The Adventures Of Tom Sawyer: Personal Growth

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer is a bildungsroman novel written by Mark Twain that tells us a series of events that happen to a boy from the south of the United States who lives in a town near the Mississippi River. A bildungsroman is a novel in which emphasis is the education and maturing of its main character.

Tom lives with his aunt Polly; he always causes problems to her for his lack of discipline. Since her mother died a while ago, she is the only one in charge of Tom. Whenever he gets into trouble, plays tricks on his aunt to save himself from the problems and escapes, besides being a very naughty child, he is very clever and always finds a way to solve his problems by planning a big lie that benefits him.

Tom and his friends see the world in a different way than adults, they live without many problems, with a simple life, make barter and are very superstitious. In contrast, the adults in Mark Twain's novel are no more mature than the children who are raising, drunkards of the town, very strict and ingenuous parents, etc. Throughout the novel we can see Tom’s transformation from a naughty boy into a hero praised by the adults in his community because of his audacity and talent to manipulate people by deceiving them.

This essay will strive to demonstrate how this novel follows this process called bildungsroman in which is focused on the psychological and moral development of the character rather than the adventure itself. Also, is going to be shown how Twain does not only narrates a change in Tom’s personality, but a change in the adults’ perception of Tom. Finally, it will be analyzed if, in fact, Tom had a personal growth becoming in a “hero” or it only was one of his deceiving tricks of solving the same problems that he caused.

First, we can identify that the theme of this novel is the evolution and the physical, moral, psychological and social development of a character. The novel presents a story of the moral development of a child who is in a youth stage, so his friends and freedom are the paramount of his happiness. Punishing him or putting him to perform forced labor leads him to commit immoral acts. In an early scene, Tom has the brilliant idea of ??pretending to be enjoying the painting of the fence that his aunt forced him to whitewash, because of his great talent for manipulation, he convinces other children to paint his aunt's fence for him. He does not feel any remorse, even though his lie hurts other people. He acts in a disobedient manner when he flees from his house with his friends to a nearby island, this causes the neighbors of the town and his own aunt to conclude that he died drowned before appearing by surprise at his own funeral. But the subsequent actions he performs like, Tom's decision to save Becky from the cave in which he lost her, his offer of half his money to poor Huck Finn and his statements against Injun Joe about his murder to dr. Robinson, convince the adults that Tom has reformed and became a man. Therefore, Twain's novel fits perfectly to the definition of a bildungsroman. Tom learned the importance of being a responsible, charitable and a fair person, so that all his trips shown in the book led him to evolve into a boy who is a pride for his community and his aunt. 'They felt heroes instantly, it was a glorious apotheosis, they missed them, they wore mourning for them, they were all grieving and tears were shed for their cause, there were remorse of conscience for bad treatment inflicted on the poor guys to useless and late regrets, and what was even more

valuable: they were the conversation of all the people and the envy of all the boys, at least for that dazzling notoriety, that was nice, it was worth being a pirate, after all. ' (Twain, 91)

This leads us to the most severe satire that Twain exposes in his work: the hypocrisy, the hypocrisy of adults towards children, they are punished for unfair reasons and their parents are equally guilty for most of the problems that they originate.

Although the novel is critical of the hypocrisy of the adult society, that is, of the frequent discord between its values and its behavior, Twain does not really defend subversion. The novel demonstrates the potential dangers of subverting authority as well as demonstrating the dangers of adhering to authority too strictly. The children in this novel have the need of escape from that environment in which they are controlled and contained of all fun. It is ironic to think that the adults in this story are as responsible as they claim to be, since many of them commit sins and slander, then prefer to blame the children for their own mistakes. for example, the remarkable doctor of the town, Doctor Robinson, realized experiments with corpses that he unearthed with the aid of delinquents. When he was murdered by Joe, many accused Muff Potter (the village drunkard) for this crime, but Tom knew the truth and he testified of what he saw. The adults, at first, did not believe in the child with great imagination and fame of deceive. This perception of the adults towards Tom changed completely from naughty child to mature hero when they discovered that his declarations were true. This scene shows us, ironically, the low intelligence of adults when judging the innocence and guilt of a person, and how easy it was for Tom to make them change their mind about him with a simple honorable act.

'Tom received more kisses and more kisses that day-according to the fickle humors of Aunt Polly-than he ordinarily earned in a year, and he did not know which of the two things expressed more gratitude to God and affection for his own person. ' (Twain, 109)

Ultimately, the personal growth of our character becomes more noticeable as the story progresses. Tom's experiences have made him a mature person. When he convinces Huck to stay, he does so with an awareness of the importance of accepting society and being part of it. He and Huck are rich and have a prosperous future, and Tom understands this. He is not a full mature man, yet – he is still dreaming of becoming a thief and all the things that he has always wanted since boy - but he is definitely a person who has changed. Twain ends the book at a point where Tom the boy is, without doubt, on the way to becoming a man. His story celebrates the freedom, mischief, and excitement of youth, and suggests that children shouldn’t hurry to grow up and become adults.

'He discovered, without realizing it, one of the fundamental principles of human behavior, namely that for someone, man or boy, to crave something, it is only necessary to make it difficult to achieve.'

In conclusion, this great novel by Mark Twain take us to feel a great nostalgia for the good times of our childhood. The innocence of a child and his great ingenuity to immerse himself in incredible adventures shows us the beauty in the process of maturity. The experiences that Tom lived to forge his new more mature and conscious person were indispensable for his personal growth. Thus, Twain educates us with his bildungsroman novel on the importance of living life without restrictions and even more if it is in its earliest stages, since, if we prohibit our children from experimenting with the environment that surrounds them, we will be inhibiting them from achieving the personal growth they need to become competent individuals of society.

Works Cited

1. Twain, Mark. The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. New York: Bantam Dell, 1876.