

PASTORAL STRUCTURE OF *Huckleberry Finn* (1884)

Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* dramatizes pastoral dynamics with a plot that roughly follows the paradigmatic order of City/Garden/Wilderness. The egocentric Tom Sawyer has a lot of money in his town/City, wants to be the head of everything, represents immature conventional society--its racism and romantic foolishness--and is dissociated from the humanity of Jim, the enslaved soul. Vertically, Huck is in the middle, representing the heart. As a southern white boy, Huck is conditioned to subordinate Jim and to look up to Tom. He runs away from the puritanism of the upright Miss Watson and the widow Douglas, and from the primitivism of his Pap in the Wilderness, but his alienation leaves him unable to attain the self-knowledge he needs for self-esteem. By helping Jim to escape, he saves his own soul. Yet he thinks, ironically, that he is going to hell as a result. His conditioned thinking is vertical, while his heart rebels against verticality by bonding with Jim on the raft, his "good place."

From the moral perspective that is traditional in American literature since the 18th century, the pastoral horizontal mode of consciousness "elevates" people to equality, like Huck and Jim at the top of Jackson's Island. Twain's personal morality, his independent vertical thinking, goes farther than that: He turns the racist moral hierarchy of his culture upsidedown, putting Jim on top. Yet his style is pastoral. He deploys Huck in a horizontal mode and affirms the triumph of a good heart over social conditioning. In such ways the vertical and the horizontal modes may be simultaneous. Much of the drama in literature is generated by the dialectical tension between and within the different modes of the spatial paradigm.

Huckleberry Finn illustrates all of the four main types of movement in the horizontal mode, the first two sentimental and the second two complex:

1. Vertical encroachment into the Garden, often represented by a machine such as the steamboat that overturns the raft, and personified in Tom Sawyer
2. Escape from the vertical mode into sentimental pastoralism, as represented by popular romance, personified in both Tom and Emmeline Grangerford
3. "Downward" counterpoint in complex pastoralism, conveyed by Twain through irony, satire, problems and horrors during the journey down the river, and a pseudo-happy ending
4. Progress toward the holistic mode in the individuation process, personified in Huck

Narratives with unreliable narrators such as Huck Finn illustrate how the limited "I" may be transcended by a more comprehensive vision through subtexts and implications beyond the consciousness of the unreliable narrator. The horizontal mode of consciousness is sustained in some popular genres, but psychologically it tends to be transitory. Huck demonstrates that vertical thinking is supplemented by lateral or right-brained thinking, according to which all modes are subject to change. Accordingly, beyond the horizontal mode and often evolving from it, as happens immediately in Walt Whitman's "Song of Myself," is the holistic mode of consciousness.

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