

interpretation

a journal of political philosophy

volume 2/3

spring 1972

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martinus nijhoff, the hague

edited at

queens college of the city university
of new york

interpretation

a journal of political philosophy

volume 2

issue 3

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interpretation is a journal devoted to the study of political philosophy.
it appears three times a year.
its editors welcome contributions from all those who take
a serious interest in political philosophy regardless of their orientation.

all manuscripts and editorial correspondence
should be addressed to the executive editor

interpretation

jefferson hall 312 · queens college · flushing, n.y. 11367 · u.s.a.

subscription price

for institutions and libraries Guilders 36.— — for individuals Guilders 28.80
one guilder = ab. \$ 0.31 = ab. £ 0.12
subscriptions and correspondence in connection
therewith should be sent to the publisher

martinus nijhoff

9-11 lange voorhout · p.o.b. 269 · the hague · netherlands.

TOM SAWYER: HERO OF MIDDLE AMERICA

HARRY V. JAFFA

In the last chapter of *Tom Sawyer* Becky tells her father, in strict confidence, how Tom had taken her whipping in school: “. . . the Judge was visibly moved; and when she pleaded grace for the mighty lie which Tom had told in order to shift that whipping from her shoulders to his own, the Judge said with a fine outburst that it was a noble, a generous, a magnanimous lie—a lie that was worthy to hold up its head and march down through history breast to breast with George Washington’s lauded Truth about the hatchet.”

Tom Sawyer, master of the noble lie, is the master figure of American literature, the character in whom, more than in any other, Americans fancy themselves to be reflected and idealized. Not Captain Ahab, pursuing the great white whale, or Walter Mitty at the bridge of the destroyer, but Tom Sawyer playing hooky comes closest to our aspirations for glory. To be described as having a “Tom Sawyer grin” is an accolade of immeasurable value to any rising politician. In recent years the man to whom this epithet was most frequently applied was the late President, General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower. It is a curious revelation of the American soul that the reflection of his Kansas childhood in his boyish smile and wave of the arms conveyed more of the reassurance the republic sought from his leadership than any specific achievement of his later life. We are a democratic people, and democracies love equality above all else, as Alexis de Tocqueville so forcefully pointed out so long ago. We tend to equalize the distinctions based upon wealth and birth, but we tend also to equalize those based upon age. Where else is it considered an achievement not to be able to tell the mother from the daughter—or the grandmother from the granddaughter? It is nature’s way of providing immortality that a father should find in his son signs of his own qualities and characteristics. But it is part of democracy’s quest for immortality to seek signs of its childhood in its elders. The ancients celebrated the strength that comes with maturity and the wisdom that comes with age. But we moderns turn instead to the cleverness and charm—if not the innocence—of the young. In part this follows from our belief in science and progress. “When I contemplate the immense advantages in science and discoveries in the arts which have been made within the period of my life,” wrote Jefferson in 1818, “I look forward with confidence to equal advances by the present generation, and have no doubt they will consequently be as much wiser than we have been as we than our fathers were, and they than the burners of witches.” As a nation we seem early to have

been committed to a depreciation of ancestral wisdom and to an elevation of the young that reverses the order of nature. Tom Sawyer had no father. Aunt Polly tells us that he is her dead sister's son; but no allusion of any kind is ever made to his paternity. Even Huck Finn had a father, albeit the town drunk. Tom is the new boy, if not the new man, par excellence. "Tom Sawyer's Gang," whose formation is the culminating event, or conclusion, of the novel, is in fact the United States, whose founding or re-founding is described symbolically within the framework of the plot. The democratization of the republic requires a juvenile hero to replace the father figure of Washington. We know of course that the "lauded Truth about the hatchet" was Parson Weems's invention, just as we know that Judge Thatcher is utterly deceived as to the generosity of Tom's lie. But Judge Thatcher's declared intention, to send Tom first to the National Military Academy and then to the best law school in the country indicates that even he comprehends somehow that Tom's destiny is that of a guardian of the democratic republic. What Judge Thatcher fails to realize is that Tom's education is already complete, that in the new order, of which Tom is a new prince, the boy is father of the man, and the old are ruled by the young.

In the third chapter we find that the small fry of St. Petersburg meet regularly in battle under the rival generalship of Tom and Joe Harper, a bosom friend. The two commanders do not, we are told, condescend to fight in person. Rather do they sit upon an eminence and conduct operations through aides-de-camp. We are not vouchsafed details of the conflict, although we may surmise it is carried on by well-defined rules, by which the advantages of the respective sides are evaluated. We are told that Tom's army won a great victory after a long and hard battle, after which "the dead were counted, prisoners exchanged, the terms of the next disagreement agreed upon, and the day for the necessary battle appointed." All Tom's virtues, we learn, are in a manner arts of war, arts of force and fraud, in which the latter component is predominant. Tom may be said, like the grandfather of Odysseus, to surpass everyone in thievery and perjury. Yet his deceptions are of the grand, not of the petty variety. And they turn out, in the end, to be in the service of the law and justice and piety against which he appears to rebel. Tom's unregenerate individualism, or protestantism, which is the book's never failing source of humor, strikes a deeply sympathetic chord within the sanctuary of the conventions he appears to ridicule. In one of his moments of supreme glory, produced by a most profane deception, he makes the congregation of the little village sing the doxology with a passion and intensity they had not known. In the opening chapter the author tells us that Tom "was not the Model Boy of the village. He knew the model boy very well though—and loathed him." In the end, however, Tom is the Model Boy. Tom, we may say, captures the town by his generalship.

Tom's military skills are displayed in the opening episode, when he is

hidden in a cupboard as Aunt Polly seeks him out. As her back is turned, he makes a dash for freedom, only to be caught by the tail of his coat. He stoutly denies all wrongdoing, but the evidence of the jam jar is upon him. "The switch hovered in the air—the peril was desperate—'My! Look behind you, aunt!'" And as the old lady whirls around, Tom is gone in the instant, over the high board fence outside, and is lost to sight.

There follows a long soliloquy in which we learn from Aunt Polly that Tom is always playing such tricks and that she is always being victimized by them. She ought to be on to them now, she says, "But my goodness, he never plays them alike, two days, and how is a body to know what's coming?" Tom is an expert in trickery, not only because of the variety of his tricks, but because he knows how to work on the feelings of his subjects. "He 'pears to know just how long he can torment me before I get my dander up," she observes, "and he knows if he can make out to put me off for a minute or make me laugh, it's all down again and I can't hit him a lick."

The next episode displays still further Tom's resourcefulness—and something of the magnitude of the obstacles it faces. Tom has played hooky, as Aunt Polly expects he has, and at dinner she conducts a guileful (as she in her simplicity thinks) inquisition designed to entrap him. It has been a warm day and she supposes that he has gone swimming. He forestalls her by observing that "Some of us pumped our heads—mine's damp yet. See?" Aunt Polly retorts that he wouldn't have to unbutton his shirt to pump his head and demands that he open his jacket to see whether the collar she had stitched closed is still securely in its place. Tom feels he is safe now, until his half-brother Sid treacherously comments, "Well, now, if I didn't think you sewed his collar with white thread, but it's black." At this, Tom has no recourse but to flight. When alone, he examines the two large needles with black and white thread he carries concealed in his lapels and complains bitterly at his aunt's inconsistency in using now one and now the other. Nevertheless, we must be impressed by the fact that his guile was more than sufficient for dealing with her, had not Sid betrayed him. He vows retribution to Sid, which is not long to come.

Aunt Polly is now determined to punish Tom. She will make him work the next day, which is Saturday, when all the other boys will be having a holiday. Aunt Polly loves Tom, and there is a conflict within her, between a loving heart and a stern Puritan conscience. Her heart is vulnerable to Tom's wiles, which play upon her weakness. Her love for him is not without return, but it is slight beside the great love they share, which is for himself. There is no conflict within Tom between heart and conscience, of the kind that so dramatically preoccupies that other transcendent hero in the later volume, *Huckleberry Finn*. Yet Tom does, as we shall see, have a conscience of a sort. Tom, unlike Huck, is essentially a man (or boy) of the law, who needs only to have it settled that he is the lawgiver.

Or perhaps we should say that he is like Machiavelli's Prince, who knows that good laws require good arms and therefore devotes himself first to attaining eminence in arms. Tom retreats from the dinner table, discomfited. Wandering through the town, he comes upon a stranger, "a boy a shade larger than himself." The stranger is dressed to a degree of fashion that to Tom is astounding, and he "had a citified air about him that ate into Tom's vitals." Later Tom calls him "aristocracy," using the noun as adjective. The necessary outcome of the ensuing confrontation is a fight. It is a bitter one, and results in Tom's victory. Before the fight takes place, however, there is a contest of wills, in which we see both Tom and the other boy resort to every imaginable bluff. They come to force only after the resources of fraud are exhausted. But we see that Tom, although something of a bully, is no coward. Much later, when Tom, along with Joe Harper and Huck Finn, is thought to be dead, the children of the town vie with each other in memories of the departed. "One poor chap," remarks the author, "who had no other grandeur to offer, said with tolerably manifest pride in the remembrance: 'Well, Tom Sawyer he licked me once.' But that bid for glory was a failure. Most of the boys could say that . . ." We thus see that Tom's democratic leadership among the village boys is founded upon the natural right of the stronger, a right not inconsistent with an aristocratic love of glory.

Tom returned home late, only to find his aunt awaiting him, and "when she saw the state his clothes were in her resolution to turn his Saturday holiday into captivity at hard labor became adamant in its firmness."

Tom's generalship had enabled him to play hooky. But will it enable him to do so with impunity? He had nearly escaped scot free until Sid's treachery betrayed him. Aunt Polly's heart—before it was hardened—might have rescued him, had not her conscience accused her and him together. "He's full of the Old Scratch," she says, and to allow him to go unpunished is only "a-laying up sin and suffering for us both." She *must* do her duty by punishing him, or she will be his ruination. Thus is he cursed with Adam's curse; and being as full of the Old Adam as of the Old Scratch, "he hates work more than he hates anything else." But Tom's genius does not forsake him. Not only will he escape the fate of Adam, and revenge himself upon Sid, but he will in the end displace Sid and the Model Boy as the paragon of respectability. He will look down upon them, and he will do so *ex cathedra*, from a new seat of authority he will have created for himself. Sid, we are told, "was a quiet boy, and had no adventurous, troublesome ways." Tom will triumph, not only over Sid's person, but over the orthodoxy in aunt Polly's soul that Sid dutifully accepts. Tom is a hero of the new Calvinism, in which a new wine of worldly glory is poured into the old churchly vessel, and such success will henceforth be regarded as the hallmark of election and salvation.

"Saturday morning was come, and all the summer world was bright and fresh, and brimming with life . . . Cardiff Hill, beyond the village and above it . . . lay just far enough away to seem a Delectable Land."

Thus is the scene set for a most unpromising Christian. Tom is set to work with a bucket of whitewash and a brush. "Life seemed to him hollow, and existence a burden." Tom first attempts to suborn the little Negro boy Jim, who has been sent to pump water. He offers three temptations to Jim to whitewash for him: first, that he will carry the bucket to the well for him; next, that he will give him his white "alley"; and finally, that he will show him his sore toe. After many remonstrances that "Ole missis . . . [will] take an tar de head off'n me," poor Jim succumbs. He is bent over with absorbing interest as the bandage is unwound, but before the stigmata come into view, Aunt Polly descends in force, and Jim is sent "flying down the street with his pail and a tingling rear." Tom, for a moment, whitewashes with vigor. But soon despair settles upon him. He empties his pockets to examine his wealth; but by bartering it all away, he finds that he could not purchase more than half an hour of pure freedom. "At this dark and hopeless moment an inspiration burst upon him! Nothing less than a great, magnificent inspiration."

The effect of this inspiration is to set Tom tranquilly to work. This he could not hitherto do, because his soul within him was troubled. Now it is serene. But what is the work? It is not the work of whitewashing the fence, although that is how it will appear to Ben Rogers, the first of the long series of Tom's victims. The real work is in deceiving Ben into believing that he, Tom, is absorbed in the whitewashing, a work that requires for its consummation that he appear beyond possibility of detection to be so absorbed. The work of whitewashing and the work of deceiving are distinguishable to the mind, but not to the eye. And Tom does enjoy his work and take pride in it. At the end of the chapter the author intrudes the following reflection: "Tom . . . had discovered a great law of human action, without knowing it—namely, that in order to make a man or a boy covet a thing, it is only necessary to make the thing difficult to attain. If he had been a great and wise philosopher like the writer of this book, he would now have comprehended that Work consists of whatever a body is obliged to do, and that Play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do."

But Mark Twain, that great and wise philosopher, like Tom, is not altogether candid. Tom could not have sold the boys whitewashing privileges, however unconstrained the activity, merely under the aspect of its being play. He had first to create in them the vision of its desirability, and this vision is a work of art. Tom makes Ben believe, first, that he, Tom, is enjoying it; second, that it is something that requires skill in its execution; and last and most important, that to be selected or permitted to do it is to occupy a position of envy and distinction. In a polity whose principle is equality, where the individual feels himself lost in the mass, no passion burns more universally than the passion for distinction, or more precisely, the illusion of distinction. Actual distinctions are of course by their nature rare and difficult, but the illusion of distinction is easy and

can be made available to anyone who is gullible and willing to pay for it.

As Ben begs for a chance to take a turn at the whitewashing, Tom cautiously refuses, saying it wouldn't do, since Aunt Polly is so particular about this fence, "right here on the street, you know—but if it was the back fence I wouldn't mind and she wouldn't." Tom says he reckons "there ain't one boy in a thousand, maybe two thousand that can do it the way it's got to be done." And then in the spirit that was to descend upon one hundred, or maybe two hundred thousands of used-car salesmen, whose ancestor Tom is, he goes on in response to Ben's begging, "Ben, I'd like to, honest injun; but Aunt Polly—well, Jim wanted to do it, but she wouldn't let him; Sid wanted to do it, and she wouldn't let Sid. Now don't you see how I'm fixed? If you was to tackle this fence and anything was to happen to it—" Ben's appetite is now whetted, from a faint inclination to a raging desire. He offers Tom the core of his apple; Tom holds out. Then he offers *all* of the apple. "Tom gave up the brush with reluctance in his face, but alacrity in his heart. And while the late steamer *Big Missouri* worked and sweated in the sun, the retired artist sat on a barrel in the shade close by, dangled his legs, and planned the slaughter of more innocents." And, as used-car salesmen have discovered ever since, "There was no lack of material; boys happened along every little while; they came to jeer but remained to whitewash." At the end of the operation Tom "had had a nice, idle time . . . plenty of company—and the fence had three coats of whitewash on it! If he hadn't run out of whitewash, he would have bankrupted every boy in the village."

In that moment of great inspiration, Tom had revealed to him some of the profoundest mysteries of American democratic capitalism. Its essence does not, we see, lie in "the relief of man's estate," if that estate is understood to be merely the estate of nature. Rather does it lie in the relief of an estate the capitalist himself has created, by infusing the desires by whose relief he is to profit. Long after Tom, John Kenneth Galbraith was to make a theory of this fact, and call it the "dependence effect." Tom is the quintessential capitalist, carrying enterprise to that consummation that is every entrepreneur's deepest longing, but which he never hopes to achieve except, no doubt, in that better world to which good capitalists aspire to go. He turns the workers into customers and sells them their own labor. What he realizes is pure profit, purer profit indeed than Karl Marx ever imagined in his wildest polemics against the iniquity of surplus value. He has no overhead, no labor cost, and no cost of material, and he exacts the entire purchasing power of his market, at least until the whitewash runs out. We should, moreover, not omit to notice the twofold nature of the entire transaction. Tom sells not only to the boys but to Aunt Polly, with whom the original "exchange" takes place. He is under a "debt" to her—under what we might call the old, precapitalist order—a debt contracted by playing hooky. This debt too he discharges at no cost to himself. And there is a further bonus. When he reports back to headquarters, and "his" work is inspected, Aunt Polly "was so overcome by the splendor

of his achievement that she took him into the closet and selected a choice apple and delivered it to him, along with an improving lecture upon the added value and flavor a treat took to itself when it came without sin through virtuous effort." Tom thereupon doubles his bonus, or, we might say, enlarges upon his state of grace, by "hooking" a doughnut, as Aunt Polly is closing with a happy scriptural flourish.

Tom has imposed his will upon every one of its obstacles; fortune has proved his slave, as it will hereafter. He has played hooky, and far from paying the wages of sin, he has reaped a wonderful bounty of profits from a venture of marvelous enterprise. The inspiration that brings these rewards is founded upon the capitalist discovery that wealth is not to be measured by the work it embodies—the principle of the just price—but by the appetites of those who exchange. By shrewdly rigging the market in his own favor, he exemplifies the new principle, upon which most of the great fortunes of America in the later nineteenth century were based. Tom Sawyer is an exquisite example of the genius of the "robber barons" of the Gilded Age, concealed in the idyllic setting of a Golden Age.

Taking his apple and the "hooked" doughnut, Tom skips off. But in passing out he sees Sid, with whom he still has an account to settle. A storm of clods fills the air; and although Aunt Polly comes to Sid's rescue, it is not before revenge has been exacted. Now Tom's soul is at peace.

The peace however is short-lived. Tom goes off to direct the victory of his army over Joe Harper's. But this is mere epilogue to the victory at the fence. The more important sequel occurs afterwards as Tom is passing the house where Jeff Thatcher lives, and where for the first time he catches sight of a "lovely little blue-eyed creature with yellow hair plaited in two long tails," who has just come to town. Mars and Venus are in conjunction, and the "fresh-crowned hero fell without firing a shot." But the hero's affections, we learn, had not been a *tabula rasa*. "A certain Amy Lawrence vanished out of his heart and left not even a memory of herself behind . . . He had been months winning her; and she had confessed hardly a week ago . . ." Later we watch the wooing of Becky, and the betrothal ceremony in which she plights her faith to Tom. After the coy denials, the chase, the maidenly blushes, and finally the kiss of surrender, he tells her that now she is never to love or marry anybody but him, "never, never, and forever." She agrees, and demands in return that he never marry anyone but her. Tom's reply is, "Certainly. Of course. That's *part* of it." But his obligations are clearly an afterthought. A moment later he blunders into disclosing the engagement to Amy and that "forever" to him can be a very short time. Tom's conquest of Becky thereupon faces the same kind of complicating circumstances that had previously befallen his hooky playing, when Sid ratted on him. This time he has ratted on himself. But as before, his victory will be all the more astounding. The illusion of virtue that he will conjure before Becky (and her father), which will obscure the memory of his infidelity, is exactly of

a piece with that with which he confronts Aunt Polly when he presents her with the thrice-whitewashed fence.

We have followed our hero from Friday to Saturday, and now it is Sunday. Aunt Polly's religion, over which Tom so mightily triumphed at the fence, now assails him with all its multiplied Sabbath-day force. First there is family worship, followed by a drill in the verses he is supposed to have memorized for the Sunday school. Sid, of course, had learned his days before. His cousin Mary tries to help him, but "his mind was traversing the whole field of human thought," and the case appears hopeless. In her perplexity, Mary offers him a prize, without telling him what it is. Then, "under the double pressure of curiosity and prospective gain, he did it with such spirit that he accomplished a shining success." And what were the verses? The five lines of the Sermon on the Mount, beginning "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Tom had chosen them "because he could find no verses that were shorter." As we shall see, they constitute the exact point on the moral compass 180 degrees opposite to the principle by which Tom lives. Tom does nothing except for gain, the chiefest gain being the glory that nurtures self-esteem. But memorizing the injunctions to humility and meekness brings him a "sure-enough Barlow" knife, which sends convulsions of delight through his system. It was a good deal.

At the door of the Sunday school Tom drops back a step from the family procession and accosts a Sunday-dressed comrade. The trading for tickets begins, with a "yaller" exchanging for a "piece of lickrish and a fishhook." Each blue ticket, we learn, is payment for memorizing two verses. Ten blue tickets are worth one red one, and ten reds equal one yellow. Ten yellow tickets would bring the scholar who had memorized 2,000 verses a Dore Bible, very plainly bound, and "worth forty cents in those easy times." "Only the older pupils managed to keep their tickets and stick to their tedious work long enough to get a Bible, and so the delivery of one of these prizes was a rare and noteworthy circumstance." We are told that it is doubtful that "Tom's mental stomach" had ever "really hungered for one of those prizes, but unquestionably his entire being had for many a day longed for the glory and *éclat* that came with it."

This Sunday proves to be different from other Sundays. There are visitors to the school of august presence. The great Judge Thatcher, from Constantinople, the county seat, comes accompanied by his wife and child, she of the yellow hair and blue eyes. Everyone, we are told, from the most restless of the boys to the Sunday school superintendent is, each in his own way, "showing off." "There was only one thing wanting, to make Mr. Walters' ecstasy complete, and that was a chance to deliver a prize and exhibit a prodigy." But no one seemed to have the requisite number of tickets, or so his inquiries among the star pupils had indicated. "And now at this moment, when hope was dead, Tom Sawyer came forward

with nine yellow tickets, nine red tickets, and ten blue ones." We are assured that the superintendent had not expected "an application from this source for the next ten years." But the "certified checks . . . were good for their face," and "Tom was therefore elevated to a place with the Judge and the other elect." Too late did the other boys, their vitals "eaten with envy," realize that "they themselves had contributed to this hated splendor by trading tickets to Tom for the wealth he had amassed in selling whitewashing privileges. These despised themselves, as being the dupes of a wily fraud, a guileful snake in the grass." Or perhaps we should say that, like Esau, they found out too late that they had sold their inheritance for a mess of pottage. Certainly Tom here fits the role of the crafty Jacob, and like him will vindicate his character as one chosen of the Lord.

Tom has repeated upon a grander scale the miracle of the fence. As before he had used the labor of the boys, gaining the credit for it himself, so now he has utilized their labor in memorizing Bible verses. In doing so, Tom again demonstrates his superiority. He displays that "rational and industrious" soul that, by its prosperity in this world, came to be regarded as the elect of God, and therefore a proper witness of the true faith. Tom has already shown himself an artisan of belief, when he led the boys to credit something directly opposite to what they had previously supposed to be true. Of the many successors of Ben Rogers, the author had said that "they came to jeer, but remained to whitewash." This paraphrases a familiar line in Goldsmith's *The Deserted Village*, "And fools, who came to scoff, remained to pray," spoken of a gifted divine in a village church. Although Tom's mental stomach may never have hungered for the prize Bible itself, yet he had the vision to see a good connected with its possession that the others—who presumably knew its contents better than he—lacked. Moreover they lacked his entrepreneurial genius, which saw that the assembling of the scattered efforts of many could create a new, capital asset, as distinct from the consumption goods with which he entered the market. Whereas the others sell the testimonials of their faith, he buys them. We see that it is not mere love of ease that drove him to escape work, or an appetite for goods that led him to sell whitewashing privileges. Nor is it love of glory or *éclat* alone, great as that is, that motivates him now. He displays a shrewdness that transcends these undoubted motives when he exchanges his newly acquired liquid assets for the far more durable capital of a churchly reputation. Tom is acquiring credit with the world, a world represented by the vast dignity of Judge Thatcher—who is, besides all else, *her* father.

Tom's aspiration for the prize Bible may have had little to do with the contents of that book. Or perhaps we should say that it had little to do with such contents, as understood by the old Protestant orthodoxy, if a protesting orthodoxy be not a contradiction. As Tom was introduced to the Judge, "his tongue was tied, his breath would hardly come . . . He would have liked to fall down and worship him, if it were in the dark."

Tom sadly flunks the test of scriptural knowledge, and we are left to wonder, as the "curtain of charity" is drawn, what lies behind. It is our hypothesis that nothing detracts from Tom's essential triumph. As far as the Judge is concerned, Tom's display of genuine feeling, if not his rote learning, testify in his behalf. We must remember that at the end of the book Tom is as much the Judge's hero as the Judge is Tom's upon this occasion. We would surmise that the Judge misconstrues Tom's motives in Tom's favor on each occasion.

Tom is presented to us throughout as a rebel against the constraints of home, church, and school. But in each case his rebellion is the occasion for his becoming a hero, either of the institution, or at least in the institution, against which he rebels. By disobeying Aunt Polly, and grieving her beyond measure, he becomes the beloved prodigal, for whom she rejoices ninety and nine times more than ever she could for Sid. Tom's naming David and Goliath as the first apostles is infinitely funny. Evidently they were the only two Biblical names he could summon from the depths of a highly functional memory. But we should not overlook the significance that the story of David's heroism must have had for Tom. Nor must we forget that, very soon, Tom *does* play David to Injun Joe's Goliath and helps rid the town of a scourge believed to have taken the lives of five of its citizens. In Plato's dialogue on piety, *Euthyphro*, we are presented with these alternative definitions: that piety consists in obeying the gods or that it consists in imitating the gods. In both the Athens of Socrates and Tom Sawyer's America, the conventional wisdom would appear to have been on the side of obeying the gods, of doing what one is told to do, upon divine authority. But both Euthyphro and Tom insist upon the more radical form of piety; both insist upon imitating the gods, or the heroes who represent the divine to them. Euthyphro prosecutes his father for murder, upon the pattern of conduct he believes to be true of Zeus and Kronos; Tom imitates both David and the scion of the house of David.

In the service in the church that followed the Sunday school, Tom was busied in many ways designed to relieve his oppression. "Tom counted the pages of the sermon; after church he always knew how many pages there had been, but he seldom knew anything else about the discourse." This time, we are told, "he was really interested for a little while." The minister had evidently taken as his text the eleventh chapter of Isaiah and "made a grand and moving picture of the assembling together of the world's hosts at the millennium when the lion and the lamb should lie down together and a little child should lead them." But, says the author, "the pathos, the lesson, the moral of the great spectacle were lost upon the boy; he only thought of the conspicuousness of the principal character before the on-looking nations; his face lit with the thought, and he said to himself that he wished he could be that child, if it was a tame lion."

Whether the moral of the spectacle of the prophecy was lost upon the boy depends upon one's point of view as to what that moral was. The

author seems to be assuring us that his own understanding is orthodox and that he finds Tom to be amusing but mistaken. We doubt that this is Mark Twain's real intention. Tom wants the glory of the little child of the millennium. Are we to understand that the child himself does not want it? Does God not create man for his own glory? Tom understands that the admiration of the child depends upon a certain kind of belief in that child; and Tom becomes an ever greater expert in compelling wonder, or belief in himself. We believe Tom's enterprise, or the enterprise of which Tom is the vehicle, becomes intelligible in the light of a famous passage in the sixth chapter of Machiavelli's *Prince*. There it is said that all armed prophets have succeeded, and that all unarmed ones have failed. This must be understood in the light of the reflection that both Jesus and Machiavelli were unarmed prophets. Of the unarmed prophets who failed, Machiavelli mentions only Savonarola, "who was destroyed amid his institutions when they were still new, as soon as the multitude ceased to believe him, because he had no way to keep firm those who had once believed or to make the unbelieving believe." The art embodied in *Tom Sawyer* demonstrates how without the compulsion of arms men may become firm believers in the principle of a new regime. Tom runs away with Huck and Joe Harper to punish Aunt Polly and Becky by becoming that dread and fearful figure, the Black Avenger of the Spanish Main. But he returns instead as the central figure of that pathos that is his own funeral. He returns to enact his own resurrection! Let us retrace the development of this Machiavellian *Imitatio Christi*.

The evening of the day that Tom had gained his great victory over work, the ancient curse of Adam, he returned home in the best of spirits. He was reproached for clodding Sid, but this he did not at all mind. His knuckles are rapped for stealing sugar, and he complains that Sid is not punished for the same crime. "Well, Sid don't torment a body the way you do. You'd be always into that sugar if I warn't watching you," is the reply. Then Aunt Polly steps into the kitchen and Sid reaches for the sugar. "But Sid's fingers slipped and the bowl dropped and broke." Tom expects that Sid will catch it and adopts an attitude of demure silence on Aunt Polly's return. But just as he expects the thunder of vengeance to fall upon Sid, a potent palm sends him sprawling on the floor. Then Tom speaks up, "Hold on, now, what 'er you belting *me* for? Sid broke it!" Poor Aunt Polly is perplexed, and all she can say is that she is sure that Tom didn't get a lick too many, for all his many transgressions, seen and unseen. Now the situation between Tom and his aunt is the reverse of what we saw in the opening chapter. Her conscience, which then condemned him, now reproaches her. And he in his turn is quick to perceive possibilities in the advantage he has gained. "He knew that in her heart his aunt was on her knees to him, and he was morosely gratified by the consciousness of it." But the genius within Tom will have no cheap reward, merely by humbling her. He will die for her sin. "And he pictured himself brought home from the river, dead . . . How she would throw herself

upon him . . . and her lips pray God to give her back her boy But he would lie there cold and white and make no sign And such a luxury to him was this petting of his sorrows that he could not bear to have any worldly cheeriness or any grating delight intrude upon it; it was too sacred for such contact" Then the scene shifts to the "deserted street . . . where the Adored Unknown lived," for this is before the meeting with Becky. He lies on the ground beneath her window, clasping to his bosom the wilted flower that is the memorial of his secret passion. "And thus he would die—out in the cold world, with no shelter over his homeless head, no friendly hand to wipe the death damps from his brow, no loving face to bend pityingly over him when the great agony came." This reenactment of the cross is interrupted when a window is raised and "a maidservant's discordant voice profaned the holy calm, and a deluge of water drenched the prone martyr's remains." The erstwhile "martyr" is now a "strangling hero" who now further profanes what had been a holy calm with a curse, which is quickly followed by the sound of shattering glass. The mysteries of love, war, and religion are in close proximity.

But the mood of martyrdom returns. After wooing, winning, and then losing Becky, he retreats into the woods beyond Cardiff Hill. "The boy's soul was steeped in melancholy It seemed to him that life was but a trouble, at best, and he more than half envied Jimmy Hodges, so lately released If he only had a clean Sunday school record he could be willing to go and be done with it all." This latter sentiment is one of the few expressions of what we might call conventional remorse. It should, of course, be taken for what it is, namely, an excuse, since Tom has not the slightest inclination for an early death. "Now as to this girl. What had he done? Nothing." Tom conveniently forgets the infidelity, or perhaps we should say hypothetical bigamy, that had so disturbed Becky. "He had meant the best . . . and been treated like a dog She would be sorry . . . maybe when it was too late. Ah, if he could only die *temporarily!*" In the earlier scene Tom had wished that he could be drowned, "all at once and unconsciously, without undergoing the uncomfortable routine devised by nature." Tom, we see, is the paradigm of that latter-day Christian, whose passion is the pleasant indulgence of his own self-love, expressed as grief at the neglect of others to take him at his own self-estimate. Or, more precisely, it is the pleasant contemplation of the grief or pain of others, for failing to take him at his own self-estimate. The pleasure that he is to enjoy occurs in virtue of a death that is both painless and temporary! Tom is unmindful that, by the traditional Christian doctrine of the resurrection, all death is temporary, for the faithful. Of course, traditional Christianity also taught that the soul of the individual found its fulfilment by the recognition given it after death, by God in Heaven. Tom demands that recognition, not by God, but by men (and women), not in Heaven, but on earth. Moreover, this is to happen, not in virtue of the grace and power of God, but in virtue of a certain secular skill. The fraud that Tom now perpetrates replaces traditional piety, in the same way that the traded

tickets replace the work of memorizing the sacred scriptures, as title deeds to the prize Bible.

Tom's wish for a painless, temporary death is followed by a series of fantasies of self-glorifying revenge. But we should notice that the fear and envy that he inflicts upon others in these fantasies are equivalents of the grief and remorse of earlier fantasies, in which Aunt Polly and Becky weep bitter tears over his poor dead body. They are simply alternative ways of enjoying the pain of others, ways with which he retaliates for his supposed rejection. First, then, an idea he had once had of becoming a clown recurs, to be rejected with disgust. It is entirely out of harmony with his present mood. Next he considers going away to be a soldier, "to return after long years, all warworn and illustrious." Better still, "he would join the Indians . . . and away in the future come back a great chief, bristling with feathers, hideous with paint, and prance into Sunday school, some drowsy summer morning, with a bloodcurdling war whoop, and sear the eyeballs of all his companions with unappeasable envy." This is getting closer to the mark. "But no, there was something gaudier even than this. He would be a pirate!" And the future is now vouchsafed to him in colors of unimaginable splendor. "How his name would fill the world, and make people shudder! . . . And, at the zenith of his fame, how he would suddenly appear at the old village and stalk into church, brown and weather-beaten . . . his crime-rusted cutlass at his side . . . his black flag unfurled, with the skull and crossbones on it, and hear with swelling ecstasy the whisperings, 'It's Tom Sawyer the Pirate!—the Black Avenger of the Spanish Main!'"

And so Tom gathers up Joe Harper, who has had a difference with his mother, similar to Tom's with Aunt Polly, and Huck Finn, who is ready to go anywhere with anybody, and off they go to Jackson's Island to play pirates.

The pirating expedition turns out, in the main, to be no more than skylarking, away from the town, away from all adult supervision or interference. They do steal certain provisions—a boiled ham, a side of bacon, and hooks and lines for fishing. And Tom and Joe have difficulty getting to sleep that night. They remember the stolen meat, and conscience causes trouble. "They tried to argue it away by reminding conscience that they had purloined sweetmeats and apples scores of times; but the conscience was not to be appeased by such thin plausibilities . . . there was no getting around the stubborn fact that taking sweetmeats was only 'hooking,' while taking bacons and hams and such valuables was plain simple *stealing*—and there was a command against that in the Bible." So they inwardly resolve that "their piracies should not again be sullied with the crime of stealing. Then conscience granted a truce, and these curiously inconsistent pirates fell peacefully to sleep." Tom's piracy, as we shall see, is of the grand, not petty variety. He means to capture the town. Why then should he despoil it? That would be to diminish the value of his own. All the laws of property are in his favor—as his commercial genius has already

demonstrated. He should be the last one to hold them in disrespect. Mark Twain's interpretation of his leading character is again misleading. These pirates, or at least one of them, are anything but inconsistent.

In the middle of the day, the boys are puzzled to hear a distant booming. Presently they see the village's little steam ferryboat, its decks crowded with people. Then they realize that the booming is a cannon and that the entire town is engaged in a quest for drowned bodies. But it is Tom's mind in which the 'revealing thought' flashes. "Boys, I know who's drowned—it's us." "They felt like heroes in an instant. Here was a gorgeous triumph; they were missed; they were mourned; hearts were breaking on their account; tears were being shed . . . the departed were the talk of the whole town, and the envy of all the boys, as far as this dazzling notoriety was concerned. This was fine. It was worthwhile to be a pirate, after all."

But when the excitement subsides, trouble sets in for the pirate chieftain. His crew grows homesick and mutinous, and play loses its savor, reversing the process by which the work of whitewashing had been transmuted into play. After Joe and Huck have drifted off to sleep, the troubled leader steals out of camp and makes his way back to St. Petersburg and to his own home. He creeps unobserved into the sitting room and squeezes under the bed. Aunt Polly, Sid, Mary, and Mrs. Harper are there. It is a kind of wake being held for the lost boys. Tom who is believed—at least by Aunt Polly—to be in a better place, is quite literally beneath them. Now the fantasy that Tom had imagined, of the grief occasioned by his death, is being enacted in his very presence. He is enjoying a "death" that is both painless and temporary!

Tom remains silently beneath the bed until everyone has departed. He joins the heavenly witnesses to Aunt Polly's prayer for him, delivered "with such measureless love" that Tom welters in tears in his hiding place. As she finally falls into a troubled sleep, he steals out and looks down at her, "his heart full of pity." Tom takes from his pocket a sycamore scroll, upon which he had written a message. "But something occurred to him . . . His face lighted with a happy solution of his thought; he put the bark hastily in his pocket." The light on Tom's face, of course, is the idea of coming and hiding in the church, to provide the tremendous climax to his own funeral. And he couldn't bear to spoil such a gorgeous spectacle. So his love and pity for Aunt Polly do not deter him from making her love and her grief an instrument of his self-glorification.

There is a curious epilogue to the secret visitation of that night. After the funeral is over, and the resurrection has transfigured Tom into unbelievable glory among the smaller fry, and unappeasable envy among the larger, he imposes scandalously upon Aunt Polly's credulity for a further enlargement of his apotheosis. He tells her in complete detail—but with artful hesitations—the story of everything he overheard from beneath the bed, pretending that it came to him in a dream while on the island. Sid overhears this shameless imposture in silence. He is now hopelessly overpowered by Tom's grandeur. He only comments to himself, "Pretty thin—

as long a dream as that, without any mistakes in it!" Eventually the hoax is revealed because Joe Harper had told his mother of Tom's having left the camp that Wednesday evening. Poor Aunt Polly, who had rushed to tell Mrs. Harper of Tom's prophetic powers, is subject instead to remarkable embarrassment. Yet Tom has a knack for profiting from the exposure of his deceptions no less than from the deceptions themselves—as we saw in the case of the collar thread, and as we guessed in the case of the "curtain of charity." In the pocket of his old jacket he still had the bark on which he had written, "We ain't dead—we are only off being pirates." When he pleads in extenuation of his fakery that he had come over that night to relieve Aunt Polly's anxieties and not to gloat over them, she says, "Tom, Tom, I would be the thankfullest soul in this world if I could believe you ever had as good a thought as that, but you know you never did, and I know it, Tom." He pleads that this is the truth, and Aunt Polly begs him not to lie, that it only makes things a hundred times worse. Tom insists, against all probability and reason, that this is not a lie. Aunt Polly rejoins that she would "give the whole world to believe that—it would cover up a power of sins." Tom explains that it was only the thought of the funeral that made him change his mind and put the bark back in his pocket. Then he tells her how he kissed her as she slept, to which she responds with infinite pathos. Tom has so wrought upon her that her will to believe in him is equal in full to the great power of faith that is in her. It will require but a single scrap of evidence to make him the complete beneficiary of that faith. When Tom leaves she turns toward the closet with its tattered jacket. Her heart is overwhelmed with its burden of love, and she reasons herself into justifying him, whatever the evidence. "Twice she put out her hand to take the garment . . . and twice she refrained." Finally, "she fortified herself with the thought: 'It's a good lie—it's a good lie—I won't let it grieve me.' . . . A moment later she was reading Tom's piece of bark through flowing tears and saying: 'I could forgive the boy, now, if he'd committed a million sins!'" As far as Aunt Polly is concerned, Tom's redemption and glory are complete.

Before turning to the culminating episode of Tom's piracy, let us consider it against the background of certain alternatives. Tom's favorite game is that of Robin Hood. We see him at it twice, once with Joe Harper and once with Huck Finn. Joe and Tom play at it regularly and store their equipment in the woods beyond Cardiff Hill. What they do is, in fact, to play roles in episodes drawn from the story, just as if it were a stage production. It is not a game, played to win. It is, rather, a dramatic ritual. Here we first see Tom's own kind of scriptural authority. But Huck has never heard of Robin Hood, and Tom tells him, "Why, he was one of the greatest men that was ever in England—and the best. He was a robber." Huck asks who he robbed. "Only sheriffs and bishops and rich people and kings, and such like. But he never bothered the poor. He loved 'em. He always divided up with 'em perfectly square." Huck rejoins, "Well, he must 'a' been a brick." To which Tom replies, "I bet you he

was, Huck. Oh, he was the noblest man that ever was. They ain't any such men now, I can tell you." When Tom had played Robin Hood with Joe Harper, the boys had ended "grieving that there were no outlaws any more, and wondering what modern civilization could claim to have done to compensate for their loss. They said they would rather be outlaws a year in Sherwood Forest than President of the United States forever." In the final episode of Tom's and Joe's reenactment, "Tom became Robin Hood again, and was allowed by the treacherous nun to bleed his strength away through his neglected wound." Then Joe, "representing a whole tribe of weeping outlaws, dragged him sadly forth," and put his bow into his hands, that the falling arrow might indicate Robin's place of burial. Tom shot the arrow, "and fell back and would have died, but he lit on a nettle and sprang up too gaily for a corpse." All Tom's deaths are, we see, highly dramatic and extremely temporary. But the story of Robin Hood is the romantic embodiment of that Machiavellian or piratical Christianity that is Tom's religion.

Tom calls Robin "the noblest man that ever was." We can understand why. The people that Robin robbed, "sheriffs and bishops and rich people and kings," are essentially appendages of a feudal regime. He appeals therefore to democratic, Protestant radicalism. In his attack on the privileged orders, Robin represents the egalitarianism of the American Revolution; in his betrayal by the established church, he represents the spirit of the Reformation. But Tom's America, represented by Judge Thatcher, whom Tom would have liked to fall down and worship (if it were dark), is dedicated to that "simpler but wider justice" that Robin Hood robbed to implement. When Robin Hood's principle becomes that of the establishment, noble outlawry is no longer possible. That is why Tom can engage in ritualistic play as Robin Hood, but when it comes to a serious choice of a vocation, it never occurs to him to make Jackson's Island into Sherwood Forest. In the world of American democracy Tom is on the side of property and authority, because that world is itself antagonistic to bishops and kings. Yet that world lives, in its imagination, in the golden glow of its revolutionary past, symbolized by the story of Robin Hood. In a deeper sense, Tom *does* enact Robin Hood, in the same sense that Robin himself enacts the Christ of radical Protestantism. Robin is a robber, and Tom Sawyer's Gang is a robber gang. But it is a robber gang that meets the highest standards of *respectability*. At the end of the novel Tom explains it to Huck in this way: "A robber is more high-toned than what a pirate is—as a general thing. In most countries they're awful high up in the nobility—dukes and such." Robin himself, if memory serves, was an earl. Tom Sawyer's Gang is founded, not only upon the powerful imagination of its leader, but upon his wealth—which is inherited from an earlier nonrespectable gang, Murrel's, whose treasure cache becomes Tom's and Huck's in the end. In other words, Tom ends by despoiling the despoilers, which is exactly what Robin Hood had done; only after the American Revolution, the despoilers can only be enemies of the legal

order. Yet nothing prevents the ill-gotten gains from supplying an admirable foundation for the new, respectable gang. In the new legal order the highest and most respectable kind of robber is also the most highly honored. And so the myth of Robin Hood is replaced by, or becomes instrumental to, a new myth—that of Tom Sawyer.

Before piracy is settled upon for the expedition to Jackson's Island, one alternative is briefly considered. When Tom meets Joe as he is on the point of running away and finds that Joe is about to do the same, "they began to lay their plans." "Joe was for being a hermit, and living on crusts in a remote cave, and dying, sometimes, of cold and want and grief; but after listening to Tom, he conceded that there were some conspicuous advantages about a life of crime, and so he consented to be a pirate." We know that Tom's piracy consisted eminently in the appropriation of all those pleasant passions connected in Joe's mind with the spectacle of the unpleasant life of the hermit. Tom has already indulged the fantasy of a lonely death, and his steps are already directed toward enjoying all its advantages without its disadvantages. On Jackson's Island he has some further discussion with Joe and Huck about the comparative merits of hermiting and pirating. A pirate, Tom explains, "don't have to get up mornings, and you don't have to go to school, and wash, and all that blame foolishness. You see a pirate don't have to do *anything*, Joe, when he's ashore, but a hermit *he* has to be praying considerable, and then he don't have any fun, anyway, all by himself that way." Joe assures Tom that, now that he's tried it, he much prefers being a pirate. "You see," Tom continues, "people don't go much on hermits, nowadays, like they used to in old times, but a pirate's always respected." Moreover, Tom continues, "a hermit's got to sleep on the hardest place he can find, and put sackcloth and ashes on his head, and stand out in the rain, and—" This is too much for Huck, who demands to know what they do such things for. Tom says he doesn't know, but they always do these things, and Huck would have to do them too, if he was a hermit. Huck stoutly insists that he would not, upon which Tom demands, "How'd you get around it?" Huck says he wouldn't stand it, that he'd run away. At this Tom exclaims, "Run away! Well, you *would* be a nice old slouch of a hermit. You'd be a disgrace." Tom thus sees quite clearly that hermiting, meaning ascetic Christianity, is out of style. On the other hand, pirating ashore comes close to Marx's vision, in the *Germain Ideology*, of a communist society in which there is perfect freedom, and all distinction between work and play is abolished. It also resembles the Garden of Eden. The "work" of piracy is said to consist in taking and burning ships, making people (but not women) walk the plank, and burying treasure. But these pirates, we soon learn, do none of these things. Their climactic moment comes not afloat but ashore, and it comes in the church, where they demonstrate the superiority of the piratical to the hermitical, of the comfortable to the uncomfortable brand of Christianity. Yet Tom remains true to his compulsive sense of propriety, which is also an unreasoning sense of

authority, even as he rejects hermiting. Whereas Huck would reject the hermit's life because it makes no sense—even though it comes closer to his own style of living than to Tom's—Tom rejects it because it is out of fashion. Yet if it were in fashion, Tom would see no way for departing from the authoritative version of hermiting. Tom cannot conceive of an alteration or variation from an authoritative model except if it be founded upon an equal or superior authority. All Tom's defiances of authority are based, like Euthyphro's, upon a higher and more esoteric version of the authority he seems to defy.

Let us then return to the churchly consummation of Tom's piratical Christianity. "When the Sunday-school hour was finished . . . the bell began to toll, instead of ringing in the usual way." The villagers gathered in the hushed atmosphere induced by the presence of the mystery of death. "None could remember when the little church had been so full before." The congregation rises reverently as the bereaved families enter. Amidst muffled sobs the minister spreads his hands and prays. "A moving hymn was sung, and the text followed: 'I am the Resurrection and the Life.'" Little could the congregation guess that, but a week before, the central figure of the present drama, sitting in their midst, had lusted after the glory of the little child who should lead them. They had seen in the departed only "faults and flaws . . . [and episodes] that at the time had seemed rank rascalities, well deserving of the cowhide." These same incidents are now related by the minister in such a way as to illustrate the sweet, generous natures of the departed. And the congregation, conscious that heretofore they had been persistently blinded to the truth about the lost lads, felt the pangs of conscience compounding their grief. "The congregation became more and more moved, as the pathetic tale went on, till at last the whole company broke down," including in the end the preacher himself. At this moment, when the pathos of the occasion had reached its extremity, there is a rustle in the gallery. A moment later the astounding event occurs, as the three boys come up the aisle, Tom in the lead, Joe behind, and Huck in his tattered rags slinking miserably in the rear. In the pandemonium that follows, two incidents are remarkable. As their families throw themselves upon Tom and Joe, Tom laid hold of Huck and said, "Aunt Polly, it ain't fair. Somebody's got to be glad to see Huck." As Aunt Polly responds with her warm humanity, the minister's voice thunders out, "Praise God from whom all blessings flow—SING!—and put your hearts in it!" "And they did. Old Hundred swelled up with a triumphant burst, and while it shook the rafters Tom Sawyer the Pirate looked around upon the envying juveniles about him and confessed in his heart that this was the proudest moment of his life."

We are told by the author that "As the 'sold' congregation trooped out they said they would almost be willing to be made ridiculous again to hear Old Hundred sung like that once more." This puts us in mind of the missionary piracy of the king, as he worked the camp meeting in Pokeville, in *Huckleberry Finn*, as well as reminding us of how the king and

the duke "sold" the little Arkansas river town with the "Royal Nonesuch." When Jim is shocked by the rascality of the king, Huck explains that it's "in the breed . . . [that] all kings is mostly rapsCALLIONS, as fur as I can make out." Later Huck comments to himself, "What was the use to tell Jim that these warn't real kings and dukes? It wouldn't 'a' done no good; and, besides, it was just as I said: you couldn't tell them from the real kind." Kings and dukes are the fraudulent rulers of the *anciens régimes*, who appear as mere frauds, divested of all the aura of rule in this democratic regime. But Tom's fraud is a success. Unlike the gulled townspeople who come back for blood to the third performance of the "Royal Nonesuch," those in the church of St. Petersburg have, in a manner of speaking, got their money's worth. And it was not money but glory that Tom sought. His ambition, unlike the king's and the duke's, is not vulgar. Yet the price that Aunt Polly and the town pay for Tom's ambition—a price exacted not in money but in grief and anguish—is far higher than that taken by the emblems of spurious nobility in the later work.

All Tom's virtues, we have said, are arts of war; yet the consummation of these virtues has been an imitation of the greatest of the unarmed prophets. But the deceptions practiced by Tom have been recognizable as deceptions. The fame Tom has achieved in the episodes noted, and the pleasures attendant upon a painless and temporary death, are only stages upon his way to a place and station beyond detection and beyond reproach. We have noted a resemblance in Tom to the patriarch Jacob, who deceived both his brother and his father. But there could be no final recourse to fraud when alone Jacob wrestled with the angel of the Lord. Tom, as he wrestles with his conscience during the trial of Muff Potter and as he faces death in the cave, also demonstrates that his daring and his cleverness are not the full measure of his character.

We have presented Tom's piratical Christianity as animated by a lust for glory in a world still believing itself to believe in the otherworldly religion of humility. Tom's religion appears as a sanctification of that process by which the blessed have their rewards here and now. We should bear in mind that the *ancien régime*—the one plundered by Robin Hood—was characterized by inequality and the postponement of the pleasures of the many to the next world. Modern democracy is characterized by equality and the enjoyment by the many of the pleasures of this world. Tom is a hero of that myth by which religion is transformed to meet the requirements of modern democracy.

Tom has an elaborate set of superstitions, which strike one as having a kind of humorous absurdity, against the background either of staid orthodoxy or of scientific reasoning. However, if we remember the orthodox roots of Tom's piety, in imitating rather than obeying the divine, we can see an equally radical Protestantism in his superstitions. Protestantism was in its origins a movement of religious authority from the established church to the common people. The extension of this movement is shown

here when Tom reveals the source of his convictions in regard to the supernatural. Tom, we should remember, always settles disputes by an appeal to authority, never to experience. Usually it is the books he has read, about Robin Hood, hermits, pirates, or robbers, that supply the truth about these things. In *Huckleberry Finn* Tom undergoes a radical extension of his literary authoritarianism. Tom Sawyer's Gang is there conducted upon methods borrowed from Don Quixote. The attack upon the Sunday school picnic is closely modeled upon episodes from Cervantes. The emancipation of Jim, at the end of the latter novel, is based upon borrowed bits and pieces from "Baron Trenck . . . Benvenuto Chelleeny . . . Henry IV" and other of "them heroes," the Count of Monte Cristo chief among them. Tom's Law is derived from the Book, the original being transformed by infusions from such other sources as we have suggested. Accordingly, it is remarkable when, in considering a question in regard to the supernatural—with Huck questioning the authenticity or reliability of the superstition that a stray dog howling in the night is a certain prophecy of death—Tom settles the matter by saying, "That's what the niggers say, and they know all about these kind of things, Huck." Negroes as a source of authority stand outside conventional Christianity in Tom Sawyer's America, much as earlier Protestants were outside the precincts of authority in the Europe from which Tom's ancestors had fled.

Tom is led by his superstitions to a rendezvous with Huck Finn, to test the virtues of a dead cat for the removal of warts. The cure requires going to the graveyard " 'long about midnight when somebody that was wicked has been buried," on the assurance that "a devil will come, or maybe two or three" to carry off the deceased. "When they're taking that feller away, you heave your cat after 'em and say 'Devil follow corpse, cat follow devil, warts follow cat, I'm done with ye!'" We suspect that Huck himself is as much an attraction for Tom at this point—the beginning of their relationship in the novel—as the ritual of the cat. Huck's position outside conventional society, like that of the slaves, promises communion with an esoteric and more genuine reality. But Huck's belief in a devil or devils coming for the corpse has a certain foundation in reality. It is notable that Huck expects the body and not merely the soul of the deceased to be carried off. From the events that follow in the graveyard, culminating in the murder of young Doctor Robinson, we infer that body snatching was practiced by many young medical scholars, who needed cadavers for dissection and who could not get them any other way. The main obstacle to dissection was the traditional religious belief in the bodily resurrection, a belief to which Tom also addresses himself, as we have seen. The doctor, like Huck, Tom, and the Negroes, represented a ground of conviction outside traditional religious views. Huck's superstition was then not random, but arose from the frequency of grave robbing in the early days of modern medicine. Dobbins the schoolmaster is also a secret votary of medicine, and the book he keeps locked in his desk—and which must be kept from the view of children, as Becky discovers, because of its pictures

of the naked human body—is a textbook in anatomy.

Huck's and Tom's wart cures have other points of resemblance to modern medicine, and indeed to modern science altogether, in contradistinction to traditional religious beliefs. Getting rid of warts is a catharsis of the body, in contrast with ridding oneself of sin, a catharsis of the soul. In ridding oneself of warts, method is all-important. The devils that carry off Hoss Williams must be approached at the right time, in the right place, and with the right incantation. Earlier, Tom had described two other methods of removing warts. One is with spunk water, the rain-water remaining in the hollow of a tree stump. Bob Tanner is said to have failed with this method. For Huck this is evidence of the inefficacy of the method. Tom, however, insists that Bob had not done it correctly, the proper way being as follows. One must go at midnight to a stump that is in the middle of the woods, and back up to it to immerse one's hand. Then you recite a prescribed verse, take eleven steps with your eyes shut, turn around three times, and walk home without speaking to anyone. "Because if you speak the charm's busted." The other method consists in splitting a bean, drawing blood from the wart and putting it on one half of the bean, and burying that half at midnight at the crossroads in the dark of the moon. Then you burn the rest of the bean. "You see that piece that's got the blood on it will keep drawing and drawing, trying to fetch the other piece to it, and so that helps to draw the wart, and pretty soon off she comes." Implicit in the three wart cures—all of which are performed at midnight—is the belief that the powers of darkness are impersonal forces, like the laws of physics and chemistry, and have no option but to produce the desired results if they are solicited in the proper manner. They differ in this from prayer, to which a personal God may or may not respond, according to the desire of the petitioner. They are also like modern science in that the power in question obeys anyone who discovers the right method, and the possession of this method is independent of the character of the seeker. For one of these superstitions to fail means to Tom only that it has not been performed properly. In fact, we never see Tom verifying any of his wart cures. He claims that he has taken off "thousands" of warts with spunk water and attributes the supposed multiplicity of his warts to the fact that he plays a great deal with frogs. That frogs cause warts is as much a superstition as the idea that spunk water removes them, and we suspect that the cause and the cure are equally imaginary. Neither of the boys exhibits any warts for removal before the trip to the graveyard. All their interest is concentrated upon the ritual and none upon the warts for the sake of which the ritual is ostensibly performed. We observe that, to a devotee of modern science, the failure of science to solve a problem does not mean that science cannot solve the problem. All it means is that the right experiment has not yet been devised or the right formula found. The votary of traditional religion, however, believes that God acts for the best, whether he seems to grant our prayers or not. It is assumed that God knows better than we do what is good for us and

that, moreover, his purposes are fulfilled and his goodness made manifest, in the next world as well as in this one. Tom's expectations are confined strictly to this world, and we can see that science and superstition in a kind of fluid mixture are reshaping the traditional beliefs of St. Petersburg. Aunt Polly, although a traditionalist in religion, subscribed to all the new "health" periodicals and "phrenological frauds" and made Tom their victim whenever she deemed his health in need of assistance. Aunt Polly's traditional faith does not protect her from these incursions of pseudo science, any more than it protects Tom from wart cures. In Aunt Polly's decisions to "cure" Tom with the water treatment, the sitz baths, the blister plasters, and finally the "painkiller" (which was probably raw whiskey), both the ailment and the cure are probably as imaginary as the warts and the wart cure. In this respect the triumph of imagination over experience is no less in the new than in the old dispensation.

We can see that in Tom Sawyer's St. Petersburg law, religion, science, and superstition are moving in the direction of a new order in which self-preservation in this world replaces salvation in the next as the dominating human concern. All Tom's superstitions are ways of recognizing and evading or controlling threats to his person or his property. Although he believes the devils are coming to take Hoss Williams, there is no mention of the hell or hell-fire awaiting the victim. The only allusion to future punishment—there is none whatever to future reward—is when he contemplates the fate of Jimmy Hodges, "lately released," and thinks he might be willing to go too "if he only had a clean Sunday school record." When the stray dog howls nearby as the boys flee the murder scene, they reckon they're "goners." Again, Tom momentarily regrets his Sunday school record, but only because of the conviction of doom that has seized him. Elements of the oldtime religion thus survive in Tom, but only as part of the new religion of self-preservation in this world. That is, they appear, along with his superstitions, as elements of his wariness in dealing with the supernatural as one among the threats to his personal safety.

Tom and Huck are drawn to the graveyard at midnight, ostensibly by the dead-cat wart cure but in fact by the secret exigencies of modern medicine. There they witness the murder of the young doctor. They become the guardians of an important truth, upon which both the justice of the law and (to a degree) the safety of the community depend. Not even Muff Potter knows the facts about the murder, because he was drunk and unconscious when it was committed. The boys are terrified and swear an oath, written out by Tom on a pine shingle, that "they will keep mum about this and they wish they may drop down dead in their tracks if they ever tell and rot." Huck admires Tom's facility in writing and takes a brass pin to prick his flesh. But Tom stops him and insists on using one of the clean needles he carries for the sewing of his shirt collar. There is a danger of poisoning from the pin, he explains to Huck. We can see, in this informative sidelight, the beginning of Tom's transition from superstition to science. Although invoking the powers of darkness by their oath,

Tom will take care not to corrupt the blood that invokes those powers by any negligence with respect to natural causality. The oath is required, as Huck puts it, because "that Injun devil wouldn't make any more of drowning us than a couple of cats, if we was to squeak 'bout this and they didn't hang him." The oath then has the purpose of guaranteeing their personal safety by adding a supernatural sanction to the fear already engendered by Injun Joe. It draws a kind of pledge for its enforcement from the blood, which takes the place of God in what we would consider a conventional oath. Of course, it is their lifeblood that they wish to safeguard. Shedding blood makes the oath a kind of homeopathic antitoxin, in which respect it bears a certain resemblance to the wart cures.

Before the night is out the horror of the murder has been augmented by the howling dog. After that omen of death has passed, Tom is convinced that it is Muff Potter who is doomed. He seems unaware that if Muff is doomed, it is because of their own oath to conceal the truth. As we have seen, that oath now stands in the way of truth, justice, and the security of the community. This oath, we see, protects Injun Joe at the inquest, where the boys for the first time feel the pull of sympathy for poor, betrayed Muff Potter. They hear the "stonyhearted liar [Injun Joe] reel off his serene statement" falsely accusing Muff, and they expect "every moment that the clear sky would deliver God's lightnings upon his head." When divine vengeance fails, they conclude that "this miscreant sold himself to Satan and it would be fatal to meddle with the property of such a power as that." Tom's conscience is thus quieted by the opinion that God has abdicated responsibility too. When in the crisis he does the work of God, it will not, however, appear to be God's work. It will be Tom Sawyer's.

It is some weeks later that Muff, who has now been charged with the murder, finally comes to trial. The boys are oppressed by their secret, yet fear dominates guilt. Tom seeks out Huck to find whether the latter's resolve has weakened. Huck seems firm enough. He appears to know Injun Joe better than Tom, and being an outcast himself is less likely to have protection from Joe's vengeance. It is clear that Tom fears his own resolve more than he fears Huck's when he suggests that they swear their oath of secrecy again. Having sworn, the boys relapse into commiseration for Muff. "He ain't no account," says Huck, "but then he hain't ever done anything to hurt anybody. Just fishes a little, to get money to get drunk on . . ." But it transpires that he also shared food with Huck, when there wasn't enough for two, and that he has mended kites for Tom and knitted hooks to his fishlines. They try to relieve their guilt by doing many small kindnesses for Muff at the village jail, but the pathetic gratitude they receive in return only adds mightily to their inward torture.

The trial comes on, and at the end of the second day, with Injun Joe's evidence unshaken, it appears there can be but one verdict. That night Tom is out late and returns home "in a tremendous state of excitement." The next day three witnesses are called. The first testifies to seeing Muff

wash himself at a brook, early in the morning following the murder. A second testifies to the identity of the murder knife. A third attests that the knife in question was Muff's. In each case, Muff's lawyer declines to cross-examine. The courtroom buzzes with dissatisfaction at the lawyer for the defense, who appears to be letting his case go by default. But suddenly the lawyer addresses the court, saying that he has changed his defense from that he had indicated in his opening remarks two days before. Then he had intended to prove only that Muff had committed an involuntary homicide under the influence of drink. Turning to the clerk, he says. "Call Thomas Sawyer!" In an atmosphere electric with puzzled anticipation, the clerk administers the oath, an oath different from that Tom had administered to himself and to Huck. Then Muff's lawyer leads Tom, breathless and almost inaudible at first, through the sensational narrative of the events he and Huck had witnessed from their hiding place that night in the graveyard. "The strain upon pent emotion reached its climax when the boy said: '—and as the doctor fetched around and Muff Potter fell, Injun Joe jumped with the knife and—' Crash! Quick as lightning the half-breed sprang for a window, tore his way through all opposers, and was gone!"

"Tom was a glittering hero once more—the pet of the old, the envy of the young." The heroism is on a more solid basis than before; but Tom now pays a price for his glory. His days, we are told, were "days of splendor and exultation," but his nights "were seasons of horror." "Injun Joe infested all his dreams, and always with doom in his eye." What was it that tempted Tom into this new heroism? All his glory hitherto had been the consequence of tricks played upon others. Fear had dominated him from the moment of the murder. Sympathy for Muff Potter had only led to the precaution of a second oath, until the trial was under way and the tension began to build. The scene in the courtroom certainly was one whose "theatrical gorgeousness" appealed to his nature as strongly as that in which he returned to play the lead at his own funeral. We have no introspective evidence of what it was that led to Tom's great decision to risk Injun Joe's vengeance, or the doom invoked upon himself in his own oaths. In *Huckleberry Finn* we are provided abundant evidence of the hero's inward processes of moral crisis and of the deliberations accompanying their resolution. The Huck of the later novel articulates his private world much as does Hamlet in the great soliloquies. In Tom's case, we are never told in advance how the hero determines upon his great deeds. In the whitewashing episode we are told only that "an inspiration . . . a great, magnificent inspiration" had burst upon him. At the Sunday school we saw Tom mysteriously trading for tickets among the boys, but his sudden presentation of himself for the prize Bible, in the presence of Judge Thatcher, is almost as much of a surprise to us as to Mr. Walters, the Sunday school superintendent. Later, in the midst of his pirating expedition, as he stands silently in the night over the troubled sleeping form of Aunt Polly, we only know that "his face lighted with a

happy solution of his thought." In each of these cases we only learn what he had decided from the results of his decision. An indication of how Tom decides may be gleaned, however, from the description of how he chooses his runaway vocation. He contemplates the careers of the clown, the soldier, and the Indian chief. Then, as the vision of the Black Avenger of the Spanish Main seizes and convulses his being, it sweeps the field, and his choice is made. It is the workings of Tom's passions, not any inner reflection upon alternative courses or motives, that determine his fate. We venture to suggest, therefore, that fear controlled him from the moment of the murder but that compassion for Muff Potter warred closely with fear until the second oath recorded the ascendancy of the latter.

We recollect but one reference to Tom's conscience in connection with the murder trial. In the twenty-third chapter, in which the case is brought on, we are told that "Every reference to the murder sent a shudder to his heart, for his troubled conscience and fears almost persuaded him that these remarks were put forth in his hearing as 'feelers'; he did not see how he could be suspected of knowing anything about the murder, but he still could not be comfortable in the midst of this gossip." It is not clear from this whether conscience and fears are altogether different things. Tom would like to be "comfortable," even as he earlier had sought a comfortable way of enjoying the advantages of death. The feels threatened by Injun Joe; but he also feels threatened by the community, which could use legal processes to compel him to testify if they suspected what he knew. Yet we know that he is troubled also by his attachment to Muff Potter and by the threat to Muff. It is our judgment that it is, strictly speaking, compassion for Muff, not conscience proper, that motivates Tom in the direction he finally takes. By compassion we mean sympathy arising from a sense of identification with another. We distinguish it from conscience, insofar as the latter implies recognition of a duty or obligation. Tom shows no sense of obligation to Muff, or to either law or justice. But he quite literally *feels* for him, and this feeling, this passion, is at war with the more fundamental passion he has for his own life. In the end, the ascendancy of fear over compassion is reversed, not by the strength of compassion, but by its mighty assistance from Tom's love of glory and *éclat*. The melodrama of the trial and the vision of himself in the central role—like that of the little child of the millennium—overcome the contrary force of fear. The playing of the heroic role before the entire community, and of the role of personal savior of Muff, presented overwhelming immediate gratifications, which obliterated for the moment the more remote sense of danger from Injun Joe.

But let us understand thoroughly what that love of glory was that seems to have acted so decisively upon Tom. Love of glory has two roots that, strictly understood, differ as much as conscience and compassion. Glory is an intensification of fame, as fame is of honor. We can love honor either from self-knowledge or from self-love. In the former case,

what we ultimately seek is a competent assurance of our virtue or excellence. That is to say, we may desire virtue as a means to well-being, and honor as a means to virtue. The quest for honor may then be an element in the quest for self-knowledge in the service of excellence. But the quest for glory rooted in self-love apart from self-knowledge tends to make glory an end in itself. The passion Tom seeks to gratify—clearly of the latter species—thus appears as a passion merely for a name. Perhaps this is not unnatural for a boy who has no father and who must overcome his anonymity by becoming a founder in his own right. We spoke earlier of the love of distinction to which Tom appealed in his sale of whitewashing privileges. Love of fame, in a modern mass democracy, tends to be the passionate negative to the constant threat to the sense of individual identity. At bottom, it is the equivalent upon the human level of the reaction of the organism to the threat of physical extinction, as that threat is seen from the perspective of modern science. From this perspective the individual organism is never more than a hypothetical and temporary sequestration of atoms upon a gravitational field into which, presently, it will dissolve. Radical nominalisms in physics and in ethics parallel each other. Because Tom's glory has no foundation beyond the acclaim he sees and hears—or feels—he is constantly driven to repeat it. He must constantly revive that limelight in which alone he experiences assurances of his own authenticity. Whether he is swearing the oath to keep the secret, or revealing the same secret before the astounded court, he is obeying the same law of his nature.

Tom's questionable glory in the church has now been transformed into unquestionable glory in the courtroom, and beyond. Yet Injun Joe remains at liberty. Rewards have been offered, a detective from St. Louis has come and gone, but no Joe. Of course, it is Tom, assisted by Huck, who must prove Joe's nemesis. After the trial had ended so sensationally and Tom had been immortalized by the village newspaper, "There were some that believed he would be President, yet, if he escaped hanging." The humor notwithstanding, it is Tom's quasi criminality that qualifies him as an antagonist of Joe. "Set a thief to catch a thief" is the relevant proverb.

In fact, Tom never sets out to catch Joe. Because of Mark Twain's myth that this is a story of a boy, certain things are ascribed to chance by the art of the novel that otherwise might be ascribed to the art of the protagonist. Tom and Huck discover the secret meeting place of Joe and his confederate as an accidental by-product of a treasure hunt that is presented to us as a development unrelated to the prior action of the plot. In a ruined, abandoned house, they witness the equally accidental discovery by Joe of the long-lost treasure of the Murrel Gang. From their hiding place they watch the criminals cart off the treasure, which they hear is to be hidden in one of Joe's dens, "Number Two—under the cross." At that point the boys set off, not to apprehend Joe, but to steal the treasure for themselves. Their motive is simply to rob the robbers.

It is of some interest to recognize the cause of Joe's undoing. It is not Tom's skill in tracking either him or the treasure. Joe and his companion planned to light out for Texas with their loot; but Joe would not do so until they had done one more "dangerous" job. Had they foregone that final job, they might have taken both their loot and the treasure and departed for a life of ease, and perhaps even respectability. But the job consists, as the confederate himself discovers only at the last moment, in taking revenge upon the Widow Douglas. At a crucial moment, Joe threatens even the confederate with death unless he renders the necessary assistance in carrying the act of vengeance to its conclusion. Joe had murdered young Doctor Robinson as revenge for once having caused him to be jailed for vagrancy. The widow's husband, who had been a justice of the peace, had done the same thing. Moreover, he had once done something infinitely worse; he had had Joe horsewhipped in front of the village jail, "like a nigger!" The insult to Joe's pride had demanded the judge's death, and since the judge had cheated him by dying without Joe's assistance, it now demanded the widow's mutilation. Joe has a brutal and barbaric sense of honor, yet it is a sense of honor nonetheless. It is moreover a sense of honor that has nothing in common with Tom's love of glory and *éclat*. It causes him to lose both treasure and life. Yet Joe shows, in the dialogue with his confederate, that neither life nor gold count for much with him in comparison with his pride or honor. Mark Twain presents Joe to us as a worthless as well as a dangerous being. Yet except for Aunt Polly's old-fashioned piety, Joe appears to be the sole representative within the novel of devotion to an immaterial good. Joe's pagan pride joins Aunt Polly's Christian humility upon the altar of Tom's materialistic self-glorification.

Tom and Huck trace Injun Joe to his lair in the whisky room of the temperance tavern. They believe the treasure is in the room and that if they can get in there when Joe is away they can make off with it. They are certain he will not leave by day, and agree that Huck will watch every night and come for Tom when Joe has left on the "dangerous" job. Several nights pass without event, and on Saturday Tom goes on the long-heralded picnic that had been planned by Becky. Why Tom risks being away on a night when Injun Joe might emerge from his den is expressed to us as follows. "The sure fun of the evening outweighed the uncertain treasure; and boylike, he determined to yield to the stronger inclination and not allow himself to think of the box of money another time that day." We think the author meant, not that Tom "determined to yield," but that he yielded. The present good of the picnic outweighed the treasure, just as the fear of Injun Joe had been outweighed by the glory in the courtroom.

Before pursuing the dual themes of the treasure and the picnic, we must direct attention to an episode that was a necessary condition of the picnic, namely, the reconciliation of Tom and Becky. Their estrangement, which began with the discovery by Becky that Tom had been engaged to Amy

Lawrence, had finally reached an impasse. But one day during the noon recess, Becky passes the schoolmaster's desk and sees the key in the lock. The master keeps a book there, the identity of which is the great and tormenting mystery of the school. Becky turns the key, opens the drawer, and presently is inspecting the anatomy text with its handsomely engraved frontispiece, "a human figure, stark naked." At that moment Tom steps up behind her, Becky starts, and as luck would have it, tears the page. Becky bursts into tears: her terror of discovery and punishment thereupon multiply a thousandfold her grievance against Tom.

What old Dobbins does in such cases is to demand of the class that the guilty party step forward. When no one volunteers, he asks each of the scholars in turn, fixing his gaze full upon him or her, to discover evidences of guilt. Such a procedure might not succeed with such a hardened prevaricator as Tom, but it cannot fail with such an innocent as Becky. Becky might have confessed had she not been so paralyzed by fear. The beating that is the sure punishment for such a crime appears to her in all the lurid light of eternal damnation. But Tom has been licked times without number. We have seen him deliberately court a licking in order to be sent to sit with the girls, the first day Becky had come to the school. He can't understand why Becky is so bitter at the prospect. "That's just like a girl—they're so thin-skinned and chicken-hearted," he comments. But of course we know that that is part of their charm for Tom. At the same time, we know that taking a licking is about the smallest price Tom could possibly pay for any good thing he might desire. At the crucial moment, just as Dobbins reaches Becky in his relentless search for the guilty one, Tom has another of his great inspirations. "He sprang to his feet and shouted—*I done it!* . . . and when he stepped forward to go to his punishment the surprise, the gratitude, the adoration that shone upon him out of poor Becky's eyes seemed pay enough for a hundred floggings." Their reconciliation is complete. Indeed, it should be characterized, not as a reconciliation, but as a conquest. No knight slaying dragon had ever won fair lady by what the lady had perceived as greater valor.

So Tom and Becky are inseparable upon the long-delayed picnic. In the afternoon the children take to exploring McDougal's cave. There was a main avenue that was familiar to most. No one, we are told "knew" the cave, for there were labyrinths beyond labyrinths, and it was not customary to venture beyond the main avenue and the corridors and recesses immediately adjacent thereto. "Tom Sawyer knew as much of the cave as any one."

Tom leads Becky on into the cave, beyond the known portion to the unknown, until finally they are lost, with no idea, and finally no rational hope, of emerging alive. Why? At a certain point, "the ambition to be a discoverer seized him." Tom is a venturer; his is the spirit of enterprise. But Tom never seeks danger for its own sake; nor does he willingly face danger except when, as in the courtroom, it is suppressed by another,

more immediate passion. But now Tom is led to unsought and unnecessary danger. There was no reason for him to venture into the unknown without marking the pathway by which they might return. But Tom is under a compulsion to break with the trodden pathways, to go onward without retracing his steps. There will be either death or salvation, but no turning back. And so, having lost the way and being driven ever onward, Tom and Becky are lost. *

Their only food is a piece of cake she has "saved . . . from the picnic for us to dream on, Tom, the way grown-up people do with wedding cake . . ." Tom shows great tenderness for Becky's growing weakness in the cave and reserves the greater part of the cake for her, never eating more than a small part of his own share. Yet he never returns the pledge of her troth. To him, the cake is not consecrated; it is only a means of survival. When they come to a spring, Tom decides that they must make a halt; at least the water will keep them alive longer, while they wait and hope for rescue. Becky becomes very weak; slowly she sinks into "a dreary apathy," and eventually loses all hope. She tells Tom to take his kite line and continue to explore if he chooses; but makes him promise to return from time to time and to hold her hand when the end comes.

During this terrible vigil, Tom makes a discovery—that Injun Joe is in the chamber of the cave next to their own. Fear of Joe overcomes fear of the cave at that moment. It apparently never occurs to Tom to appeal to Joe to rescue them. Yet Joe could have had no grudge against Becky; and it might have been in Joe's interest to have saved both of them. After all, there was already a petition being circulated for Joe's pardon. Rescuing the children after all other hope had gone might have led to the success of the petition. But Tom's future glory brooks no such medium. How then and why does Tom succeed?

There are two conspicuous facts about the vigil in the darkness. First is the apparent absence from Tom of any conception of his own death. Although Tom knows fear—particularly of Injun Joe—there never seems to be the decided equation between hopelessness and death that there is in the case of Becky. Becky feels her growing weakness and accepts death as its inevitable conclusion. But Tom, although aware of the facts of the situation, never resigns himself to it. Second is the absence of any suggestion of prayer, by either Tom or Becky. We recall that only once before did Tom ever pray, when Huck was overcome by fright at the approach of the "devils" in the graveyard. But he broke it off before ever naming the Lord. In his utmost extremity, Tom relies on no other power than himself, whether higher or lower.

Tom then, wasting no time or energy on useless thoughts or actions, extends his kite line, first down one corridor, then down another, and then down still another. Turning back from the third, "he glimpsed a far-off speck that looked like daylight." Dropping the line, he groped toward the

* See note page 224.

light and presently "pushed his head and shoulders through a small hole and saw the broad Mississippi rolling by!" Tom is thus saved, and Becky is saved by Tom, by a light vouchsafed to him far within the innermost recesses of the cave, at a point where the probability of finding light—or of light finding him—was the most remote, if not most unreasonable. Tom thus becomes an authentic hero of that new Calvinism in which grace comes, not by works or faith, but by the spirit of utter and indefeasible self-reliance. Tom, we may say, is saved by the Lord because the Lord finds merit in the fact that it had never occurred to Tom to ask for help. Tom may have appeared as a clever and lucky trickster hitherto. But he will emerge with a new aura of authenticity and legitimacy. The highest principle of the old order has now anointed the leader of the new. Tom's education and the formation of his character have been completed deep within the earth. Tom Sawyer's Gang is now ready for the light of the sun.

Huck meanwhile has kept his own faithful vigil. On the night that Tom and Becky are wandering ever deeper into the cave, Huck follows Joe and his companion as they leave their lair. But they carry a box with them, which Huck mistakenly believes is the treasure. There is no time to go for Tom. The men pursue a course toward the Widow Douglas's, and following closely in the dark, Huck discovers the evil nature of their mission. But the widow has company, and the men lurk under cover waiting for the lights to go out. Then Huck runs for help. The Welshman and his sons arrive with guns. Joe and his confederate are driven off, but not captured. Huck is terrified and is taken into the Welshman's house, where he is seized with a fever and for a long time loses consciousness. When he comes to himself again, he too will taste, but without pleasure, the glory of a hero.

Before Huck recovers, Tom and Becky triumphantly return. Judge Thatcher has the mouth of the cave sealed, not knowing that Joe is within. And Joe dies of thirst and starvation before Tom discovers what the Judge had done. The light that had been vouchsafed to Tom has been denied to Joe.

Now the boys are safe, and when Huck is well enough, Tom takes him aside and imparts his secret. Number Two is in the cave, and Tom knows an easy way to get there. He is sure that that is where the treasure is kept. They gather up provisions and two bags to carry the treasure. Then they head for the secret place five miles below the mouth of the cave from which he and Becky had emerged to safety. Exploring the chamber where Tom had nearly stumbled upon Joe, they discover a cross, done with candle smoke on a big rock. This without doubt is "Number Two," and the treasure must be "under the cross." But Huck is again struck with terror. Injun Joe's ghost must be nearby. Tom remonstrates that the ghost must surely be at the mouth of the cave, where Joe had died, rather than here. But Huck disagrees, "No, Tom, it wouldn't. It would hang around

the money. I know the way of ghosts, and so do you." Tom begins to have doubts too. That the ghost would stick to the treasure seemed eminently reasonable. But once more inspiration comes to Tom. "Looky-here, Huck, what fools we're making of ourselves! Injun Joe's ghost ain't a-going to come around where there's a cross!" And so the sacred symbol performs the function that will now be characteristic in the order over which Tom is to preside. It will point the way to the new salvation and keep the air pure and free of evil spirits for the votaries of the faith.

Huck and Tom return to St. Petersburg. As they enter the town, the Welshman sees them and tells them they are wanted at the Widow Douglas's. Their wagon appears to him to be loaded with old metal. As they reach the widow's it appears that something great is in progress. All the people of consequence in the town are there. The boys are quickly sent aside for scrubbing and dressing. Huck wants to find a rope and drop out the window and escape. But Tom senses another scene of grandeur and won't miss it for anything. The celebration is a setting for the supposed grand revelation by the Welshman of how Huck had risked his life that Saturday night to save the widow. Huck had earlier sworn the Welshman to secrecy, but the death of Injun Joe evidently has convinced the Welshman—but not Huck—that the oath is no longer binding. Huck still feared that Joe might have some friends around. But the secret had already leaked out, and the surprise lacked some of its supposed force. When the widow responded by saying that she meant to give Huck a home, have him educated, and start him in business some day, "Tom's chance was come. He said: 'Huck don't need it, Huck's rich.'" "

And so the long trail of successes winds its way to the triumph to end

* The exact cause of the break with the return path is not easy to state precisely. Tom had made two smoke marks for future guidance before they were attacked by the bats. To escape, Tom leads Becky hastily down a corridor, just as Becky's candle is put out. The flight continues for some time, down a succession of corridors entered at random. Is the pathway broken at this point? Tom does not think of returning for some time, still impelled by his search for novelties to brag about later. He then tells Becky he reckons he could find the way back, but fears encountering the bats again. He insists upon searching for a new way. His fear of the bats appears to govern him at this point, just as his fear of Injun Joe does a little later. But the bats are a largely imaginary danger. A resolute attempt to protect the candle, at least until they reached the smoke marks or the staircase might have succeeded. Even if they failed, they would have remained at a point in the cave where they might easily have been rescued. In fact, had they remained near the bats, they might have followed them out of the cave when night came, and the bats emerged in their quest for food. If it is true, as we are told, that Tom knew the ways of bats, his behavior becomes even more unreasonable. But Tom is ever dominated by the passion of the moment. He never acts reasonably. It is in his defiance of reason, and the cunning of his passion, that his *virtu* consists. His way is irreversibly downwards, and he emerges not from the top, but from the bottom of the cave. One can hardly imagine a more apt symbol of the replacement of Platonic by Machiavellian republicanism.

all triumphs. Once more Tom is the little child in a drama that has all the glory of the millennium. The whitewashing of the fence, the prize winning in the Sunday school, the return from the dead, the revelation in the courtroom, all pale into insignificance beside the twelve thousand dollars in gold coins that now transfix the assembled magnates of St. Petersburg.

Tom's glory will now endure. The Lord has shown him to be truly of the elect. He has shown him the light of salvation in his hour of sorest need. His cross has pointed him the way to the treasure. And the treasure the cross has revealed and protected is such as neither moth nor rust can corrupt, or other thieves can steal. Tom Sawyer's Gang is set upon the path to greatness and immortality such as no faith can assure so well, either in this world or the next, as a large capital.