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The other world of Mark Twain: dreams and reality in his works

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**THE OTHER WORLD OF MARK TWAIN:
DREAM AND REALITY IN HIS WORKS**

1.

BY

Kristin Majercik Rugg

ABSTRACT

When man loses belief that God cares for and loves him, life often loses its meaning, and suffering becomes unbearable. That suffering must then be invested with some reason for being, or divested of its reality, in order to be endured. Mark Twain, left without an unquestioning belief in the love of God for him, and unable to find some reasonable and bearable cause for the pain in his life, negated not only the reality of the suffering, but carried that negation to its full conclusion and denied the existence of any real life.

The vehicle for Twain's denial of reality was the dream. His use of the dream as an escape from the suffering in his life and as an answer to the pain of his own seemingly futile quest for an answer to that suffering did not appear suddenly in his work. The dream itself is tied closely in his personal life. Not only was he subject to frequent and quite distinctive dreams throughout his life, but in many ways he was, in childhood, absorbed by the world of make-believe. He was also intrigued by "psychological" dream, such as the possibility of dual personality, and, in fact, was subject to what might be called ESP experiences, including mesmeric control. There are hints in Twain's earliest writing which point to his eventual use of the dream as an escape, including dream in description, dream in

discussion, and dream in competition with various other concepts.

The development of this escape mechanism follows a pattern based on Twain's ever-changing philosophy of life. This philosophy moved, as his personal life suffered, from a view of life as idyllic, through various stages, to a refusal to accept the unbeatable evils of life by refusing to accept their reality. The pattern itself is traceable in the development of Twain's writings. It begins with the initial separation of dream and reality, continues to explore the nature of dream and fantasy, asks whether it matters if a circumstance is dream or reality, and finally merges dream and reality. The difference is that before the initial separation, dream was only a part of reality. After the final merger, reality is only a dream.

There has been much conjecture about the emotional coloration of Twain's final statement. Is it optimism or pessimism that is clothed within that ultimate conclusion? The answer is that it is neither, and it is both. It is not truly optimistic because there is no hope for a better tomorrow. It is not fully pessimistic because there is no fear of a darkening future. What there is is acceptance of an answer. It is an answer not completely joyful, but it is an answer nonetheless, and with acceptance of it comes peace.

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DREAM AND REALITY IN HIS WORKS

by

Kristin Majercik Rugg

A Thesis

Presented to the Graduate Committee

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Carl F. Strand
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Chairman of the Department

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CHAPTER I
DREAM IN TWAIN'S LIFE

3.

Life

We laugh and laugh,
Then cry and cry -
Then feebler laugh,
Then die.¹

The short poem above, taken from Mark Twain's Notebook, introduces the idea that laughter and tears are opposite sides of the coin of life. The same might be said of dream and reality, both of which were certainly part of the coinage of the life of Samuel Langhorne Clemens, the man better known as Mark Twain. What is interesting about the comparison is that laughter, uncontrolled, becomes tears, and weeping often turns into the laughter of hysteria. For Mark Twain dream became the nightmare of reality; he saved his sanity by seeing the reality in which he lived as only a dream.

Dreams were a part of Mark Twain's personal life from childhood until death. References to dreams and dream-like things are frequent throughout his travel books. There are hints even in his earliest writing of his eventual use, in the non-travel books, of the dream as an escape, and the development of this escape mechanism follows a definite pattern.

There are three kinds of dreams which can be experienced, and Twain, in his own life, had all three. There is, first, deliberate and conscious dream, as in the theatre, which is the

presentation of make-believe: a kind of living dream. Evidently Mark Twain, like so many children, enjoyed being theatrical: "there was his boyish passion for make-believe, his inclination for gorgeous trappings and medieval splendor."² This love of splendor, as evidenced in "his love for gorgeous costumes . . . in dressing up for charades"³ can be seen, translated into its verbal form, in such books as The Prince and the Pauper and Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc.

Secondly, there is non-deliberate but still conscious dream, as in those things which strike the imagination but which are not displayed before the multitude. Mark Twain was struck by various such fancies. One, which seemed to stay with him his whole life, was the idea of dual personality. In his works the subject is treated in books such as The Prince and the Pauper and Pudd'nhead Wilson. The fancy probably is rooted in the third kind of dream which crowded Mark Twain's life.

There is dream which is neither deliberate nor conscious. Twain, who in childhood was "susceptible not only to somnambulism but to mesmeric control, had shown from the outset a distinct tendency toward what is called dissociation of consciousness."⁴ When a man and his spirit are dissociated, there truly is a duality in his nature. This duality, encouraged by other elements of his life and personality, made Twain susceptible to confusion regarding the nature of things. "The nervous child of a father who himself tended to live in illusions, made superstitious by his education, enjoying besides a certain gift for divination and having complete faith in his star, he was ruled by his imagination to such an

extent that he never drew a clear line between the real and the unreal, between the wish and the reality."⁵ Wish, of course, is very close to dream. And Twain also had frequent and repetitive dreams. One was about a childhood sweetheart who joined him in dream adventures for years until, in one, she was killed by an arrow and never showed up again. After his wife's death he also dreamed of her. In a note after one such dream he mentions how real the dreams seemed: "a beautiful dream and vividly real. Livy. Conversation of two or three minutes. I said several times 'Then it was only a dream, only a dream.' She did not seem to understand what I meant."⁶

Mark Twain's Notebook, which contains such references to actual dreams, also contains the kind of comments about dream-like things which Twain used in his travel-books. The San Juan River he describes as "a little narrow avenue, carpeted with greenest grass and walled with the thickest growth of bright ferns and quaint broad-leaved trees whose verdant sprays sprang upward and outward like the curving sprays of a fountain - an avenue that is fit for the royal road to Fairyland."⁷ In Life on the Mississippi he describes a town asleep, suddenly awakened by the dream-like beauty of a steamboat, with "two tall, fancy-topped chimneys, with a gilded device of some kind swung between them; a fanciful pilot house, all glass and 'gingerbread,' perched on top of the 'texas' deck behind them; the paddle boxes are gorgeous with a picture or with gilded rays above the boat's name..."⁸ When the steamboat leaves, the town, drunkard and all, returns to its dead sleep once more. And Tangier, in

The Innocents Abroad, is a place once seen only in pictures, and "we always mistrusted the pictures before. We cannot anymore. The pictures used to seem exaggerations - they seemed too wierd and fanciful for reality. But behold, they were not wild enough - they were not fanciful enough... The true spirit of it can never be found in any book save the Arabian Nights."⁹

The travel books which form the first of four categories into which Twain's books can be divided, contain not only dream in description, but also dream in discussion, as in Following The Equator. Twain's leanings toward the world of dream and fantasy form a progression showing up next in the books centered upon a boyhood theme, such as The Adventures of Tom Sawyer and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Then Twain utilizes the concept in what might be called his argument books: A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (science versus superstition), Pudd'nhead Wilson (environment versus heredity), and Joan of Arc (the dream ideal versus reality). The concept culminated in the use of the dream as an escape, and this idea can be seen in "Letters from the Earth", "The Great Dark", and ultimately in "The Mysterious Stranger".

From description and discussion of the dream, to fantasy utilizing the dream and argument defending the dream, and finally to escape via the dream, Twain inexerably moves, literally and literarily, from the practical but painful real world into another world of his own making. There are seven steps in the development of the dream concept which eventually forms this other world of Mark Twain. The first is the separation of dream and reality, seen initially in the travel books. Secondly, and also in the boyhood books, is the

fantasy level of superstition and witchcraft. This carries over into the argument books and dream escape books as well, as do the remainder of the steps. There is a very thin line between step three, which is the contrived fantasy or deception, and step four, which is the pretend fantasy or imagining. The difference is that in one the character directs the masquerade and is apart from it. In the other, the character loses himself in his own dream world. Step five is an outgrowth of steps three and four. It invokes the question of whether or not it matters if the circumstance is dream or reality. The answer, as will be demonstrated later in this thesis, is "no", which leads to step six, the inability to distinguish between dream and reality. Finally, of course, reality and dream merge: in step seven dream becomes reality, and reality is only a dream.

The seven steps are the literary accompaniment to the changing attitudes which Mark Twain experienced in his personal search for a reason for the pain in his life. These attitudes can be grouped into five general areas of feeling. At first Twain viewed life as idyllic. When he began to realize that society did incorporate a certain amount of evil, he began to employ laughter as a weapon against it. As the evils of the world continued victorious, he searched for someone to blame. Meanwhile he tried again to change the world by fighting its evil with dream ideals. Finally he submerged the evil beneath the dream, refusing to accept the pain of his life as real, in effect exchanging dream and reality.

The question arises as to why anyone, even subconsciously, would want to confuse the two. The answer is fairly easy. Dream is an escape. If life is a dream, neither man nor God can be blamed for

those things that go wrong within it. The fact that in many ways life did go wrong for Mark Twain, and that finally he had to find an answer other than the simple but painful expedient of blaming himself, as he had so often done in the past, frequently by using his day-dreaming as an excuse, or of blaming God, which he could not do, is in a large part responsible for the development of his escape route. Many people take themselves into their dream and wake up, if they wake up at all, in a mental institution. Mark Twain brought his dream to him, and the philosophy which his books contain on that point is the result.

Mark Twain did blame himself for many things, to the extent that some biographers have claimed that he was neurotic in that respect. The guilt complex involved the people closest to him, including both his parents, his wife, his brother, his son, his three daughters, even his dream sweetheart, and perhaps most importantly, himself.

The reason he felt that he failed his father is unexplained, but several biographers record the scene at his father's funeral when the boy, in tears, pleaded with his mother not to be sent back to school, and promised, for his father's sake, to behave himself. His remorse possibly had something to do with the fact that he inadvertently witnessed his father's autopsy, which he likened to "butchering in the slaughterhouse down at the point".¹⁰ He felt that his father had been humiliated, and the memory of the irritations he had caused the Judge in life brought the child more grief. That night his emotional distress caused him to wander in his sleep.

The problem between Mark Twain and his mother is not an uncommon one, and is closely associated with one of the reasons he felt that he failed himself. As most parents, the Clemenses, particularly his mother after her husband's death, wanted a life of success for their son. In order to please his mother Twain, despite the fact that he was "all his life the most inept of business men",¹¹ attempted to prove himself outstanding in those areas which polite society considered relevant. Humor was not something to which important men devoted themselves, however, and so in spite of whatever heights he might reach there, he could not achieve the goal he considered important. Even much later in his career this sort of attitude seemed to haunt him. After a rather embarrassing speech which he made about Emerson, Holmes, and Longfellow, Twain received a number of uncomplimentary comments. "The reminder that Mark Twain was after all only a jester, and should know his place must have been especially galling to the unfortunate speaker".¹²

A similar sort of situation, inadvertently as it might have been caused, hampered the success of his marriage. Mark Twain's father-in-law, a highly successful businessman, as a wedding present installed his daughter Olivia and her husband in a home of such grand proportions that Twain found it impossible to afford its upkeep. So again he failed his family in a purely materialistic way, but in a way which is particularly important to a man. Put rather crudely, when a man can't bring home the bacon, whether it be slab bacon for dinner, or strip bacon wrapped around liver for hos-d'oeuvres, he will feel shame and guilt.

Twain's guilt about his marital relationship was not, however, restricted to this materialistic level. He felt that he failed his wife in other ways as well, especially in the final years of her life when, after their daughter Susy's death, she became an invalid and, after eight years of increasing decline, weakened, as Twain thought, by arguing against his own spiritual disbeliefs, died.

Mark Twain felt at least partly responsible for deaths other than his wife's. One of the first which he felt that he had helped to cause was that of his brother Henry. While a cub pilot on the Mississippi, Twain arranged for his younger brother to take a job on the boat. One night they discussed steamboat disasters, and Mark Twain advised Henry that as a rule he would always be able to save himself, and that he should not forget to help the passengers. Within two days, in May of 1858, the Pennsylvania blew up and Henry, not realizing he had breathed live steam, tried to follow his brother's advice. Though at first not expected to live, surprisingly he showed signs of recovery. One night Twain, following doctor's orders, asked that Henry be given morphine to ensure his rest. An inexperienced intern administered an overdose, Henry died, and Twain, thinking of the advice he had given and the morphine he had requested, blamed himself.¹³

Fourteen years later on a raw cold day in 1872, Twain took his son Langdon, nineteen months old and frail since his premature birth, for a ride in an open carriage. The child was wrapped in furs, but they slipped and exposed the baby's bare legs. Twain failed to notice this and Langdon caught a cold, which developed into either pneumonia or diphtheria. Twain's only son died and for

years afterward the grief-stricken father "felt shame for that treacherous morning's work".¹⁴

When the oldest daughter Susy died at the age of twenty-four, Twain considered himself quite closely involved with her death. Several financial catastrophes had struck Twain during the 1890's, including the faltering of his own publishing firm, which went bankrupt in 1893 (the \$90,000 debt of which he felt obliged to repay), and the non-success of the Paige typesetting machine, in which he had invested almost a quarter of a million dollars. In an effort to recoup the losses and despite his own poor health (he had bronchitis and rheumatism) he and his wife and their daughter Clara set out on a lecture tour, leaving the youngest, Jean, and Susy, who was preparing for a singing career, behind. The girls were to meet them a year later in London. Susy fell ill with meningitis and died a painful death in August of 1896.¹⁵ "Mark Twain's daughter Clara tells how, with a father's natural feeling that if Susy's parents had only been there, her death might somehow have been averted, he walked the floor in grief and cried out in bitterness...."¹⁶

In 1904 in a rented villa in Italy, on the very day Twain told her that he had found the home which she had so desperately wanted for so long, Olivia Clemens died. He anguished over her suffering, and made a vow never to look in the grave of a loved one again.¹⁷

Five and a half years later, at Christmas time of 1909, he kept his promise after the death of his youngest daughter, Jean had begun acting strangely years before, and was finally discovered to be an epileptic. She spent much time in hospitals, but finally Twain built a home for her and himself. The remaining daughter, Clara,

had been married in October and was in Europe. Jean seemed healthy at last and Twain was happy that there was a family once more, if only a family of two. She died within twenty four hours. "We were together, we were a family. The dream had come true - oh, precisely true, contentedly true, satisfyingly true! and remained true two whole days."¹⁸ After his comments on his daughter's death he never wrote again.

Twain's guilt and suffering over his family were not restricted to fatalities. As a younger man, in an accident similar to the one involving his son, he took one of his daughters for a walk in her perambulator and inadvertently let go. The baby, after the perambulator went down a steep hill, was tumbled out, bleeding, among the stones by the roadside. It was after one of these misfortunes that Twain said, "I should not have been permitted to do it,... Someone should have gone who had at least the rudiments of a mind. Necessarily I would lose myself dreaming."¹⁹ The event is doubly interesting, for both the guilt and the dream are embodied in it.

Clara also was cause for a certain amount of guilt, for reasons other than accidental or fatal. Mark Twain, raised by a strong-willed woman, was a man who through most of his life "required authority as much as he required affection."²⁰ When the authority was transferred from the hands of his wife Olivia to his daughter Clara, who cared for her father in his later years, some of the guilt was transferred too. Twain continued trying to live, and write, for his women instead of himself.

Added to these causes for guilt in Twain was the feeling that he had betrayed the artist within him by writing humor. Some believe that he himself was not really aware of the cause, but

that the "bitterness of his was the effect of a certain miscarriage in his creative life; a balked personality, an arrested development of which he was himself almost wholly unaware, but which for him destroyed the meaning of life. The spirit of the artist in him, like the genie at last released from the bottle, overspread in a gloomy vapor the mind it had never quite been able to possess."²¹ This particular pain, which Brooks evidently feels is of some importance, must have caused a certain amount of grief to a sensitive man interested in both the meaning of life and the meaning of his own artistic creations.

Artists can frequently forgive themselves for being failures in a materialistic sense if they are secure in the knowledge of the emotional or intellectual wealth of their creations. Their own suffering then, and the suffering of their family, becomes at least partly acceptable as an offering to the "cause" of their creativity. Businessmen can forgive in themselves a lack of artistic creativity if they feel that they have made valid contributions to society in some other way. Their families, then, must forgive them for certain lapses because of their importance to the world at large, or because of their purely materialistic success. Many men, important neither artistically nor materially, find a certain pride in the atmosphere of love and emotional security and cohesiveness which they have been able to provide for their family. Most men, then, can find success or at least satisfaction, in at least one of the three areas: the artistic, the materialistic, or the familial.

Many document the failure Twain experienced in the business world. Quite a large number of people, including Twain himself, record his sense of failure as a husband and father. Although no editor develops the third possibility extensively, Brooks, among others, gives a certain credence to what was apparently also a sense of inferiority in Mark Twain regarding the value of his own work. The feeling was perhaps based on the belief of the times that humor was somehow a second-rate art to begin with. If the analysis is a sound one, then Twain must have felt surrounded by failure. Feeling that he was incompetent in his materialistic, or business life, in his emotional, or family life, and his intellectual, or creative life, would leave nothing to provide him with some valid reason for the suffering which he saw and experienced.

On top of the many personal reasons Twain may have had for his feelings of guilt, there was his added sense of responsibility as a member of the human race. Mark Twain raged at many injustices. Gladys Bellamy says that those rages "seem to have arisen from some obscure sense of guilt; he felt himself somehow responsible, simply because he was a part of the social structure permitting the wrongs he raged at".²² Van Wyck Brooks reverses the direction of the flow of guilt, stating that Twain's "attack upon the failure of human life was merely a rationalization of human failure in himself".²³ Whether the shortcomings of the human race added to Twain's burden of guilt, or simply provided a means whereby that burden could be expressed is of minor importance. The fact is that Mark Twain was a man fascinated by dream and fantasy from childhood, and as failure

piled upon failure (his own and others'), the dream, the fantasy, became more and more beautiful. When the realization came to him, as it must to each man, that he could accept no more blame, the door that his fascination had been leading to was open, and Mark Twain slipped through into his other world, the world of dream, where he could be blameless and therefore happy.

CHAPTER II

BELIEFS IN HIS WRITING: DUALITY AND THE IDYLLIC LIFE

Twain's gradual move into his dream world is rooted in many things, not all of which are strictly biographical. Various separate beliefs which he held at one time or another and which supported him in his final escape, can be seen in his writing. One of the most interesting, and one closely related to his previously mentioned tendency toward dissociation of consciousness, is his belief in the duality of man. Even this is in a sense biographical, for as Brooks says, of "that pair of incompatibles bound together in one flesh - the Extraordinary Twins, the 'good' boy who has followed the injunctions of his mother and the 'bad' boy of whom society disapproves - how many of Mark Twain's stories and anecdotes turn upon that same theme, that same juxtaposition! - does he not reveal there, in all its nakedness...the true history of his life?"²⁴

Twain explained that he believed about duality with a statement about the separate physical self and spiritual self of each person. He expressed it in his Notebook by saying "Now, as I take it, my other self, my dream self, is merely ordinary body and mind freed from clogging flesh and become a spiritualized body and mind and with the ordinary powers of both enlarged in all particulars a little, and in some particulars prodigiously."²⁵ Echoing the mystic, he said, "Waking I move slowly; but in my dreams my unhampered spiritualized body flies to the ends of the earth in a millionth of a second. Seems to - and I believe, does".²⁶ He discussed a similar belief in "My Plantonic Sweetheart", written in 1898.

Twain, who could often be heard denying any hope of an afterlife, in this context once said, "when my physical body dies my dream body will doubtless continue its excursion and activities without change, forever".²⁷ This may be the closest he ever came to a belief in some meaningful existence after life on Earth. This concept of the Dual Man, either during life or after death, is easily translated into the twinship theme which runs through Twain's works and which is most obvious in The Prince and the Pauper and Pudd'nhead Wilson.

Both books investigate the results of an identity switch. In The Prince and the Pauper both Tom Canty and Edward Tudor, because of the switch, leave behind the reality of the physical world to which they are accustomed and enter an existence dream-like in quality because it started out as a dream-come-true. Pudd'nhead Wilson, as a lawyer, is the instrument by which the supposedly real identities of Tom Driscoll and Chambers are reversed, their past made a dream-like null and void, their future a nightmare reality.

The Prince and the Pauper appeared in 1882. The pauper is Tom Canty, trained to be a beggar by his father and grandmother. He is also a boy who spends his spare time listening to tales about giants and fairies, enchanted castles and gorgeous kings and princes. Soon he uses his imagination to help him forget the hunger and pain of his existence. He pictures a life completely opposite to his own, and soon his one desire is to see a real prince. Gradually his secret dreams of a fine life begin to influence him, and unconsciously he begins to act like and talk like the prince he longs to see. One half of the stage is set.

The day comes when he does see a prince, Edward, Prince of Wales. Tom, about to be chased by the guards, is taken in by the prince, who listens to tales of Offel Court, of swimming in the canals and playing in the mud, with a glee that does not allow him to understand the less joyful aspects of Tom's life. The stage is fully set when Edward craves such pleasures for himself. A moment later they exchange their clothes. The impulsive prince goes to chastise a guard and in Tom's rags, is mockingly thrown to the crowd. The switch has been made and each begins his education in the life for which he has longed.

The identity change of the boys leads to perils for both the prince and the pauper. This book was written before the great catastrophes of the 1890's, however, and the ending is a happy one. Tom lives a long and honored life, revered for his friendship with Edward. Edward learns the suffering of his subjects, and so his reign is a merciful one. Both Tom and the prince gain by their sojourn into what is, to them, an unreal world.

With Pudd'nhead Wilson the results were quite different. Twelve years had passed before its appearance, and in 1896, because of the unfortunate events previously mentioned, Twain was in quite a different frame of mind. For Tom Driscoll and Chambers the end result of the switch is not happiness but misery. Except for the ending, and for the fact that the switch is engineered by outside forces instead of arranged from within, the story is rather similar to The Prince and the Pauper. Instead of the Prince there is a white child born free. Instead of the Pauper there is a black child born into slavery. The two infants, however, black and white, are so

alike that, as in the other case, only fingerprints can identify them.

Since the infants are switched before they themselves know the situation, the fingerprint solution is a necessary one, and David "Pudd'nhead" Wilson, the young lawyer with a hobby of fingerprinting, becomes vital to the story. Of course, the prints are taken before Roxana makes the switch, but she determines that the change will not be detected. So she treats the new "Marse Tom" with awe and reverence, and the real Driscoll heir receives only her curtness. The result is not surprising. The spoiled, indulged boy grows up to be a spoiled, indulged man, who, having discovered the truth of his parentage, and badly in debt, sells his mother, though she had been freed, to pay off his debts and protect his inheritance. Then he plans and carries out the murder of the man who has been a father to him.

The false heir, after his crimes are disclosed, is sentenced to prison for life, then pardoned so that he can be sold to pay off creditors. This is only justice, though it is sad. But what about the real heir, who has survived twenty-three years of slavery? Now that he is rich and free, surely his life is a dream-come-true? But no, He cannot read or write, and his speech and gestures are those of a slave. He is terrified in the white man's place, and is forever more denied the refuge of his black companions. For the rest of his life he is a man out of place in the world. "Pudd'nhead Wilson is serious in intention, for all its belly-laughs and tears. It faces up to problems made by the venality of man. Seldom is it more plainly evident that Mark Twain's eyes rarely twinkle when he laughs. A social conscience here is plainly showing."²⁸ But the book does

not stop with its revelation of justice. Twain's personal anguish has caused them to turn the dream into a nightmare.

Mark Twain did not want to see life as a nightmare. As a matter of fact, Twain attempted to see life as idyllic, a fact that is relatively easy to see in his early works. His works reflect this view for as long as he was able to reconstruct life in terms of a boy's imagination. An important example is the much celebrated The Adventures of Tom Sawyer.

In The Adventures of Tom Sawyer there is pain and horror, even murder, but seen through the eyes of the young Tom Sawyer, the pain is controlled, the horror somehow muted. The atmosphere is, in Twain's own words, that of "a Delectable Land, dreamy, reposeful, and inviting".²⁹ This represents the idyllic life which Twain envisioned early in his career. In it, Tom is "full of harmony and his soul full of gratitude".³⁰ He enjoys life to the fullest, even to the point of gleefully attending his own funeral when he supposedly drowned. Having played at being a hero throughout the book, toward its end he becomes a hero in the defense of Muff Potter, falsely accused of murder. He becomes involved with hidden treasure, the dream of all boys, and "presently found himself leaning to the impression that the thing might not have been a dream after all".³¹ The hidden treasure amounted to over twelve thousand dollars, but Tom's life remained as it had been. He formed a gang of "robbers", which were simply more "high-toned" than his "pirates" of the past, and his boy's adventurous life continued unchanged. "This notion of the excellence of simple innocence, imaginative and irrepressible,

and superior to adult methods of confronting the world, was one to which Mark Twain would often return".³²

Twain's concept of the idyllic life continued, and nine years later in 1885, a companion-piece, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (Tom Sawyer's Comrade), appeared. In this book the boy's life of adventure, exciting yet always ultimately satisfactorily resolved, is even more extolled than in the first. The excitement Tom Sawyer helped create with his play-acting is all too real on Huck Finn's raft journey, which he has taken to escape the confines of The Widow Douglas's respectability. The sense of freedom which Huck gains for himself and which, through Twain's emerging sense of social responsibility, he helps Jim to achieve, though the act may cause him to go to hell, is not seen to any great extent in any of Twain's later works. Even four years later, in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, the sense of social responsibility has expanded too much for irresponsible freedom to survive. Twain's efforts in 1894 to recapture his earlier feelings, with Tom Sawyer Abroad, were a failure. Mark Twain had begun to realize that life was not simply idyllic adventure.

CHAPTER III

HUMOR AS WEAPON AND SHIFTING THE BLAME

As Twain realized that life was not an idyll, that it could hand out hard knocks that were not always easily or even happily resolved, he began to fight back. The weapon he used was the one weapon he had always had at his command, humor. Still believing that life is good, even if not idyllic, he attempted to shrug off the evil with a laugh. The best and most obvious example of this tactic is A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, wherein Hank Morgan, the main character, takes an "underhand blow at this nonsense of knight errantry" by sandwiching knights between bulletin boards advertising such things as soap, to encourage cleanliness, so that "when they got to be numerous enough they would begin to look ridiculous".²³

In this book Twain attacks far more than sixth century knight-hood. He speaks out first of all against the members of the nobility, "tyrannical, murderous, rapacious and morally rotten as they were".³⁴ Morgan le Fay, cruel as she is, is almost ridiculous in her inability to recognize even the barest scrap of humanity in anyone less "noble" than herself. She maintains prisoners in her dungeon without even knowing who they are or why they were imprisoned, simply because they were "property" handed down to her. The implications for the nineteenth century are veiled in the comments of one of her prisoners, who says that "one man is as good as another, barring clothes...if you were to strip the nation naked and send a stranger through the crowd, he couldn't tell the king from a quack doctor, nor a duke from a hotel clerk".³⁵ Twain mocks the overly pious with his picture of a renowned hermit who bows, touching his feet, as his method of

prayer, constantly. Twain has Hank Morgan hitch him up to a sewing machine so that the power generated by his movements can be used to sew shirts, thereby commenting on useless religiosity. When Twain comments on slavery he does not veil his attitude, but has Hank Morgan come right out and mention that "this same infernal law had existed in our own South in my own time".³⁶ Here there is no escaping or mistaking the object of his attack. The humor in the situation is that the king is valued at less than Hank Morgan, and that he broods deeply about the low price for which he was sold. Hank Morgan and the king are rescued from their misadventure, the cause of which was a hope that King Arthur might learn something about his subjects and his kingdom, much as Edward VI learned from his sojourn into the world of the common people, by the ultimately ridiculous sight of Launcelot and his boys charging to the rescue on webby wheels - "five hundred mailed and belted knights on bicycles".³⁷

The kind of humor with which Twain attacked groups and institutions in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court is the same which he had used to attack individuals and their attitudes in The Innocents Abroad twenty years earlier. It shows up again later in such stories as "King Leopold's Soliloquy: A Defense of His Congo Rule". As long as Twain believed people and life to be basically good, and therefore subject to improvement, he used humor as a weapon. But as he came to believe that he could not change life, he ceased attempting to improve it and began trying to run away from it. His escape route, as mentioned previously, and the development of which will be discussed shortly, was the dream.

When Mark Twain came to realize that life was filled with other than good and that his humor was all too frequently an ineffective weapon against what must have seemed to him to be life's ever-increasing tragedy and cruelty, he began to ask the inevitable "Why?" Most of humanity can accept only so much pain as being their "share" or as the result of chance, with their being the losers in some mad celestial poker game. "Why?" becomes "Why me?" which in turn becomes "What have I done?" Self-centered man, unless he is capable of throwing all blame onto God, as Mark Twain certainly could not do, almost invariably winds up blaming himself. Mark Twain blamed himself in life, and he demonstrated the same attitude of selfblame in his writings.

The first step in shifting the blame from God to himself was a repudiation of all special power, control, and interest, which God, under whatever name by which He might be called, supposedly possesses. Increasing preoccupation with evil in the universe, and with its cause, Twain's groping for an answer, and this growing inclination to disparage whatever Creature Force might be blamed, can be seen readily in the author's later works. The two most obvious areas of control where God might exercise excessive power are providence and punishment. Through His providential mercy, God might show special favor toward certain individuals. Or, in justice, God might decree for others eternal punishment. These two areas Twain holds up to the light, inspects, and finds completely wanting in "Extract from Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven," dated 1907 by Neider, and "Letter from the Earth", from the same twenty year period (1890-1910).

Many people believe that God holds them in special favor, or that in His great providence He occasionally grants them something a little "extra". Mark Twain tries to show that the world is too big for God to pay individual attention to the desires of any one particular person. Captain Stormfield represents those who believe that God has nothing to worry about except the body and soul of a single Earthling. The Captain is on his way through space to heaven. He is amazed at the vastness of the universe, having already been enroute thirty years at approximately a million miles a minute. Twain builds up his case for the great size of the universe and tops it off with the astounding statement that the comet which the captain is racing wins the race by throwing overboard its cargo - eighteen hundred thousand billion quintillions of kazarks of brimstone - and that one kazark equals one hundred and sixty-nine worlds the size of Earth.

The implications of the size of the universe which, after all, can hardly be disputed, do not make themselves evident until Captain Stormfield arrives in heaven at the wrong gate, his race with the comet having put him slightly off course. He designates his point of origin as San Francisco, California, the United States of America, and the world, even mentions the Savior. He is told that the Savior has saved thousands of worlds, and it is only after he mentions the planet Jupiter that the head clerk begins to get an inkling of what solar system he is from. After several days, and with the help of a microscope used on a map the size of Rhode Island, his home is identified as the planet called the Wart.

Just in case all this might not be enough to convince the reader of the ridiculousness of assuming that God might be keeping His own eye on him or any other person, Twain goes on to show how silly he considers the heaven which most people seem to imagine, that of eternal psalms and wing practice. "There are a lot of such things that people expect and don't get".³⁸ Twain scoffs at the concept of special providence, for even in heaven, "there are limits to the privileges of the elect...why, if Adam was to show himself to every new comer that wants to call and gaze at him and strike him for his autograph, he would never have time to do anything else but just that".³⁹ Soon Sandy, a previous arrival, is explaining to the captain the entire social structure of heaven, and it is remarkably like that of Earth, with people of different ages, races, languages and customs. "A body can't bring his rank up here with him"⁴⁰ but rank exists just the same. The point is that God is never mentioned; heaven continues inflexibly on its own well-oiled wheels and gears, just as Earth does under its laws of Nature. God is the Creator, but not the immediate supervisor, and even an appearance by Moses and Esau is so rare that a monument will be placed where they stood, and "travelers would come for thousands of years and gawk at it, and climb over it, and scribble their names on it".⁴¹

Having commented on the great improbability of God's continuous personal intervention in the life, or heavenly after-life, of men, and having briefly alluded to the laws of Nature, Twain expands his view of those laws in "Letters from the Earth", showing how those very laws also make the concept of eternal punishment a ridiculous one.

Eternal punishment is something merely conceived by some very silly people, certainly not believed in or arranged by God. In fact, God is as conspicuously absent from this work as from "Extract from Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven", His very absence showing how unimportant the question is to Him. In "Letters from the Earth" He is mentioned briefly and appears only twice, momentarily when He creates the universe of suns and planets, moons and stars, with a flick of His fingers, and several centuries later when He devises the animals, and explains the Law of God to Satan. The subsequent discussion and the letters are between Satan and his two fellow archangels, Gabriel and Michael.

The Law of God, as explained to Satan, is the one most powerful argument against the theory of eternal punishment, wherein men must fear everlasting suffering as a consequence for committing some act which, by his very God-given nature, he could not help but commit. "Nothing approaching it has been evolved from The Master Intellect before. Law - Automatic Law - exact and unvarying Law - requiring no watching, no correcting, no readjusting while the eternities endure!"⁴² Under this Law, each creature, beast and man alike, is governed by the law of his nature, and cannot disobey that Law. The tiger commits no offense in being ferocious; the rabbit is permitted to be honorably cowardly. Individual men have differing shades and degrees all of the various Moral Qualities, and therefore some are "good", and some are "evil", but all are whatever they are because of and under the Law. Therefore the idea of eternal punishment is silly. It is silly to punish man as it would be to punish any other of God's creatures.

Satan, on his visit to the world of Man, God's experiment, writes home of the extraordinary conceit which he finds there. He says, with all the sarcasm which he feels the statement deserves, that man "thinks he is the Creator's pet. He believes the Creator is proud of him; he even believes the Creator loves him...he thinks he is going to heaven!"⁴³ Twain moves ever so slightly with these words from denying heavenly providence and eternal punishment toward a denial of any after-life at all. Apparently man is not of enough moment to be even admitted to heaven, to say nothing of being noticed once he gets there. In the final section of "Letters from the Earth" Satan shows how ridiculous all of the religious concepts of men are: the Bible is so contradictory that anyone stupid enough to believe it in all its inane misrepresentations must be insane. So Twain, in destroying whatever notions he might have had of God's favor or God's ill-favor, destroyed the entire concept of God as man sees Him. Thus he destroyed whatever hope he might have had of finding in some external force an answer for his own pain and suffering. The only place left to which he could turn was himself, and he subsequently delved deeper and deeper into himself until he found the place of his own dreams.

CHAPTER IV

THE DREAM AS DEFENSE

Of Twain's dream-originated defenses, the most well-known and perhaps the most telling, at least in terms of Twain's growing despair and emerging cynicism is Joan, the ideal of womanhood, in Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc, published in 1896. It is significant that this last battle against both the evil of the world and the pessimism which was shadowing Twain's life is fought by a woman, for Twain had always seen women like his mother, his wife, and his own dream sweetheart, as creatures above the crudeness of the ordinary world. Not only is Joan based on dream, for she is in a way the re-embodiment of Twain's dream girl, but the strength and determination which give her her power come from her own dreams. If the goodness with which dream as a thing of beauty is imbued is capable of overpowering the evil of an ugly reality, then surely the double dream that created the purpose of Joan of Arc must conquer. But though Joan remains pure, the church slays her with harsh cruelty, and the King ignores her death until ignoble self-concern causes him to take notice of the Church's decree.

Twain introduces the idea of the dream as a force for good early in the book with a discussion of the Fairy Tree in Domremy, Joan's home village. Originally the fairies themselves did friendly good services. When that was no longer possible, there was still one mystic privilege granted to the children of the Tree. "Whenever one of these came to die, then beyond the vague and formless images drifting through his darkening mind rose soft and rich and fair a vision of the Tree".⁴⁴ There was disagreement as to when and why the vision came, but whatever

the tradition, the vision represented a message from heaven.

Joan receives other messages from heaven in other visions, and her Voices tell her that she is to lead the armies of France, rescue and make free the English-enslaved nation, and set the crown on the head of the Dauphin and make him King. There are those who doubt the origin of Joan's Voices. Joan, though she goes to confession, which devils cannot abide, submits to the rite of exorcism; the priest finds no devil, so Joan must be a servant of God.

She continues in her efforts, guided by her Voices, and at one point, in a dress contrived for her by the Queen for a court appearance, she becomes "a poem, she was a dream, she was a spirit when she was clothed in that".⁴⁵ The French people flock to her banner, and Joan, though hindered by foolish men and cunning traitors, accomplishes The Raising of the Siege, The Victory of Patsy, The Reconciliation of Sully-sur-Loire, The Coronation of the King, and The Bloodless March.⁴⁶ But the young girl who has spent her childhood near the Fairy Tree, and who has drawn her power from her heavenly Voices, though she looks like a dream and in the pomp and grandeur of victory she becomes as a child again and "war and wounds and blood and death and the mad frenzy and turmoil of battle a dream",⁴⁷ she undergoes the reality of a cruel captivity and a tormented trial.

Then she is promised by her Voices that she will be delivered from imprisonment, and before her death, made to listen to a sermon that heaps all kinds of verbal abuse on her, she "seemed lost in dreams".⁴⁸ Finally she is burned at the stake, and "none saw that face anymore, nor that form, and the voice was still".⁴⁹ The dream-

like, if horrifying death, she could not free Twain from his growing horror of life and the world around him. Ultimately Joan of Arc only demonstrated that it was impossible for any individual, no matter how dream-like even though she be raised on and empowered by dreams, to alter reality or change the mean treacherousness of the real world.

So, the dream could not be used as an offensive weapon. It proved, in the end, to be as ineffective as laughter had been against the reality of life. Not being able to change the world, Twain at last was forced to simply protect himself from it. Dream, the last weapon he had had in his hands, became his mode of defense. If he could not change reality, which Joan of Arc seemed to prove in 1896, he would simply make it unreal - a dream.

The most obvious example of the exchange of dream and reality is in "The Great Dark", worked on for several years from around 1896 to 1898, though several of the ideas it incorporates go back as far as 1882.⁵⁰ Even it does not show Twain's final escape, for the exchange is valid only for Henry, the main character, and does not include either the other characters or the reader. It is engineered by the Superintendent of Dreams, and might be said to be a singular mental exchange rather than an encompassing physical reversal.

The result of the exchange is not pleasant. Although the manuscript is incomplete, Bernard De Voto, the editor, has been able to summarize the intended conclusion from Twain's notes. The dream characters undergo great suffering and tragedy, and at the end, though the story is brought back out of the dream, Henry thinks reality is

his final dream, and dream triumphs over reality in his mind. That the mental exchange is a permanent one preventing Henry from functioning in the real world is attested to by the very first words of the story, when Henry's wife says "We were in no way prepared for this dreadful thing".⁵¹

Although "The Great Dark" is a good example of the last of the five plateaus which Twain reached in his development toward the use of dream as an escape from reality, it does not represent clearly enough his ultimate stand. "The Great Dark" is in itself only the final stage prior to the all-important work, "The Mysterious Stranger". The basic idea of the smallness and/or the unimportance of man, and the unusual character called Satan are both foreshadowed in it - one by the use of the powerful microscope, the other by the smiling, clever, Superintendent of Dreams. One important difference is that Henry, in "The Great Dark", is in a dream, but begins to believe that the dream is reality. The boys in "The Mysterious Stranger" live in a very real world but Theodor is shown, and finally comes to believe, that reality is a dream. The difference is perhaps subtle, but important, for it enabled Twain to live sanely in a "dream world" rather than insanely in a "real world".

Because "The Great Dark" is merely a final preparation it is in many ways less important than the story which follows it, but it remains of great interest for another reason. It is one more link in the chain which connects Twain's literature to his own life. It includes many events from his real life, as De Voto indicates. "For instance, Mark twice crossed the Atlantic in the "Batavia", once alone, and once with his family, and when Henry reminds Alice

that she was attended during an illness by the author of Rab and His Friends all the details he mentions are taken from Mark's experience...both the difficulty he had writing 'The Great Dark' and the obstinacy with which he kept coming back to it suggest that it meant more to him than a mere story, that its basic fantasies were extremely important to him".⁵²

CHAPTER V

LITERARY DEVELOPMENT OF CHANGING ATTITUDES

The literary development which accompanied Twain's changing attitudes begins with the separation of dream and reality seen first in the travel books, step one in the seven step progression. Gladys Bellamy, commenting on the conceptions of good and evil in them, says, "There, ugliness is reality; beauty is a dream".⁵³ She indicates that even this basic concept hints at the ultimate escape, for "must one, then, go looking through a glass stained yellow rather than face reality? Must one always seek an escape into an artificial dream-land? The glamour of unreality tinged the beautiful; the ugly was always real - sharply, starkly, definitely real - to Mark Twain. But his mind was unable to reconcile the beautiful and the ugly, the good and the evil, as actual and inevitable parts of the same world".⁵⁴

Twain's description in The Innocents Abroad, for example, shows the Azores Islands to be in one instance good and beautiful, in another evil and ugly, illustrating his inability to merge the two. The ship on which Twain is sailing is forced to take shelter from a storm at one of the islands. "The town has eight thousand to ten thousand inhabitants. Its snow-white houses nestle cosily in a sea of fresh vegetation, and no village could look prettier or more attractive. It sits in the lap of an amphitheater of hills which are three hundred to seven hundred feet high, and carefully cultivated clear to their summits - not a foot of soil left idle".⁵⁵ He continues with the story of a party given by one of the men. When the bill is presented, it is calculated in reis, the Portuguese monetary unit, and the man, misinterpreting the requested amount (which is 21,700 reis) thinks that he is ruined. The landlord, having been given \$150 in gold

and a bitter refusal to pay more than that, leaves for a short time. When he returns he has a translated bill indicating that he only wanted \$21.70. The problem is solved; everyone is happy.

Almost immediately Twain begins talking about the island group from a different point of view. Suddenly "the community is eminently Portuguese - that is to say, it is slow, poor, shiftless, sleepy, and lazy".⁵⁶ He looks down on their farming methods, and states that "the people lie, and cheat the stranger",⁵⁷ and continues downgrading them and their homeland in various ways. One wonders if he really is talking about the same place. One can only conclude that when he sees it through the eyes of a man who loves people and unusual places, it is beautiful and quaint and exciting. It is like a dream - the dream Mark Twain had for so long of the exotic places which he wished to visit. When he sees it through the eyes of a cosmopolitan traveler from a "modern" country, it is merely a backward settlement, ugly in its dreary reality of non-modern methods and ancient customs. It is either like his dream, and all beautiful, or mere reality, and quite ugly.

This inability to merge the two concepts of good and evil is evident in his presentations of people as well as in his descriptions of scenery. "With the oversimplification of the moralist viewing everything in terms of black or white, he possessed a mind that rebelled at the twofold nature of life with its grayed intermingling of good and evil, its inevitable mixture of beauty and ugliness. It was easier to praise some individuals and condemn humanity in bulk than to attempt the synthesis necessary for recognizing and

bringing together both good and evil in fictional characters as life brings them together in the same persons."⁵⁸ In Life on the Mississippi there is just such a contradiction. Twain describes the nightwatchman of the ancient "Paul Jones" bound for New Orleans. The man fabricates for a young listener a plaintive history of noble birth, incredible adventure and "engaging and unconscious personal villanies".⁵⁹ Under the spell of these stories, wondering and worshipping, the boy says, "what was it to me that he was soiled and seedy and fragrant with gin?" The boy sees the man's profanity as a strength, and he cries in sympathy for a "man who had seen trouble".⁶¹ When he discovers that the fantastic narrative is simply a yarn, then not only the man's background, but the man himself must be discredited. The profanity now is a weakness in him, and suddenly he becomes not the dreamer's wronged man, but the real world's "low, vulgar, ignorant, sentimental, half-witted humbug".⁶² He is either all good and worthy of a boy's worship, or he is all bad, and worthy only of contempt.

The separation of good and evil can also be seen quite clearly in the boyhood books. And again the dream is associated with beauty or evil. In The Prince and The Pauper Miles Hendon is dubbed an earl by the real Edward of England, who is disguised as a beggar child. Hendon thinks the child is mad and calls himself "the specter knight of the Kingdom of Dreams and Shadows....Better these poor mock dignities of mine, that come unasked from a clean hand and a right spirit, than real ones bought by servility from grudging and interested power".⁶³

In a much less definitive sort of way, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn also shows the separation, for of that book it can be said that the shore represents the ugliness of reality, society, while the trip down the river is seemingly a dream "escape from the constrictions of civilized society".⁶⁴ On the raft, "the mind...is lulled...into the illusion that it has lost all contact with reality and is drifting bodilessly through a world of sleep and dreams".⁶⁵ The concept of the journey is dealt with by several critics and the separation of the shore and the river given varying importance.

The relationship of the two - shore as society and river as escape route - is given prime consideration by Richard P. Adams, who unites the two in what he calls a "death-and-rebirth pattern".⁶⁶ This pattern, according to Adams, represents more than a simple unifying device for the story; it actually functions as a symbolic structure reinforcing again and again the theme of the book, which Adams sees as "the growth of a boy to manhood, and his final acceptance of adult moral responsibilities".⁶⁷ The final acceptance comes after a series of decisions which Huck makes concerning Nigger Jim's flight from slavery, decisions which he makes only after he learns more and more about society from his trips to the shore. Huck grows, "during the time of crucial change by 'dying' out of society, withdrawing into nature on the river, and then returning or being 'reborn' into society with a new and different attitude toward it".⁶⁸ The idea of escape is clear, for Huck is running, initially from Pap, but also from

his own growing up. Nigger Jim is running from slavery. The shore, in a sense, represents all three things. The shore is a fearsome place, and one to be avoided, for it is the place where boys are scolded and thrashed, and where slaves can be sold at auction. The river is the place where the boy and the slave learn to know and help each other. Only when the raft on which the two are riding touches the shore or is boarded by the shore element does ugliness intrude on the developing relationship. In the end, Huck is freed from the fear of Pap and Jim is freed from the threat of being sold down the river. But the escaping is not complete, Huck does accept social responsibility to a certain extent, and the two must return to the shore and reality; the close relationship they had, almost literally a dream in the slave society in which the story takes place, is destroyed.

The second step in the development is Twain's exploration of unreal things. His boyhood books abound in statements of beliefs on a basic fantasy level of superstition and witchcraft. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn for instance "exists in a medium darkened by witchcraft and demonology; ghosts are only an amulet's width away; the malevolence of the unseen world is everywhere a danger as tangible as Injun Joe".⁶⁹ The explanation is more than mere self-indulgence. In The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, "this folklore of the supernatural becomes a structural element essential to the work of art",⁷⁰ according to Daniel G. Hoffman, who has dealt with the various types of magic in one chapter of his book Form and Fable in American Fiction. Hoffman feels that "the

association of these superstitions in Mark Twain's mind with freedom from restraint is reiterated in the first chapter of "Huckleberry Finn" but that such freedom has its dangers; that for Huck "the omens are an acknowledgement of the fact of death", and that "these portents are an admission of evil as a positive force in the natural world".⁷¹ This subtle connection between superstition and the forces of evil is particularly interesting in light of Twain's own emerging recognition of evil as a strong existing power in society.

It is also interesting that "a subtle emotional complex binds together superstition: slaves: boyhood freedom in Mark Twain's mind".⁷² Boyhood freedom is, in a sense, an unreal thing, or at least boyhood is a time when realities can be ignored or overlooked. The ever popular Peter Pan demonstrates well the dream-like existence in never-never-land, where boyhood freedom is a never-ending thing. But, as has already been demonstrated, Huck does grow, and does exchange a portion of his boyhood freedom for a share of a stake in society. Nevertheless, the hint, however vague, of Twain's later escape into a dream-like land exists.

Superstition is, however, in and of itself, a thing of fantasy. Several characters in the book, though primarily Nigger Jim, evidence a belief in superstition. Hoffman states that "this lore is used to differentiate Jim from the white characters, ... the only whites who are superstitious are either young boys or riffraff like Pap - the two categories of white folks who might have picked up the lore of slave quarter".⁷³ But others succumb too, if only

momentarily, to a superstitious belief in the supernatural. This kind of belief, no matter what the origin, or if the superstitions prove true or not, or if they are constant or occasional, are, if nothing else, evidence of Twain's interest in what is a basic level of fantasy.

The instances of such beliefs in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn are plentiful, especially in the case of Jim. As a matter of fact, "Jim was most ruined for a servant, because he got stuck up on account of having seen the devil and been rode by witches".⁷⁴ He had a hair-ball taken from the fourth stomach of an ox, with which he did magic and told fortunes. "And Jim said you mustn't count the things you are going to cook for dinner, because that would bring bad luck, the same if you shook the table cloth after sundown...Jim knowed all kinds of signs".⁷⁵ The "respectable" people in the book who are superstitious shot a cannon over the water to make Huck's body rise, just as they did in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer nine years earlier in 1876. "They shoot a cannon over the water, and that makes him come up to the top. Yes, and they take loaves of bread and put quick silver in 'em and set 'em afloat, and wherever there's anybody that's drowned, they'll float right there and stop".⁷⁶

In The Prince and the Pauper, written in 1882 within the same ten year period as the other two, the superstition is housed in the age-old fear of witches. A woman and her nine-year-old daughter are to be executed for having sold themselves to the

devil. Only Tom, the pauper turned prince, is clever enough to see through the fear to the impossibility of the charge. While he is thus determining justice at court, Edward of England, forced into a pauper's role, encounters a gang of thieves led by The Ruffler. He hears about Black Bess, one of the gang members, and her mother, who was lost because "Her gift of palmistry and other sorts of fortune-telling begot for her at last a witch's name and fame".⁷⁷ Black Bess's mother is in good company, for Joan of Arc is also accused of witchcraft, and more than once. And Joan also dies at the stake.

In 1889 Twain finally pits "superstition against science in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. The two ideas are personalized in Merlin, the magician, and Hank Morgan, from the arms factory. Science wins the battles, and Hank Morgan, after King Arthur's death, issues a final proclamation establishing a Republic from what was once Marlin's Cave. But Merlin, despite the efforts of Hank, Clarence, and the fifty-two hand-picked boys raised outside of the atmosphere of superstition, wins the war. Twenty-five thousand of Merlin's men lay dead, but the magician's "curious passes in the air"⁷⁸ put Hank Morgan to sleep for thirteen centuries and take him away from the one thing he really wanted, the love of his wife and child. Even in winning what he did Hank Morgan did not aid the downfall of superstition, for his position was made secure not because he was a scientist while Merlin was a magician, but because he was a better magician.

FANTASY IN DECEPTION AND IMAGININGS

Steps one and two, the separation of dream and reality, and the exploration of unreal things, concerned things outside the self; steps three and four, the contrived fantasy and the pretend fantasy, involve the self as seen by outsiders. The difference between the two kinds of fantasy is slight, but it is an important distinction. The first is a deception, such as the masquerades Huck Finn uses in order to protect himself. Huck is separate from the role he plays; he is well aware that he is only an actor in a part. The second is imaginings like those of Tom Sawyer, who pictures himself as the romantic hero. Tom becomes what he imagines himself to be. He loses himself in his dream world. It may be a slight distinction, but it is one which also separates sanity and insanity.

Interesting examples of both these types of fantasy can be found in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. "Tom Sawyer's imagination, whose compass spans only what is in Twain's everyday power, takes over at precisely the point where Huck's sense of reality can no longer function, where 'life' yields to art, strategy to style. Though both are liars Huck lies to stay alive, while Tom lies for the glory of it; the modest dream of Huck is survival, the less modest vision of Tom is heroism."⁷⁹ At one point Huck dresses up like a girl, in order to learn some information, but is so far apart from his role that he can't even remember what name he is going under, and he commits a whole catalogue of "boy" acts. However, his quick

ability to tell a tall tale enables him to present a reasonable excuse for the whole masquerade. Tom, on the other hand, sees himself as helping to steal Nigger Jim out of slavery; for such a romantic hero, a simple workable escape is not enough. As Huck says of Tom's plan, "I see in a minute it was worth fifteen of mine for style, and would make Jim just as free a man as mine would, and maybe get us all killed besides".⁸⁰ Tom goes about his plan, immersing himself in his role, as though nothing else mattered. He is prepared to saw off Jim's leg; he does make Jim chisel a mournful inscription on a rock with a nail; he tries to convince him that he needs a rattlesnake or several rats as pets, and does present him with a wide variety of such creatures to keep him company in his "prison". All in all, he succeeds in arousing real gun-shots over the slave, who could have been quietly long gone, and in having him beaten and chained, when all the time he knew Jim had been set free months before. "But Tom was the gladdest of all because he had a bullet in the calf of his leg".⁸¹ Tom is so caught up in his own adventure that he neither sees nor cares about what might happen to other people because of it.

From the preceding steps emerges the next, step number five - actually the question of whether it matters if the circumstances are dream (fantasy) or reality. The seed of its development can be seen in both The Prince and the Pauper and The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. In reading The Prince and the Pauper one asks whether it matters if the royal puppet who is called the prince is Tom or Edward. Court life continues much the same with the pauper on the throne. He forgets his own humble origins at the sight of some grave injustice, renders a decision in commanding

tones and is greatly admired by the crowd for his intelligence and spirit, and thankfulness is voiced about his "return" to his former self, the madness gone. He is even likened to his "father", Henry VIII. If the people believe in him, surely that is what counts. As for the real prince, he is disbelieved by the Cantys no more fervently than Tom was, and so the appearance of reality has not changed at all.

The very early The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Tom had been preoccupied with day dreams about outcast nobles, pirates, and Arabs. These same daydreams are made a part of reality, though they are not truth, through the masquerades of the Duke and the Dauphin in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. To the people who give the two money, it makes no difference whether or not the result is the same: the money is gone. As Huck says, "You couldn't tell them from the real kind".⁸² The matter of birth becomes unimportant, it is the results that matter.

The question is particularly evident in the latter works, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court and Joan of Arc. Does it matter either to Hank Morgan or to King Arthur's Court if Hank's life there is dream or reality? The results are the same. Hank is in despair because of his lost love, and Arthur's Court, the "dream" of justice which Camelot was, (whether it was Hank's dream, as Twain says, or Arthur's dream, as history dictates) has evaporated. Does it matter to either Joan of Arc or the French people if Joan's concept of herself as a servant of God is dream

or reality? The results are the same. Joan becomes the leader in the battle against the English because she believes she was sent to do so. Joan underwent two major investigations: the first to be a witch. Neither changed the fact that she accomplished the release of France and ended the Hundred Years' War.

CHAPTER VII

DREAM AND REALITY FINALLY MERGE

So when Twain asks whether it matters if the circumstances are dream or reality, his built-in answer is "no". The results are the same. This, of course, leads to step six, which is the inability to distinguish between dream and reality. There are several people in the Mark Twain cast of characters who are unable to distinguish between dream and reality. As has been noted, Tom Sawyer, especially in the rescue of Nigger Jim in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, is perhaps the first to lose himself in his own dreams to the extent that, if only for a short time, he tries to live them.

A more obvious example is that of Tom Canty in The Prince and the Pauper. For Tom, dream and reality have merged, in one sense, and it is only his own knowledge of his identity that keeps the two separate. But Tom, in the role of the prince, presumed mad, gives commands which are instantly obeyed. He had begun to play the prince simply to save his head. Gradually, however, he begins to forget his own background and, in his own mind, to be the prince. "His first royal days and nights were pretty well sprinkled with painful thoughts about the lost prince....but as time wore on, and the prince did not come, Tom's mind became more and more occupied with his new and enchanting experiences, and... when he (the vanished monarch) did intrude...he was become an unwelcome specter..."⁸³ The adventure had begun with Tom playing the prince in order to prolong his life, all the time hoping for

Edward to return and straighten out the error. But, it was not long before Tom forgot he was only playing a role; he no longer hoped for Edward's return. In fact, he struggled to suppress memories of the real prince, for they only reminded Tom that he was not heir to the throne at all, but only a beggar in masquerade.

On the day of his coronation, Tom enters the city and sees, in the cheering crowd, the faces of some of his Offal Court comrades, and he thinks "What unspeakable glory it would be if they could recognize him and realize that the derided mock king of the slums and back alleys was become a real king, with illustrious dukes and princes for his humble menials and the English world at his feet!"⁸⁴ The sight of his mother, however, brings Tom back to reality, and when the real prince does make an appearance at the coronation, Tom fights to have him recognized for what he is. In the end, dream and reality are put in their proper places, and life goes on.

In The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson, written in 1894, eight years after The Prince and the Pauper, both Thomas Driscoll and Chambers, the white man and the slave, are unable to tell that life, as they know it, is unreal. Each is living the life meant for the other, but not intentionally, or even wittingly. Here too, however, the characters learn the true situation and each eventually takes his place in what society has determined is the "real" world for him. That this "real" world - the world of the slave for the boy raised as Tom Driscoll and the world of the wealthy white man for the boy raised as chambers - is like a nightmare is inconsequential, for to society the reality of birth is of far more importance than the fact of training.

The best example of the inability to distinguish between dream and reality is in "The Great Dark". The inability involves only one person in the story, but Henry's conviction that the horrors of his dream are real, and that reality is a dream, is permanent and complete, as previously noted. Henry enters the dream of the voyage in the drop of water under the microscope quite calmly, knowing that it is an excursion provided by the Superintendent of Dreams - a situation apparently not new to either of them, for Henry says "you have seen me face dangers before..."⁸⁵

Matters seem to go quite well until Henry first discovers that the planned voyage is to be much longer than he had anticipated, and then gets into a quarrel with the Superintendent. Quite in command, however, he says "And moreover, if my style doesn't suit you, you can end the dream as soon as you please".⁸⁶ At this point the Superintendent, not to be bested, says with great deliberation, "The dream? Are you quite sure it is a dream?"⁸⁷ That one seed of doubt is enough to eventually unbalance Henry's mind. The memory of his real life slips into the dim past. His dream wife does not remember any life other than in the dream, and Henry's mind finally accepts that as proof that the dream is real. Eventually the dream becomes a nightmare, but Henry never wakes up. When his real wife and children do come in to say good-night, Henry thinks that they are dreams.

Up to this point, dream and reality have been two separate things: one beautiful, one ugly. The two had been placed in opposition to each other, but as can be seen in "The Great Dark", their qualities have finally been reversed, until what was

beautiful is a nightmare, what was ugly becomes the yearned for dream. Now in the final step of the seven, the two are merged, and reality becomes a dream. The urge towards escapism enlarges the dream motif until "the dream finally engulfs the whole of life, the ugliness as well as the new beauty".⁸⁸

CHAPTER VIII

THE FINAL ANSWER

Life becomes a dream because anything can be endured in a dream, and this is the message of Satan in "The Mysterious Stranger", which is the culmination of the development of five plateaus of Twain's own attitudes, and the seven steps in his writing. Here "reality is so mingled with the dream that the dream at last submerges the reality, and the greatest wrongs become tolerable simple because they are not real".⁸⁹

"The Mysterious Stranger" is like the books and stories which come before it in that it, in many ways, not surprisingly, is filled with dream images and references. The conclusion of the story, that life is a dream, is briefly hinted at as early as the second paragraph, where the narrator says that "Austria was far from the world, and asleep, and our village was in the middle of that sleep, being in the middle of Austria. It drowsed in peace in the deep privacy of a hilly and woodsy solitude where news from the world hardly ever came to disturb its dreams..."⁹⁰ The continued description of the town in that same paragraph is reminiscent of descriptions in the earlier travel books; it also is strikingly similar to the description of the town in the Tom Sawyer tales. DeVoto goes so far as to say that "Eseldorf is, of course, St. Petersburg under a different name, and the boys who watch the miracles are just Tom Sawyer's Gang in costume...."⁹¹

Theodore Fischer, the principal character outside of Satan himself, is very much like Tom Sawyer in his love of exciting adventure and in the position of leadership which he holds among his playmates. One of his friends, an old servingman at the nearby castle, describes the angels he has seen in such a way as to remind one of Captain Stormfield's sojourn into the heavenly regions. The picture of the astrologer, with "his tall, pointed hat and his long flowing robe with stars on it,"⁹² is very much like that of Merlin in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. And it is the mysterious stranger, the angel Satan, nephew of the fallen archangel of the same name, who introduces the concept of sinlessness through ignorance of sin, the same idea which his uncle discusses in "Letters from the Earth".

The elements of many of Twain's earlier works, then, are brought together in "The Mysterious Stranger". What is added is the conclusion which Twain had not yet reached in his previous writing. Whether the conclusion that life is only a dream is a positive or a negative one is debatable, at least among those of Twain's critics who treat the subject. Lewis Leary states that "no subtlety of interpretation is required for recognition of the bleak despair ..."⁹³ of the story. To Leary, the situation is one in which, "Crippled by moral sense, in bondage to circumstance, his vision distorted by illusion, man pampers himself with ideals which exist only when he imagines them. What an ass he is!"⁹⁴ Another critic concluded that the story achieves "a wintry serenity beyond despair".⁹⁵ It is this second analysis which seems to agree

with the story itself, and which accepts the story as a satisfactory conclusion to the long search which Mark Twain had been making for some sort of reason or remedy for his own pain.

The conclusion must be accepted with caution, however, and with due regard for its lack of certain implications. It must not be assumed that the word "serenity" indicates joy or cheerfulness for, as the word "wintry" reinforces, it only suggests calmness and peacefulness - the freedom from anxiety that arrives, even though the occasion is not a happy one. The despair of the unending quest is displaced by the serenity which comes from finding and accepting an answer, even though that answer be bleak and cold. Bernard DeVoto considers "The Great Dark" and "The Mysterious Stranger" as successful and, therefore, final conclusions to Twain's need for peace. There is an answer, if a cheerless one, in them. "If nothing existed but a homeless thought wandering forlorn among the empty eternities, then his smaller agony and his personal guilt were also a dream".⁹⁶

The character who introduces to the reader Twain's final conclusion that "Life itself is only a vision, a dream",⁹⁷ is Satan, "of the aristocracy of the Imperishables".⁹⁸ Yet he goes by the name of Philip Traum - and Traum is German for Dream. As an angel without the Moral Sense, Satan can create and destroy life and property without a second thought. But his acts are never committed with the intention of harming anyone. And because of his much greater powers of understanding, even are invariably

a blessing in disguise. Man, on the other hand, as the only creature who has the Moral Sense, can distinguish between right and wrong, and is at liberty to choose between them. The result? "When a brute inflicts pain he does it innocently; it is not wrong. And he does not inflict pain for the pleasure of inflicting it - only man does that. Inspired by that Mongrel Moral Sense of his!...He is always choosing, and in nine cases out of ten he prefers the wrong".⁹⁹

Is it fair to assume, however, that this view of man, uncomplimentary as it is, as presented in "The Mysterious Stranger", is also the view of man actually held by Mark Twain? Two things support the contention that Mark Twain actually believed what he was writing. There are a variety of similar pessimistic expressions in other works, and a number of equally uncomplimentary statements in some of Twain's letters. In one letter to William Dean Howells, written in April of 1899, Twain comments that "We all belong to the nasty stinking little human race.... oh, we are a nasty little bit - and to think there are people who would like to save us and continue us".¹⁰⁰

What is it that makes man so nasty? According to Satan, and, we must assume, to Twain, it is the Moral Sense that makes man a creature who will pay women and children a starvation wage for walking eight miles a day to and from filthy crowded kennel-like homes to work fourteen hours a day. Because of the Moral Sense, man will take his brother and torture him on the wheel, smashing

him to rags and pulp, or starve little girls into admitting having met with the devil, then chain them to the stake to be burned. The Moral Sense created war, and the Moral Sense was the reason that life could be declared a dream. Any God who "could make good children as easily as bad, yet preferred to make bad ones;...who gave his angels eternal happiness unearned, yet required his other children to earn it;...who mouths justice and invented hell - mouths mercy and invented hell -...who mouths morals to other people and has none himself;...who created man without invitation, then tries to shuffle the responsibility for man's arts upon man,... and finally with altogether divine obtuseness, invites the poor, abused slave to worship him!..."¹⁰¹ must be the result of a dream. "These things are all impossible except in a dream...they are pure and purele insanities, the silly creations of an imagination that is not conscious of its freaks".¹⁰²

The dream concept is brought vividly and symbolically into the story, Bernard DeVoto feels, with the miracles which Satan performs. "The miracles, which at first are just an idle game for the amusement of the boys and the astonishment of the villagers, become finally a spectacle of human life in miniature, with the suffering diminished to the vanishing point since these are just puppets, unreal creatures moving in a shadow-play, and they are seen with the detachment of an immortal spirit, passionless and untouched. And so from a spectacle they come to be a dream - the symbolic dream of human experience that Mark had been trying to write in such travail for so many years".¹⁰³

The miracles begin with the comparatively simple conjuring of fruits and sweets. Then Satan creates a tiny toy squirrel and dog and a number of birds out of clay, and brings them to life. It is an easy step from that to the creation of little men and women out of clay. Although the boys are concerned about the accidents that occur, and distressed by the harm that comes to the miniature villagers, they soon forget and are "dancing on that grave".¹⁰⁴ Even before that apparent disregard for humane sympathy, which Theodore attributes to Satan's magic, the boys laugh at the ridiculous sight of their own poorly made human replicas brought to life and reeling about on their misshapen legs. These strangely fashioned creatures are just enough to give the scene the touch of unreality which is required to keep the boys from becoming too involved in it.

Some of the miracles are amazingly close in the way that they occur to dreams - Like dreams, the trips Satan arranges have no relationship to real time. "We often went to the most distant parts of the globe with him, and stayed weeks and months, and yet were gone only a fraction of a second as a rule. You could prove it by the clock."¹⁰⁵ Also, the appearance of their destinations is sometimes pertinent. One evening Theodore falls asleep, but is roused by Satan and, after a fierce glare of sunlight, finds himself in China, which he describes as "a tranquil and dreamy picture, beautiful to the eye and restful to the spirit".¹⁰⁶ Satan even makes use of dreams to accomplish

his purposes. On a trip to India he creates a magic, the fruits of which are refused to the natives by a selfish foreigner. Satan places a curse on the tree and prescribes a harsh regimen for the foreigner to follow if he wishes to survive. Satan comments "In his dreams he will imagine them chopping his tree down. That will make his days uncomfortable - I have already arranged for his nights".¹⁰⁷

Not the least of Satan's miracles is the favor which he grants Father Peter, weak and heartsick in his prison, accused of being a thief. Satan promises that Father Peter's good name will be restored and that the rest of his life will be happy. It is only after the fact that Theodore learns of Satan's method for giving happiness to the suffering old man. Satan causes Father Peter to lose his mind, and the result is that he "was as happy as a bird. He thought he was Emperor!"¹⁰⁸ The villagers are sad. His relatives weep. Theodore reproaches Satan, but the explanation is as close to a justification of Twain's final answer, which comes five pages later, as anything found in his works. Satan, irritated at last by Theodore's incomprehension, asks if he hasn't yet learned that "sanity and happiness are an impossible combination? No sane man can be happy, for to him life is real, and he sees what a fearful thing it is."¹⁰⁹

In the final paragraphs, Satan gives Theodore's final gift - the understanding that there will be no afterlife because life itself is non-existent. Life is nothing but a dream. Here he ties together his gift of madness to Father Peter with this final answer for Theodore by remarking "Strange, indeed, that

you should not have suspected that your universe and its contents were only dreams, visions, fiction! Strange, because they are all frankly and hysterically insane - like all dreams".¹¹⁰ Thus, though there may not be a heaven, neither is there a hell. All that exists is thought - all else; humanity, but also its failures; joy, but also sorrow; ecstasy, but also pain - all else is, though it also sounds to be a duality, "a grotesque and foolish dream".¹¹¹ This is the human experience.

The book is an answer, then, not only for the man who had been seeking an explanation for his pain, but also for the author who had been striving to express something hidden deep within himself. The results of the answer - the answer to pain and the answer to the creative urge - are alike in two respects. There is peace - an end to the tortured, incomplete attempts at expression. But in bringing an end to each of the things, the answer also brings a sense of finality. The man, Samuel Langhorne Clemens, does not live for many more years. The author, Mark Twain, no longer writes as once he used to do.

Bernard DeVoto says with clarity what the result is for the man born Samuel Langhorne Clemens. "If everything was dream, then clearly the accused prisoner might be discharged. The accusation begotten by his experience could be stilled by destroying all experience. It was possible to uproot terror and guilt and responsibility from his little world by detonating the universe. He could end his contention with the vengeful God and

put away remorse forever by reducing all contention, vengeance, pain, degradation, guilt, sin, and panic to a lonely dream. That was the price he paid for peace."¹¹²

The result for the writer, Mark Twain, is much the same. Henry Nash Smith explains it, if somewhat harshly, in a discussion of Satan's destruction of the miniature world which he has created for the three boys. "Satan's destruction of the mimic world he has created is the symbolic gesture of a writer who can no longer find any meaning in man or society....this marks the end of his career as a writer, for there was nothing more to say."¹¹³

Smith carries his interpretation a bit far when he claims that Twain associates himself with some supernatural being for "whom mankind is but a race of vermin, hardly worth even contempt".¹¹⁴ Twain, of course, never allied himself with God against humanity; he was always a part of mankind. Granted, man was not to be extolled, and, as has been demonstrated, was even to be chastised, but not with contempt. A better explanation might be that found in What Is Man?, issued privately in 1906, "which contains his most astringent diagnosis of man as a mechanism, the plaything of chance,..."¹¹⁵ In "The Mysterious Stranger", Twain compares man to a spider, true, but only to demonstrate how insignificant he is to the angels, the elephant. "The elephant has nothing against the spider - he cannot get down to that remote level."¹¹⁶ Twain's sorrowful search does not turn to bitter hatred, as Smith intimates. It merely dies, and as Smith also indicates, takes all of life with it.

The final judgement is that "in the closing pages of "The Mysterious Stranger" Mark Twain solved his riddle out of grief and self-reproach, and clothed his soul in the only vulnerable armor of desperation. Good and evil, like reality itself, are only illusions, such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with the best gift of The Artist who saves it to the last - extinction".¹¹⁷

FOOTNOTES

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