the loneliness of the plantation” (Corbett et al. 351).

Louisa Cheves McCord’s poem *Women’s Progress* describes the role of women in male-dominated society, as she stated:

Her mission is /To labour and to pray; to help, to heal, / To soothe, to bear;  
patient, with smiles, to suffer;/ And with self-abnegation noble lose/ Her private  
interest in the dearer weal/ Of those she loves and lives for... /Woman lives Man’s  
constant prophet. If her life be true And based/ upon the instincts of her being, /  
She is a living sermon of that truth /Which ever through her gentle actions  
speaks, / That life is given to labour and to love (qtd.in Corbett et al. 352).

Yet, slave women were prevented from the domestic role as caretaker and were instead taken into the fields. Thus, they found themselves like slave males. They were treated violently and separated from their children or their families (Corbett et al. 352).

In this white Southern society, the “number of African Americans increased to 4.4 million” and most of them were slaves (Corbett et al 336). 1.8 million slaves in the fifteen states were responsible for taking care of animals, doing the chores and most important was the production of “two billion pounds per year” of the cotton in the South by clearing, plowing and planting the land. They also “shaped the culture and society of the South, which rested on a racial ideology of white supremacy” (Corbett et al 331-334). The plantation of this commodity took time and energy since they were expected to “to work ten acres of land and pick two hundred pounds of cotton a day”, as Corbett et al explain

Cotton planting took place in March and April, when slaves planted seeds in rows around three to five feet apart... On each day of cotton picking, slaves went to the fields with sacks, which they would fill as many times as they could. The effort was laborious, and a white “driver” employed the lash to make slaves work as quickly as possible (333).

They were often beaten when they did not work the amount of land that the master wanted. Slaves worked all day with only “five minutes break at lunch”. There were masters who fed their slaves well to work more and others gave “them little to eat, since spending on

## Chapter One

---

food would cut into their profits” (Corbett et al. 333-34). Yet, the best way to make slaves under control was threatening them “to be sold down the River”. This expression was coined by Harriet Beecher Stowe in her novel *uncle Tom’s Cabin*, that refers to the “Domestic Slave Trade”, in which slaves will be sold and moved “from upper Southern states to the Deep South”, on the Mississippi, in order to plant cotton (Corbett et al 333).

By behaving in ignorant and childish way, masters would believe that slaves “accidentally” break the rules and do not rebel against them. Some slaves would resist their masters by poisoning them whereas others would reveal the disobedient slaves for better treatment. They were also prohibited from marrying but some slaveholders would permit marriages to increase the number of slaves to work the land (Corbett, et al. 339). Slave parents taught children to behave in good manner to escape torture and to survive. They also told their offsprings popular stories such as tales of tricksters, sly slaves or animals like Brer Rabbit, and sing to them “work songs” that told the “harshness of their life” and which have double meanings that masters cannot understand. For example, “Roll, Jordan, Roll” that was included in *Slave Songs in U.S*, the first published collection of African American songs in 1867. The Africans’ practices and rituals were seen as ‘witchcraft’ such as using some plants as remedy (Corbett, et al. 339-41)

On the contrary, there was a large free black population of 261,000 free slaves in Southern states (Corbett, et al. 341). The reason behind their freedom was either “the granting of freedom to slaves” by their masters who believed in Thomas Jefferson’s opening phrase in the Declaration of Independence “all men are created equal” (Corbett, et al. 342). Other free blacks in the South were residents of Louisiana before the Louisiana Purchase, and others who arrived from Cuba and Haiti. The majority of them were “lighter-skinned” women and they were described by various names that differentiate them. For instance, “mulattos” who are from one black and one white parent, “quadroons” from one black grandparent, and “octoroons” from one black great-grandparent (Corbett, et al. 342). Some free blacks had slaves such as William Ellison, who was born as slave in 1790 in South Carolina, bought his freedom, and later became American resident and sugar planter after Louisiana Purchase. Before the civil war, he was “the richest and largest slaveholders in the state” (Corbett, et al 342).

Moreover, the abolitionists saw that black mental inferiority was not inherited but rather a result of the oppression of slaves mentally and physically (Taylor 90). For Theodore Dwight

## Chapter One

---

Weld, who was abolitionist and examined the institution of slavery and the hard conditions of the enslaved people in his work *Slavery As It Is*, also exposed the brutal treatment of slaveholders as he claimed:

The slaves in the United States are treated with barbarous inhumanity.... they are overworked, underfed, wretchedly clad and lodged, and have insufficient sleep.... they are often made to wear round their necks iron collars armed with prongs, to drag heavy chains and weights at their feet while working in the field.... they are often stripped naked, their backs and limbs cut with knives, bruised and mangled by scores and hundreds of blows with the paddle, and terribly torn by the claws of cats, drawn over them by their tormentors (qtd.in Taylor 124).

The life as slave was ended after the civil war, when they became free people who owned and worked their own lands. Yet, they did not have money, food and other basic necessities to start new lives. There were many debtors who gave credits to free black people but with high interest rates which made it difficult for them to pay back and thus they did not reach “economic independence” (Corbett et al. 471). After the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments of the constitution, “the cancer of slavery was cut out”, citizenship was granted with the right to vote for ex-slaves (White 1-2).

The first revolt of slaves against their masters in the antebellum South was in 1811; a group of five hundred slaves from Louisiana took up arms against white sugar planters under Charles Deslondes. This man was “mixed-race slave driver on a sugar plantation owned by Manuel Andry” (Corbett et al 343). They killed the master’s son and many other whites and burnt three plantations. Yet, after their heads were cut and put on ‘pikes along the Mississippi River’ another rebellion was in Southampton County, Virginia in 1831. It was guided by a slave named Nat Turner who wanted to sacrifice his life like Christ, after his wife was sold (Corbett, et al 343). He was a man of “deep religious and spiritual nature”, as he claimed in 1825

I saw white spirits and black spirits engaged in battle, and the sun darkened-the thunder rolled in the heavens, and blood flowed in streams and I heard a voice saying, ‘Such is your luck, such you are called to see and let it come rough or smooth you must surely bear it’ (qtd.in Cromwell 209).

Thus, he gathered his relatives and murdered many whites. After the end of the rebellion, he was executed and hanged until he died. Thomas Gray in his book *The Confessions of Nat Turner* gave an account of Tanner’s insurrection and confession in the prison and the verdict of the court on November 11, 1831 (1-16). Moreover, Religious beliefs have always played an

important role in the daily lives of Americans and Africans, especially during the nineteenth century.

### **1.2.2. The Role of Religion and Superstition**

According to Butler, Wacker and Bulmer, “Religion, beliefs in supernatural powers, forces and beings powerfully shaped the peoples and society that would become the United States” (11), as Alexis De Tocqueville, a French historian who was sent to America in 1831, assumed in his book *Democracy in America*:

there is no country in the world where the Christian religion retains a greater influence over the souls of men than in America; and there can be no greater proof of its utility and its conformity to human nature than that its influence is powerfully felt over the most enlightened and free nation of the earth (qtd.in Graebner 263).

As a Roman Catholic who emphasized the authority of religion, Tocqueville questioned the truth about American religion that was highly connected to freedom, and came to the conclusion of the detachment of religion from the state. This separation was the main principle of *Democracy in America* (Graebner 264). Unlike Protestants, the American minority of Catholics were “fervent”, “zealous” and “faithful” to their rituals (Graebner 267)

According to Amanda Porterfield and John Corrigan, the American Christian religion was formed by the coming of immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe, Asia and Africa (4). Yet, Protestantism dominated the American society in the antebellum years. Indeed, most Americans were members in either evangelical or Protestant churches since the 1830s. Since the Second Great Awakening increased the number of Christian ministers and the formation of many organizations such as the American Bible Society, the American Sunday School Union and the American Tract Society, which encouraged religious revival and education (Corbett, et al. 365).

The American Bible Society was established in 1816 in order to ensure that every member of society had a copy of the Bible while, the American Sunday School of 1824 aimed to teach the Bible to children. In 1825, The American Bible Society “formed with the goal of disseminating the Protestant revival message in a flurry of publications” education (Corbett, et al. 365). The spread of Christianity helped the Christian slaveholders to make slaves more obedient and work hard by allowing them to learn the Bible. As a result, in 1790, the first African American church was built by Richard Allen in order to separate themselves from

## Chapter One

---

White American churches and express their faith education (Corbett, et al. 365). In 1839, Christianity was “influenced by Eastern philosophy including the Hindu Vishnu Sarma, the Persian Desatir, the writings of Confucius, and the sayings of Buddha, and opposed “chilly Calvinism” (Powers ch2 2)

Moreover, the Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian were the Protestant denominations and their religious objective was to build “America’s moral empire”, as the historian Ian Tyrrell described in his work *Reforming the World: The Creation of America's Moral Empire* (qtd.in White 5). They believed in their ability to bring their own salvation which opposed the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. They also aimed to perfect society by establishing reform movements such as Temperance reform. Those reformers tried to limit and ban the consumption of alcohol, and had a different view of freedom which is based on self-discipline and self-control. Instead of the freedom to commit sins, people would be free from the temptation of sins (Corbett, et al. 364). One of the protestant denominations which is Presbyterian, is defined by Ron Powers in his book *Mark Twain: A Life*, as

...the un-Transcendentalism of the early 19th century. No sunny optimism in its tenets, no cheery vision of liberating faith built on the divinity within the personal soul. Presbyterians derived from an older and chillier strain of worship in the New World, and from a blood-soaked era of Christian rebellion in Europe before that—the Reformation. They refused to believe that sinfulness could be absolved through ceremony and incantation. Far from the Emersonian notion of man’s personal divinity, Presbyterians believed in the cold, absolute sovereignty of God’s will. Sinners were doomed to Hell (ch3 6).

Tocqueville assumed that religion in America put emphasis on “American passion” which means that any interference of religious laws in the Americans’ “material pursuits” will lead to its end and claimed that the main role of religion in America is:

to purify, to regulate, and to restrain the excessive and exclusive taste for well-being that men feel in periods of equality; but it would be an error to attempt to overcome it completely or to eradicate it. Men cannot be cured of the love of riches, but they may be persuaded to enrich themselves by none but honest means" (qtd.in Graebner 270).

Furthermore, in “Native American Religions”, Christopher Jocks and Lawrence Sullivan noted that Native Americans had diverse spiritual beliefs and practices (para.1). Those rituals have been inherited through myths and legends (para.2); for example, the creation myths that tell different stories about the origin of the first world (para.28). Yet, those beliefs, from the North to the South of the land, have been changed over time because of “political, economic

## Chapter One

---

and religious domination”(para.4). The indigenous people also believed that they have to live in harmony with nature which they saw as having a spirit. Thus, the natural objects or as they are called “mythic beings” including “plants, animals, clouds and mountains” were considered as sacred and represent revelation (para.5). One of the most famous spiritual beliefs was the “Ghost Dance” which indicates the “return of the dead”. This latter was inherited from “Christian traditions”(para.17). Also, there were other rituals and ceremonies that have been practiced by them. Moreover, the ones who succeeded to communicate with spirit world are called Shamans and considered as the guide and leader of the community. They use “musical instruments” in order to “re-create the bodies of suffering patients or to reorder the seasons to overcome drought or famine”(para.36-37).

Thus, the Native American religion is rooted in the spiritual beliefs and rituals and has developed after the contact of Europeans and Indigenous tribes. This led to the oral transmission of creation myths throughout the generations (Heyrman para.2). The individual isolates himself from other people to seek spiritual guidance, wisdom. Throughout this ritual, the individual meditates, prays and sacrifices by giving “valuable items” such as “furs, tobacco, food” to connect with nature and to receive visions and dreams that will be interpreted according to his experience in the natural world (Heyrman para.3-4).

Moreover, during the nineteenth century, Africans’ traditions played an important role in the fight of African-Americans later to gain their freedom and civil rights. Those traditions were rooted in “polytheistic and Muslim religious traditions” (“African Religion in America” para.1). The West Africans, for instance, believed in the spiritual power of their ancestors. They “worshipped diverse pantheon of gods overseeing all aspects of daily life” to reach “physical and spiritual health” (“African Religion in America” para.4). Their traditions include folk tales, ecstatic dance and song. Yet, their lives as slaves changed their rituals and traditions. For example, the “ring shout” is a mixture of West Africans’ dance and song styles and the black Christian (“African Religion in America” para.4). Out of the African slaves that came to America, between 10 and 30 percent were Muslims. Thus, most of their traditions were rooted in Muslims practices and rituals such as praying and fasting. They also had knowledge about the Qur’an, the holy book of Muslims (“African Religion in America” para.5). Thus, the American beliefs and traditions are also rooted heavily in Native Americans, West Africans and Muslim Africans. One of the major beliefs in American society were omens, signs and superstitions.

### 1.3. Omens, Signs and Superstitions in American Society

The study of American Folklore in society depends on examining the four main races that formed America including the British, Europeans, Africans and the Indian tribes of North America. The early settlers that came from Great Britain, brought with them their own “Fairy tales, beast Fables” that were told by mothers and nurses, and ballads which vanished by the seventeenth century. Yet, the belief in superstitions such as witchcraft and belief in lucky days still exist in American society (“On the Field and Work of a Journal of American Folk-Lore” 3-5). The second is African American folklore. This latter connected “cultural heritage” of both Africans who lived in America and Africa. It included tales relating to animals, stories of enslaved people’s rebellion and songs that “contained seeds of wisdom, problem solving and prophecy” (Ogunleye 436). The third division is Indian tribes. Each tribe had their own myths, rituals, feasts, sacred customs, games, songs, tales society (“On the Field and Work of a Journal of American Folk-Lore” 5).

Moreover, the word “superstition” had always been intertwined with “wrong religion” and opposed “true religion” and “reasoned faith” such as “fanaticism”, “idolatry” (‘the worship of the wrong God’) and “heresy”(‘the worship of true God’, according to one’s beliefs and not to ‘authority’ and “community consensus”) which refers to bad or incorrect beliefs and practices of religion. It also refers to the lack of “rationality” and used by atheists to deteriorate any religion. Thus, this term is used to achieve certain objective especially in politics (Cameron 4-5). According to Wayland Hand, a folk belief scholar, and Robert Burton, the author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy, what it is: With all the kindes, causes, symptomes, prognostickes, and severall cures of it*, “superstition is folk notions” (qtd.in Mullen 125). Those beliefs found at all levels of society and even among the educated which rooted in the traditions, and seek to give rational explanations to human fear of the unknown through divination, and to control it or protect against it” (Mullen 125; Cameron 5).

Alan Dundes gave a “structural definition” of folk belief by explaining that “superstitions are traditional expressions that have condition” (qtd.in Mullen 126). For instance, when a black cat crosses the path of someone (cause), he will have a bad luck (result). The black cat is thus a cause for the bad luck.

## Chapter One

---

Yet, “scientific progress” caused a decline of superstitious belief, as Fletcher Basset, a retired naval officer and the founder of the Chicago Folklore Society in 1891, claimed:

The Old type of sailor, who believed in mermaid, the sea-snake, and the phantom ship, is fast disappearing, and, with the gradual substitution of the steamship for the sailing-vessel, he is being replaced by the mechanical seaman, who sees no spectre in the fog, nor sign of disaster in the air, or beneath the wave (qtd.in Mullen 122).

Basset referred to the development of the steam engine and invention of locomotives that made the sailor of ancient times, who believed in superstitions of mythical sea creatures, faded and replaced by the rational “mechanical seaman” who depends on advanced instruments of the steamship to navigate the sea (Mullen 122).

Nevertheless, in the nineteenth century, superstitious beliefs emerged again as a consequence of the spread of dangerous diseases and the risks of childbirth and pregnancy. Even after the mother gave birth to her child, she will pray for the survival of her child. For instance, Mark Twain’s mother was alerted to superstitions. Her son had survived a harsh winter where many children died from “smallpox, bilious fever, malaria, spider bites, cholera, scarlet fever...” (Powers ch1 3). Yet, she did her best to take care of her child by giving hope to herself through good signs. For instance, during the birth of Clemens, there was comet which is named by its British discover, Edmand Halley, and it was near the earth in its seventy-five year cycle. This omen meant that he would survive (Powers ch1 3-4).

It also created a “positive romantic image of people and described them as “the wise old folk” who took advantage of nature and became connected to it and to the “spiritual powers as a means of understanding natural cures and medicines”. Magic ritual occurred as a consequence of uncertainty and anxiety of people in facing certain situations. For instance, fishermen who came across bad omens will take a day off from work (Mullen 127-128).

### **1.3.1. Defining Omens, Signs and Superstitions**

According to the *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, the word omen means “an occurrence or phenomenon (observable fact or event) believed to portend a future event”(“Omen”). It portends either good or bad luck. For instance, “Greenock fishermen” believed that the fall of a fly into a glass of water is an omen that signified good luck. For Scotch and English fishermen, mentioning a quadruped brought bad luck whereas “Hindoo boatmen” were accompanied with “venomous serpents” in their boats to know if it will be a “lucky voyage” or not by staying

## Chapter One

---

alert to the movement of serpents (Bassett 429-430). Such beliefs were caused by fear of the sea and the weather (Bassett 13).

Moreover, in the words of *Merriam Dictionary*, superstition is “a belief or practice resulting from ignorance, fear of the unknown, trust in magic or chance, or a false conception of causation”(“superstition”). There are two types of superstitions, according to the folklorist Newbell Nilles Puckett, which are “control-signs” and “prophetic-signs”. The first category of signs can be either positive or negative. As an example, “if someone bite a butterfly’s head off, he will get a new dress” (qtd.in Puckett 312). Thus, the person has control over this sign and he can get the “desired results” when he follows the condition of the sign. The second, “in which the human individual has no free play”, contradicts the control-sign. For instance, weather and dream signs are prophetic-signs that individuals cannot interfere in their condition, and thus they have to accept the result whether it brings good or bad luck (Puckett 312). As an example, “A red sunrise is a sign of bad weather” (qtd.in Dundes 28).

*The Encyclopedia Britannica* defines it as a “belief, half-belief, or practice for which there appears to be no rational substance”. It is also explained as

anything that people believe, that is based on myth, magic, or irrational thoughts. They are beliefs that are steeped in lore or tradition, and it is usually difficult to pinpoint the exact origin. Superstitions are also known as old wives' tales, legends, and traditions. They may involve animals, graveyards, ghosts, inanimate objects, or even other people (qtd.in Amuthenu 3).

Bidney defines superstition as "a mode of fear based on some irrational or mythological belief and usually involves some taboo” and is prohibited in “the great religions” such as Islam and Christianity (qtd.in Dundes 26) while Rose identifies it as “the acceptance of beliefs or practices groundless in themselves and inconsistent with the degree of enlightenment reached by the community to which one belongs” (Dundes 27). Yet, some superstitions turned out to be scientifically correct such as weather signs and “homeopathic magic of many cures in folk medicine [which] has, of course, been found to be the scientific basis of immunization through inoculation” (Dundes 27).

According to Alan Dundes, superstitions are traditional expressions of one or more conditions and one or more results with some of the conditions signs and others causes (28). This shows that some superstitions have either one condition and one result; for instance, when

## Chapter One

---

a dog's barking is a sign of death while other superstitions have several conditions and one result, as an example:

In the spring the first mourning dove you hear cooing, take off one of your stockings or socks, turn it wrongside out and in the heel will be a hair, the color of the hair of the person you're going to marry (qtd.in Dundes 28).

Furthermore, a portent means "an omen of ill" and "a warning of the approach of evil or calamity" (Cannell 7). As an example of such superstition, "Christians had a superstition that Friday is bad day to start an important work, because Christ was crucified on that day" (Cielo 4).

According to the *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, sign is something material or external that stands for or signifies something spiritual or it indicates the presence or existence of something else ("sign"). Yet, in Stephan Evans' book *Natural Signs and Knowledge of God: A New Look at Theistic Arguments*, he called this term as "natural signs". Evans defined them as a message from God that "point to God's reality" and "directs" the individual attention to "some reality or fact and makes knowledge of that reality or fact possible". Thus, in order to reach this knowledge, these signs have to be perceived and then interpreted and 'read' properly without the "inference" (3-4).

As Evans further explained, the meaning of "inference" under the concept of "natural theology":

I have stipulatively described "natural theology" as the attempt to show that there is knowledge of God's reality without presupposing any special revelation, such as the Bible or the Koran, or perhaps the events described in the Bible or the Koran. However, this description is ambiguous in an important way. One may understand it as specifying that the attempt to gain knowledge of God must be undertaken without any prior commitment to the authority or truth of a special revelation (5).

Birds are considered as a good example of natural signs. These vertebrate animals which are distinguished from other creature by feathers, wings and beaks can be seen as a major part in predicting the weather. The flying of the Hawk in a higher distance from the ground signifies a good weather and if it flies closer to the ground, the weather will be bad. During the rain, if birds are singing it means that sky will be clear soon (Warren, "How Birds Predict Weather"). The persistence of such beliefs may have many reasons.

### 1.3.2. Psychological Aspects of Belief in Superstitions

There are two main psychological aspects that make people still believe in superstitions until nowadays. First, uncertainty which means, according to *the Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, “doubt, skepticism and it may range from short of certainty to complete lack of conviction or knowledge especially about an outcome or result” (“uncertainty”). It is also “an inescapable feature of the human experience” which can lead to mental diseases such as “phobia and depression” when people fail to predict “random happenings of life” such as birth, marriage, illness, death, and control them (Vyse 5). Believing in superstition helps in avoiding risks and predicting the future. For instance, “the position of the stars at the time and place of one’s birth helps determine one’s health, physical characteristics, personality, and future destiny” (Vyse 5). Also, many people believed in bringing good luck by “knocking at the wood” and “crossing fingers” (Vyse 5). However, superstitious belief, in Vyse’s view, is not abnormal and in fact is a natural product of human learning and cognition. He also shows that the existence of humans and their survival is linked to their superstitious behavior (Vyse 6).

Second, believing in superstition is highly associated with fear such as the fear of failure and death, as Vyse explained further in his book entitled *Believing in Magic: The Psychology of Superstition*; “superstitious people have higher anxiety and a greater fear of death, feel less in control, suffer more from depression, experience higher levels of neuroticism, and have lower self-esteem than non-superstitious people” (239-240). Indeed, Gustav Jahoda defines superstition “as any thought or irrational act and illogical fear or dread of something mysterious and fantasy and a doubt or habit that its basis is ignorance or fear” (qtd.in Afreen 2). Yet, other people are calmer during a difficult situation because of their superstitious belief in certain objects which they believe they gave them luck. For example, they always had a lucky penny (Vyse 93), special pens or they wear “lucky sweatshirts or jewelry” (Vyse 249).

Another factor of fear can be traced back to childhood trauma that later became a superstitious belief. For instance, many people who feared black cats during their childhood, when their ‘critical thinking skills’ were still developing, turned to believe that black cats bring bad luck (Vyse 172). Thus, the fear of certain things can grow to become superstitious beliefs.

Moreover, superstition helps in reducing levels of anxiety (Vyse 216). This latter is “experienced when an individual attempts to resist his or her compulsions or confront a feared object” (Vyse 214). The people who have ‘obsessive-compulsive disorder’ believe in

superstitions that is linked with bad luck rather than good luck in order to avoid risks and “imagined dire consequences” and therefore “reduce their anxiety”. They stay away from black cats that they suspected are an omen of bad luck (Vyse 216).

Benjamin Tuck found in a study in 1995 that reports of childhood superstitions were associated with higher levels of obsessive-compulsive disorder symptoms, as he explained

Obsessive-compulsive disorder is equally common in boys and girls, but it appears earlier in boys. In boys, its onset comes between 6 and 15 years of age, and in girls (young women) between 20 and 29 years. The primary features are obsessions (unwanted, often disturbing, thoughts or impulses that occur repeatedly and are difficult to control) and compulsions (behavioral responses to these obsessions that frequently take the form of repetitive, rigidly executed movements that are difficult to resist) (qtd.in Vyse 214-215).

Thus, uncertainty, fear and anxiety are the significant psychological factors that make people develop a superstitious behaviour to avoid risks, difficult situations or to give hope to themselves. Those psychological aspects made Africans and Americans confined to superstitious’ beliefs in their daily lives.

### **1.3.3. American and African Signs, Omens and Superstitions**

Folklore in general “includes myths, storytelling, recollections, ballads, songs, rap, and other orally transmitted lore” (Ogunleye 435). In order to study the American and African folklore, it is crucial to examine the two races; blacks and whites. The white people are primarily the French, the Spanish and the Anglo-Saxon (Roberts 144). Also, they include English, Scotch and Irish (Roberts 146). Moreover, since they travelled to “a wild new country” and the fear from the threat of other races, people tried to preserve “the proverbs and superstitions of their home land”. For instance, the most common rhymes among the Americans which cited many superstitions, are “Sunset red and morning gray/ Sends the traveler on his way. / Sunset gray and morning red /Sends the rain down on his head.” or “A bride should wear, /Something old, something new, / Something borrowed. something blue, / And a bit of silver in the heel of her shoe” (qtd.in Roberts 146).

Moreover, many superstitions are similar among the Africans and Americans such as the bad luck that a black cat or the owl brought when someone encountered it. Yet, for them the cat’s blood had a “power” to heal, as they used it for children who had shingles. Still, the black people’s superstitions are distinguished from the Whites by the “hoodoo” (Roberts 146-147). According to the *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, hoodoo is defined as “a body of

## Chapter One

---

practices of sympathetic magic traditional especially among African Americans in the southern U.S which brings bad luck”(“hoodoo”). This term is derived from the African word “juju” which is defined by *Britannica Dictionary* as “an object that has been deliberately infused with magical power or the magical power itself ...practiced in West African countries such as Nigeria, Benin, Togo, and Ghana”(“juju”). It is also referred to as “conjure” which means according to *Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, “to summon a devil or spirit by invocation or incantation”(“conjure”).

This type of magic is practiced by “Roots” which “is the Southern Negro's term for folk-doctoring by herbs and prescriptions” (Hurston 22). They are also known as “traiteurs” who are “old negro men or women”. In order to restrain this kind of magic from affecting someone, black people wore a “dime” as a necklace on their ankles or blue beads (Roberts 147). Later, the hoodoo practices were “modified of course by contact with white civilization and the Catholic church” (Hurston 318). The fear of the whites from being conjured by this magic led them to ask for help from “traiteurs” rather than “physicians” or consult both of them at the same time (Roberts 147). Yet, the southern planters who owned slaves were the strongest believers in superstitions, so most of their superstitious beliefs were inherited by their slaves through acquiring the English language and culture (Hurston 318).

Furthermore, in the book *Folk Beliefs of The Southern Negro*, Newbell Niles Puckett explained that animal folktales were rooted in African culture, “originated in the African jungle” and were admired by the white children. The characters of these folk tales were beasts, birds, elephants, lions, tigers... (Puckett 31-33). They not only entertained the listeners but rather had a “deeper purpose” which is demonstrated by Puckett as:

Almost always the weaker animal by his superior wit wins out in the contest with more ferocious animals of superior strength. In a symbolic way this may have been originally a form of prayer or incantation whereby protection against these powerful denizens of the jungle was secured. This seems all the more likely since in Africa, as illustrated by the Benga tribe, the lower animals were believed in prehistoric times to have human speech and to associate with man even in marriage (31).

Also, there were Africans who believed that apes could speak but they hold their tongues in order not to work, and others saw that when animals heard that they will be killed they will try to escape (Puckett 32). The spider character was the most common in African folklore because it was seen as “the creator of all men” (Puckett 34). Animals also played a

vital role in predicting the weather. For instance, the blacks in New Orleans believed that if a cat touches her paw in a gentle way, it is a sign that it will rain (“Superstitions of Negroes in New Orleans” 330).

Conversely, most of the whites’ superstitions were rooted in their life in the new world, especially Southerners’ superstitions that referred mostly to their agricultural life. For instance, Friday is seen as a good day to plant everything such as turnips, beans, grapes and radishes and it is known as “hangman’s day”. The corn is planted when the “little moon points down” and wheat is sown “before the full moon” which means in October. These Zodiac signs also helped in predicting matters like death, birth, marriage and moving. For example, they saw that the crawfish sign is unlucky to marry (Hoke 113). Another sign of death is when a bird enters a house or when “two people look in a mirror at once, the younger will die within a year” (Hoke 114). Also, many believed that stepping over a child is a bad omen because of the fear of parents that the child will be crippled or his growth will be stopped (Cielo 4).

Thus, there are superstitions, omens and signs that are common among Africans and Americans especially concerning animals, as Astra Cielo claimed in her book entitled *Signs, Omens and Superstitions*. In the Middle Ages, it was considered a bad omen if the couple met a cat, dog, lizard, serpent or hare; but to meet a wolf, spider or toad was a good sign (Cielo 8). Yet, there are differences between the two races since they came from different continents, cultures and they had different religions.

### **1.4. The Significance of Superstition, Omens and Signs in the Literary Works of the Nineteenth Century**

During the travel of the British writer James Fullarton Muirhead to United States in 1898, he noticed the American’s “intense interest in the supernatural, the spiritualistic, the superstitious” (qtd.in Thomas 1). The Americans’ embracement of superstition and the supernatural was reflected in the works of literature during the 19th century. People started demanding for the elements of supernatural and the “presence of the weird in literature” which was a mirror to “human psychosis”, as Dorothy Scarborough revealed the reasons behind man’s love of supernatural, in her book *The Supernatural in Modern English Fiction*:

## Chapter One

---

Man loves the frozen touch of fear, and realizes pure terror only when touched by the unmortal. The hint of spectral sounds or presences quickens the imagination... Man loves the supernatural elements in literature perhaps because they dignify him by giving his existence a feeling of infinity otherwise denied. They grant him a sense of being the center of powers more than earthy, of conflicts supermortal. His own material life may be however circumscribed and trivial yet he can loose his fancy and escape the petty tragedies of his days by flight beyond the stars...He is so greedy of power, and has so piteously little that he must look for his larger life in dreams and in the literature of the supernatural (2).

In *Romantic Returns: Superstition, Imagination, History*, Deborah White also showed that Romantic authors of the nineteenth century were inspired by superstition because it was alluring and seen as the source of imagination and creativity (29). However, even realistic authors had recourse to this theme. According to the *North American* magazine, “novels are the most popular mode of communication with the public” (qtd.in Baym 28) since the novels of this era reflected the life of Americans. For instance, Stephan Crane, Rebecca Harding Davis and Mark Twain used realism in their works including *The Red Badge of Courage*, *Life in The Iron Mills* and *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. A realist novel is a mirror to the ordinary people and their life experiences (Byerly 2). Its goal is to portray the social realities that needed to be reformed.

Other authors embraced naturalism in their writing in which they believed that “the laws of nature and the natural world were the only truly relevant laws governing humanity” (Corbett et al. 569). There were also writers of short stories such as Kate Chopin who gave a portrayal of women struggling in a patriarchal society. In her work *The Story of An Hour*, the heroine died “ironically and tragically” when the death of her husband turned to be misinformed after she thought she will be free from the “constricting marriage” (Berkove 152). The events of this story lasted one hour which made the narrative a masterpiece of the nineteenth century.

### **1.4.1. Superstitions, Omens and Signs as Literary Devices**

The elements of superstitions, omens and signs play a significant role in fiction. They have several purposes in the construction of the novel including the creation of certain atmosphere and tone, the conveying of messages and themes, the development of characters and shaping the structure of the narrative. They also give the reader the opportunity to predict the future events of the story and the destiny of the characters.

## Chapter One

---

Foreshadowing is a literary device where the author gives hints to the future events (Morson 45). In the article “Lucanic Omens in *Julius Caesar*”, Clifford Ronan explores the use of omens in Shakespeare’s play *Julius Caesar*. Shakespeare incorporated elements such as comets, dreams and natural signs in his play that he brought from Lucan’s works in order to foreshadow the tragic events. These omens are used as portents and warnings to future events such as the emergence of comets, a certain type of birds called “solitaire birds” and snakes which are all signs of the fall of the kingdom and death of Caesar. Thus, they created an atmosphere of suspense and horror and a tone full of uncertainty and fear (Ronan 138-142).

Moreover, foreshadowing is “one of the indispensable ingredients in fiction” and gives “unity to the structure of the novel” (qtd.in Staal 1). It adds the elements of suspense and surprise and helps the reader to immerse into “the world of the novel” and ‘evoke complex emotions”. This literary device used “as a means to elicit the protagonist’s response” and therefore contributes to character’s development. It also “revealed” the fate of the protagonist to the readers when the hero himself is “unconscious” of his future (Staal 1- 5). For instance, if the character is unconscious of the signs of nature such as the storm, thunder and the migration of birds that predict something will happen in future or ignore the messages that nature wants to deliver to him so that he would change either his actions or character. Yet, the reader will recognise it as foreshadowing and as sign of future catastrophe (Morson 47-8). This technique is used to engage the readers in the mysterious events of the story by giving hints and clues in a form of omens and signs and thus making the reader predict the destiny of the character and the end of the novel.

Omens, signs and superstition are used in fiction as symbols. According to Rene Wellek and Austin Warren in their work *Theory of Literature*, a symbol is “an object which refers to another object but which demands attention also in its own right, as a presentation” (qtd.in Cohn 181). For Northrop Frye, in his article entitled “Three Meanings of Symbolism”, symbols are divided into types. First, “centrifugal”, and that is “moving from the words to the things they mean” and thus the word is a symbol of a sign. Second, “centripetal” symbol that collects words in order to form a “larger pattern or context” and the words are “symbol in the sense of an image, or unit of a verbal structure” (qtd.in Cohn 181).

For instance, the novella “The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Gilman Perkins written in 1892 which is an autobiography of Gilman who wrote in her diary about her experience as a

## Chapter One

---

new mom moving with her husband to the country, to a house where she stayed in a room that is covered with yellow wallpaper. In the nineteenth century, yellow was a “symbol of the rejection of Victorian morals and ethics” (“Dalnavert, in Yellow” para.1). It is described by Gilman as “The color is repellent, almost revolting, a smouldering unclean yellow, strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight. It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others” (qtd.in Simon 166).

The yellow color had an “irritating” and “disturbing effect” on the protagonist who is suffering from “temporary nervous depression” and as the events go on, her mental illness got worse and she started having hallucinations that a woman is imprisoned behind this wallpaper. Thus, this color is a symbol of “sickness” and “the decay of the narrator’s marriage and life” (Simon 166). At the end of this story, when her husband, the doctor and physician who was responsible for the medical treatment, found her creeping on the wallpaper, he fainted from shock. Therefore, from the beginning of the novella “The Yellow Wallpaper”, the “unclean” color was a bad portent about the next events, the fainting of her husband and the deteriorating condition of the main character, from depression to “hysteria”. As Maria Cohut explained, in the nineteenth century, women were diagnosed with hysteria. The symptoms of this illness included “a swollen abdomen, suffocating angina [chest pain] or dyspnea [shortness of breath], dysphagia [difficulty swallowing], [...] cold extremities, tears and laughter, oscitation [yawning], pandiculation [stretching and yawning], delirium, a close and driving pulse, and abundant and clear urine” (“female hysteria”).

This color was a sign of something terrible that would happen in future. Yet, the characters’ unconsciousness of this portent made the tragedy inevitable. Thus, the use of omens, superstitions and signs is vital to the construction of the literary work and helps the reader predict the coming events.

### **1.4.2. The American Authors’ Incorporation of Omens in their works**

During the nineteenth century, America was a “nation of novel readers” who lived through an “age of novel writing” and “floods”, “deluge” of literary works (Baym 14-27). There were many types of novels as *Graham’s* wrote in reviewing Charles Kingsley’s *Hypatia* in 1854, “political novels, representing every variety of political opinion—religious novels, to push the doctrines of every religious sect—philanthropic novels, devoted to the championship of every

## Chapter One

---

re-form—socialist novels, philosophic novels, metaphysical novels, even railway novels” (qtd.in Baym 31).

Yet, the purpose of nineteenth-century novels was to excite and please readers (Baym 32). Moreover, readers wanted to escape their harsh life and experienced something out of their world as the *Christian Examiner* magazine proclaimed in 1842:

Fiction has its origins in man's dissatisfaction with the present state of things, and his yearning after something higher and better, in effort to realize those innate ideas of the beautiful, the grand, and the good, which have no counterpart in the actual world (qtd.in Baym 37-8).

As a result, many novelists adopted these “three passions” that govern the novel including, “love for the characters, hope for their good fortune, curiosity as to the outcome of their story” (Baym 38). They used supernatural elements by implementing superstitions, omens and signs in their works, notably Washington Irving and Ambrose Bierce.

### **1.4.2.1. Washington Irving**

Washington Irving was known as the ‘first significant author of American fiction’ who included “Continental romanticism and the Gothic mode into American writing” (Hoffman, “Irving's Use of American Folklore” 425). According to Brian Jones, Irving was “skeptical of all things religious” (qtd.in Crawford 4). As he once declared, “I was tasked with it; thwarted with it; wearied with it in a thousand harsh and disagreeable ways; until I was disgusted with all its forms and observances” (qtd.in Crawford 4). His skepticism is evident in the use of “comic mythology and popular traditions of American character which, by the early nineteenth century, had proliferated widely in oral tradition” in his writings (Hoffman, “Irving's Use of American Folklore” 425).

He is famous for his short stories from *The Sketchbook* (1819-20), “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” and “Rip Van Winkle”. “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” is a tale told by Diedrich Knickerbocker of a schoolmaster, named Ichabod Crane who proposed to the beautiful girl Katrina Van Tassel but she rejected him because she was in love with a mischievous man named Brom Bones. The story enfolded the supernatural elements from its beginning until the mysterious disappearance of the main character Ichabod after his encounter with a headless horseman leaving the residents of Sleepy Hollow speculating the truth behind the legend of the headless horseman. Moreover, Irving used “environmental ambiguity” to make the supernatural events and natural world intertwined (qtd.in Crawford 1-4).

## Chapter One

---

The narrator started the story by describing the peaceful atmosphere of the town as “one of the quietest places in the whole world” (qtd.in Crawford 5). The quietness of the scene is emphasized by “the occasional whistle of a quail, or tapping of a woodpecker” as the only sounds that one can hear (qtd.in Crawford 5). The woodpecker is considered as “the most important and best known of all prophesying animals” (Walsh 3). It can be a bad or good portent depending on “the side on which one hears his pecking”, as Gerhard Lindblom explained the role of the different directions of hearing this bird in his monograph on the Akamba:

If the bird is heard straight in front, one will “see blood”, i.e. get scratched in the thickets, be gored by a rhinoceros or wounded in fighting, etc.; ... To hear the bird in front in an oblique direction and high up is also a bad sign, whereas if it is low in the same direction it only means that the listener will return without having effected his object. The left side is, on the other hand, the good side (in other districts the bad one), and if the bird is heard on that side, one has prospects of acquiring women, cattle and other wealth (qtd.in Walsh 3)

Knickerbocker further showed that the folks’ beliefs are rooted in “local tales, haunted spots, and twilight superstitions; stars shoot and meteors glare” (Crawford 6). According to Cielo, comets and meteors are “omens of disaster” (128). The Headless Horseman is the most prominent superstition in this short story. A ghostly figure that is portrayed by the narrator as “dominant spirit... that haunts this enchanted region, and seems to be commander in chief of all the powers of the air, [he] is the apparition of a figure on horseback without a head” (Crawford 7). Thus, this figure, according to Irving is similar to the “Biblical image of the devil”. It is also presented by Knickerbocker as:

the ghost of a Hessian trooper, whose head had been carried away by a cannon-ball, in some nameless battle during the revolutionary war, and who is ever and anon seen by the country folk, hurrying along in the gloom of night, as if on the wings of the wind” (qtd.in Crawford 7-8).

The main character is also immersed in explaining the superstitions he heard from the residents of the town through reading Cotton Mather’s “History of New England Witchcraft” (Crawford 9). This shows that Crane believed in superstitions and the supernatural. For instance, when the Headless Horseman followed him in the dark, Crane thought that the ghost will disappear, as he read in Mather’s work. Yet, he was the one who vanished from the Sleepy Hollow (Crawford 23-4). In addition to Romantic authors’ reliance on superstitions and omens, some Realists also adopted the same tendency like Mark Twain and Ambrose Bierce.

### 1.4.2.2. Ambrose Bierce

Ambrose Gwinnet Bierce (1842-1914) is one of the famous authors in the late nineteenth century for his “ninety-odd short stories”. He used satire in his writing as a “weapon of nonconformism” and “critical thought” by adding humour to his works. The short stories that he wrote from 1882 to 1896 were divided into three categories including “satirical horror stories”, that focused on horror, “anti-war satire” that focused on the “brutality and human wreckage of war” and “old-western ‘tall tales’” (Bierce 11-2). His satire was used as a tool to “attack superstitions, ceremonies and customs” that are related to death and to “ridicule falsity and hypocrisy” (Bierce 25).

One of Bierce’s popular war stories is “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” published in *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians* (1891). The novella is about a man named Peyton Farquhar a civilian planter and Confederate supporter during the Civil War. He was captured by the Union soldiers for committing a crime. Thus, he was sentenced to death by being hanged above a bridge called Owl Creek Bridge in northern Alabama. In a dramatic way, as the rope cut off, he fell in the creek. Farquhar swam until he reached a land where he found himself in his home and met his wife. Yet, the escape was at the end just a hallucination that lasted from the moment he fell till his death. The name of the bridge “Owl Creek” has symbolic connotations. The Owl is an “omen of mortality and an emblem of wisdom” (Franklin 79-80). According to Cielo, owls are regarded as “unlucky birds” as she claimed in *Signs, Omens and Superstitions*, “Their hoarse and repellent voice is a bad omen and means coming disaster” (116). For Chaucer, this bird “brings tidings of death” (qtd.in Cielo 116). Romans also believed that seeing this bird is a bad portent (Cielo 116).

In “The Man and The Snake” which is another short story whose title indicates an omen, a man named Harker Brayton encountered a snake and became obsessed with it until he went mad as a result of the disturbing dreams he had (Bierce 81-7). Africans who lived in America used snakes as an “ingredient of charms” for Voodoo society (Basset 181). This made White Americans fear snakes that later led to the emergence of many myths which showed the danger of these creatures. In Judeo-Christian tradition, serpents are portrayed as “instrument of Satan to tempt Eve and disobey God” (Stanley 2). It is also seen as a savior to people in another event in the Bible as it healed people who are bitten by it (Stanley 1-2). In the Bible, the serpent is viewed differently; it sometimes represents wisdom, evil, and an agent of the vengeance for God (Stanley 3). For Native Americans, there is a type of snake that is not allowed to be killed

## Chapter One

---

because it is a sign of rain, and it is called the rattlesnake (Stanley 4-6). Thus, snakes can be a sign of health, healing, rain and temptation.

Thus, Washington Irving and Ambrose Bierce succeeded in conveying themes such as forthcoming death and developing the main characters using elements of superstition and omens as symbols in their short stories.

### **1.5. Conclusion**

The first chapter puts emphasis on the role of superstition in American society during the Nineteenth century by examining first the historical and cultural background of America; then, defining the main elements of American Folklore including superstitions, omens and signs by showing the psychological factors behind believing in those superstitious beliefs and giving examples from American and African societies. Finally, the chapter moves to highlight the function of superstitions, omens and signs in literature as literary devices by giving examples from the works of authors Washington Irving as well as Ambrose Bierce who used these elements like his contemporary Mark Twain.

# **Chapter Two: Impact of Signs and Omens on Huck and Jim**

### 2.1. Introduction

This chapter will focus on examining the power of omens, signs and superstitions in Mark Twain's novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* from a literary perspective. It begins by analysing the two main characters; Huck, a little white orphan boy, and Jim, a slave who escapes slavery in order to free his family. Then, the focus will shift to the role of omens, signs and superstitions in the development of Huck and Jim and how they influence their actions and reactions by identifying and analysing those elements.

### 2.2. Character Analysis of Huck and Jim

Huck and Jim are considered as the main characters in Mark Twain's novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* who are responsible for the construction of the plot throughout their actions, reactions and their growth and change (see appendix). Thus, the analysis of these two characters requires the examination of their background, physical and moral characteristics, beliefs as well as their actions and relations to each other.

#### 2.2.1 Early Life and Background of Jim and Huck

Huck Finn is the hero and the narrator of the events of the story. This character is inspired by Twain from his childhood at Hannibal where he knew a "poor- white outcast child" named Tom Blankenship and his brother "who once helped a runaway slave" (Fishkin 3). He further portrayed Tom Blankenship in his autobiography as:

He was ignorant, unwashed, insufficiently fed; but he had as good a heart as any boy had. His liberties were totally unrestricted. He was the only really independent person – boy or man – in the community, and by consequence he was tranquilly and continuously happy, and was envied by all the rest of [boys] (qtd.in Fishkin 14).

This representation is similar to Twain's description of his narrator as a good boy when Huck in the first chapter was called by the widow Douglas as "poor lost lamb" (Twain 2). Yet, he believed that she did not intend to hurt him by those words. His freedom was seen through his actions that opposed the social norms and the rules that were dictated by Douglas such as smoking that was regarded by the widow as "mean practice" (Twain 2).

## Chapter Two

---

Huckleberry Finn is a thirteen-year-old Orphan boy who has been adopted by the two sisters; the widow Douglas and Miss Watson who lived in St. Petersburg and the responsible for teaching Huck religion and social norms. He has also a drunk and scary father named Pap who appears after knowing that his son had money that was in the hand of the local Judge of the town whose name is Thatcher. Yet, he has a close friend named Tom Sawyer; who nurtures Huck's imagination from his romance novels.

Jim is another major character in the novel; yet, he is different from Huck. He is a household slave of Miss Watson and an adult and later a runaway slave whose ultimate goal was to free his family from slavery and to reach the free states. This character was inspired by Twain's visit to his uncle's farm in Florida, where he encountered a slave man named Dan. This latter is described by Twain as "a middle-aged slave whose head was the best one in the negro-quarter, whose sympathies were wide and warm, and whose heart was honest and simple and knew no guile" (Powers ch1 7). His age was around forty and he was "6 feet tall" (Powers ch1 7). This man used to tell slaves stories of ghosts such as "The Golden Arm" (Powers ch1 8). This story is about a man who stole his wife's golden arm from her grave. As a result, the dead wife's ghost chased and terrified him until he returned it. This tale was told with a "freighted pause", certain rhythm, timing and dialect to create a Gothic atmosphere and add suspense to the events which made Twain obsessed with this folktale during his childhood and influenced by it in his writings (Powers ch1 8).

According to Newbell Niles Puckett, the majority of slaves that were brought from the West Coast of Africa, from Congo, Niger, Gambia and Senegal, were people of "good physique" because they were "accustomed to agriculture" (3-4). He also added that "the tropical climate and excessive humidity of the coast" made their skins darker thus, they were black people with "flat noses and kinky hair" (Puckett 3-4)

In the novel, Twain depicts Jim through the voice of the narrator as a "big nigger" (Twain 5). His actions and behavior throughout the novel represent "the essential simplicity and kindness and generosity of the Southern negro" (Robinson 361). Yet, according to Leo Marx, Jim symbolises the "image of a flat stereotype: the submissive stage-negro" (qtd.in Robinson 361). For Henry Nash Smith and Joseph Sawicki, this character is "reduced to the level of farce and stock character" in the last chapters and therefore he was "ignored" (qtd.in Robinson 361-62). From the beginning of the novel until the end, Jim was played tricks by

## Chapter Two

---

Huck and his friend Tom Sawyer. For instance, in chapter two, when Huck and Tom wanted to escape from the Widow Douglas' house, before their leave, they put Jim's hat on a tree branch and fooled Jim who believed that the "witches bewitched him and put him in a trance" after he fell asleep (Twain 5-6). Moreover, the two characters had their own personal traits and beliefs since they came from different background and were treated differently by society.

### 2.2.2. Personal Characteristics of Huck and Jim

Huckleberry Finn is a free and open-minded boy although he is uneducated. He is always questioning social norms and rules. All the efforts of Widow Douglas and her sister Miss Watson to civilize him did not work as he claimed in chapter one:

The Widow Douglas she took me for her son, and allowed she would sivilize me; but it was rough living in the house all the time, considering how dismal regular and decent the widow was in all her ways; and so when I couldn't stand it no longer I lit out. I got into my old rags and my sugar-hogshead again, and was free and satisfied (Twain 2).

This passage shows that Huck could not understand and absorb the facts and rules that the two sisters established in the house by making him behave in certain way as she says, "Don't gap and stretch like that, Huckleberry—why don't you try to behave?" (Twain 3). The disobedience of this character was the result of the hypocrisy of Miss Watson and widow Douglas because they pray and talk about the "good place"; yet, they own slaves (Twain 3).

Moreover, Huckleberry Finn was abused by his father Pap Finn, which made him escape and start a journey down the Mississippi river by faking his death as he narrates:

I took the axe and smashed in the door. I beat it and hacked it considerable a-doing it. I fetched the pig in, and took him back nearly to the table and hacked into his throat with the axe, and laid him down on the ground to bleed...I pulled out some of my hair, and blooded the axe good, and stuck it on the back side...I says to myself, they'll follow the track of that sackful of rocks to the shore and then drag the river for me... to find the robbers that killed me and took the things They won't ever hunt the river for anything but my dead carcass. They'll soon get tired of that, and won't bother no more about me (Twain 35-6).

This excerpt reveals the intelligence and cleverness of Huck that made his escape succeed. His plan was almost perfect and made people think that he was killed which shows also his creativity and self-reliant characteristics. Furthermore, the hardships and "child abuse" that Huck experienced as an orphan child made him a prankster (Elmore and Girardi 1). He tried to escape the torture by playing practical jokes on Jim just to experience pleasure.

## Chapter Two

---

According to Christopher Burris and Rebecca Leitch, there is “a possible link between sadism and pranking” (1). They argued that the sadist person enjoyed seeing others suffering physically and mentally and made them excited, aroused and satisfied. However, Huck later regretted doing practical jokes on Jim after he knew that he put him in danger when he hid a snake in Jim’s bed as he says:

It made me feel so mean I could almost kissed his foot to get him to take it back. It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger; but I done it, and I warn’t ever sorry for it afterwards, neither. I didn’t do him no more mean tricks, and I wouldn’t done that one if I’d a knowed it would make him feel that way (Twain 89).

Jim, on the other side, is a “highly complex and original creature” although he was seen in the first chapters as ignorant and ordinary due to the fact that he was tricked by little boys in chapter two (Hanson 45). Another practical joke was in chapter fifteen, when he was fooled again by Huck after they were separated by heavy fog; Huck tried to convince him that the fog was only a dream. Yet, Jim’s only concern was to find Huck safe despite the fact that he knew that he was fooled again as he says;

When I got all wore out wid work, en wid de callin' for you, en went to sleep, my heart wuz mos' broke bekase you wuz los', en I didn' k'yer no mo' what become er me en de raf. En when I wake up en fine you bade agin', all safe en soun', de tears come en I could a got down on my knees en kiss' yo' foot I's so thankful. En all you wuz thinkin' 'bout wuz how you could make a fool uv ole Jim Wid a lie. Dat truck dah is trash; en trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head er dey fren's en makes 'em ashamed (Twain 89).

His reaction towards Huck’s lie prove that Jim is a good, dignified and honest man (McIntyre 33). According to James M. Cox, the portrayal of Jim as a humble and great man made the character embody the image of “a humble victim lacking any semblance of the shrewd humanity Huck so amply possesses” (qtd.in Robinson 365). This lack of shrewdness and his wisdom are the result of his “fear of the white oppressor”; the fear that at any time Huck can hand him over to his mistress Watson and betray him (Robinson 365). Thus, he is also a suspicious character (Robinson 365-66).

From chapter eight till the last chapter, Jim is seen as a courageous and fearless individual, from the moment he escaped alone to Jackson’s Island until he was released from bondage. Nevertheless, he is impulsive because of the quick decision of escaping without planning and neglecting the dangerous outcomes of the flight of a slave. In fact, impulsiveness

## Chapter Two

---

is an “African trait” (Puckett 8). He is also a survivor who endured sufferings; as for instance, when he was on the verge of death after being bitten by rattlesnake (Twain 54-5). Thus, Jim and Huck had their own personal traits; they also have different religions and come from different backgrounds.

### 2.2.3. Belief in Superstitions

According to Daniel G. Hoffman, “Recent critics have observed that much of the superstitious lore in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* centers around Jim, the Negro slave” (47). As Edgar Branch examines the character of Jim, he notices that he is:

a confirmed animist who lives in the midst of a swirling drama enacted by malicious spirits and he himself is a primitive dramatist of his own experience. ... Although occasional good luck and exercising ritual justify hope and personal effort, the main force of superstition in the novel is to keep alive a sense of the malevolence at the heart of thing (qtd.in Hoffman “Jim’s Magic” 47).

In Newbell Niles Puckett’s view, these folklore beliefs of the Negro slaves are “the custodian of former beliefs of the whites” that he called “Mental Heirlooms” (2). This means that the white master transmitted his superstitions to the slaves and then he forgot the fact that he is the source of those beliefs (Puckett 2). Moreover, the harsh nature of Africa that resulted in the spread of diseases and the “high infant mortality” made the Africans strong believers in superstitions (Puckett 4).

In Twain’s novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Jim and Huck are the two characters that “are highly affected by superstitions, more than they are influenced by their religious beliefs, or other social factors and values”(Nafi 37).

#### 2.2.3.1. Huck’s Belief in Superstitions

From the beginning of the novel, Huck Finn appears as a superstitious child. When he was in his room after supper and the ending of Miss Watson’s prayers with the slaves, Huck’s feeling of loneliness grows stronger at the point that he wanted to be dead than living his new life as an adopted child. These feelings made him think of “something cheerful” (Twain 3). Yet, as he sits on a chair near the opened window, he is swamped by natural signs and omens that predict the bad luck and seen as portents of death, as he says, “I heard an owl, away off, who-whooping about somebody that was dead, and a whippowill and a dog crying about somebody that was going to die” (Twain 3).

## Chapter Two

---

Indeed, in “central and North America”, the owl is considered as a bird that brings death when it is either heard or seen (Marcot, Johnson and Cocker 2). Thus, the owl is a bird of ill-omen as Chaucer claims, “the owl brings tidings of death” (qtd. in Cielo 116). Moreover, it is said that “before the death of the Roman emperor Antoninus, an owl was observed to sit over his chamber door” (Cielo 116). Whereas, the howling of a dog is a “sign of a coming disaster” since dogs have strong sense of smell; thus, they can even sense the approaching of catastrophe (Ceilo 116). Besides, “the wailing of the whippoorwill is an omen of death” (qtd.in Puckett 488). Thus, the hearing of an owl, the howling of a dog, and the crying of whippoorwill are regarded as signs of death or approaching calamity.

Also, Huck Finn heard the wind that he felt “was trying to whisper something” like a ghost that wants to deliver a message to him (Twain 3). In Greek mythology, there are wind deities like “the Anemol” who is the father of four gods who have been worshiped by enormous civilizations including; Boreas, the god of “the north wind” and “the cold breath of winter”, Zephyrus, the god of the “gentle” wind of the west, Notus, the god of the south wind and Eurus, the god of the east wind (“The Mighty and Mysterious Gods and Goddesses of Wind” para.2). Yet, there are other names of the gods and goddesses of the wind such as Aura, the “Greek Titan goddess of the breeze and the fresh, cool air of the early morning” (“The Mighty and Mysterious Gods and Goddesses of Wind” para.5). They can be protective or harmful (Pryke para.16). In science, the wind is an essential element in nature that enables plants growing through spreading seeds (Pryke para.8). Yet, in the Bible, the four cardinal winds can lead to apocalypse and thus they can bring either life or death (Pryke para.13-14). In “West Africa and South America”, there are myths that told that winds are associated with “breath” that is the essence of life and “the ancestral spirits” (Pryke para.20). Therefore, these bad signs left Huck scared and he could not “rest” (Twain 3).

Another bad omen is when Huck has accidentally killed a spider that was on his shoulder and he got frightened as he says, “I was scared and most shook the clothes off of me” (Twain 4). According to Astra Cielo, it is a “good sign” to encounter a spider and it is forbidden to kill it as it would bring bad luck (118). As Frank Cowan also explained the way a person should behave when he meets a spider:

...if a spider approaches, either by crawling toward or descending from the ceiling to a person, it forebodes good to such person...if [he] kill(s) a spider crossing [his] path, [he] will have bad luck...In the Netherlands, a spider seen in the morning forebodes good luck; in the afternoon, bad luck (540).

## Chapter Two

---

There is also a famous saying in Ireland and Scotland: “if you wish to live and thrive, let a spider run alive”(Aashima para 1). Scottish and Irish people believe that letting a spider alive would bring good luck and they leave them in the house to “eat small insects such as mosquitoes and flies” and thus they “prevent diseases” (Aashima para1-2). Whereas, in the Bible, spiders “represent both positive and negative aspects” (Aashima para 1). This insect can symbolise weakness and their webs indicate evil deeds. Yet, it has positive aspects such as protection and humbleness; for instance, Saint Felix who used spider webs to hide and escape the Roman persecution (Reinke para 1-2).

In order to prevent bad luck, Huck “got up and turned around in [his] tracks three times and crossed [his] breast every time; and then [he] tied up a little lock of [his] hair with a thread to keep witches away” (Twain 4). He also mentioned that a person does those things when he lost his horseshoe. This latter is used “to keep off ghosts, witches or hoodoos” and it prevents the person who holds it from conjuration (Puckett 291). Yet, it is not used to avoid bad luck after killing a spider. One day, Huck throws salt on his “left shoulder” in order to “keep off the bad luck” (Twain 16). Despite what he has done, Huckleberry is certain that the bad luck will not be avoided by doing these gestures. Later, his prediction that something awful will happen, became reality. After three or four months passed and during the winter, his father Pap who was missing for a year, appeared suddenly in his room asking for the money that Huck kept with the Judge Thatcher (Twain 16-18). Thus, Huck Finn is superstitious from the very beginning of the story. This characteristic is inherited from his own culture and environment. Also, Huck is not a religious person and thus, he is instead controlled by superstitious beliefs that have been explained above (Nafi 37). The slave Jim is another strong believer in superstitions.

### **2.2.3.2 Jim’s Belief in Superstitions**

Jim has “blind faith in the supernatural world” around him and most of folk superstitions in this novel are related to this character (Nafi 39). For instance, in chapter two, when Huck and his friend Tom tried to escape the house, they met the slave Jim who kept watching the house after he heard a noise coming from the backyard. Thus, he leaned against a tree but after a while he fell asleep. During this time, Tom played a mischievous prank on Jim by hanging his hat on the branch of a tree. After this practical joke, Jim believed that:

...the witches bewitched him and put him in a trance, and rode him all over the State, and then set him under the trees again, and hung his hat on a limb to show who done it. And next time Jim told it he said they rode him down to New Orleans; and, after that, every time he told it he spread it more and more, till by and by he said they rode him all

## Chapter Two

---

over the world, and tired him most to death, and his back was all over saddle-boils (Twain 6).

The belief in witches has its origin in the white man and by time it has disappeared but it was transmitted to the Negroes' tradition (Puckett 250). Yet, both Americans and African-Americans feared ghosts and witches. Americans used to read "the Bible backwards to keep ghosts away" or put the Bible under the Pillow to prevent the witches from controlling the person (Puckett 568) whereas Africans believed that witches caused disease, disaster, misfortune and death ("Witchcraft in Africa and The World" para 4). Thus, those who are bewitched wear amulets and take medicines that are prepared by "witch doctor" or "hoodoo-doctor" ("Witchcraft in Africa and The World" para 6; Puckett 200). The amulets are from African origin and called by the Senegalese as "gris-gris" that "signifies charm" (Puckett 16).

Moreover, Jim used to do magic as Huck narrates; "Miss Watson's nigger, Jim, had a hair-ball as big as your fist, which had been took out of the fourth stomach of an ox, and he used to do magic with it" (Twain 17). This object has "spirit inside of it, and it knowed everything" (Twain 17). Huck seeks to know through Jim what his father wants from him after he found his tracks near the house. After doing some rituals, Jim told Huck that his father has two angels; one is black and bad and the other is white and good (Twain 17-18). According to Newbell Niles Puckett, a hair-ball is "one of the compact balls of hair often found by butchers in the stomachs of cows or oxen. This object (powerful, because peculiar) may also be carried about as an amulet to protect one from spells" (231).

There are many kinds of balls such as Conjure-balls, Poisonous balls and Luck-balls that are personal charms containing all sorts of reptiles, roots, herbs and even hair or tracks of the "victim person". They are found in the bed, room or hand of those who have been bewitched (Puckett 230-31). Thus, hair-ball is used to protect the person from spells and curses and not to make contact with the spirit to predict the future as Jim pretends.

Jim also believes that he will be rich because he has a lot of hair on his arms and breast (Twain 48). Indeed, the features of the human body can dictate his fate or reveal the person's character. For instance, if there is space between the front teeth, there is possibility that this person is "a liar, a person who cannot keep a secret, a nagging person, or a person that is to live far away from the home folk" (Puckett 455). For a person who has a hairy chest, it indicates that he will be rich (Puckett 456). Therefore, Jim is a superstitious person who believes that omens and superstitions can determine someone's fate and predict his future as Huck notes,

## Chapter Two

---

“Jim knowed all kinds of signs” (Twain 47). At the end of the novel, Jim’s prediction of becoming wealthy becomes real. As Tom pays Jim forty dollars after causing troubles to him and putting his life in danger, he was happy that he will finally be a free and rich man as he says:

‘Dah, now, Huck, what I tell you? —what I tell you up dah on Jackson islan’? I tole you I got a hairy breas’, en what’s de sign un it; en I tole you I ben rich wunst, en gwineter to be rich agin; en it’s come true; en heah she is! dah, now! doan’ talk to me—signs is signs...mine I tell you; en I knowed jis’ ‘s well ‘at I ‘uz gwineter be rich agin as I’s a-stannin’ heah dis minute!’” (Twain 294-295).

The hairy arms and chest that Jim predicts as signs of wealth and fortune became prophecies that prove Jim’s blind trust in omens and signs. Yet, most of the signs that Jim believes in are European superstitions except one that considered as African belief and that is the hair-ball which is a “voodoo belief” (Hoffman “Jim’s Magic” 52).

The slave Jim and Huck Finn both believe in superstitions and try to predict the future and avoid the bad luck of some portents that gave them warnings. Yet, Jim’s reaction to signs and omens is totally distinct from Huck’s response to omens.

### **2.2.4 Reactions to Omens, Signs and Superstitions**

Superstitious people tend to believe in omens, signs and superstitions when they fear of something, get in troubles or look for knowing the cause and effect of a phenomenon. Also, they are more frightened of the future when they are under certain physical and mental conditions such as sickness, tiredness and anxiety and they are more superstitious in night-time than daytime (Dresslar 217-18). After they draw superstitious conclusions, they feel satisfied and relieved even if these presumptions are wrong or useless; superstitious persons will experience a “mental equilibrium” (Dresslar 225). Yet, according to Fletcher Dresslar, a professor of psychology in Alabama University, superstition is an irrational belief that “is closely associated with narrow experience, unscientific observation, the undue persistence of early conclusions, and the natural tendency of the mental life to reduce experience to rules or generalizations for guidance in practical life” (226).

Moreover, this belief can cause stress, depression and related health problem (Hoffmann, Plotkina, Roger and D’Hondt 1-2) whereas, in other cases, observing superstition can help regulate tension in uncertain and stressful situations, creating a feeling of control (Hoffmann et al. 2). Thus, people who predict omens and signs can be either happy and

## Chapter Two

---

comforted or depressed and stressed. There are other responses that can be observed through the characters Huck Finn and the slave Jim.

### 2.2.4.1. Huck's Reaction

Huck Finn's response to omens, signs and superstitions has changed throughout the novel. In chapter one, Huck noticed that the howling of a dog and the hooting of the owl were omens of death. Yet, after he heard the sounds of the wind and the ghost, he could not figure out the message behind them so he ignored those sounds. This neglect made him feeling "cold shivers" although he did not catch cold or had a fever. According to the doctor Karthik Kumar, shivering sometimes "has nothing to do with temperature or health" but rather it can be associated with having "strong emotions such as stress, fear, excitement, and anxiety"; as bodily reaction to what is going on in someone's brain "due to a surge of adrenaline in the body" ("What Causes Shivering?"). In fact, Huck felt terrified through the night because of fear and thus he could not "rest" (Twain 3).

Another reaction from Huck is when he killed a spider by accident and he felt "scared" of the negative affect of his bad deed that would bring him bad luck (Twain 4). As he was frightened, he mentions that, "[he] didn't need anybody to tell [him] that that was an awful bad sign and would fetch [him] some bad luck" (Twain 4). This shows that he does not want to admit his wrong gesture and its consequence. Thus, Huck denies his problem in order to manage his anxiety and overcome the result of his action. According to Kendra Cherry, the author of *The Everything Psychology Book*, denial is "a type of defen(c)e mechanism that involves ignoring reality of a situation to avoid anxiety" and to gain time, "to accept, adopt and eventually move on" (para.1-3). This mechanism was first "described by the famed psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud", who defined "it as refusing to acknowledge upsetting facts about external events and internal ones, including memories, thoughts, and feelings"(qtd.in Cherry para.4).

Moreover, Huck's denial is related to his mental health condition, and that is called "substance abuse disorder", in which a person has a substance that he is obsessed with such as caffeine and alcohol (Cherry para. 9; Hartney para. 4). Huck's addiction to tobacco led him to develop the tobacco abuse disorder. It is evident in the novel that when Huck is scared and terrified, he tries to forget his situation and calm down by smoking as he narrates, "I set down

## Chapter Two

---

again, a-shaking all over, and got out my pipe for a smoke; for the house was all as still as death now, and so the widow wouldn't know" (Twain 4).

Moreover, he tried to keep off bad luck by throwing salt on his shoulder although he knew that it would not make any difference (Twain 16). Salt throwing on the left shoulder has European origin and it is used to "avert ill luck" (Puckett 443). Yet, his intense feeling of anxiety grows higher and he wants to know the meaning of the portent and when it will happen as he notes that he "started out, after breakfast, feeling worried and shaky, and wondering where it was going to fall on [him], and what it was" (Twain 16).

Huck's perception and attitude towards signs and omens have changed after he was accompanied by Jim; from a scared boy who fears predicting signs and ignoring them to a curious person looking forward to know more about the significance of omens. His curiosity was as result of the right predictions of omens by Jim and he became later a good listener to Jim's forecast of signs and omens. This is evident when Jim had a dream that made Huck anxious to know it and its meaning as he says, "Oh, well, that's all right, because a dream does tire a body like everything sometimes. But this one was a staving dream; tell me all about it, Jim" (Twain 88). He also shows his interest and eagerness in knowing the interpretation of the dream as he states, "Oh, well, that's all interpreted well enough as far as it goes, Jim, [he] says; but what does these things stand for?" (Twain 89). However, Jim's response to omens is more intrigued since he is extremely superstitious.

### **2.2.4.2. Jim's Reaction**

In the beginning of the novel, Jim was happy and fascinated by omens and signs as he told everyone he met about them and was not scared that he was "bewitched" by witches after finding his hat on the branch of tree while he was asleep. His extreme joy means that he is experiencing a wave of euphoria. According to Kendra Cherry, when someone is experiencing a euphoria, he will "feel a strong sense of well-being and a feeling that [he] [is] deeply connected to others and the rest of the world" ("What is a Euphoric Mood?" para.5). Yet, in other situations, this feeling is associated with "psychiatric conditions" such as "anxiety, confusion, paranoia..." (Cherry "What is a Euphoric Mood?" para.7). Indeed, Jim's euphoric mood was a result of his inability to explain certain situations and his suspicion towards the reality of the incident. Thus, his overjoying state was just paranoia. This latter is defined as "a pattern of thinking that involves intense, irrational distrust and suspicion. It can range from

## Chapter Two

---

mild feelings of discomfort, nervousness, or unease about a situation” (Purse para.1). Thus, Jim invents a whole story to make a logical reason to an incident that he cannot absorb and comprehend and each time he recounts it, he adds new events to embellish the story and to make more people listening to him as Huck narrates:

Jim said the witches bewitched him and put him in a trance, and rode him all over the State, and then set him under the trees again, and hung his hat on a limb to show who done it. And next time Jim told it he said they rode him down to New Orleans; and, after that, every time he told it he spread it more and more, till by and by he said they rode him all over the world, and tired him most to death, and his back was all over saddle-boils (Twain 6).

Throughout the novel, Jim felt happy specially when he predicts omens and signs that bring him good luck. For instance, when he tells Huck about the good significance of having hairy arms and breast which is becoming wealthy (Twain 48). Also, he is thrilled after his interpretation of this superstition became real as he got forty dollars from Tom at the end of the novel. Huck shows Jim’s happiness by saying that he “was pleased most to death, and busted out” (Twain 294). Yet, he is scared and terrified when omens try to give him warnings or bring him bad luck. In chapter fifteen, Jim is tired after he has a bad dream and he decides to interpret it and not to ignore it as Huck states:

[Jim] said he must start in and “interpret” it, because it was sent for a warning. He said the first towhead stood for a man that would try to do us some good, but the current was another man that would get us away from him. The whoops was warnings that would come to us every now and then, and if we didn’t try hard to make out to understand them they’d just take us into bad luck, ‘stead of keeping us out of it (Twain 88).

Moreover, Jim is always certain and confident of the prediction that he makes which indicates his strong belief in superstitions. In chapter ten, for instance, Jim believes that touching a snake is “the worst bad luck in the world to touch a snake-skin with [his] hands” and it will certainly bring bad luck as he says to Huck, “It’s a-comin’. Mind I tell you, it’s a-comin’” (Twain 54). Indeed, the bad omen came true and he was bitten by a snake that Huck thought was dead and hid it in Jim’s bed (Twain 54). Thus, Jim is more eager and curious than Huck as he tries to interpret every single omen and sign that he encounters whether it was good or bad unlike Huck who tries to ignore them at first but later he looks forward to know their meaning by asking Jim. Huck and Jim’s reactions and their changing attitudes towards omens and signs show the influence of those elements on the characters’ development and on their relationship.

### **2.3. The Impact of Omens, Signs and Superstitions on Huck and Jim**

Several researchers found that “engagement in superstition results into boost in confidence levels, overcome anxiety and ambiguity” (Afreen 3). It also gives people hope towards their future by giving them illusions that they take control of the situation (Afreen 3). Therefore, it increases their motivation and persistence and affects people’s choice and decision-making (Ang, Lai and Leong 1074-75). In *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, superstitions, omens and signs have a deep effect on the development of both characters, Huck Finn and the runaway slave Jim, through influencing their actions and decisions. They also have an effect on the relationship of Huck and Jim.

#### **2.3.1. The Impact of Omens on Huck**

Omens have played a significant role in the moral development of Huck Finn. This progress started with Huck’s changing attitude and perception towards signs; from a doubtful and suspicious boy towards searching for the meaning and significance of signs and omens until he became convinced and confident that these elements are accurate and trustful.

According to Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of moral development, “children develop morality and moral reasoning through moral logic that focused on seeking and maintaining justice and making distinction between right and wrong” (Cherry “Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development” para.1-3). This theory suggests that moral development goes through six stages, from childhood till adulthood. These stages are divided into three levels including, preconventional morality, conventional morality and postconventional morality. The first level focuses on children from one to nine-years old, when their decisions are made by adults through obeying them and being punished when breaking the rules. The second period pits emphasis on valuing social relationship and seeking approval from others by accepting social norms and laws. The last period of moral development is the highest one that is characterized by “developing an understanding of abstract principles of morality” (Cherry “Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development”).

##### **2.3.1.1. Huck’s Initial Skepticism towards Superstitions**

In the first chapters, Huck sometimes appeared as a believer in omens and in other situations he became skeptical and suspicious towards the reality of some superstitions especially those that are told by Jim. He tried those superstitions and none of them turned out as real:

## Chapter Two

---

Jim said you mustn't count the things you are going to cook for dinner, because that would bring bad luck. The same if you shook the table-cloth after sundown. And he said if a man owned a beehive and that man died, the bees must be told about it before sun-up next morning, or else the bees would all weaken down and quit work and die. Jim said bees wouldn't sting idiots; but I didn't believe that, because I had tried them lots of times myself, and they wouldn't sting me (Twain 47).

Moreover, doubting is seen as the source of knowledge as René Descartes states, I doubt, therefore I think therefore I am” (qtd. by The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica “Methodic doubt” para.2). He further explained the importance of being skeptic by showing that the knowledge that comes from “tradition is dubitable because authorities disagree; empirical knowledge dubitable because of illusions, hallucinations, and dreams; and mathematical knowledge dubitable because people make errors in calculating” (“Methodic doubt” para.2). Indeed, Huck is incredulous because of the lies that have been told to him and the hypocrisy that he experienced while living with the two sisters, the widow Douglas and Miss Watson. For instance, when the widow tried to teach him about Moses and the Bulrushers, he was first eager to know more about him but after he knew he was dead, he did not care anymore. Also, the hypocrisy of the widow when she found him smoking, she told him that it is a “mean practice” (Twain 2). Yet, “she took snuff, too; of course that was all right, because she done it herself” (Twain 2). She only objects to Huck's smoking and finds nothing wrong with her snuffing practice.

### **2.3.1.2. The Evolution of Huck's Attitude towards Superstitions**

Huck Finn's perception of omens has developed throughout the novel. At first, Huck was interpreting signs and omens alone which made him always deny or ignore them as a result of his fear towards the bad significance of the omens that he experienced. Indeed, he saw that most of them symbolize bad luck as he states: “it looked to me like all the signs was about bad luck” (Twain 47). Yet, after he met Jim on Jackson's Island, he started believing in them and became eager to know more, as he discovered some good omens. For instance, when he asks Jim if there are just awful signs and superstitions, Jim replies that there are “Mighty few—an' *dey* ain't no use to a body” and he adds: “Ef you's got hairy arms en a hairy breas', it's a sign dat you's agwyne to be rich” (Twain 47-8) which is a very positive sign.

Along their journey, Huck became more connected to omens and his actions were determined based on them as he witnesses that Jim's predictions are becoming reality. He

## Chapter Two

---

further narrates how Jim explains and interprets the sign of rain through observing the flight of birds:

Some young birds come along, flying a yard or two at a time and lighting. Jim said it was a sign it was going to rain. He said it was a sign when young chickens flew that way, and so he reckoned it was the same way when young birds done it. I was going to catch some of them, but Jim wouldn't let me. He said it was death. He said his father laid mighty sick once, and some of them caught a bird, and his old granny said his father would die, and he did (Twain 47).

Indeed, birds are seen as natural signs that predict weather especially domestic birds such as chickens. When someone sees chickens fly, it is an indication of rain (Puckett 509). There are other types of birds that play significant role in predicting weather as Newbell Niles Puckett notes:

If the cock flies upon the fence and picks his feathers during a rainstorm it will soon "fair off," as is also the case, in general, when chickens pick their feathers after a rain, though in England such preening at any time indicates foul weather. If chickens dust themselves or huddle all together in a bunch, the Negroes say that it indicates rain. The same is also true if chickens lie on their sides in the sun, but if they run for shelter when it first starts to rain it will not rain long, though if they stay out it will be a lengthy rain. The latter part of this belief is of European origin (509).

Therefore, Huck's position towards omens has changed after being accompanied by Jim and when those signs occurred as Jim interpreted them "pretty soon it darkened up, and begun to thunder and lighten; so the birds was right about it" (Twain 51). This shows that Huck Finn's actions started to be influenced by omens; for he and Jim start hiding their things in the back of the cavern before the rainfall (Twain 51). Huck's character and personality have also been affected by omens and signs.

### **2.3.2.3. The Influence of Omens on Huck's Character Development**

Huck's connection with nature and its signs and Jim's role as teacher of omens made him in conflict with himself, between his conscience that is formed by society and his sound heart as Twain claimed that, "sound heart and a deformed conscience come into collision and conscience suffers defeat" (qtd. by Kaufman 463).

In the beginning of the novel, Huck's interpretation of the bad omens that signified death including the hearing of an owl and the howling of a dog made his fear and anxiety grow intense which result in making Huck hope to have friend and to change his life by traveling to another place as he states, "All I wanted was to go somewheres; all I wanted was a change... I felt so

## Chapter Two

---

lonesome I most wished I was dead... I got so down-hearted and scared I did wish I had some company (Twain 3-4).

Then, his eagerness to interpret those omens made him meet Jim who was the foreteller of every single sign and omen throughout the novel. Moreover, when Huck was in conflict with his conscience and wanted to hand over the runaway Jim to the widow Douglass, he was shocked by the difference between him and Jim who was always talking out loud about everything that a slave desired, and that is freedom as Huck claims:

Jim talked out loud all the time while I was talking to myself. He was saying how the first thing he would do when he got to a free State he would go to saving up money and never spend a single cent, and when he got enough he would buy his wife, which was owned on a farm close to where Miss Watson lived; and then they would both work to buy the two children (Twain 91).

He then sympathised with him as he is certain that Jim trusts him and is honest with him; “[Jim] wouldn’t ever dared to talk such talk in his life before” (Twain 92). Moreover, his decision to not give Jim to his mistress is the best proof of his moral development and his victory in fighting his deformed conscience and reach the reality that what he was doing was wrong. He tried to pray before handing over Jim but “the words wouldn’t come” and thus he knew that what he is going to do is a “sin” and he felt “deep down in [him] [he] knowed it was a lie, and He knowed it” (Twain 215-16). He then came to the conclusion that someone cannot pray a lie and chose to go to hell to save Jim from prison after he was captured by the Phelps family.

Moreover, Huck appears as a grown man who thinks on his own as he does not leave people’s perception regarding the issue of slavery affect him. He also sees that Jim’s desires are the same as his wishes to be free as he says, “Jim just as free a man as mine would, and maybe get us all killed besides. So I was satisfied” (Twain 235). This reveals that Huck’s relationship with Jim and the hardships that they have lived throughout their journey led to the breaking of the racial barrier and made them friends for Huck describes Jim as “his true friend” (Twain 236).

### **2.3.2. The Impact of Omens on Jim**

Jim’s prediction of omens and signs shifts when he escapes enslavement as Daniel Hoffman explained in his article entitled “Jim’s Magic: Black or White”. As the novel’s events develop,

## Chapter Two

---

Jim changes from a “victim of his own credulity, persecuted by his own superstitions of witchcraft” to “a magician able to read the mysterious signs of nature” and his interpretation were becoming real (Hoffman 48). Moreover, he was playing the role of teacher who knew every sign and omen and its significance. Thus, omens and signs have a great effect on Jim’s personality and his behavior towards Huck.

### **2.3.2.1. Omens and Signs as Jim’s Assets**

In the beginning of the novel, Jim used omens and signs to his advantage. In chapter two, Huck’s friend played a trick on Jim by taking his hat while sleeping and put it on a tree branch which made Jim glad and pleased as he thought that the witches charmed him. Thus, he became “monstrous proud about it” (Twain 6).

He recounts it whenever he meets a slave by adding suspense and more details to make it more interesting and attractive to the listeners. He then takes his story to his benefit by making slaves give anything to him in order to show them “the five-center piece” which he wore as a necklace as he believes that it was a gift from the devil who “told him he could cure anybody with it and fetch witches whenever he wanted to just by saying something to it” (Twain 7). People were coming from every place just to hear his anecdote as Huck claims, “niggers would come miles to hear Jim tell about it, and he was more looked up to than any nigger in that country” (Twain 6). Therefore, he became the most famous slave in the state.

Moreover, he used his hair-ball as an African tool called amulet to protect himself from spells and conjuration. Yet, Jim lied about it to Huck and told him that there is a “spirit inside of it, and it knowed everything” and later he manipulates him and said that, “it wouldn’t talk without money” (Twain 17). Thus, Huck brought him a “an old slick counterfeit quarter” and Jim started doing some gestures with his ball as if he was trying to connect with the spirit to predict the future of the little boy:

Jim got out his hair-ball and said something over it, and then he held it up and dropped it on the floor. It fell pretty solid, and only rolled about an inch. Jim tried it again, and then another time, and it acted just the same. Jim got down on his knees, and put his ear against it and listened (Twain 17).

After Jim put the quarter, he finally could listen to what the spirit was going to tell and told Huck about what his father was going to do and when he returned. Yet, the only thing that Jim predicted was that Huck’s father has two angels, one is white and good and the other is black and evil but he did not know which angel will dominate his father; thus, the future of Huck with his father was still unknown. The slave used omens and signs that happened to him

in his own benefit although he was afraid and uncertain of the prediction. Still, they help him to enhance his reputation and gain money by manipulating others but they also guide him and direct him through his challenges and decisions.

### **2.3.2.2. Omens, Signs and Superstitions as Source of Guidance for Jim**

Omens and signs are regarded as the beacon that guides Jim through his journey with Huck. They are as the light that enables him to see danger coming and alerts him before a calamity occurs or gives him hope to continue his trip. Thus, his decisions are determined by those signs that should be interpreted in their right meaning to guide him to the right path and to his freedom.

For instance, when he predicts the unusual movement of birds in the sky as a symbol of rain; “some young birds come along, flying a yard or two at a time and lighting. Jim said it was a sign it was going to rain” (Twain 47). Thus, he and Huck could hide their things in the cavern and prevent them from damage by rain and keep themselves dry by seeking a shelter and delaying their sailing. Right after they shelter in the cave, it starts raining “and begun to thunder and lighten” (Twain 51).

Yet, Huck’s recklessness made Jim’s attempts to get away from bad luck go in vain; especially after Huck plays a trick on him by hiding the rattlesnake in Jim’s bed and it later bites him. So the bad luck of the snake came when the canoe disappeared after the fog. Huck thought that they missed reaching Cairo when the fog came. Thus, Jim puts the blame on the snake and he was “awful disappointed” as he says, “Po’ niggers can’t have no luck. I awluz ‘spected dat rattlesnake-skin warn’t done wid its work” (Twain 96). Thus, the portent of the snake alerts Jim of the bad incidents that they will encounter and from the beginning he has warned Huck to stay away from this evil creature.

### **2.3.2.3. The Influence of Omens and Signs on Jim’s Relationship with Huck**

Omens and signs have a great effect on shaping the relationship between Huck and Jim. In chapter ten, Huck wanted to know more about the dead man that they found in the house. However, Jim did not allow him to see the dead body that was floating in water and he hid the truth about the dead man from Huck as he knew that it was his father Pap by explaining to Huck that it is an awful sign that will bring bad luck:

## Chapter Two

---

After breakfast I wanted to talk about the dead man and guess out how he come to be killed, but Jim didn't want to. He said it would fetch bad luck; and besides, he said, he might come and ha'nt us; he said a man that warn't buried was more likely to go a-ha'nting around than one that was planted and comfortable. That sounded pretty reasonable, so I didn't say no more; but I couldn't keep from studying over it and wishing I knowed who shot the man, and what they done it for (Twain 54).

Indeed, he succeeded in keeping the death of Huck's father a secret until the end of their journey which shows his caring and his love for Huck. After he was freed in the last chapter and when Huck thought that his father took all his money from Judge Thatcher and spent all of it on alcohol, Jim finally announced that Huck's father passed away and he will never return as he explained:

He ain't a-comin' back no mo' /Doan' you 'member de house dat was float'n down de river, en dey wuz a man in dah, kivered up, en I went in en unkivered him and didn' let you come in? Well, den, you kin git yo' money when you wants it, kase dat wuz him (Twain 295).

Jim also risked his life and freedom to save Huck's friend Tom as he took him to the Doctor after being injured and the doctor told the men who captured Jim that they should not treat him roughly as he states:

[he] never see a nigger that was a better nuss or faithfuller, and yet he was risking his freedom to do it, and was all tired out, too, and [he] see plain enough he'd been worked main hard lately. [he] liked the nigger for that... a nigger like that is worth a thousand dollars (Twain 288).

Therefore, Jim and Huck became true friends as he says, "Huck; you's de bes' fren' Jim's ever had" (Twain 92). They both started caring for each other and Jim was the guide and the protector of Huck by explaining and interpreting the significance of omens especially those that would bring them bad luck so they can prevent the danger that will face them.

### 2.3. Conclusion

The chapter examines the influence of omens and signs on the main characters in the novel, Huck and Finn, by taking first a look into how Twain presented those characters and then, analysing their reaction to superstition and omens which looks different from each other since Huck in the beginning of novel appeared skeptical towards those elements but as time passed, he started believing in them and was eager to know more about their significance from Jim; whereas, for Jim, omens were the source of fame, reputation and guidance to his freedom. They also affected and shaped his relation with Huck and made them true friends.

# **General Conclusion**

## General Conclusion

---

The nineteenth-century events were seen as turning points that transformed and shaped the American character. During this period, the country witnessed economic, political and social changes such as the Industrial Revolution and the expansion to the West that led to tensions between the Northerners who were against slavery and the Southerners whose economy depended on slaves. Furthermore, religious and superstitious beliefs have played a significant role in the daily life of Americans and African-Americans. Among these beliefs are signs, omens and superstitions that escalated with the spread of diseases and the intense fear of people from the unknown or the inability to give an explanation to certain phenomena. One of the significant works that reflected the superstitious society during this era was Mark Twain's novel, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, that tackled the impact of those elements on the major characters (Huckleberry Finn and Jim) including their actions and reactions towards omens and how it shaped their relation.

Moreover, the Americans' embracement of superstitions, omens and signs were a result of certain historical and cultural events. Many superstitious beliefs in America are traced back to the beliefs and practices of the early European settlers such as English, Scottish and Irish. Their new life was filled with beliefs in superstitions that were involved in agriculture such as omens and signs that are related to the perfect season and day for planting in order to avoid crop spoilage that was caused by the harsh weather of rural areas. They also believed in omens that are related to childbirth because of the spread of diseases such as fever, malaria and cholera. Until Americans moved to cities during the Industrial Revolution, citizens started experiencing new anxieties and uncertainties regarding their harsh working conditions that led again to the blind faith in superstitions and omens. Besides, the slaves of those planters were strong believers in superstitions. They brought from Africa their own rituals and practices. Yet, many superstitions are similar among the Africans and Americans such as the bad luck a black cat or an owl brought when someone encountered them. Still, the black people's superstitions are distinguished from the Whites by the voodoo magic practiced by *traiteurs* or voodoo doctors using herbs and prescriptions to prevent a person from being conjured.

The Americans' craving for superstition and the supernatural was also reflected through literature that spread supernatural elements and popular superstitions among the general public. Authors such as Washington Irving and Ambrose Bierce were inspired by superstition because it was alluring and seen as the source of imagination by using them as literary devices such as foreshadowing and symbols where the author gives hints to the future events in order to add

## General Conclusion

---

suspense and thus immerse the reader into the events of the novel and please him by making him predict the future and destiny of the characters.

Indeed, Mark Twain's novel depends heavily on those elements specially in developing the major characters, primarily Huckleberry Finn and Jim. From the beginning of the novel, Huck Finn appears as a superstitious child. Thus, he is swamped by natural signs and omens that predict bad luck and are seen as portents of death such as the hearing of an owl, the howling of a dog, and the crying of whippoorwill. Another bad omen is when Huck has accidentally killed a spider that was on his shoulder and he got frightened. Yet, throughout the novel, Huck Finn's response to omens, signs and superstitions has changed after he was accompanied by Jim; from a scared boy who fears predicting signs and ignores them to a curious person looking forward to know more about omens. His curiosity was a result of the right predictions of omens. Thus, omens have played a significant role in the moral development of Huck Finn. This progress was seen through Huck's changing attitude and perception towards signs; from a doubtful and suspicious boy towards searching for the meaning and significance of signs and omens until he became convinced and confident that these elements are accurate.

Huck's connection with nature and its signs and Jim's role as teacher of omens made him in conflict with himself, between his conscience that is formed by society and his sound heart. His sympathy towards Jim and his decision to not hand him over to his mistress is the best proof of his moral development and his victory in fighting his deformed conscience. Thus, omens had an effect on Huck's personality and his relationship to Jim, from seeing him as a slave to becoming his best friend.

The slave Jim is another strong believer in superstitions; still, his perception towards omens is complex since he sometimes appeared happy when predicting some omens and in other situations, scared. In the beginning of the novel, Jim was happy and fascinated by omens and signs as he told everyone he met about them and was not scared and he used them to his advantage whether to gain reputation among other slaves or money. Throughout the story, Jim's prediction of omens and signs shifts when he escapes enslavement and it becomes a source for guidance through his journey with Huck. They enable him to see danger coming and alert him before a calamity occurs or give him hope to continue his trip. Thus, his decisions are determined by those signs that should be interpreted in their right meaning to guide him to the right path and to his freedom. They also shape his relation with Huck as he played the role of a

## General Conclusion

---

father when he kept the death of Huck's father a secret and prevented him from seeing his father's corpse. Jim also risked his life and freedom to save Huck's friend Tom as he took him to the doctor after being injured. Therefore, Jim's blind faith in omens affect his personality and his relation to Huck as he became his best friend who told him everything that he desired such as admitting to him that he escapes to free himself and his family.

Omens and Signs have played a great role in shaping the life and the journey of these two characters who have different backgrounds, skins and each of them has a racial stereotype about the other. This racial barrier has collapsed through listening to the honest sound of the heart by interpreting the significance of natural signs and omens that save the characters' life, give them hope, and show them the right path, instead of listening to the deformed conscience that had been shaped by social norms and rules of a materialized and hypocrite society. Yet, there is a difference between natural signs that came from the universe and the mother nature that guide people towards their journeys in discovering the reality and the secret behind their existence and some omens and superstitions that are shaped by people's perception towards their fears and uncertainties about certain phenomenon. This distinction between these two elements have been positioned under the same umbrella of superstitions has been highlighted to differentiate between natural signs and superstitions that may appear similar but possess distinct differences.

# Appendices

## Appendix: The Summary of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

"The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," written by Mark Twain, follows the journey of a young boy named Huckleberry "Huck" Finn. Huck escapes from his abusive father and sets off down the Mississippi River on a raft. He is joined by Jim, a runaway slave seeking freedom. As they travel, Huck and Jim encounter various characters and challenges, including two conmen who create trouble. Throughout their journey, Huck grapples with his conscience and societal values, particularly regarding race and friendship. Despite the dangers, Huck decides to help Jim attain freedom, even if it means breaking the law. The novel explores themes of freedom, racism, and moral growth, culminating in Jim's eventual emancipation and Huck's decision to seek his own path away from societal constraints.

# **Bibliography**

## Bibliography

---

- “African Religion in America.” *The Pluralism Project*, pluralism.org.  
<https://pluralism.org/african-religion-in-america>. Accessed 5 Apr. 2024.
- Aashima, Rana. “Does Killing Spiders Bring Bad Luck?” *RTE.ie*, 8 Aug. 2022,  
[www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2022/0808/1312024-spiders-folklore-superstitions-ireland](http://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2022/0808/1312024-spiders-folklore-superstitions-ireland).
- Afreen, Faiza. “Social and psychological factors for Superstition: A Brief literature review.” *International Journal of Advance Study and Research Work*, vol.1, no.5, 2018, pp. 81. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.1405381.
- Ang, Swee Hoon, Wai Kit Lai, and Siew Meng Leong. “The effects of superstition on choice and latency.” *Psychology & Marketing*, vol. 31, no.12, 2014, pp. 1074-1083.
- Barney, Brett. “Walt Whitman: Nineteenth-century Popular Culture.” (2006).
- Bassett, Fletcher S. *Legends and Superstitions of the Sea and of Sailors in All Lands and at All Times*. Belford, Clarke, 1885.
- Baym, Nina. *Novels, readers, and reviewers: Responses to fiction in antebellum America*. Cornell University Press, 1987.
- Berkove, Lawrence I. “Fatal Self-Assertion in Kate Chopin’s ‘The Story of an Hour.’” *American Literary Realism*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2000, pp. 152–58. *JSTOR*,  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27746974>. Accessed 5 Apr. 2024.
- Bierce, Ambrose. *The complete short stories of Ambrose Bierce*. Vol. 896. U of Nebraska Press, 1984.
- Burris, Christopher T., and Rebecca Leitch. “Harmful Fun: Pranks and Sadistic Motivation.” *Motivation and Emotion*, vol. 90–102, no. 1, 31 Oct. 2017,  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11031-017-9651-5>.
- Butler, Jon, Grant Wacker, and Randall Balmer. *Religion in American Life: A Short History Updated Edition*. Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Byerly, Alison. *Realism, Representation, and the Arts in Nineteenth-Century Literature*. Vol. 12. Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Cameron, Euan. *Enchanted Europe: superstition, reason, and religion 1250-1750*. OUP Oxford, 2010.
- Cannell, Margaret. "Signs, Omens, and Portents in Nebraska Folklore." (1933).
- Cherry, Kendra. “What is a Euphoric Mood?”. *Verywell Mind*, 2 Apr.2022.  
<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-a-euphoric-mood-5212790>. Accessed 19 Apr.2024.

## Bibliography

---

- Cherry, Kendra. "Denial as a Defense Mechanism". *Verywell Mind*, 14 Nov.2023.  
<https://www.verywellmind.com/denial-as-a-defense-mechanism-5114461>. Accessed 19 Apr.2024
- Cherry, Kendra. "'Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development'". *Verywell Mind*, 7 Nov.2024.  
<https://www.verywellmind.com/kohlbergs-theory-of-moral-development-2795071>.Accessed 20 Apr.2024.
- Cielo, Astra. *Signs, omens and superstitions*. Health Research Books, 1996.
- Cohn, Robert G. "Symbolism." *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 33, no. 2, 1974, pp. 181–92. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/429086>. Accessed 5 Apr. 2024.
- Cohut, Maria. "The Controversy of 'Female Hysteria'." *MedicalNews' Today*,13 October 2020. <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/the-controversy-of-female-hysteria>. Accessed 21 Mar.2024.
- "Conjure." *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conjure>. Accessed 15 Mar.2024.
- Corbett, P. Scott, et al. *U.S. History*. *OpenStax*, 30 Dec. 2014, U.S. History ([d3bxy9euw4e147.cloudfront.net](https://d3bxy9euw4e147.cloudfront.net)).
- Cowan, Frank. *Curious Facts in the History of Insects: Including Spiders and Scorpions. A Complete Collection of the Legends, Superstitions, Beliefs, and Ominous Signs Connected with Insects; Together with Their Uses in Medicine, Art, and as Food; and a Summary of Their Remarkable Injuries and Appearances*. JB Lippincott & Company, 1865.
- Crawford, Benjamin. "By Supernatural Means": Environment and Ambiguity in Irving's "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, vol. 28, no. 4, 2021, pp. 1507-1533.
- Cromwell, John W. "The Aftermath of Nat Turner's Insurrection." *The Journal of Negro History*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1920, pp. 208–34. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2713592>. Accessed 5 Apr. 2024.
- "Dalnavert, in Yellow." *Dalnavert Museum*, 24 Mar. 2021.  
<https://www.friendsofdalnavert.ca/blog/2021/3/24/dalnavert-in-yellow>. Accessed 21 Mar.2024.

## Bibliography

---

- Dresslar, Fletcher B. "Suggestions on the Psychology of Superstition." *American Journal of Psychiatry*, vol. 67, no. 2, 1910, pp. 213-26.
- Dundes, Alan. "Brown County Superstitions: The Structure of Superstition." *Midwest Folklore*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1961, pp. 25-56. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4317902>. Accessed 5 Apr. 2024.
- Elizabeth Hartney. "DSM 5 Criteria for Substance Use Disorders." *Verywell Mind*, 7 Apr. 2023, [www.verywellmind.com/dsm-5-criteria-for-substance-use-disorders-21926](http://www.verywellmind.com/dsm-5-criteria-for-substance-use-disorders-21926). Accessed 19 Apr. 2024.
- Evans, C. Stephen. *Natural Signs and Knowledge of God: A New Look at Theistic Arguments*. Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Fishkin, Shelley Fisher. *Was Huck Black?: Mark Twain and African-American Voices*. Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Franklin, Benjamin. *Research Guide to American Literature*. Vol. 1. Infobase Publishing, 2010.
- Graebner, Norman A. "Christianity and Democracy: Tocqueville's Views of Religion in America." *The Journal of Religion*, vol. 56, no. 3, 1976, pp. 263-73. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1201932>. Accessed 5 Apr. 2024.
- Gray, Richard. *A history of American literature*. John Wiley & Sons, 2011.
- Gray, Thomas R. and Turner, Nat, "The Confessions of Nat Turner" (1831). *Zea E-Books in American Studies*. 11. <https://digitalcommons.unl.edu/zeaamericanstudies/11>. Accessed 28 Feb. 2024.
- Green, John. "19th Century Reforms: Crash Course US History #15." *YouTube*, 15 May 2013, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=t62fUZJvjOs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t62fUZJvjOs).
- Hansen, Chadwick. "The Character of Jim and the Ending of 'Huckleberry Finn.'" *The Massachusetts Review*, vol. 5, no. 1, 1963, pp. 45-66. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25087058>. Accessed 14 Apr. 2024.
- Heyrman, Christine Leigh. "Native American Religion in Early America", *Divining America*, TeacherServe®, National Humanities Center. <https://www.nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/eighteen/ekeyinfo/elinksna.htm>. Accessed 5 Apr. 2024.
- Hoffman, Daniel G. "Jim's Magic: Black or White?" *American Literature*, vol. 32, no. 1, 1960, pp. 47-54. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2922801>. Accessed 15 Apr. 2024.

## Bibliography

---

- Hoffman, Daniel G. Irving's Use of American Folklore in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." *PMLA/Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 68, no. 3, 1953, pp. 425-35. doi:10.2307/459863.
- Hoffmann, Arvid, et al. "Superstitious Beliefs, Locus of Control, and Feeling at Risk in the Face of Covid-19." *Personality and Individual Differences*, vol.196, pp. 111718, 1 Oct. 2022, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2022.111718>.
- Hoke, N. C. "Folk-Custom and Folk-Belief in North Carolina." *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 5, no. 17, 1892, pp. 113–20. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/533545>. Accessed 15 Mar. 2024.
- Hurston, Zora. "Hoodoo in America." *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 44, no. 174, 1931, pp. 317–417. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/535394>. Accessed 5 Apr. 2024.
- Jocks, Christopher and Sullivan, Lawrence E.. "Native American religions". *Encyclopedia Britannica*.<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Native-American-religion>. Accessed 4 April 2024.
- "Juju." *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/juju-magic>. Accessed 15 Mar.2024
- Karthik Kumar. "What Causes Shivering? 14 Causes, COVID-19." *MedicineNet*, 6 Jan. 2022, [www.medicinenet.com/what\\_causes\\_shivering/article.htm](http://www.medicinenet.com/what_causes_shivering/article.htm). Accessed 17 Apr.2024.
- Kaufman, Will. "Mark Twain's Deformed Conscience." *American Imago*, vol. 63, no. 4, 2006, pp. 463–78. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26305378>. Accessed 20 Apr. 2024.
- Levitt, Eugene E. "Superstitions: Twenty-Five Years Ago and Today." *The American Journal of Psychology*, vol. 65, no. 3, 1952, pp. 443–49. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1418765>. Accessed 26 Jan. 2024.
- Marcot, Bruce, David Johnson and Mark Cocker. "Owls in Lore and Culture." *The Owl Pages*, [www.owlpages.com/owls/articles.php?a=64&p=2](http://www.owlpages.com/owls/articles.php?a=64&p=2).Accessed 16 Apr.2024.
- Morson, Gary Saul. "Foreshadowing." *Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time*, Yale University Press, 1994, pp. 42–81. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt32bmv0.8>. Accessed 20 Mar. 2024.
- Mullen, Patrick B. "Belief and the American Folk." *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 113, no. 448, 2000, pp. 119–43. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/541285>. Accessed 1 Mar. 2024.

## Bibliography

---

- Nafi, Jamal. "The Role of Superstition in Twain's *the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and Shakespeare's *Macbeth*: A Comparative Study." *English Language and Literature Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2016, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2838072>
- Ogunleye, Tolagbe. "African American Folklore: Its Role in Reconstructing African American History." *Journal of Black Studies*, vol. 27, no. 4, 1997, pp. 435–55. *JSTOR*, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2784725>. Accessed 5 Mar. 2024.
- "Omen". *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/omens>. Accessed 7 Mar.2024.
- Porterfield, Amanda, and John Corrigan, eds. *Religion in American history*. John Wiley & Sons, 2010.
- Powers, Ron. *Mark Twain: a life*. Simon and Schuster, 2005.Ebook
- Pryke, Louise. "Friday Essay: From Angry Gods and Fertile Myths to Battleships and New Technologies – How the Wind Shapes Our World." *The Conversation*, <http://theconversation.com/friday-essay-from-angry-gods-and-fertile-myths-to-battleships-and-new-technologies-how-the-wind-shapes-our-world-206592>
- Puckett, Newbell Niles. *Folk beliefs of the southern Negro*. University of North Carolina Press, 1926. <https://www.noor-book.com/Folk-beliefs-of-the-southern-Negro-pdf>.
- Purse, Marcia. "What Is Paranoia?" *Verywell Mind*, 28 Apr. 2022, [www.verywellmind.com/what-is-paranoia-378960](http://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-paranoia-378960). Accessed 19 Apr.2024.
- Reinke, Benjamin. "What Does a Spider Mean in the Bible?". 27 Jan. 2024, [versesandprayers.com/what-does-a-spider-mean-in-the-bible](http://versesandprayers.com/what-does-a-spider-mean-in-the-bible). Accessed 16 Apr.2024.
- Roberts, Hilda. "Louisiana Superstitions." *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 40, no. 156, 1927, pp. 144–208. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/534893>. Accessed 14 Mar. 2024.
- Robinson, Forrest G. "The Characterization of Jim in Huckleberry Finn." *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, vol. 43, no. 3, 1988, pp. 361–91. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3044898>. Accessed 14 Apr. 2024.
- Ronan, Clifford J. "Lucanic Omens in *Julius Caesar*." *Comparative Drama*, vol. 22 no. 2, 1988, p. 138-44. *Project MUSE*, <https://doi.org/10.1353/cdr.1988.0044>.
- "Sign." *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sign>. Accessed 12 Mar.2024.
- Simon, Mónica. "Symbolism in the Yellow wallpaper by charlotte Gilman Perkins." *ERUDITIO–EDUCATIO*: 165.

## Bibliography

---

- Staal, Arie. "The Role of Foreshadowing in the Fiction of Nathaniel Hawthorne." PhD. Diss. U of Michigan, 1970. *ProQuest*.  
<https://www.proquest.com/openview/76dd832a3689a0dd52a0af1046a290f7/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750&diss=y>. Accessed 4 Apr.2024.
- Stanley, Jonathan W. "Snakes: objects of religion, fear, and myth." *Journal of Integrative Biology*, vol.2, no.2 ,2008, pp. 42-58.
- "Superstition." *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/superstition> . Accessed 8 Mar.2024.
- "Superstitions of Negroes in New Orleans." *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 5, no. 19, 1892, pp. 330–32. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/533248>. Accessed 15 Mar. 2024.
- The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Elf | Mythology, Origins and Germanic Folklore." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 20 July 1998.  
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/elf-mythology>. Accessed 23 Mar.2024.
- The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Methodic Doubt | Descartes, Skepticism, Rationalism." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 20 July 1998,  
[www.britannica.com/topic/methodic-doubt](http://www.britannica.com/topic/methodic-doubt). Accessed 20 Apr.2024.
- The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. "Witchcraft | Definition, History, Varieties, and Facts." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 29 Mar. 2024,  
[www.britannica.com/topic/witchcraft/Contemporary-witchcraft](http://www.britannica.com/topic/witchcraft/Contemporary-witchcraft). Accessed 17 Apr.2024.
- "The Mighty and Mysterious Gods and Goddesses of Wind". *WeatherSleuth*.  
[www.weathersleuth.com/wind\\_god.html](http://www.weathersleuth.com/wind_god.html). Accessed 16 Apr.2024.
- Thomas, Adam. "The spectral Imagination: American art between science and superstition in the late nineteenth century." PhD. Diss. U of Illinois, Urbana, 2014.
- Twain, Mark. *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. A Glassbook Classic. adobe.com, n.d,  
<https://contentserver.adobe.com/store/books/HuckFinn.pdf>.
- Uhl, Mary. *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, vol. 36, no. 1, 2003, pp. 145–51. *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1315406>. Accessed 25 Jan. 2024.
- Vyse, Stuart A. *Believing in Magic: The Psychology of Superstition-updated edition*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2014.
- Walsh, Martin. "Birds of omen and little flying animals with wings." *East Africa Natural History Society Bulletin*, vol. 22, no.1 ,1992, pp. 2-9.

## Bibliography

---

Warren, Tom. "How Birds Predict Weather." *Almanac.com*, 16 Feb. 2024,  
[www.almanac.com/how-birds-predict-weather](http://www.almanac.com/how-birds-predict-weather).

White, Deborah Elise. *Romantic Returns: Superstition, Imagination, History*. Stanford University Press, 2000.

White, Richard. *The Republic for Which It Stands: The United States During Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896*. Oxford University Press, 2017.

## Summary

This dissertation explores the significance of the omens, signs and superstitions in Mark Twain's novel *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* through the analysis of the major characters. This study aims at detecting and explaining the meaning of omens and their impact on Huck and Jim by taking a closer look at the background of each one including their personalities and their beliefs in superstitions, and the influence of signs and superstitions on both characters and the way it shapes their relation. Thus, the work is divided into two chapters. The first chapter tackles the historical and cultural background of the American society during the nineteenth century. Then, the second chapter is devoted to one of the most prominent works of this era which is *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* that is written by Mark Twain and examines the influence of these elements in this novel by first taking into consideration the identification and analysis of omens, signs and superstitions in the novel and then shifting the focus on the role of those beliefs in the development of the two characters.

### المخلص

تستطلع مذكرة الماستر هذه أهمية البشائر، الإشارات والخرافات في رواية مارك توين "مغامرات هاكلبيري فين" من خلال تحليل الشخصيات الرئيسية. تهدف هذه الدراسة الى كشف وتفسير دلالة البشائر وتأثيرها على هاك وجيم عبر النظر في خلفيتهما بما في ذلك ادراج شخصيتهما ومعتقداتهم الخرافية وتأثيرها على شخصيتهما وبناء علاقتهما ببعض وبالتالي ينقسم هذا العمل الى فصلين. يتناول الفصل الأول الخلفية التاريخية والثقافية للمجتمع الأمريكي خلال القرن التاسع عشر. ثم يخصص الفصل الثاني الى تقصي أثر هذه العناصر في الرواية من خلال التركيز اولا على تحديد وتحليل البشائر، الاشارات والخرافات ثم صب التركيز على دور هذه المعتقدات في تطور الشخصيتين.

### Résumé

Cette recherche explore l'importance des présages, signes et superstitions dans le roman de Mark Twain intitulé *Les Aventures de Huckleberry Finn* en analysant les principaux personnages. Cette étude vise à détecter et à expliquer la signification des présages et leur impact sur Huck et Jim en examinant de plus près le contexte de chacun, y compris leurs personnalités et leurs croyances en superstitions, ainsi que l'influence des signes sur les deux personnages et la manière dont cela façonne leurs relations. Le travail est donc divisé en deux chapitres. Le premier chapitre aborde le contexte historique et culturel de la société américaine au dix-neuvième siècle. Ensuite, le deuxième chapitre sera consacré à explorer ces éléments dans le roman, en commençant par se concentrer sur l'identification et l'analyse des présages, signes et superstitions, puis en mettant l'accent sur le rôle de ces croyances dans l'évolution des deux personnages.