The symbols in *The Glass Menagerie* that create Tom’s character suggest a young man struggling with duty, someone who wants to break out of the prison of his family and rebel against conventionality. Tom’s cigarette smoking is one symbol of the passive way he rebels against his mother. Throughout Tom’s remembrance of his past, he frequently recalls both his mother’s complaining about his uncivilized habits, such as smoking, and her self-righteous moralizing. Similarly, the fire escape symbolizes Tom’s burning desire to leave his family without actually abandoning them. He delivers many of his judgmental speeches from the fire escape, and whenever he leaves the apartment to smoke, go to the warehouse, or take in movies, Tom uses the fire escape, thereby drawing attention to this symbol of escape. Furthermore, the movies represent Tom’s hopes for the future, along with his desire for adventure. After Tom and Amanda make up after their big fight, Amanda asks Tom why he spends so much time at the movies, and Tom replies, “I have been to the movies . . . I like a lot of adventure” (Williams 45). The most powerful symbol that frames Tom’s vision of his predicament is Malvolio the Magician who transmutes ordinary things, such as water, into extraordinary ones, such as wine, and is a master of daring escapes. In his drunken stupor, Tom tells Laura when he comes home late from the movies that “He [Malvolio] changed water into . . . whiskey. I know it was whiskey because I tasted it . . . [then] we put him in a coffin and nailed it shut . . . [and] he got out without removing one nail . . . I wish I knew that trick” (Williams 64). Tom’s coffin is their tiny apartment, and the nails are his mother and sister. Finally, the glass menagerie itself has different meanings for all the Wingfields, but for Tom, it symbolizes the fragile family that relies on him. His near destruction of the menagerie in one of his rages against Amanda evinces Tom’s subconscious longing to escape his sister’s and mother’s frailty, a cycle of fragility that has trapped him since his father left the family.
Because both characters escape valley society to the peace and freedom of the river, Huck is able to evaluate Jim without the influence of contemporary stereotypes or ideas. In these fresh conditions Huck begins to appreciate his companion’s individual qualities, and Jim’s humanization occurs. The basis for Huck’s new respect of a slave evolves in the Jim’s development as an emotional, caring family man. Jim’s very motivation to escape Miss Watson lies in his intense desire to remain near to his wife and children. His recollection of his inner guilt and grief after he ignorantly beat his deaf child reaffirms this care for family:

“ ‘Oh, de po’ little thing! de Lord God Almighty forgiving po’ ole Jim, kaze he never gwine to forgive hisself as long as he’s live!’ Oh, she was plumb deaf and dumb, Huck, plumb deaf and dumb – and I’d ben a ‘treat’n her so!’” (Clemens 126)

Jim seems to translate this past guilt into a parental care for Huck, taking the boy’s shifts at night on the raft in steadfast loyalty to him. Jim embraces Huck with a father’s worry whenever the boy survives danger on the river; these embraces deeply impact Huck, who has never felt such affection from an adult. A crucial moment in Jim’s humanization comes in his development into Huck’s equal in knowledge of right and wrong. This evolution of Jim comes with the important reprimand that he gives to Huck after the boy cruelly tricks him that their dangerous separation by fog was a dream. When the slave realizes that Huck has ridiculed him with the degrading joke, he lashes out against him in speech, demanding an earnest apology. Jim affirms his own moral goodness and questions Huck’s:

“ ‘En all you wuz thinkin’ about wuz how you could make a fool uv ole Jim wid a lie. Dat truck dah is trash; en trash is what people is dat puts dirt on de head en dey fren’s en makes ‘em ashamed.’” (Clemens 72)

Jim’s words of admonition to Huck parallel painful lessons on good and bad that a parent would teach a child. By standing up to Huck, Jim models moral right and truth for him. Huck’s feeling of shame about the incident overrides his past ideas of the silent submission of slaves to their masters. Jim’s stand against Huck brings them closer together because it puts them on terms of true moral equality to each other. Jim now feels even more comfortable to nurture the boy as father-figure and role model. He eagerly expresses his bond with Huck in repeated gratitude toward the boy, honoring him as his most valued and trusted friend. In his concrete experiences of friendship with Jim, Huck witnesses the slave’s humanization at its height.