

MARK TWAIN'S DEVELOPMENT OF THE NARRATIVE AND VERNACULAR
PERSONA TECHNIQUE

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Dedicated to My Father,

James H. Boylan

PREFACE

Mark Twain was such a dominant personality that he literally commanded the full attention of his day with his activities. It has been said that he was the world's most well-known figure in his time. Twain's speaking tours in America and abroad helped him to create and maintain his image as a kind of representative American personality; in many ways he seemed the embodiment of the new man, the new spirit. After Twain's death in 1910, the force of his personality was so strong that it continued to overshadow his works. The early theories of Brooks' therefore were in the best traditions of biographical criticism and in the best traditions of Twain criticism; Brooks and others kept the emphasis on the man, Twain, rather than on his works. Brooks' idea, that Twain was a "divine amateur" who was thwarted by a psychological wound, is obviously in keeping with the forces of that time. What is not so obvious is that Twain's supporters such as Devoto were, also, a part of this same tradition. Devoto defended Twain by trying to show from Twain's life that he was not psychologically "wounded." The whole period of the 1920's and 1930's was an unfortunate one for Twain criticism because it was dominated by Mark Twain with a concomitant de-emphasis of his works and their merits.

In the late 1940's, a change began in Twain criticism. Lionel Trilling, among others, started to investigate

Huckleberry Finn which had long been accepted as Twain's classic. These critics wrote of the work not the man. Since this time, investigations have slowly widened until they now embrace many of Twain's works. As these studies continue, Twain's reputation as a writer grows. Among his many accomplishments, Twain's critics have generally agreed on one; Twain was a great innovator in the use of the language. Scholars have noted especially his achievement with the vernacular persona in Huckleberry Finn. Huck Finn's voice is a great accomplishment in American fiction.

However, only a few critics have recently studied Twain's earlier works in an attempt to trace the development of this technique. The best of these studies (especially the work of John C. Gerber) have left great areas still open to investigation. This study is an attempt to fill in some of those open areas.

Dr. Green D. Wyrick deserves great thanks for his indispensable help with this work. His course, Mark Twain and His Times, was the starting point of the present investigation. His knowledge of Twain's use of language levels was the basis for this study and is an intrinsic part of it. Also, Dr. Wyrick's suggestions along the way represent substantial improvements in the end product. Dr. Brian Byrd, also, deserves

thanks for his aid in organizing the structure of large parts
of the work and for his helpful reading of the completed study.

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CHAPTER I

PUTTING THINGS RIGHT

Critics of Mark Twain have only recently come to investigate his works seriously. Before the later 1940's or early 1950's, what criticism there was, centered itself on Twain's life, his personality. He had, for a long time, been given credit for producing one great work, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. Scholars have noted, almost without exception, that one of the elements of Huckleberry Finn which contributed much to its greatness was Twain's original use of the language. They have commented especially on his use of the first person point of view and the vernacular language level as two of the main factors in its success. Mark Twain had long been known to have a deep interest in the spoken language. Since critical endeavor has shifted to Twain's work instead of Mark Twain, himself, his other books have been noted as important works in American literature also. However, no one has made a complete study of his canon to discover how he developed his remarkable achievements in the language. A developmental approach to his recognized major works should show clearly how Mark Twain came to use both the narrative persona and the vernacular language level with such great skill.

General agreement on its importance has long been centered around Mark Twain's great classic, Huckleberry Finn.

This book started the revolution in critical acceptance and thought about Twain and rightly so. All critics and scholars agree, whether they think that Twain is a great writer or not, that in this book he found the techniques that allowed him to create a lasting work in American fiction. It has long been seen by almost all Twain scholars that his use of the first person persona is one of the most significant techniques in the book. Earlier American writers had used the first person to carry forth their narratives, but Twain added a significant modification; he chose to use the vernacular language. Ernest Hemingway said in The Green Hills of Africa that all American fiction comes from "one book by Mark Twain called Huckleberry Finn."¹ He recognized that Twain's use of the vernacular was an important achievement for all American writers who follow Twain; Richard Chase agrees with Hemingway by noting that the first delight with the book is in its use of the language.² It is through the use of the vernacular that Twain was able to create one of the best known characters in American fiction, Huck Finn. Mark Twain did many things well. He was a great humorist; he had wonderful insight into his contemporary world; he was a great story teller. However, as Edgar Goold states, "What is Mark Twain's finest contribution on the subject of

¹Ernest Hemingway, The Green Hills of Africa, p. 22.

²Richard Chase, The American Novel and Its Traditions, p. 139.

fiction as an art, lies in his development in characterization."³ When a critic talks of Twain's characters, he is, whether he knows it or not, talking about language because, with Twain, the two become the same thing. He developed, over many years, the technique of using language to show character and character change to its highest level. Blair comments:

He [Twain] appreciated the monologue revealing character whether inclosed in a frame work or not. Hence, as many testify, he could, by appreciative reading, make crystal-clear the obscure monologues of Robert Browning. Hence he could create Huckleberry Finn in which every paragraph revealed the yarn-spinners character.⁴

The most useful literary form to Twain, then, was a particularly American one; it is the romance tale of Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville. This genre goes back to Richardson in its interest in the psychological, the nature of character.⁵ However, unlike his American counterparts, Twain made character everything. No line of Huckleberry Finn is without its character-revealing qualities by the very nature of the book. Twain had created a new voice, the vernacular voice of Huckleberry Finn.⁶

³Edgar H. Goold, "Mark Twain on the Writing of Fiction," AL, XXXII (January, 1961), 145.

⁴Walter Blair, Native American Humor, p. 231.

⁵Chase, op. cit., p. 156.

⁶Leslie A. Fiedler, "The Duplicious Mark Twain," Commentary, XXXIX (March, 1960), 244.

America had long encouraged a far greater breach between its vernacular language and its literary language than did English literature of the same time.⁷ However, neither can be said to have possessed a strong vernacular tradition. America's earlier writers, although great innovators in their own way, still turned to an artificial language which claimed to be a standard literary mode. Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville all turned to this official language level in their works. Twain's accomplishment, in the use of the vernacular, was to change this irrevocably. Eliot writes:

Huckleberry Finn was an innovation, a new discovery in the English language. Other authors have achieved natural speech in relation to particular character--Scott with characters talking lowland Scots, Dickens with Cockneys; but no one has kept it through a whole book.⁸

Twain not only kept it going through a whole book, but he created an acceptable prose style from the vernacular. He did it without the overuse of misspellings and other artificial devices used by others.⁹ He used, instead, the simple direct sentence patterns that maintain the actual rhythms of speech.¹⁰ Trilling goes on to say:

⁷Lionel Trilling, "Introduction to Huckleberry Finn," p. xi.

⁸T. S. Eliot, "An Introduction to Huckleberry Finn," p. viii.

⁹Ibid., p. x.

¹⁰Trilling, op. cit., p. xi.

Out of the knowledge of the actual speech of America, Mark Twain forged a classic prose. The adjective may sound a strange one, yet it is apt. Forget the misspellings and the faults in grammar, and the prose will be seen to move with the greatest simplicity, directness, lucidity, and grace. These qualities are by no means accidental. Mark Twain, who read widely, was passionately interested in the problems of style; the mark of strictest literary sensibility is everywhere to be found in the prose of Huckleberry Finn.¹¹

Dwight Macdonald concurs that Twain's accomplishment with the vernacular raised it into a great style, and that his accomplishment is equal to Wordsworth's Preface.¹² Wordsworth claimed to want to use the speech of common man; Twain did it. All of these critics, then, point to Huckleberry Finn as a great innovation in the use of the language, especially the vernacular.¹³ Devoto recognized this contribution when he wrote,

The important thing to be observed about Huckleberry Finn's speech is its achievement in making the vernacular a perfect instrument for all the necessities of fiction.¹⁴

At his best in Huckleberry Finn, Mark Twain put his language ability to work without really being aware of the greatness of his accomplishment in making the vernacular language level a respectable and useful medium for all literary expression.¹⁵

¹¹Loc. cit.

¹²Dwight Macdonald, "Mark Twain: The Unsentimental," Mark Twain: A Profile, ed. Justin Kaplan, p. 213.

¹³Bernard Devoto, Mark Twain's America, p. 312.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 313.

¹⁵John Hoben, "Mark Twain and the Writer's Use of Language," Am Speech, XXI (October, 1956), 171.

Critics should have not been so surprised at Twain's knowledge and ability with the vernacular language. He had long demonstrated his interest in the spoken and written uses of the English tongue.¹⁶ He had a definite method, which he stated in his notes, by which he tried to catch the spoken language on paper. As Edgar Goold writes, "To achieve this standard [in written speech] required constant rereading and revision. Twain's own method was to talk and talk until the dialogue sounded convincing."¹⁷ This concern with the language was with Twain from the beginning of his career; as early as 1860 he was making it clear that his ambition was to write as people speak.¹⁸ He knew that this was not an easy thing to accomplish, and he commented that, when the spoken language was written down, it did not "sound" right. Twain had to work with the words until they had the appearance of speech. This interest in capturing the spoken language has been viewed as an example of his realism, and it well might be. However, it is much more central than that to Twain's work. His books are full of oblique references to the intricacies of language. Other than the relatively complete acceptance of Huckleberry Finn as a great vernacular accomplishment, there has been

¹⁶Trilling, op. cit., p. xi.

¹⁷Sydney Krause, "Twain's Method and Theory of Composition," MP, LVI (February, 1959), 169.

¹⁸Goold, op. cit., p. 146.

little real investigation of Twain's development of the narrative persona and the vernacular. As John Hoben notes,

One of the most neglected phases of Twain's critical theory is, strangely enough, a matter on which most of his appraisers agree. From Howells to Hemingway, Mark Twain is usually greeted as an expert on the writer's use of language.¹⁹

For a long time Huckleberry Finn has stood as a great vernacular achievement; for a long time Mark Twain has been noted as a great technician and craftsman in the use of the narrative persona and the vernacular language level. However, it is surprising that no one has yet made a comprehensive study of Mark Twain's works to show how these techniques originated, how Mark Twain developed them in his earlier works, how he modified them in his classic works, and how they were employed (or not employed) after his great classic. The present study will attempt such an undertaking.

The first genre to which Mark Twain turned and in which he won almost instant success was the short story or tall tale. His story, "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," has taken on the proportions of an American myth. People who have barely heard of its author know the tale of the famous frog. It should not be too surprising, then, to find that the story, also, shows some of the beginnings of the language techniques which Twain was to shape into a great prose style. After writing this tale, Twain wrote many others which have

¹⁹Hoben, "Twain's Language," op. cit., p. 163.

been practically untouched by critics although they clearly demonstrate the refining of the important techniques to Twain. These early language experiments show Twain's use of the "frame" story, the vernacular persona, the language level conflict (which finally comes to embody the total language experience), and the use of the comic mask or pose. In the early part of his career, Twain tested the limits of these techniques. The stories selected in this section have been carefully chosen to demonstrate the various uses of the narrator and the language that Twain was working with at the beginning of his career.

Innocents Abroad, Roughing It, and "Old Times on the Mississippi" (an earlier section of Life on the Mississippi) have been generally viewed by critics as representing the best of Twain's earlier long works. Chronologically, they represent his first three book-length works, also. To be valid, this study could not leave them without treatment. Luckily, the task is an easy one since these three books show a development going in a straight line to Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn in language. The best parts of these earlier works are integrally bound up in the use of the persona and the use of some language level.

Innocents Abroad is about the narrator, not about the journey to the old world. The parts of the book which are successful are the parts where Twain is clearly assuming some

mask or pose. The faults of the book are also a matter of point of view. Basically, the book lacks unity because of the inconsistent view point. Roughing It shows Twain narrowing and clarifying his point of view at least in the first section. The section on the journey to the West shows some of his best writing to that date. Again, it is easily shown that his success is a matter of point of view. The last part of the book reverts to the worst parts of Innocents for the same reasons. In "Old Times on the Mississippi" Twain further narrows and restricts his point of view and language level. These three books are all a step backward in the life of the narrative persona, and they are all a step forward in the development of a narrative style which is a direct preparation for Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn.

Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn are Twain's recognized works which tell the tale of the American experience. They, also, show his greatest achievements in the use of the narrator and the language. In Tom Sawyer, Twain tries to tell his story using a technique which is demonstrably like the one used in Roughing It and Life on the Mississippi. Still Twain has some problems in point of view. There has always been a question in critics' minds as to just what Twain's intention in Tom Sawyer was. A careful study of his use of the narrative persona and the language levels will bring to light many answers in this matter. Everything is affected by Twain's use of the

language. His use of irony, theme, description, and character are all dependent on his use of view point and persona.

Huckleberry Finn is Twain's second telling of the story of the boy. However, Huck is not just any boy; he is the flowering of the vernacular character who has his roots in "The Jumping Frog," other early tales, and the travel books. In using the vernacular persona Twain finds the best way to tell his story as many critics have noted. In Huckleberry Finn, the language finally comes to represent everything. It becomes a synthesis for the total American experience. A comparison of these two books will clearly show the superiority of Huck's vernacular voice over Tom Sawyer's point of view and will clearly show why Huckleberry Finn is a great achievement in American fiction.²⁰

As the vernacular language developed for Twain, it took on many important qualities. These qualities become associated with literary, social, and moral traditions until Twain was unable to use the vernacular persona effectively again after Huckleberry Finn. Although he tried, his next book, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, was only partially a success. Many critics have misread this book or been fooled by Twain's intentions. By applying the techniques which Twain has developed in persona and in the use of the language levels, the reasons for the failure and the misreadings of the book

²⁰Devoto, op. cit., p. 315.

will become clear. The qualities of the narrative persona, Hank Morgan, are, of course, the thing which cause problems with Connecticut Yankee. He is the closest that Twain can come to a vernacular character after Huck. The book fails as a unified story because Hank Morgan cannot be a vernacular character. The same is true of Twain's last full-length work, Pudd'nhead Wilson. Both works represent what is left of the techniques which Twain developed so highly over a literary lifetime.

The purpose, then, of this study is to document the rise and fall of the use of the vernacular persona. The works have been chosen carefully as representing Twain's best in the opinions of most critics; it is not a coincidence that they, also, show clearly Mark Twain's development of the language techniques which are inexorably a part of his work. Twain's great works are written in the vernacular. Often his lesser works do not employ it or employ it only partially. This study will attempt to show that Mark Twain's style is intimately dependent upon, and flourishes only when, Twain uses the narrative and persona techniques developed through his use of the language.²¹

²¹John C. Gerber, "Relationship Between Point of View and Style in the Works of Mark Twain," English Institute Essays, p. 143.

CHAPTER II

THE EARLY TALES: A LANGUAGE EXPERIMENT

The tall tale was the basic Southwestern mode for telling the humorous story. In its most typical form, it was a perfect starting point for Mark Twain. However, he made significant modifications in the form and style which he continued to use throughout his career as a writer. In the archetype humorous tale, the story is told using a "frame" for the anecdote. There is a "frame" narrator who is usually an Eastern genteel persona and a story narrator who is usually a vernacular Western persona. As Spengemann notes,

The reader recognizes the humor of the tale by perceiving the incongruity between appearance and reality, which is emphasized by the difference between the elevated rhetoric and the coarse dialect of the respective speakers.²²

The "frame" genteel persona is a reliable narrator who sees the reality which the vernacular persona misses; the joke is on the vernacular persona. The main purpose of this form was its use as a vehicle for the ridiculous tall tale. Twain was certainly familiar with this "frame" technique and appreciated it since he discusses it in "How to Tell a Tale."²³ However, he stresses that the main thing about the humorous tale is not

²²William Spengemann, Mark Twain and the Backwoods Angel, p. 5.

²³Blair, Native Humor, p. 240.

the tale, itself, but the way it is told; style and form, then, are more important to the success of the tale than the subject matter.²⁴ The reader is more interested in the effect of the tale on the mind of the persona than in the tale.²⁵ By starting with this form, Twain took part in the tradition of the mask.²⁶ However, he showed in his first well-known story, "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," that the possibilities for high artistic achievement were rampant in this humorous "frame" story technique.

In the first version of "The Jumping Frog" Twain used an epistolary form; he pretended that he was writing a letter to Artemas Ward.²⁷ This provided for the "frame" which was so necessary to the success of the story. Although this "frame" technique was the standard form for the Western humorists,²⁸ Twain's version of this tale was only the second version to apply the "frame" to this story.²⁹ At first glance, this tale seems to be typical of the "frame" story as the humorists used it. Twain links several humorous anecdotes together in a

²⁴ Samuel Clemens, Mark Twain in Eruption, p. 220.

²⁵ Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 151.

²⁶ Constance Rourke, American Humor, p. 141.

²⁷ John C. Gerber, "Mark Twain's Use of the Comic Pose," PMLA, LXXVII (June, 1962), 282.

²⁸ Walter Blair, Mark Twain and Huck Finn, p. 134.

²⁹ Blair, Native Humor, p. 243.

seemingly random form. There is the controlling figure of Jim Smiley who is featured in all of these anecdotes. First, Jim Smiley is characterized as "the Dangdest Feller" who would "bet on anything."³⁰ Next, the incidents concerning Smiley are related. There are the stories of Smiley's mare, the fifteen-minute nag, Smiley's dog, Andrew Jackson, and, finally, Smiley's famous frog, Dan'l Webster. All of these stories are humorous tall tales in the Western tradition. However, it is the "frame" which provides the real interest in the story.³¹ The "frame" used in "The Jumping Frog" is a clear, well-defined one. It allows Twain to develop two personae who represent the real humorous level of the story which arises out of a genteel/vernacular conflict.

The "frame" narrator, who is really nameless, although Twain pretends to be he in some versions of the story, is literary and dull; he is the perfect representative of the Eastern genteel and its language level.³² He is an elegant ass who cannot see anything strange in the request of his friend from the East; as Gerber points out, it is a little strange to be looking for a minister in Angel's Camp.³³ From

³⁰ Samuel Clemens, The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain, p. 2.

³¹ James Cox, The Fate of Humor, p. 26.

³² Gerber, op. cit., p. 145.

³³ Ibid., p. 144.

his first line, he reveals his character through his stilted speech. When he says things such as "I hereunto append the result," the reader immediately recognizes him as genteel. His genteel nature is further pointed up as Twain develops him; he is no longer like the narrators of the typical Southwestern humorous story for, unlike them, this narrator is not a reliable speaker; he fails to see the humor of the material that he reports.³⁴ The narrator takes the situation seriously, and, therefore, he becomes the butt of the joke. It is not the story which is funny; it is the conflict of personae as they are revealed through the story.³⁵ This making of the genteel voice into an unreliable persona is a significant modification in the tall tale form.

The vernacular persona, Simon Wheeler, is just as complex a character as the "frame" persona but in an importantly different way. Simon Wheeler is one of Mark Twain's finest creations. Like the "frame" narrator, he is solemn and serious throughout the story. Unlike him, Wheeler is uneducated, but he reveals his character in the same way as the "frame" narrator, through his speech, and Wheeler's vernacular is one of Twain's finest achievements in the use of language.³⁶ His

³⁴Spengemann, op. cit., p. 6.

³⁵Henry Nash Smith, The Development of a Writer, p. 11.

³⁶Gerber, "Point of View," op. cit., p. 146. The language level conflict is as good as in Huckleberry Finn, but the subject matter is not as worthy.

colorful language is clear as revealed when he spins his tale of the dog, Andrew Jackson:

It was a good pup, was that Andrew Jackson, and would have made a name for hisself if he'd lived, for the stuff was in him and he had genius--I know it, because he hadn't no opportunities to speak of. . . .³⁷

The speech represents the tall tale, but the humor comes from the character who is telling it; it is Wheeler's language which makes this story and all the stories in "The Jumping Frog." Wheeler seems to be rambling, but in fact, his stories are manipulated for climax.³⁸ However, Wheeler is not the controller; he does not see the reality of the situation any more than the "frame" narrator does.³⁹ Twain is the controlling hand; he is the one who makes the climax effective by contrasting the two language level traditions.⁴⁰

Twain, then, lets the two speakers unconsciously suggest the real situation which neither of them sees.⁴¹ By making both speakers naive and unreliable observers, Twain makes the reader interested in the outcome of the juxtaposition of the language levels.⁴² The result of this conflict is the defeat of the genteel establishment represented by the officious

³⁷Clemens, Complete Stories, op. cit., p. 3.

³⁸Gerber, "Point of View," op. cit., p. 145.

³⁹Spengemann, op. cit., p. 6.

⁴⁰Gerber, "Point of View," op. cit., p. 144.

⁴¹Spengemann, op. cit., p. 6.

⁴²Paul Baender, "The Jumping Frog as a Comedian's First Virtue," MP, LX (February, 1963), 193.

"frame" narrator at the hands of the vernacular community represented by Simon Wheeler.⁴³ Just as the stranger in the story of the frog takes in Jim Smiley, Wheeler's vernacular takes in the literary narrator.⁴⁴ It is interesting to question whether Twain intended Wheeler to be aware of his victory. Probably he did not; for there is little irony about the manner of Simon Wheeler, and irony would destroy his unreliable voice which is needed for the structure of the tale. Regardless, in "The Jumping Frog," Twain starts a theme which he is to carry and develop throughout his work; he shows the higher value of the vernacular over the traditional.⁴⁵ Twain was to experiment with this theme until it became one of the most important and complex in his work. Along with Twain's use of the "frame" story technique and the genteel/vernacular conflict, "The Jumping Frog" shows the beginnings of what John C. Gerber has come to call Mark Twain's Comic Poses.

Twain has two main poses which he always employs; they are the pose of Superiority and the pose of Inferiority.⁴⁶ However, at times he uses many subdivisions under these two main headings. As the Superior, Twain can be the Moralist,

⁴³Ibid., p. 192.

⁴⁴Cox, Fate of Humor, op. cit., p. 29.

⁴⁵Spengemann, op. cit., p. 5.

⁴⁶Gerber, "Comic Pose," op. cit., p. 272.

the Sentimentalist, or the Instructor; as the Inferior, he can be the Sufferer, the Simpleton, or the Tenderfoot.⁴⁷ In later stories, Twain defines these poses with much greater clarity, but the rudiments can still be seen in "The Jumping Frog." Twain appears to be using both the Superior and Inferior in the "frame" narrator. As the Eastern literate, he plays the role of Superior (incidentally, in its original form as a letter, this would show Mark Twain clearly assuming a persona as he does repeatedly in his later works).⁴⁸ However, the final role which the "frame" narrator assumes is that of the Sufferer. It is in this role that he is defeated by the vernacular, for Wheeler is the real Superior of the story in the end. The story narrator is led to the pose of Sufferer through his implied pose as Tenderfoot, another role of the Inferior. "The Jumping Frog," then, has many of the important elements of Twain's later work. He uses the "frame" story, the narrative persona, the conflict of language levels, and the comic pose. All of these things Twain was to experiment with in the stories to follow "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County."

Twain experimented with the "frame" technique in other early tales. In "Cannibalism in the Cars" (1869), Twain turns

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 276.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 273.

away from the vernacular, but he retains the "frame" with two narrative personae. The "frame" narrator is unnamed, and he listens to the tale told by the story narrator. The story is that of a train load of men who are marooned by a storm. After six days, they decide to eat one another in order that those remaining might survive. The "frame" narrator is a young man who is much too believing and incredulous; he is an innocent, a quality usually associated with the vernacular.⁴⁹ He creates an atmosphere of reality around the tale. He describes the story persona, for instance, as "a mild, benevolent-looking gentleman . . . exceedingly intelligent and entertaining."⁵⁰ So, the story narrator is the completely genteel persona; the humor of the tale is derived as he reveals his "true" nature to the innocent young man. Slowly, the tale of horror becomes more and more terrifying to the young man until it reaches its climax when the story persona says:

I like Harris. He might have been better done, perhaps, but I am free to say that no man ever agreed with me better than Harris, or afforded me a larger degree of satisfaction. Messick was very well, though high flavored but for genuine nutritiousness and delicacy of fiber, give me Harris.⁵¹

By his language level, the story persona shows himself to be a genteel character. The humor comes, not from a conflict of

⁴⁹Spengemann, op. cit., p. 5.

⁵⁰Samuel Clemens, Complete Stories, op. cit., p. 9.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 14.

two language levels, but from the conflict of the genteel's language level with his nature as the innocent sees it. The theme of the tale is a political satire on the statesmen's tendency to "eat" one another. The use of what amounts to two genteel personae, although one is innocent, is not typical of Twain, but he uses it very well here to filter the Swiftian irony through the young innocent "frame" persona; he feels what the reader is to feel. In both "The Jumping Frog" and "Cannibalism in the Cars" Twain uses a fairly strong frame narrator. However, he soon begins to make the "frame" less important to the stories, which, of course, increases the importance of the story persona making it the main element of the tale.

In "A Curious Dream" (1870), Twain again uses the "frame" story, but, now, the "frame" persona is only a thin character who gets the story persona started. The story persona is a ghost who, again, comes from the genteel tradition. What "frame" persona there is represents a contrasting view to this tradition although the view is not embodied in a language level. The ghost plays the role of Sufferer, and he reveals his "true" nature as he describes his sufferings to his silent but understanding listener. The ghost states:

Ah, it was worth ten years of a man's life to be dead then! Everything was pleasant. I was in a good neighborhood, for all of the dead people who lived near me belonged to the best families in the city.⁵²

⁵²Ibid., p. 35.

The ghost reveals the shallowness of his character since he only cares about what to him should be trivialities. The humor arises from the dichotomy between his attitude and the reality of the situation; he is, after all, dead. He should have little interest in the family background of his neighbors, but that is all he does care about. He constantly remarks on how good the family background of his "set" in the cemetery is, the Bledsoes and the Higgins. He cares only about appearance, but his appearance is obviously horrible as he shows himself; he says, "if you will glance up in my mouth now as I tilt my head back, you can see that my head piece is full of old dry sediment. . . ." ⁵³ He is ignorant of all reality, even his own. The satire is fairly broad in nature, but it derives mainly from the revelation of character of the story persona. The emphasis is on him, and, by the end of the tale, the reader is laughing, not at the tale, but at the teller. Twain again shows the downfall of the genteel tradition at its own hand this time. Twain will use this persona as butt to good advantage in the travel books, especially Roughing It and Life on the Mississippi.

The next interesting use of the "frame" story, "A True Story" (1874), is probably one of Twain's best short works. Whenever Twain calls anything "true," the reader should be on

⁵³Loc. cit.

his guard. This story has a weak "frame" of a Mr. C- as persona. The presumption is that the story is being told to Mr. C- "Repeated Word for Word as I Heard It" which is the subtitle of the tale. It is probably safe to say that the narrative is completely Twain's invention. The "frame" narrator, at first glance, could pass as a mere reporter (or Mr. C-), a closer look reveals a subtle character which is not in keeping with the story to follow. Our Mr. C- reveals his nature clearly as he describes the story persona, "Aunt Rachel." He says

"Aunt Rachel" was setting respectfully below our level on the steps--for she was our servant and colored. She was a cheerful hardy soul, and it was no more trouble for her to laugh as it is for a bird to sing. She was under fire now, as usual when day was done. That is to say, she was being chaffed without mercy and enjoying it.⁵⁴

He seems to hold the typical white view of the black man as a clown with "no troubles" as he later says of her. This "frame" persona, then, sets the stage for "Aunt Rachel's" tale of woe. The "frame" narrator only interrupts once to say, "Aunt Rachel had gradually risen while she warmed to her subject and now she towered above us, black against the stars."⁵⁵ Except for this fairly significant interruption, the story is "Aunt Rachel's." She is, perhaps at this date, the best drawn vernacular female in American literature. She tells a fairly

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 94.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 95.

typical story of a former slave who had been a "house nigger," finally sold down the river with the loss of her children. It is a sad story, to be sure, but almost a cliché. During the war, she worked as a cook for Northern officers, and she eventually finds one of her children in the Northern army.

However, "Aunt Rachel" is a much more complex character as she reveals through her vernacular speech. Early in the story she says of her mother and herself that "I wa'n't bawn in de mash to be fool' by trash! I's one o' de old Blue Hen's Chickens, I is!"⁵⁶ As she explains, this means that her mother and she are not low "niggers" but are from Maryland, a sign of position. However, her status never changed even during the war. She was a cook for "Big Union Officers" which is exactly what she was doing before the war; she is still a slave. She shows her contrasting beliefs, however, when she states about a "nigger" regiment,

I was down on sich doin's; beca'se my place was wid officers, an' it rasp me to have dem common sojers cavor-tin' roun' my kitchen like dat. . . . Well, one night--it was a Friday night--dey comes a whole platoon f'm a nigger ridgment. . . . I was just a-bilin! . . . I ups an' says 'Git along wid yo-rubbage!' . . . I want you niggers to Understan' dat I wa'n't bawn in de mash to be fool' by trash! I's one o' de old Blue Hen's Chickens, I is!⁵⁷

In this speech, "Aunt Rachel" reveals herself to be still a slave, some servant "darky" to a Northern master; she has

⁵⁶Loc. cit.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 97.

bought the system which puts people in castes and which made her a slave in the first place. She sees herself as better than the "niggers" among whom she finds her son; the irony is of the very subtlest kind. Not only is the "frame" narrator unable to see reality (i.e., "Aunt Rachel" has had a hard life), but "Aunt Rachel" is blind to the truth about herself; she will always be a slave to her beliefs.

Another vernacular persona is used in a much lighter story called "What Stumped the Bluejays" (1880). Again, Twain uses himself as a "frame" narrator, but there is no characterization; in this tale he merely serves as a device to introduce the vernacular story persona, Jim Baker. Simon Wheeler and Jim Baker are very much alike; they come from the same part of the country in the same time span, and they spin tall tales. However, their greatest similarity is in the common language level that they use.⁵⁸ Jim Baker's use of the vernacular is obvious when he tells how smart Bluejays are; he states,

You may call a jay a bird. Well, so he is, in a measure-- because he's got feathers on him, and don't belong to no church; but other wise he's just as much a human as you be. And I'll tell you why. A jay's gifts and instincts, and feelings, and interests cover the whole ground. A jay hasn't got no more principal than a congressman. A jay will lie, a jay will steal, a jay will betray; and four times out of five, a jay will go back on his solemn promise. . . . If a jay ain't human he'd better take in his sign, that's all.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Blair, Native Humor, op. cit., p. 233.

⁵⁹ Clemens, Complete Stories, op. cit., p. 160.

Jim Baker is making some fairly strong statements about the nature of man, but the emphasis is kept on the speaker through his use of the vernacular; so the comments slide by without being noticed; but they are there. Also, since Baker is, obviously, unaware of the nature of his comparisons, they become ironical. Baker is an unreliable narrator reporting a reality which he fails to see clearly. What is missing in this tale to make it the equal of "The Jumping Frog" is the conflict of language levels. However, Twain was to experiment with this element in his early stories, also.

In another group of tales, Twain drops the "frame" technique and concentrates on making himself the persona. Usually, this persona is unnamed (although the assumption is that it is Twain); usually he uses many of the comic poses; and usually he is the innocent. The conflict in these stories arises as this persona meets vernacular characters; the result is often disaster for the persona.

"A Day at Niagara" (1869) is an early example of this type of tale. In the story, the persona writes of his vacation at Niagara; this is one of the first examples of the pose of the Tourist. He does everything; he puts on rubber clothes and gets wet; he hears the guide tell the same facts ten times. Then he states, "After you have done it you will wonder why you did it. But by then, it will be too late."⁶⁰ He assumes

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 17.

the comic poses of innocent and Sufferer when he meets the Indians of Niagara whom he has a great fondness for in his innocence. This meeting provides for the conflict; he says,

The Noble Red Man has long been a friend and darling of mine. I love to read about him in tales and legends and romances. I love to read of his inspired sagacity . . . and his general nobility of character, and his chivalrous love of the dusky maiden, and the picturesque pomp of his dress and accoutrements.⁶¹

The satire on this innocent romantic's view of Indians is not long in coming. At his first encounter, the persona is yelled at by Dennis Hooligan who says, "ye'd be taken me for a dirty Ijin . . . I'll ate ye!"⁶² Later, the persona meets the whole "tribe" and is beaten and thrown over the falls becoming the archetype Sufferer. Also, he never drops the pose of the innocent; even at the very end of the tale, he asks a doctor where the awful Indians are from and finds only then that they are from Limrick. The conflict is between the innocent romantic's view, which Twain constantly associates with the established tradition in culture and literature, and reality represented in the vernacular Irish; the result of their meeting is the Sufferer who has some very original things happen to him.⁶³ Actually, the tale is, also, a parody of romantic

⁶¹Ibid., p. 19.

⁶²Loc. cit.

⁶³Gerber, "Comic Pose," op. cit., p. 277.

versions of the American experience. Certainly, no one could confuse the persona with the "real" Mark Twain (whoever he was) since Twain's view was that Indians were on the same cultural level as the French!

"Journalism in Tennessee" (1869) could be a companion piece to "Niagara." However, the positions of genteel versus vernacular are a little better defined since it presents the Eastern innocent meeting the vernacular West in a purely literary sense. The story concerns a young man going to Tennessee for his health who takes a job as assistant editor of a newspaper. Since the tale is about newspaper writing, it deals explicitly with the language level conflict. The persona demonstrates his language level in his first article which begins,

The editor of the Semi-Weekly Earthquake evidently labors under the misapprehension with regard to the Ballyrock railroad.⁶⁴

However, the editor, a purely vernacular character, soon translates this into his language level; he makes it,

The inveterate liars of the Semi-Weekly Earthquake are endeavoring to palm off another of their vile and brutal falsehoods with regard to . . . the Ballyrock railroad.⁶⁵

This spirited style brings some strong answers in the form of guns, fights, bombs, scalpings, and other interesting and assorted mayhem which is all, of course, at the expense of the persona as Sufferer. He leaves Tennessee claiming in his

⁶⁴Clemens, Complete Stories, op. cit., p. 28.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 29.

innocently ironic way that "The Southern heart is too impulsive; Southern Hospitality too lavish with the stranger."⁶⁶ The importance of this light tale is that it shows the literary aspect of the language level conflict explicitly; by its very form, the story is about writing.

In another story about newspaper writing, "How I Edited an Agricultural Paper" (1870), Twain continues this conflict using the innocent persona. Here, however, he plays the role of Simpleton. He is editing an Agricultural paper, but he knows nothing about farming; so, he writes things like "Turnips should never be pulled, it injures them. It is much better to send a boy up to shake the tree."⁶⁷ With reporting such as this, he becomes the wonder of the West. People come from miles to see this man and ask him if he really wrote such articles. All of the Simpleton's activities have a satirical purpose which comes out in his final speech where he states to the hurriedly returned editor,

I tell you I've been in the editorial business going on fourteen years, and it is the first time I ever heard of a man's having to know anything in order to edit a newspaper. . . . Who reviews the books? People who never wrote one. Who writes temperance appeals? Folks who never will draw a sober breath. . . .⁶⁸

The pose of the Simpleton slips here to reveal the purpose

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 32.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 46.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 49.

behind the narrative; it is clearly a satire on editorial practices. However, the humor still results from the two language levels in conflict, although the conflict is slight here. All three of these tales, which do not use a "frame," have dealt essentially with the innocent persona. Twain uses this character type in another group of stories, but he introduces a new level of conflict.

In another group of tales, Twain uses a modification of the innocent. The persona of these tales is not so much innocent as just ponderously naive. Sometimes the mask is a thin one, but at other times he assumes a definite pose. One of the earliest stories of this type is "The Story of the Bad Little Boy" (1865); it was written not long after "The Jumping Frog." The theme of this tale shows Twain's early interest in the view of contemporary literature toward boyhood versus what Twain believed was the actual state of boys. This interest was, of course, to culminate in Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, and the narrative persona of this tale has some characteristics in common with the narrative persona of Tom Sawyer especially. After describing how this "bad" boy stole jam from his mother, robbed a farmer's apple tree, and said that it was all "Bully," the persona comments,

It was very strange--nothing like it had ever happened in those mild little books with marbled backs, and with pictures in them of men with swallow-tailed coats and bell-crowned hats, and pantaloons that are short in the legs, and with women with the waists of their dresses under

their arms, and no hoops on. Nothing like it in any of those Sunday school books.⁶⁹

This satire of phony children's literature is effective because of the naive persona; he refuses to believe in the reality of boyhood; so, the really trite story line is made humorous and effective. The persona is using the pose of the Moralist in order to make fun of morality, trivial morality.⁷⁰ Later, the persona states that the strangest thing to happen to the "bad" boy is to go boating on Sunday and not drown; it is only strange if he holds that particularly naive moral position that one must, in order to believe in the kind of fiction which Twain is satirizing when he uses the persona of the Moralist. The Moralist is, also, in an indirect language level conflict. He has a genteel view (which is also a moral position) represented by a type of literature, and this is in conflict with reality represented by the story line of this tale. What, at first, appears to be a simple story takes on important complexities when examined in relation to the point of view.

Twain experimented with another type of conflict which was not even indirectly concerned with a particular language level. Although he eventually discarded it, this conflict shows him using some of his best comic poses and personae. The conflict is between the male and female in a domestic setting

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 7.

⁷⁰Gerber, "Comic Pose," op. cit., p. 276.

which is represented in three stories concerning the McWilliams family. Although the stories were written over a long period of time (1875, 1880, and 1882), they really show only a slight development in form. The situations change and develop, but the actions of the persona remain the same. In all three stories, the persona, Mortimer McWilliams, relates his experiences which are usually conflicts with his wife. In "Experience of the McWilliams with the Membranous Croup" (1875), Mortimer starts in the pose of Instructor; he tries to convince his wife that their child should not be sucking on a pine stick. He is very scientific and reasonable but to no avail. His wife counters with myth, and her superstitions win the day. From then on Mortimer plays the role of Sufferer. As night approaches, Mrs. McWilliams is convinced that their child has the deadly croup. She proceeds to move the child into their room, out of their room, and back in. She has Mortimer constantly getting up to do various jobs all night long which he does without comment to her; he is the Sufferer indeed. He comments to the reader,

A wood-fire is not a permanent thing. I got up every twenty minutes to renew ours, this gave Mrs. McWilliams the opportunity to shorten the times of giving the medicine by ten minutes, which was a great satisfaction to her. Now and then, between times, I reorganized the flax-seed poultice, and applied sinaisms and other sorts of blisters where unoccupied places could be found on the child.⁷¹

⁷¹Clemens, Complete Stories, op. cit., p. 103.

Mortimer, as Sufferer, loses the conflict, but not without a small victory; in the morning, the cause of the child's cough is found to be a small pine stick caught in its throat. However, it is Mrs. McWilliams who reigns throughout the male/female conflict. In the next story, "Mrs. McWilliams and the Lightning," the same situation and action occur. Mrs. McWilliams is again the expert of the mythology of lightning. Mortimer, as Sufferer, is forced to take responsibility for an imaginary storm because of his dissolute moral nature. He withstands all of his wife's demands as the Sufferer must; he states:

How could I know there was going to be all this rumpus and pow-pow about a little slip like that? And I don't think its fair of you to make so much of it, anyway since it happens so seldom; I haven't missed since I brought on that Earthquake four years ago.⁷²

Mortimer ends up dressed like a clown in a full dress uniform with a sword to keep away the lightning. Again he has his meager victory when the "storm" turns out to be cannon fire celebrating an election, but Mortimer is really the victim since he has already been made a fool. Again the conflict is resolved with the real victory going to the domestic female. The final story, "The McWilliams on the Burglar Alarm," shows Twain losing interest in the form; he all but drops the direct conflict. Mortimer is still the Sufferer, but, now, it is at

⁷²Ibid., p. 154.

the hands of tradesmen who sell him a burglar alarm. The alarm never works, costs huge amounts to repair constantly, and is finally stolen by the burglars. The story is amusing because Mortimer, as persona, is still effective, but, without the well-defined conflict, the story is really of little value. Twain was, obviously, not as interested in this conflict as he was in ones which deal more directly with some language level.

In other stories, Twain shows some rather sophisticated experiments with point of view. In these more sophisticated works, Twain deals with personae who show various levels of consciousness rather than a language level shift. However, the condition of the persona is still the key factor in the stories. One of the earliest using this technique was a tale called "Political Economy" (1870). The persona in this tale is writing a tract on economics which is presented in the text in italics; it is much like representing his mental processes. The rhetoric of the tract is elevated, genteel language. However, he does not get far with the clear thoughts until he is interrupted by a visitor (not from Porlock). From this point, the story is reminiscent of Melville's "The Lightning-Rod Man," because the visitor is a salesman of lightning rods. Unlike Melville's story, this lightning-rod man is not characterized at all; his actions are only reported by the persona, who is immediately convinced that he needs enough lightning rods on his roof for a whole town. The persona reveals his true nature as that of the innocent; he buys lightning rods

until a storm comes up and draws every electrical charge within a hundred miles. The persona shows, then, awareness on two levels. The first is the intellectual level which is analogous to a genteel language level and shows characteristics of it. In his imaginary essay, he says, "The great light of commercial jurisprudence, international confraternity, and biological deviation--." ⁷³ He gets no further because he is interrupted by the lightning-rod man. The persona immediately shows the other level of awareness, the innocent reality behind the rhetorical thinking. He says,

I said in an off hand way that I had been intending for some time to have six, or eight lightning rods put up, but--The stranger startled and looked enquiringly at me, but I was serene. I thought that if I made any mistakes I would not be caught by my countenance. ⁷⁴

The language is at a more natural level in keeping with the reality of the situation. At the end of the tale after the disastrous storm, the high rhetoric is abandoned. The persona tacitly admits irrelevancy. He states, "I did not continue my essay upon political economy. I am not even settled enough in nerve and brain to resume it." ⁷⁵ The victory of the more realistic level of thinking is analogous to the victory of the vernacular.

⁷³Ibid., p. 60.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 59.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 64.

In "The Invalid's Story" (1882), Twain again employs a persona with two levels of awareness. However, this persona works on the awareness of events. The narrator is a man who is retelling the story of a past event. He is aware of the realities of that event. However, when the point of view shifts to that event, he is not aware. This is a technique that Twain used in Innocents Abroad and Roughing It. In a sense it is a "frame," but one of a peculiar kind. The persona tells of his trip to transport the dead body of a friend, Thompson, to his home in Bethlehem, Illinois. However, through a mix-up, he is really riding with a box of guns and some limberger cheese which was going to Peoria. He and an old vernacular expressman soon find the combination injurious to their health. On a satirical level the double awareness makes an interesting comment on organized religion; the Church, Thompson, is traveling, not with the body of Christ, but with a load of smelly guns, and what you do not know can hurt you. The persona ends by saying, "I found out, then, that I had spent that awful night with a harmless box of rifles and a lot of innocent cheese; but the news was too late to save me. . . . This is my last trip; I am on my way home to die."⁷⁶ The irony is obvious; guns are never harmless, and the cheese was less than innocent.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 192.

A much later story, "The Diary of Adam and Eve," (1890's), uses a most subtle variation on the persona technique. This story is hardly an early tale since it was written long after most of Twain's major novels and stories. However, it is the best example to demonstrate this kind of dual persona levels. The story claims to be extracts from both Adam's and Eve's diaries, which record simultaneous events from two varying points of view, namely the consciousnesses of the two personae. Adam reveals his character from his first entry; he states,

This new creature with the long hair is a good deal, in the way. It is always hanging around and following me about. I don't like this; I am not used to company. I wish it would stay with the other animals.⁷⁷

Adam is ignorant or, perhaps, innocent. He does not know that Eve is a woman. He is selfish; he cares only about himself and his own comfort. He does not like her naming everything and putting up "Keep off the Grass" signs. However, after the fall, his attitude starts to make some subtle changes; he is not so opposed to Eve's attempts at civilizing him. He says,

I made her patch together a couple of suits proper for public occasions. They are uncomfortable, it is true, but stylish, and that is the main point about clothing. . . .⁷⁸

Adam has accepted those sure signs of civilization, clothes. Later, he wants to do away with the children, another civilizer, but he eventually comes to care for them and for her. His final

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 273.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 277.

entry is, "Wheresoever she was, there was Eden."⁷⁹ Eve goes through a similar if not as drastic metamorphosis. She begins by calling Adam "it," but she cares for him and, of course, wants to change him. Obviously, she would not be as affected since she is the founder of civilization, the namer and mother. However, she comes to accept him for what he is; she states, "Then why is it that I love him? Merely because he is masculine, I think." The two personae develop their character along parallel lines, and the roving point of view gives insight into both. Again the reader sees the reality long before either of the personae.

"The Diary of Adam and Eve" completes the experiments that Twain had started so long before. He had developed the "frame" story and will use it in Connecticut Yankee.⁸⁰ He has defined the genteel/vernacular conflict which will become an intrinsic part of all his great works, including Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn. He had developed the vernacular persona character in "A True Story" and "What Stumped the Bluejays" until it is obvious where he will go with it in his later works.⁸¹ He continued to experiment with point of view in the travel books. His range of point of view is readily apparent

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 295.

⁸⁰ Edgar M. Branch, Literary Apprenticeship of Mark Twain, p. 134.

⁸¹ Spengemann, op. cit., p. 68.

in fictional tales, but he uses it just as often and with as much skill in his early books, Innocents Abroad, Roughing It, and Life on the Mississippi.⁸²

⁸²Gerber, "Comic Pose," op. cit., p. 297.

CHAPTER III

TAKE THREE STEPS FORWARD, THREE STEPS BACKWARD

Mark Twain's first three books, Innocents Abroad, Roughing It, and Life on the Mississippi, show his first attempts at longer, sustained works of narration. They have many things in common in terms of subject matter, but they, also, show a further development in terms of Twain's use of the narrative persona. Just as he has a wide range of narrators in the tales, he, also, has a wide range in these longer works.⁸³ For some time, this fact received little or partial recognition;⁸⁴ however, Twain rarely omits the use of some persona or comic pose in these books. Generally, they deal with an innocent youth setting out in a world which he finds to be full of pain and disillusionment and despair.⁸⁵ This youth is not Sam Clemens or Mark Twain, but he is a persona whom Twain, the artist, holds up to his readers. As in the tales, the center of interest is focused, not on the events, but on the narrative persona and the various roles which he assumes.

Innocents Abroad (1869) has often created misleading views about Mark Twain. The book has been used to show that

⁸³Loc. cit.

⁸⁴Smith, op. cit., p. 24.

⁸⁵Spengemann, op. cit., p. 1.

Twain was just another Southwestern humorist.⁸⁶ Granville Hicks states that the genre of the humorist caused Twain to fail with Innocents.⁸⁷ Twain has even been accused of being a philistine for the ideas and opinions attributed to him in this book.⁸⁸ Even Gladys Bellemy states that Twain speaks "in his own person" in the travel books such as Innocents Abroad.⁸⁹ However, this view has long been disputed. Even in a contemporary review of the book, one of Twain's early critics wrote, "We are sometimes left in doubt whether [Twain] is speaking in all sincerity, or whether he is having a sly laugh at himself and his readers."⁹⁰ Knowing now what an inveterate trickster Twain was, critics should not have any questions. If the title is not enough to enlist such thought, "The Preface" should give some convincing evidence as to the nature of Twain's real interest and focus in the book. Twain states, ". . . it [Innocents] has a purpose, which is, to suggest to the reader how he would be likely to see Europe and the East if he looked at them with his own eyes instead of the

⁸⁶Richard D. Altick, "Mark Twain's Despair: An Explanation in Terms of His Humanity," So Atlan Q, XXXIV (October, 1935), 367.

⁸⁷Granville Hicks, "A Banjo on My Knee," Mark Twain: Selected Criticism, ed. Arthur Scott, p. 215.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 216.

⁸⁹Gladys Bellemy, Mark Twain as a Literary Artist, p. 249.

⁹⁰"Unsigned Review of Innocents," Mark Twain: Selected Criticism, ed. Arthur Scott, p. 149.

eyes of those who traveled before him."⁹¹ To show how any reader would see things through Twain's eyes, Twain would probably say "innocently." The focus of the book is on the traveler, and Twain was to assume many roles, poses, and personae to exemplify this traveler.

The material which finally became Innocents Abroad was first published as letters in the Alta California, the paper which sponsored Twain's trip. Twain used a technique with these letters which he had used with previous letters written from Hawaii to that paper; he invented a character who "traveled" with him; this was a Mr. Brown. Using Brown, Twain often assumed the mask of the genteel Easterner, and he had Brown play the vernacular bumpkin.⁹² In many ways this resembles the technique that he used in "The Jumping Frog" and the other tales with a vernacular/genteel conflict. It really amounts to a difference in language levels which he has previously used. The point of view became that of a genteel Mark Twain played off against a vernacular Mr. Brown. Also, both Twain and Brown worked as unreliable narrators, Twain often seeing only the beauty and Brown, only the ugliness, especially in the Hawaii letters.⁹³ As Henry Nash Smith says, "The relationship of the

⁹¹Samuel Clemens, Innocents Abroad, p. 1.

⁹²Cox, Fate of Humor, op. cit., p. 42.

⁹³Spengemann, op. cit., p. 8.

narrator to Brown is another variant on the device of bringing straight and vernacular characters into collision."⁹⁴ For example, Twain uses Brown for his foil while viewing the Old Masters. After seeing "The Last Supper," Brown comments, "Is this fellow dead? Who dobbed this?"⁹⁵ Twain immediately comments that this seemed to give Brown great satisfaction, a fact which shows Twain using Brown as the butt after the manner of the genteel/vernacular tradition. However, in Innocents Abroad, Twain relates this same incident without Brown to show the tourists making a fool of the guide which represents a complete reversal of the situation in the Alta letters. Twain dropped Brown in the revisions for Innocents Abroad and in so doing he dropped the mask of the Gentleman or genteel Easterner which he used only sparingly thereafter.⁹⁶ The merging of Twain and Brown, while overall an improvement in the book, causes Innocents Abroad to have some structural problems; mainly it makes for a lack of unity in the point of view because of the many roles which Twain, then, assumes in the book.⁹⁷ However, its great advantage is that it gives a sharper focus on the consciousness of that one narrator; he becomes the

⁹⁴Smith, op. cit., p. 13.

⁹⁵Samuel Clemens, Traveling with Innocents Abroad, p. 58.

⁹⁶Gerber, "Comic Pose," op. cit., p. 273.

⁹⁷Franklin R. Rogers, Mark Twain's Burlesque Patterns, p. 60.

medium through which all material reaches the reader; all that he reports becomes, not only incidents, but part of his character.⁹⁸

The first role that the narrator plays is, of course, that of the innocent. Under this general heading, however, he plays a variety of sub-roles associated with the innocent moving from one to the other as the spirit moves him.⁹⁹ All of these roles are basically vernacular in nature. At the beginning of the book, Twain gives his speaker an almost child-like innocence.¹⁰⁰ He says about the trip,

I hurried to the treasurer's office and deposited my ten percent. . . . I rejoiced to know that a few vacant staterooms were left. . . . I was provided with a receipt, and duly and officially accepted as an excursionist. There was happiness in that, but it was tame in comparison to being one of the "select."¹⁰¹

Here, Twain demonstrates the two levels of the "innocent" mask. He is the wise traveler looking back on his innocent experiences; one voice is supposedly reliable and the other is not.¹⁰² As the unreliable innocent, Twain is an optimistic youth who loses his illusions as he learns to see reality. In contrast to the expectations of the voyage, he sees no famous people but

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 43.

⁹⁹Gerber, "Point of View," p. 146.

¹⁰⁰Smith, op. cit., p. 47.

¹⁰¹Clemens, Innocents, op. cit., p. 8.

¹⁰²Spengemann, op. cit., p. 4.

only sea-sick ministers and other generally aged travelers; instead of enjoying a sea voyage, he is ordered around by various officers who see him as in the way. These restraints stand in the way of the innocent's natural love of freedom and abate his innate goodness;¹⁰³ the journey, which begins as a search for freedom, is turned into just the opposite. As Spengemann points out, the innocent in this early book has all the trademarks which are to be found in Twain's later works including Huckleberry Finn.¹⁰⁴ This, then, is the basic mask; but to demonstrate the various types of travelers, Twain puts on other masks which fall naturally from the innocent. One of the first of these, which he has used in the tales, is Gerber's, the Sufferer. He uses this pose in the first landing of the ship at the Azores. In the first description of the island, he paints a romantic picture, but reality comes through quickly as it always does to the Sufferer. He rides a donkey and submits "To making a ridiculous spectacle" of himself riding through the town. Later, he complains about poor native food, bathing without soap, falling over chairs in the dark, listening to native music, and being victimized by heartless chambermaids.¹⁰⁵ In other words, these are all the typical

¹⁰³Ibid., p. 63.

¹⁰⁴Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁰⁵Gerber, "Comic Pose," op. cit., p. 277.

tourists' complaints, but he endures it all without comment as the Sufferer must. At a turkish bath, he is stoical in his suffering.¹⁰⁶ This is the typical reaction of the Sufferer.

Another innocent role that he assumes is the interesting one of the Moralist, also used in the tales. At the sight of the can-can in Paris, he states, "I placed my hands over my face for very shame," but he could not pass up the joke so he continued, "But I looked through my fingers."¹⁰⁷ In the holy land he uses one of his most original personae, that of the Simpleton. In one of the best uses of the comic pose, Twain pretends to believe with all sincerity that the column in Adam's Tomb is the center of the Earth.¹⁰⁸ He states as proof:

The most reliable traditions tell us that this was known to be the center of the Earth, ages ago and when Christ was on the Earth, he set all doubts about the subject at rest, by stating with his own lips that the tradition was correct.¹⁰⁹

He, also, adds other proof of a similar nature, which as the Simpleton, he, of course, believes. In this same chapter, Twain sees the Tomb of Adam (which is another proof of it being the center of the Earth), and he plays another of his most original roles, that of the Sentimentalist, which he has, also,

¹⁰⁶Loc. cit.

¹⁰⁷Clemens, Innocents, op. cit., p. 91.

¹⁰⁸Gerber, "Comic Pose," op. cit., p. 91.

¹⁰⁹Clemens, Innocents, op. cit., p. 430.

used in the short tales.¹¹⁰ He comments in a moving passage:

The tomb of Adam! How touching it was here in the land of strangers, far away from home, to discover the grave of a blood relation. The unerring instinct of recognition thrilled at its recognition. The fountain of my filial affection was stirred to its profoundest depths, and I gave away to tumultuous emotion. I leaned upon a pillar and burst into tears.¹¹¹

Although this passage is an almost word for word parody of a serious guidebook which Twain despised, as Dickinson points out, the mask of the Sentimentalist (or Stone Dreamer)¹¹² is carried off in complete seriousness. It is not the parody which makes the passage but the persona. The Sufferer, the Moralist, the Simpleton, and the Sentimentalist are all roles of Mark Twain as innocent insisting on being a fool to his illusions.¹¹³ Another basic persona which Twain loved to use in this book, is that of the Tourist.

As James Cox points out, "In Innocents Abroad Twain gave the world, not so much a new travel book, as a new traveler-- a new perspective, a new point of view."¹¹⁴ When this traveler is not playing at some kind of innocent, he is often playing at the typical boorish American abroad. Twain was being, not

¹¹⁰Gerber, "Comic Pose," op. cit., p. 274.

¹¹¹Clemens, Innocents, op. cit., p. 430.

¹¹²Smith, op. cit., p. 33.

¹¹³Cox, Fate of Humor, op. cit., p. 45.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 129.

the rebel, but the good, bad boy of the Western world as Fiedler points out.¹¹⁵ This role is not rebellion since the Europeans, like some loving mother, approved of this role for Americans.¹¹⁶ At his worst, the Tourist is the unregenerated ignoramus such as Twain was when he and his friends insisted on calling the guides "Ferguson" and asking if Columbus were dead.¹¹⁷ There is some malice in this type of behavior, and it certainly demonstrates the Tourist at his worst. At his best, the Tourist sees through the shams and falsehoods of the old world and does away with the attitude of the typical traveler who hates the pictures, statues, and objets d'art but is afraid to say so because of some cultural inferiority complex. Fiedler states:

The character called "Mark Twain" in Innocents Abroad is a comic version of the heroic types, a shlemiel or clown westerner, a wandering jester who has learned among the "young braves" to hate cant, despise sentimentality, distrust sophistication, and has picked up from them a new vocabulary--a native American diction.¹¹⁸

This Tourist version can be seen in the chapter comparing Lake Como to Lake Tahoe. Twain is very analytic in pointing up the

¹¹⁵Fiedler, "Duplicious Twain," op. cit., p. 241.

¹¹⁶Leslie A. Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel, p. 272.

¹¹⁷Robert Regan, The Unpromising Hero: Mark Twain and His Character, p. 163.

¹¹⁸Leslie A. Fiedler, "American Abroad," Partisan R., XXXIII (Winter, 1966), 86.

advantages of the latter. Other masks which he occasionally uses are those of the Purveyor of information (his dullest), the Observer, the Satirist, and the Story Teller which is always handy if the opportunity to tell an anecdote arises.¹¹⁹ In most of these personae, Twain works well developing their individual possibilities. However, they, also, represent the biggest failing of the book because they cause the lack of unity which is so evident. The shift from one persona to another becomes fairly obvious; no one could be as shrewd as Twain is at one time and as stupid as he pretends at another.¹²⁰ So, Innocents Abroad is primarily about the traveler, not the traveling;¹²¹ its greatest accomplishment is the development of the innocent persona which is a role that Twain was to work with for the rest of his life.¹²² In a more unified, more clearly drawn form, this innocent reappears in Twain's next book, Roughing It.

The narrator of Roughing It (1871) has a great deal in common with the narrator of Twain's first long work. As Lynn says

The narrators of the two travel books are, in fact, the same literary character, and Roughing It represents a continuation of the innocent's adventures, albeit the continuation has taken us backward in time. Mark Twain's

¹¹⁹Gerber, "Point of View," op. cit., p. 147.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 150.

¹²¹Fiedler, "American Abroad," op. cit., p. 89.

¹²²Cox, Fate of Humor, op. cit., p. 51.

projection of himself, his hero--significantly enough--has grown younger.¹²³

The persona in Roughing It is presented as a young, ignorant, romantic. Mark Twain, in reality, had just completed serving as a riverboat pilot which is hardly a position calling for an innocent youth.¹²⁴ Although Twain has not fully responded to the pull of the boy in Roughing It, his style is much clearer and more unified than it was in Innocents; its sophistication of style is slyly masked by a tone of youthfulness.¹²⁵ This tone is in evidence from the first pages; Twain sets the character of the persona when he states,

I was young and ignorant, and I envied my brother. . . . Pretty soon he would be hundreds and hundreds of miles away on the great plains and deserts and among mountains of the far West, and would see buffaloes and Indians and prairie dogs, and antelopes, and have all kinds of adventures, and maybe get hanged or scalped and have ever a fine time, and write home about it, and be a hero.¹²⁶

This passage clearly shows the voice of the innocent persona; its repetitions of "and" and youthful phrasing set the tone of the youth setting out on great adventures in the West. However, as in Innocents, it, also, has the controlling voice of the wise old-timer, and the narrative method is to move freely

¹²³Kenneth Lynn, Mark Twain and Southwestern Humor, p. 40.

¹²⁴Loc. cit.

¹²⁵Loc. cit.

¹²⁶Samuel Clemens, Roughing It, p. 3.

between the two positions.¹²⁷ The implications in the passage are clear that the old-timer is going to look back on his tenderfoot youth; and in this sense it is a "frame" story.¹²⁸

Also, Twain will use a very similar technique in Tom Sawyer. However, in Roughing It, the old-timer is a reliable speaker, and with the shift in persona to the tenderfoot, the voice becomes unreliable.¹²⁹ Twain as old-timer shows the reliable attitude which the reader is to assume as his own when the old-timer comments:

I was armed to the teeth with a pitiful Smith & Wesson's seven shooter, which carried a ball like a homoeopathic pill, and it took the whole seven shots to make a dose for an adult. But I thought it was grand.¹³⁰

Juxtaposing the innocent tenderfoot and the aware old-timer as it is done here establishes the irony and humor which pervades the book.¹³¹ The old-timer controls both the point of view and the sentimental youth, and he implicitly ridicules the youth at every opportunity.¹³² Most importantly, by using the veteran Westerner in this way, Twain is really writing obvious fiction for the first time because he can (and does) put his

¹²⁷Smith, op. cit., p. 53.

¹²⁸Rogers, op. cit., p. 63.

¹²⁹Spengemann, op. cit., p. 4.

¹³⁰Clemens, Roughing It, op. cit., p. 6.

¹³¹Spengemann, op. cit., p. 16.

¹³²Rogers, op. cit., p. 65.

youthful persona in conflict with reality.¹³³ The conflict is analogous to a language level conflict, but the genteel has been translated into wise old-timer. In the first part of the book, the section on the journey West, Twain maintains this technique without the obvious jumps in point of view so evident in Innocents which makes Roughing It, at least in the first part, a much more unified book than the earlier one.¹³⁴ As Twain has done consistently since the early tales, the focus of his works becomes more and more clearly centered on the persona.

One of the advantages of this focus is its effect on the typical Western story. By placing the emphasis on the narrator instead of on the events of Western adventure, Twain makes the violence acceptable to his audience.¹³⁵ As Lynn states, "By substituting a victim's humor for a spectatorial humor, Twain transformed the comic treatment of the American frontier."¹³⁶ This effect worked to good advantage in his later works; just as the focus is away from the horror of the West in Roughing It, the focus on Huck, in his book, diminishes the really gothic humor found there. This is only one of the

¹³³Louis Rubin, "Mark Twain and the Language Experience," Sewanee R, LXXI (Autumn, 1963), 667.

¹³⁴Rogers, op. cit., p. 62.

¹³⁵Lynn, op. cit., p. vii.

¹³⁶Ibid., p. 111.

themes to which the narrative persona lends itself; the others concern the tenderfoot, himself.

The main theme concerning the tenderfoot is that of initiation. He starts as the young hero who is going to have great adventures and get rich and become famous.¹³⁷ As the tenderfoot, Twain appears to be a greenhorn, far greener than he ever was.¹³⁸ However, it is not long before the tenderfoot begins to become disillusioned by the reality of the West.

Twain says,

. . . now we were going to cross a desert in daylight. This was fine--novel--romantic--dramatically adventurous--this, indeed, was worth living for! worth traveling for! We could write home about it. This enthusiasm, this stern thirst for adventure, wilted under the sultry Autumn sun and did not last above one hour.¹³⁹

This disillusionment of the romantic dream is repeated over and over. Later, another romantic illusion is destroyed; he states of the Noble Red Man whom he first praises: "I had been over estimating the Noble Red Man while viewing him through a mellow romance. The revelation that came was disenchanting."¹⁴⁰ As the Tenderfoot reaches his destination, Carson City, he has one of his last and most important disillusionments; he tacitly

¹³⁷Cox, Fate of Humor, op. cit., p. 10.

¹³⁸Gerber, "Comic Pose," op. cit., p. 279. Gerber points out that the Tenderfoot eventually gets transformed into Twain's greatest narrative persona, Huck Finn.

¹³⁹Clemens, Roughing It, op. cit., p. 96.

¹⁴⁰Ibid., p. 100.

shows that he is fast giving up the dream for the sad reality. Carson City is not the bustling frontier town that he had been led to believe, but, instead, it is a lifeless desert. His description of the scene is in the most barren of terms:

. . . we moved in the midst of solitude, silence, and desolation. Every twenty steps we passed the skeleton of some dead beast of burden, with its dust coat skin stretched tightly over its empty hips. . . . By and by Carson City was pointed out to us.¹⁴¹

Hardly a lively place. The juxtaposing of the descriptions with the arrival in Carson City shows real control on the part of the author or wise old-timer, but it is not so blatant that the innocent youth cannot still search for the dream for a while longer.

The Tenderfoot seems to find that idyllic West of his imagination at Lake Tahoe. Twain describes a peaceful time spent on the shore of that beautiful lake; he fishes and lives in a kind of Eden very reminiscent of the river of Huck and Jim, but it does not last. A fire started by Twain, himself, consumes everything from their food to their cabin. So, the innocent has brought his own disillusionment with him. There is no escape from reality, no El Dorado. As if angry at his intrusion, the lake almost drowns Twain, and at the close of the journey west, the narrator is still moving, traveling, attempting to find the adventures that had eluded him.¹⁴²

¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 108.

¹⁴²Lynn, op. cit., p. viii.

However, he knows, now, that it is only a dream. Nevertheless, Twain has developed his persona to a much more psychologically complex state than anything done in Innocents.¹⁴³ The consistent narrator coupled with the consistent themes of initiation and disillusionment form a unity not previously found in Twain's work.

However, the second part of the book is a falling off from the consistent adventures of the tenderfoot. The cause is that Twain drops the persona which he had developed so clearly. The setting moves to San Francisco, and the narrator becomes the less than innocent reporter. Obviously, there is no innocence; the persona has "grown up" to become a mere reporter. With the earlier persona gone, immediate problems develop in the focus and unity.¹⁴⁴ As Smith states, the narrative persona used so well in the first part of the book, disintegrates into reportage and story telling like the worst of Innocents.¹⁴⁵ Twain no longer has the youth to work with, but, instead, he is left with a wise old-timer who concentrates on collecting tall tales such as the story of Scotty Briggs and the parson.¹⁴⁶ However, Twain returns with renewed vigor

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 45.

¹⁴⁴ Spengemann, op. cit., p. 21.

¹⁴⁵ Smith, op. cit., p. 64.

¹⁴⁶ Lynn, op. cit., p. vi. This tale is one of the few of Twain's to deal with a language level conflict without using a narrator. The humor of the tale derives directly from the fact that the parson speaks a completely genteel language level

to the emphasis on the youthful narrative persona in his next work, Life on the Mississippi.

In 1875, Mark Twain wrote "Old Times on the Mississippi" which later became part one of Life on the Mississippi. The short work was published serially, at Howells' request, in the Atlantic Monthly. The later chapters were written much later after Twain had taken a trip up the river which he had loved so much, and the larger work was published in 1883. As the book now stands, there is an obvious division between the two parts, both in fact and in quality. The first part written much earlier is, obviously, superior, and one of the main reasons is the manner in which Twain uses his point of view and narrative persona. Twain has taken one more step back in time to recreate a past for his hero, a hero whose characteristics are becoming only too clear. As in Roughing It, the themes of "Old Times on the Mississippi" are initiation and disillusionment; again Twain creates a persona who is much more innocent and naive than he ever was; in reality Twain was twenty-two when he became a cub pilot, but the persona of "Old Times on the Mississippi" is represented as being sixteen.¹⁴⁷

(continued) and he cannot understand or be understood by Scotty Briggs who speaks a completely vernacular language level. As always, the vernacular tradition wins because the parson "learns" the vernacular language and becomes a great success in the town.

¹⁴⁷Gerber, "Comic Pose," op. cit., p. 280.

In the latter chapters, Twain is merely reporting about his journey as a man on the river; the style turns to the reminiscence and story telling which is Twain's stock in trade along with a fair share of dull facts. As Gerber states,

In Mississippi, when Twain wrote with no pose the latter chapters, he is pedestrian; but in the earlier chapters his sixteen years old pose makes for freshness, ingeniousness, and drama.¹⁴⁸

The mask of the innocent does not exist in the latter chapters, and they suffer for it.¹⁴⁹ Some critics have suggested that the river is the thing that stirred Twain's creativity; this is a pleasant idea, and it has been widely held by the public. However, there is much more to it; it is the river, yes, but seen through the eyes of a youthful persona.¹⁵⁰ As an adult narrator, the book becomes even factual like a guide book; for example, the narrator states in one of the last chapters, "Then we have Muscatine, 10,000; Winona, 10,000; Moline, 10,000; Rock Island, 12,000. . . ."¹⁵¹ It is in the early chapters that Twain does some of his best writing where he can deal with the innocent, tenderfoot "learning" the river.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸Ibid., p. 283.

¹⁴⁹Cox, Fate of Humor, op. cit., p. 109.

¹⁵⁰Gerber, "Point of View," op. cit., p. 155.

¹⁵¹Samuel Clemens, Life on the Mississippi, p. 270.

¹⁵²Ibid., p. 12. Although it does tend to destroy the unity of the first section, there is one significant digression in terms of Twain's language experiments. In a chapter called "Frescoes from the Past" he throws in a section from the then

Devoto, speaking of the vernacular persona of Life on the Mississippi, states that with this book, Twain's prose style becomes one of the greatest in the literature of English speaking peoples.¹⁵³ The beginnings of this great style are really earlier in the tales and other narratives, but Devoto is certainly correct that Life on the Mississippi does demonstrate a great prose style, and the main thing that makes this style is his unified use of the vernacular persona. As he has already done in Roughing It, especially, Twain introduces the story from the wise adult's point of view, and, then, he shifts to the incidents and the point of view of the youthful innocent narrator; he can slide from one to the other to make comments as the adult or to experience the episodes as the youth.¹⁵⁴ The adult, then, is the reliable narrator with the boy playing the unreliable persona as the occasion demands.¹⁵⁵ At the beginning, Twain sets the character of the old-timer when he says, about Hannibal,

(continued) uncompleted Huckleberry Finn. His reason is "by way of illustrating kelleboat manners and talk." In other words, Twain is giving his readers an example of a language level. One of the boatmen says, "Whoo-oo! I'm the original iron-jawed, brass-mounted, copper-bellied corpse maker from the wilds of Arkansaw. Look at me! I'm the man called sudden death and desolation!" This shows Twain, quite obviously, playing with language for its own sake.

¹⁵³Devoto, op. cit., p. 317.

¹⁵⁴Gerber, "Comic Pose," op. cit., p. 279.

¹⁵⁵Spengemann, op. cit., p. 49.

Once a day, a cheap, gaudy packet arrived upward from St. Louis, and another downward from Keokuk. Before these events, the day was glorious with expectancy; after them, the day was a dead and empty thing. . . . After all these years I can picture that old time to myself now, just as it was then. . . .¹⁵⁶

The language level is almost genteel, but it is more, just, the wise old man looking back on his past with a romantic eye. Later, he becomes more realistic in showing the innocent. He sets the character of the innocent in chapter IV when he says,

So, by and by, I ran away. I said that I would never come home again until I could come in glory. . . . I had comforting day-dreams of the future when I should be a great and honored pilot, with plenty of money, and could kill some of those clecks and pay for them.¹⁵⁷

He, soon, learns that there is little glory on the river; it is hard work and dangerous. He had not thought that getting up in the middle of the night would be one of his jobs. He was surprised that he would have to memorize the river in detail; he states,

That was a dismal revelation to me: for my memory was never loaded with anything but blank cartridges. However, I didn't feel discouraged for long. I judged that . . . Mr. Bixby was "stretching."¹⁵⁸

When he finds that Mr. Bixby was not stretching at all, he is further dismayed to find that there is still more to it. Soon, all the romance of a cub pilot's dreams are replaced by reality.

¹⁵⁶Clemens, Life, op. cit., p. 21.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., p. 24.

¹⁵⁸Ibid., p. 32.

After he had accomplished the feats needed to reach his goal, he finds that he has changed. Just as the tenderfoot in Roughing It, the innocent pilot cub is disillusioned with the romantic quest. He states,

Now, that I had mastered the language of this water, and come to know every trifling feature that bordered this great river as familiar as I knew the letters of the alphabet, I had made a valuable acquisition. But I had lost something. . . . All of the grace, the beauty, the poetry had gone out of the majestic river.¹⁵⁹

It is significant that the metaphor, here, is one of language as it is all through the learning of the river. For the controlling artist behind the tale of the boy is making pointed comments on the learning of his art as well. Marx points out that the pilot becomes the technician who cannot see the beauty which the naive passenger can see.¹⁶⁰ As the travel book descriptions are prosaic, so the descriptions in Life on the Mississippi are prosaic before the innocent's initiation, but, afterwards, he says,

All the value that any feature had for me now was the amount of usefulness it could furnish toward compassing the safe piloting of a steam boat. . . . And doesn't he

¹⁵⁹Ibid., p. 49.

¹⁶⁰Leo Marx, "The Pilot and Passenger: Landscape Conventions and Style in Huckleberry Finn," AL, XXVIII (May, 1956), 129. The answer to the artist's dilemma, for Twain, in Marx's view, is for the artist to assume a point of view that is not a romantic one like the passengers' and not a technical one like the pilot's; that point of view is, of course, Huck Finn who sees everything with clear unromantic yet innocent vision.

sometimes wonder whether he has gained most or lost most by learning his trade.¹⁶¹

Soon after this realization, the narrative of the boy on the river ends and the reporter takes over in a lightning transition; in one paragraph Twain covers thirty years of his life; he states,

In due course I got my license. I was a pilot now, full-fledged. . . . I supposed--and hoped--that I was going to follow the river the rest of my days. . . . But by and by the war came, commerce was suspended, my occupation was gone.¹⁶²

Twain drops his innocent persona after this passage, and the book becomes the story telling collection of the latter chapters. However, Twain had found the point of view through which he could best tell his story. In the early tales, Innocents Abroad, Roughing It, and Life on the Mississippi, Twain had followed a natural progression towards a more unified point of view, the point of view of the boy. He was now ready for the books that are the flowering of this technique. First, he would try to tell the story using the adult persona/youth structure and, then, he would come to the vernacular persona of Huck telling his own tale in Huckleberry Finn.

¹⁶¹Clemens, Life, op. cit., p. 49.

¹⁶²Ibid., p. 109.

CHAPTER IV

THE SAD VICTORY OF THE VERNACULAR

In the beginning of Huckleberry Finn, Huck makes quite a point of telling the reader that Tom Sawyer, written by Mr. Mark Twain, is a "true" book with some "stretchers." Huck stresses this point so much that it becomes clear that this first narrative of youth is a lie. Huck's book, written in his language, will be a true book. Twain has been developing his narrative techniques throughout his works to this point. He has been narrowing his point of view until it has come to rest on the boy and his story. However, he had to tell the tale twice, once in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (1876) and once in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884). A comparison of these two books will clearly show the superiority of the vernacular persona technique. The point of view, as always with Twain, makes all the difference.

Critics have always had some questions about Twain's intentions in Tom Sawyer. Twain, at first, is said to have meant the book to be for adults, a satire of youth, but Howells is said to have convinced him that it was a boy's book.¹⁶³ However, this advice came too late to affect the basic structure of the work, and, therefore, it remains only partially an attempt to catch the boy's point of view. Although he is

¹⁶³Trilling, op. cit., p. vii.

not the boy, there is a narrator of the story; he is an effaced adult who is observing childhood.¹⁶⁴ He views boyhood romantically, and, at the same time, he is amused by it as many of Twain's narrators have done in some of the short tales, Roughing It, and Life on the Mississippi. However, unlike the narrators in the previous books, this adult is unreliable mainly because of his romanticism.¹⁶⁵ This narrator is constantly calling attention to himself and to his sentimentalism; he comments on Tom's "Perennial bliss" and Tom's fight with the city boy as covering him with "dust and glory." The whole fight between the boy and Tom is described in romantic terms of an adult who does not remember the reality of boyhood very well. It is basically a cliché; it is a fight as adults would have liked fights to be, not as they ever were. As Fiedler says, Tom Sawyer is meant to be read by a boy with his father looking over his shoulder, to perpetuate the legend.¹⁶⁶ This American myth of boyhood is demonstrated best in the ever-lastingly famous "white wash" scene. The language is strictly that of the adult recreating some romantic dream of idyllic youth; the narrator states,

He [Tom] surveyed the fence, and all gladness left him, and a deep melancholy settled down upon his spirit. . . .

¹⁶⁴ Eliot, op. cit., p. xvi.

¹⁶⁵ Spengemann, op. cit., p. 41.

¹⁶⁶ Fiedler, "Duplicious Twain," op. cit., p. 248.

Life to him seemed hollow, and existence but a burden.¹⁶⁷

Although this passage has a certain irony about it, it calls attention to the narrator, as Twain always does when he uses a personal view point. In Tom Sawyer, the narrator removes emphasis from the boy's point of view.¹⁶⁸ Although he still uses the old genteel descriptions in Tom Sawyer which are part of the persona's view, the mode of the boy's world does come through clearly at times.¹⁶⁹ Essentially, Tom Sawyer is traditional in form, but, as Gerber points out, it is a blend of the two points of view of the traditional adult and the boy.¹⁷⁰ The two view points are often found very close together. In describing a sunrise, Twain starts, "Not a leaf stirred; not a sound intruded upon great Nature's meditation. . . . The marvel of Nature shaking off sleep and going to work unfolded itself to the musing boy."¹⁷¹ The rhetoric is sentimental and trite, but soon the description comes down from its loftiness and begins to show specific events and details close to the boy, Tom. Here the language used to describe things becomes much more natural; the narrative continues, "A little green

¹⁶⁷ Samuel Clemens, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, p. 13.

¹⁶⁸ Gerber, "Point of View," op. cit., p. 144.

¹⁶⁹ Marx, op. cit., p. 135.

¹⁷⁰ Gerber, "Point of View," op. cit., p. 156.

¹⁷¹ Clemens, Tom Sawyer, op. cit., p. 115.

worm came crawling over a dewy leaf, lifting two thirds of its body into the air from time to time and 'sniffing around,' then proceeding again--for he was measuring, Tom said. . . ."172

Although this passage is not dialogue, Twain shows the pressures of the boy's view point clearly. As the point of view centers on Tom, the description, except for the dewy leaf, becomes much more lively and original. As Blair states of this section,

If the earlier passage misses the contrived "prettiness" and "artiness" of a Victorian description, it barely does so; but the latter passage appears to have no more concern with prettiness and artiness than Huck does.¹⁷³

When the boy's view manifests itself in Tom Sawyer, it does so in the form of more directness, better observation, increased dialogue, and better manipulation of events for climax.¹⁷⁴ By comparison, the vernacular persona point of view of Huckleberry Finn has all the clearness of the best passages in Tom Sawyer and a great deal more unity.

A host of critics have commented on the value of the first person point of view to Twain's writing. Gerber says that it "almost magically" discourages Twain from doing what he does poorly and encourages him to do what he does well.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷²Loc. cit.

¹⁷³Walter Blair, "On the Structure of Tom Sawyer," MP, XXXVII (May, 1939), 75.

¹⁷⁴Gerber, "Point of View," op. cit., p. 156.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., p. 158.

Twain has a tendency to "haul off and be literary" in Blair's view, which the shift to the view point of Huck liberated.¹⁷⁶

The vernacular persona clears up personal dilemmas which otherwise arise, and it liberates Twain from what he thought a writer should write.¹⁷⁷ It keeps him from making those digressions and authorial comments so prevalent in Tom Sawyer.¹⁷⁸

Smith sums up these comments when he remarks:

The use of Huck as a narrative persona with a subsequent elimination of the author as an intruding presence in the story, resolved the difficulties about point of view and style that had been so conspicuous in the earlier books.¹⁷⁹

However, as most critics do, he goes on to add the important conclusion that

. . . turning the story over to Huck brought into view previously unsuspected literary potentialities in the vernacular perspective particularly the possibilities of using the vernacular for serious purposes. . . .¹⁸⁰

Certainly, the vernacular was one of the reasons that Twain used Huck as a narrative persona; Twain could not crawl into Tom's language level comfortably with its concomitant moral and social ethic, but with Huck's language level, Twain was right at home.

¹⁷⁶Blair, "Structure," op. cit., p. 75.

¹⁷⁷Marx, op. cit., p. 140.

¹⁷⁸Andrew Lang, "The Art of Mark Twain," Illustrated News of the World, XCVIII (February, 1891), 222.

¹⁷⁹Smith, op. cit., p. 83.

¹⁸⁰Loc. cit.

Twain had been developing his vernacular voice for a long time, and in Huckleberry Finn, it reaches its highest point of development. He was able to achieve the precise effect of semi-literacy at which he was aiming.¹⁸¹ With both Huck and Jim, Twain rejected the standard techniques of strange spellings and used instead word order and sentence rhythms to represent the spoken language.¹⁸² When he did change spellings, as in Jim's speech, it is not difficult to understand.¹⁸³ This shift to the vernacular form gave Twain the fullest freedom of expression. However, Huck is a far greater vernacular hero than Twain has ever used before. He has been prepared for in Simon Wheeler, Jim Baker, and the ever-younger innocent of the earlier books, but Huck's greatest quality is that his vernacular allows Twain to tell the truth. However, just as there is an irony in Tom Sawyer which is dependent on point of view, Huckleberry Finn has an irony far different from the earlier book but just as dependent on the point of view.

In Tom Sawyer, the adult narrator is constantly reporting the reality which the reader is supposed to see and accept. Since he is an unreliable speaker, the reality often escapes

¹⁸¹ Joseph W. Krutch, "Huckleberry Finn: A Bad Novel," New York Times Book Review, May 23, 1954, p. 2.

¹⁸² Robert Lowenherz, "The Beginning of Huckleberry Finn," Am Speech, XXXVIII (October, 1963), 196.

¹⁸³ John N. Tidwell, "Mark Twain's Representation of Negro Speech," Am Speech, XVII (October, 1942), 176.

him as well, but, for the most part, he does report a reality which Tom misses. From these two view points comes the essential irony which pervades the book. It almost amounts to the language level conflict in "The Jumping Frog" and other stories. There is a hint of another irony developing from a light satire of romantic literature; this is caused by the slightly unreliable voice of the adult narrator. Twain started with this idea in Tom Sawyer, and Howells' advice to make it a boy's book came too late to affect fundamentally the structure of the book.¹⁸⁴ Therefore, the basic irony arises from the interaction of the two voices in Tom Sawyer. In Huckleberry Finn, Twain achieves a superior kind of irony in a different way, but it is a way which is still dependent on the point of view and voice. There is only one voice in Huckleberry Finn, and the ironical effect arises as Huck's essentially uncomplicated view of life encounters complex situations.¹⁸⁵ Within this complex world, Huck claims to be naturally wicked while through the situations the author is silently praising Huck's simpler view.¹⁸⁶ Huck is an unreliable narrator in the sense that he reports appearances where the reader can see the reality beneath; from this dichotomy develops the basic ironic tension

¹⁸⁴Gerber, "Point of View," op. cit., p. 157.

¹⁸⁵Ibid., p. 159.

¹⁸⁶Booth, op. cit., p. 159.

of the book.¹⁸⁷ The most famous example of this type of irony is, of course, that Huck sees his actions to free Jim as evil while the reader obviously knows them to be the highest moral behavior. Not only does the difference in irony derive from point of view, but, also, the difference in theme and the difference, most importantly, of character.

The themes of these two books are often similar, but the persona technique used in Huckleberry Finn intensifies the themes and makes them less juvenile than they are in Tom Sawyer. By the very nature of the two voices in the earlier book, the themes are often trite. Fiedler states that the themes of the two books are essentially the same, but that Huckleberry Finn is the dark, almost Gothic side of the boy's world.¹⁸⁸ The light theme of satire of juvenile literature used in Tom Sawyer reappears in a wholly new form. In Huckleberry Finn, the satire of Emiline Grangerford works to poke fun at the Grangerfords' values; it works as a revelation of character in a much more complex way from Tom's satire. Another theme used in both books is the search for a family.¹⁸⁹ Tom creates his gang as a kind of underground family with a rule that you must have at least a mother (who can be killed

¹⁸⁷Spengemann, op. cit., p. 4.

¹⁸⁸Fiedler, Love and Death, op. cit., p. 348.

¹⁸⁹Eric Soloman, "The Search for Security," CE, XXII (December, 1960), 175.

if you tell the secrets) to join. However, Tom returns as he must to his "real" family, and he does so gladly. Always in Tom's pocket is the note that says, "We ain't dead--we are only off being pirates."¹⁹⁰ Tom attempts to bring Huck into these official and unofficial families in both books. To Huck Finn, the theme of a search for a family is not a game. In his book he is constantly looking for a family.¹⁹¹ He finds only the real one on the river with Jim as father, but it cannot last; so he continues his search. He is constantly inventing imaginary families for himself. In the end, he becomes part of the Phelps family, but he finally must reject them all. The theme of the family is juvenile in Tom Sawyer; in Huckleberry Finn, it is in deadly earnest. The theme of appearance versus reality is also evident¹⁹² (as it may be in all literature). However, the point of view makes it only secondary in Tom Sawyer; for the same reason, it underlies all of the action in Huckleberry Finn. The growth of conscience is part of both books.¹⁹³ This is, of course, one of the most important parallels in the two tales. When Tom returns to his people and tells the truth about their adventures, he appears

¹⁹⁰Clemens, Tom Sawyer, op. cit., p. 149.

¹⁹¹Soloman, op. cit., p. 178.

¹⁹²Lauriat Lane, "Why Huckleberry Finn Is a Great World Novel," CE, XVII (October, 1955), 5.

¹⁹³Smith, op. cit., p. 67.

to be showing moral growth. However, he really is helping to recreate the myth of the good, bad boy doing what society wants. Huck's moral growth is much more profound. He must learn to reject what Tom has really embraced. All of these themes are a part of Twain's main one of the initiation of the innocent. Tom is initiated into respectable society, and he tries to bring Huck into it also. Huck's initiation takes many forms. This theme of initiation and the other themes in both books have a clear relationship to the character development of Tom and Huck. Only by comparing their characters will these themes become clear.

Tom Sawyer is an orphan, like Huck, but he is no outcast. Tom is completely a social being.¹⁹⁴ As a romantic dreamer, he wants, more than anything, success, applause, approval, fame, and an audience to see it all.¹⁹⁵ As noted, he is the good, bad boy who is scolded by adults for his wildness but secretly admired by them for the same reason.¹⁹⁶ As Fiedler says, the praise of the good, bad boy is true Americanism, and everyone in Tom Sawyer knows that Tom will grow up to take his rightful place in that society and perpetuate it. His fondest wish in the end of his book is to make Huck a part of that

¹⁹⁴ Eliot, op. cit., p. xv.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p. xvi.

¹⁹⁶ James M. Cox, "Remarks on the Sad Initiation of Huck Finn," Sewanee R., LXII (Summer, 1954), 393.

society. He chooses the very place that represents all of that culture, the church; here, Tom attempts to bring Huck into the congregation of people. He says, "Aunt Polly, it ain't fair. Somebody is got to be glad to see Huck."¹⁹⁷ However, this move fails, as it must; it only serves to make Huck (and everyone else) uncomfortable. Later, Tom again tries to convince Huck to return to civilization, but Huck will have none of it. Tom, who thinks he wants to be Huck, really wants Huck to be like him. Only after Tom states that returning to the community is the only way that Huck can be in Tom's robber gang does Huck relent. Tom argues, "But, Huck we can't let you into the gang if you ain't respectable you know."¹⁹⁸ In other words, to Tom, in order to be a robber (outcast), you must join society. Eventually, Huck rejects the offer in the beginning of Huckleberry Finn. Huck rejects polite society represented by Miss Watson, but he, also, rejects impolite society represented by Tom Sawyer; they are really both the same.¹⁹⁹ Huck is Tom's Noble Savage in the earlier book, but in Huckleberry Finn, it is Tom who serves Huck; as Eliot notes,

When Tom Sawyer returns to Huckleberry Finn, he has two functions. First, he is a foil for Huck. Huck's admiration of him points up Tom's essential commonness and

¹⁹⁷Clemens, Tom Sawyer, op. cit., p. 144.

¹⁹⁸Ibid., p. 273.

¹⁹⁹Lynn, op. cit., p. viii.

Huck's uniqueness. Tom has imagination (from romantic fiction); Huck has vision.²⁰⁰

Tom is always present in Huckleberry Finn; even when Huck and Jim are on the river, Tom is there, finally, in the form of the King and the Duke. Tom will eventually become Hank Morgan who always loved the effect. He is, also, Pudd'nhead Wilson who reveals the true nature of the grown up good, bad boy. Twain knew Tom Sawyer for the person he really was. As Hill remarks,

Evidence that Twain realized Tom's shortcomings . . . is offered by his own statement to Howells that "By and by I shall take a boy of twelve and run him through life but not Tom Sawyer--he would not be a good character for it."²⁰¹

Twain had to use the sympathetic adult narrator to write Tom's story because Twain realized Tom's basic falsity and poverty of values. Huck Finn was a very different matter.

Huck Finn is, first, one of the clearest observers in literature. He may not understand all that he sees, but his vision is without flaw. As Chase notes,

Huck Finn, our observer and narrator, sees everything with the same impassive clarity and the same total lack of distortion with which he sees the most ordinary stick, stone, or fishhook.²⁰²

Just as he is a clear observer, Huck is, also, one of Twain's most serious personae. Twain cannot bring the pose of the

²⁰⁰ Eliot, op. cit., p. vi.

²⁰¹ Hill, op. cit., p. 389.

²⁰² Chase, op. cit., p. 142.

clown into this book because Huck will have nothing to do with such foolishness himself; he may report it in others, and, when he does, it serves beautifully as a revelation of character in others; but Huck will not be a part of it himself.²⁰³ In these ways he is a "simple" character; he is the ultimate extension of the innocent. His values are just as simple as Tom Sawyer's plots are complicated. However, in his seriousness, he is not callous; one of the basic qualities of the innocents is sympathy for others, and Huck has this quality to a high degree. He demonstrates this time and time again. He says of the stranded murderers on the *Walter Scott*,

Now was the first time that I begun to worry about the men--I reckon I han't had time before. I begun to think how dreadful it was, even for murderers, to be in such a fix.²⁰⁴

He cares for them, but he is not romantic about it; when he realizes that he can do nothing to save them, he states that he can stand it if they could. His first thought on seeing the lights of Cairo at night is that they may be the lights of sick people. Huck's sympathy, finally, leads to his basic moral nature, as noted briefly before. When Huck fools Jim and humbly admits his practical joke, he shows his heroic moral nature which finally culminates in his throwing off of the old

²⁰³Gerber, "Point of View," op. cit., p. 158.

²⁰⁴Samuel Clemens, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p. 71.

codes. Here, Huck learns that he is not a boy, like Tom, but a man, and he must so be responsible.²⁰⁵ Huck's conflict, then, is the ultimate extension of the language level conflict which Twain developed so long before. As in his earlier works, the two levels are embodied in characters, Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer; they not only represent a language conflict, but they are a conflict of everything that language represents--culture, society, and finally conscience.

Tom and Huck are not merely different characters; they are brought into existence by different processes.²⁰⁶ When Huck starts to tell his story, the language, at once, defines both character and action in a way that it never does with Tom Sawyer; by allowing Huck's vernacular to imply literary form, Twain reorganized the value system of language.²⁰⁷ However, as great an achievement as this is, the vernacular does still more; this language level which is Huck, also, implies a "correct" language standard which is represented by Tom.²⁰⁸ This is the genteel/vernacular conflict in its final development. These language levels become a synthesis of all that language can represent. Tom and Huck play analogous roles

²⁰⁵ Eliot, op. cit., p. vi.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 111.

²⁰⁷ Cox, Fate of Humor, op. cit., p. 168.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 169.

as representatives of two levels of society.²⁰⁹ This is why Huck comes under Tom's domination so often especially in Tom Sawyer. Tom is the perfect representative of the official culture, and, as Rubins states, the key factor is his language level; Huck's vernacular voice could never be made to mouth the party line of the establishment.²¹⁰ Huck is ready to do Tom's bidding or the bidding of any representative of official culture whether they be respectable or no. Huck says of the King and Duke's (Tom's counterparts) demand for service that it would be easier that way so they would do it; Huck feels the same about Tom's wishes until the end of Huckleberry Finn. Another difference embodied in the language level conflict is between the natural (Huck) and the social (Tom).²¹¹ For example, Huck's primitivism is clearly shown in that his mythic values come from natural superstition embodied in the real Noble Savage, Jim; Tom's mythic values are from the most social of sources, the romantic literature which he holds as so important. Tom eventually proves to Huck, as he had long suspected, that civilization is rotten.²¹² The conflict of romanticism versus "realism" or naturalism is closely alined to the language level conflict. This quarrel, as Gullason says, shows Tom to

²⁰⁹Carson Gibb, "The Best Authorities," CE, XXII (December, 1960), 180.

²¹⁰Rubin, op. cit., p. 669.

²¹¹Cox, "Sad Remarks," op. cit., p. 397.

²¹²Gibb, op. cit., p. 183.

be the real antagonist of the book.²¹³ In the beginning of his story, Huck followed Tom's romantic vision without really questioning it; but in the end, this ceases to be true. Huck always has an alternative to every one of Tom's romantic escape plans even though Huck cannot bring himself to openly rebel against the establishment. However, his victory is in the reader's realization of the childishness of Tom's romantic view.²¹⁴ Tom's romanticism leads to his basic inhumanity in the final section of Huckleberry Finn. Another organic conflict arising from the language level is that of conscience. Huck's moral position is so indisputably worthy of praise that he stands by his every action as a rebuke to Tom's conventional values and behavior.²¹⁵ Tom's great moral act is to write the note to Aunt Polly saying that he is only off playing which she really knew all the time. Huck's greatest moral act is to throw off all the codes of his world by deciding that he will go to hell rather than turn in Jim. Huckleberry Finn is a subversive book.²¹⁶ All of these conflicts are an ultimate extension of the language level conflict; Twain again shows the superiority of the vernacular tradition over the genteel

²¹³Thomas Gullason, "The 'Fatal' Ending of Huckleberry Finn," AL, XXIX (March, 1957), 360.

²¹⁴Ibid., p. 359.

²¹⁵Gerber, "Point of View," op. cit., p. 160.

²¹⁶Trilling, op. cit., p. xi.

tradition as he has done in all his previous works. However, in Huckleberry Finn, he has synthesized this conflict into one that represents a whole cultural milieu, the American experience. The results of these conflicts can be seen when all the voices--genteel, vernacular, and slave--come together in that controversial last section of Huckleberry Finn.

When Huck starts his journey down the river, he starts it as dead to all the people of the community, as many critics have noted.²¹⁷ He is truly one of the most lonely characters in literature; he must continually recreate himself at every turn in the river. When he finally comes to the Phelps' farm, he is reborn; he says, "But if they was joyful, it warn't nothing to what I was; for it was like being born again, I was so glad to find out who I was."²¹⁸ What he finds out is that he is Tom Sawyer; this has an interesting irony all its own. In a sense, this represents the end of Huck's quest for freedom; to be free, he must be Tom Sawyer which he can, in reality, never do.²¹⁹ Huck is practically forced by the situation to be Tom, but, when Tom comes along, he is glad to be Sid; so, the good, bad boy and the good, good boy are really not so

²¹⁷Richard P. Adams, "The Unity and Coherence of Huckleberry Finn," Tulane Studies in English, VI (1956), 103.

²¹⁸Clemens, Huck Finn, op. cit., p. 224.

²¹⁹Smith, op. cit., p. 78.

different after all; they are both mother's boys.²²⁰ Which is to say, they both embrace their culture and its values in a way that Huck never can. Through this symbolic revelation and the weakness of Tom's ideals and his romantic vision (he calls Jim a creature), Huck finally sees his last tie with the establishment fall. The two boys who seem to be so close cannot, after all, exist in the same world, and when Huck regains his identity, he immediately makes his choice. He must "light out for the territory ahead of the rest."²²¹ This is the ironic "happy" ending because there is no escape for Huck. Twain knew this better than most since he had already been to the territories and had written a book about the disillusionment that is to be found in the search for the good place. In Roughing It, he made it clear that the innocent cannot escape even if he goes all the way to Hawaii. Twain kept trying to call Huck and his clear true voice back, but Huck was never the same. He was always with Tom, and he had to revert to his early role of foil and Noble Savage. As Cox points up so well,

But Huck, though he came docilely enough, could never tell the truth. He had told all the truth he had to tell in one glorious lie.²²²

It was the lie of escape for the innocent, the only victory possible for the essentially tragic vernacular voice. In

²²⁰Fiedler, Love and Death, op. cit., p. 285.

²²¹Clemens, Huck Finn, op. cit., p. 293.

²²²Cox, Fate of Humor, op. cit., p. 184.

synthesizing all the conflicts of conscience and culture into the language level conflict of Tom and Huck, Twain had a lasting effect on all American literature. However, he also recognized that the vernacular persona, Huck Finn, was doomed to defeat. Twain never reached the same heights with the vernacular persona again. In his next book, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, which he started immediately after Huckleberry Finn, he chose to use what appeared to be another vernacular persona character. However, his success was only partial. In his last full-length book, Pudd'nhead Wilson, he abandons the narrative persona altogether and presents a fragmented text. In both these books and the other late works, Twain's partial success and failure is tied as always to point of view.

CHAPTER V

THE LOSS OF THE VERNACULAR VOICE

A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (1889) was Twain's last tale of book length which used what seems to be a vernacular persona character. Joan of Arc used a persona, but it is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a vernacular book. Cox puts forth the argument that Joan was not even written by Mark Twain; it was published anonymously first and, later, Samuel Clemens' name was added.²²³ Nevertheless, Twain started preparing himself for Connecticut Yankee almost immediately after the publication of Huckleberry Finn. One of his first goals was to reread Malory around 1885.²²⁴ Twain, then, worked on the book intermittently until it was published in 1889.²²⁵ Twain used other sources for the book, and it is one of his most literary; it shows the influence of the contemporary authors whom Twain was then reading.²²⁶ As does Huckleberry Finn, this book shows Twain's constant interest in Cervantes' Don Quixote; Twain was not above borrowing an

²²³Cox, Fate of Humor, op. cit., p. 247.

²²⁴John B. Hoben, "Mark Twain's A Connecticut Yankee: A Genetic Study," AL XVIII (June, 1946), 199.

²²⁵Howard G. Baetzhold, "Course of Composition of A Connecticut Yankee: A Reinterpretation," AL, XXXIII (May, 1961), 196.

²²⁶Krause, op. cit., p. 175.

adventure or two for his knight.²²⁷ Yankee was certainly influenced by Carlyle's French Revolution which Twain was reading at the time.²²⁸ The Anglophilia, which was used to puff the book for its American audience,²²⁹ may be due to Matthew Arnold's attack on the American way of life.²³⁰ Whatever, the influences on the book, it is obvious, now, that Twain had been contemplating such a book for a long time. The seed may be an early note by Twain about the uncomfortable aspects of a suit of armour. When the book was published, it was generally viewed as a satire on England and the romantic past of chivalrous Europe, especially by Howells who saw it as Twain's greatest satire. However, Twain hints at another purpose in a letter when he says,

The book was to be a satire particularly but more especially a contrast between Arthurian times and the present age so presented as to emphasize the salients of both.²³¹

As a "contrast" the book would be about both worlds pointing up the evils and wrongs of both. This seems to be the view generally held now among contemporary critics. Twain gives us

²²⁷Sister Mary T. Roades, "Don Quixote and A Connecticut Yankee," Mark Twain Quarterly, II (Fall, 1938), 8.

²²⁸Baetzhold, op. cit., p. 198.

²²⁹James D. Williams, "Revision and Intention in Mark Twain's Connecticut Yankee," AL, XXXVI (November, 1964), 288.

²³⁰Hoben, "A Genetic Study," op. cit., p. 211.

²³¹Baetzhold, op. cit., p. 198.

some clear statements on both the world of knighthood and on the glorious nineteenth century. His view of Arthurian England is given in the "Preface" when he states:

One is quite justified in inferring that wherever one of these laws [of England] was lacking in that time, its place was completely filled by a worse one.²³²

Twain's view of the nineteenth century is given, not directly, but indirectly through the character of Hank Morgan who is the perfect product of the enlightened age. However, the tale proper starts with neither, because in form, Twain returns to one of his favorite story techniques, the "frame" story.

Twain uses a slender "frame" around the story which has some important effects.²³³ First, it makes all the events of the tale come through the "frame" narrator; this creates the problem of the reliability of any of the speakers. The meeting between the "frame" narrator and the story narrator, Hank Morgan, is much like the genteel/vernacular conflict of Twain's earlier works. The "frame" narrator is portrayed as a dreamy tourist type who is "electrified" when Hank says of the hole in the armour, "Wit ye well, I saw it done. . . . I did it myself."²³⁴ Yankee starts then as a satire as Twain intended; Morgan is to be an anti-mask of the tourist-author, and just

²³² Samuel Clemens, A Connecticut Yankee and King Arthur's Court, p. ix.

²³³ Cox, Fate of Humor, op. cit., p. 93.

²³⁴ Ibid., p. 211.

as Hank has punctured the armour, he punctures the dream world of the "frame" narrator.²³⁵ However, this makes Hank, in a sense, like Huck; they both tell their own stories, and they both report what they believe to be reality but what is actually appearances.²³⁶ Hank starts as the seemingly reliable observer, the true anti-mask, but, at the end of the tale, it is Hank who is in the dream state, and the "frame" narrator says, "He lay muttering incoherently some little time; then for a time he lay silent and apparently sinking away toward death. . . . He was getting up his last "effect" but he never finished it."²³⁷ This is hardly the realistic Yankee of the "frame." What has happened to him? As so often in Twain's work, the Yankee has turned on Twain and become something entirely different from what he started to be.

In his brilliant article on Huckleberry Finn, Lionel Trilling states that Twain, through his persona, Hank Morgan, sang the praises of the machine age in Connecticut Yankee which shows that even the best of critics have their bad days.²³⁸ However, he has much company going all the way back to Howells in misreading this book. It is easy to see how this

²³⁵Loc. cit.

²³⁶Ibid., p. 94.

²³⁷Clemens, Connecticut Yankee, op. cit., p. 320.

²³⁸Trilling, op. cit., p. 318.

misconception could arise. It is, perhaps, more true to say that Hank epitomized the nineteenth century archetype in all his manifestations,²³⁹ and in many ways he does represent the things which the nineteenth century was most prideful of.

Hank says it of himself:

I am an American. . . . So, I am a Yankee of the Yankee's --and practical; yes, and nearly barren of sentiment, I suppose--or poetry, in other words. . . . I went over to the great arms factory and learned my trade; learned all there was to it; learned to make everything; guns, revolvers, cannon, boilers, engines, all sorts of labor-saving machinery.²⁴⁰

He was the man who could get things done; he had "know how" and was not afraid to get his hands dirty. So, in a positive sense he is the idealist and missionary of the nineteenth century and all that that time held as important.²⁴¹ In his practical way, he soon decides that the only thing is to run England and set things right. His goals are good; he will fight all the wrongs and bring the advantages of his time to the innocent sixth century. However, he unknowingly speaks ironically at the outset when he says,

There did not seem to be brains enough in the entire nursery, so to speak, to bait a fishhook with; but you didn't seem to mind that after a little, because you soon saw that brains weren't needed in a society like that,

²³⁹Gerald Allen, "Mark Twain's Yankee," NEQ, XXXIX (December, 1966), 437.

²⁴⁰Clemens, Connecticut Yankee, op. cit., p. 15.

²⁴¹Charles S. Holmes, "Connecticut Yankee: Mark Twain's Tale of Uncertainty," So Atlan Q, LXI (Autumn, 1962), 464.

and, indeed, would have marred it, spoiled its symmetry--perhaps rendered its existence impossible.²⁴²

The Yankee's words are, obviously, ironic for they prophesy exactly the effect that he will have on the innocent land which has been traditionally looked on as an English Eden, "some enchanted spot." In this terrible way, Hank is, clearly, the typical nineteenth-century man after all. Many critics fail to see that Hank and Twain are as far apart as Huck and Tom. Rourke confuses Hank and his creator.²⁴³ Others only partially see Hank's true nature. Holmes suggests that, perhaps, Twain viewed his Yankee ironically.²⁴⁴ Gerald Allen agrees that Twain was making light of his persona.²⁴⁵ However, it is clear that Twain, himself, was not fooled by his creation; he called Hank a perfect ignoramus.²⁴⁶ Obviously, Hank Morgan has a dark almost Gothic side which he develops slowly through the narrative. He goes from the positive character of the opening encounter with the "frame" narrator to the beaten man of the final meeting.

One of the first clues to Hank's true nature is his generic relationship to Tom Sawyer. Like Tom, he at first

²⁴²Clemens, Connecticut Yankee, op. cit., p. 27.

²⁴³Rourke, op. cit., p. 141.

²⁴⁴Holmes, op. cit., p. 463.

²⁴⁵Allen, op. cit., p. 446.

²⁴⁶Cox, Fate of Humor, op. cit., p. 92.

appears to be an outcast; he states, "I was just another Robinson Crusoe cast away on some uninhabited island with no society. . . ." ²⁴⁷ However, Hank does not rejoice, as Huck would, at this state of affairs. He acts just as Tom would; Hank says further on: "I must invent . . . contrive, create, reorganize things; set brain and hand to work, and keep them busy. Well, that was my line." ²⁴⁸ His most important relationship to Tom is demonstrated in his love of the "effect." He is constantly showing off; he loves to surprise his audience such as the miracle at the holy fountain. Hank always thinks in terms of drama just as Tom does at the Phelps when he makes them his audience. ²⁴⁹ Hank states of himself in this matter, "For I never care to do a thing in a quiet way; it's got to be theatrical or I don't take any interest in it." ²⁵⁰ So, Hank is not related to the vernacular Huck Finn and his love of the natural, but he is related to the genteel Tom Sawyer. Hank may not be in a society that he loves, but he loves society.

Another way of viewing Hank Morgan's true character is to investigate his opinions about that sixth-century society that he wishes to improve. He begins the book as the

²⁴⁷ Clemens, Connecticut Yankee, op. cit., p. 47.

²⁴⁸ Loc. cit.

²⁴⁹ Cox, Fate of Humor, op. cit., p. 91.

²⁵⁰ Clemens, Connecticut Yankee, op. cit., p. 224.

enlightened missionary bringing the goodness of the nineteenth century, and he plays this role intermittently throughout the book. The best example of this side of Hank's nature is during the journey which he makes with the king. Here he points up the evils of Arthur's slave system, and he shows that the so-called freemen lived only slightly better than the slaves, themselves. Perhaps, this, too, is an oblique reference to Hank's era. Whichever is the case, Hank's true nature is not as the savior of mankind but as the seducer of mankind. Hank ironically describes the citizens of Camelot as innocents many times, and Hank is the evader in an innocent land.²⁵¹ He is bringing evil in the guise of good. Hank claims to be "elected by the nation" who named him "the Boss." In this position he has absolute power over the people, and he desires absolute power over all things including nature; he demonstrates this desire at the beginning of the tale by "using" an eclipse as if he called it into being. Hank Morgan wants to be a god.²⁵² Barring this, he will settle for being an absolute dictator.²⁵³ He becomes such a dictator, in the democratic sense of the man who arises from the people to become their absolute ruler and

²⁵¹Spengemann, op. cit., p. 88.

²⁵²Edmund Reiss, "Afterword to A Connecticut Yankee," p. 324.

²⁵³Allen Guttman, "Mark Twain's Connecticut Yankee: Affirmation of the Vernacular Tradition," NEQ, XXXIII (June, 1960), 234.

finally their absolute destroyer. He demonstrates this dark side of his nature with his visit to Morgan le Fey (interestingly, they have in common the name, "Morgan," showing a relationship between them). At the evil queen's castle, Hank lightly condemns a whole band of musicians to be hanged because of their poor playing. He says,

I therefore considered the matter thoughtfully, and ended by having the musicians ordered into my presence to play that "Sweet Bye and Bye" again, which they did. Then I saw that she was right, and gave her my permission to hang the whole band.²⁵⁴

This occurrence is handled in the light humorous manner of the Southwestern humorist; this method was always Twain's stock in trade, but it still stands as a demonstration of Hank's callousness, a callousness which only foreshadows his actions to come. The great destructive qualities of the man are revealed later. In the final chapters, Hank retires with his band of boys (so like the Hitler youth) to a cave from which he proceeds to destroy all of Arthurian society and all of the nineteenth-century society that he had started. When he finishes the "Battle of the Sand Belt," there was less of civilization than there was before he came to Camelot.²⁵⁵ Hank Morgan shows himself to be, not a vernacular character at all, but, instead, the ultimate extension of the social civilized persona which Twain

²⁵⁴Clemens, Connecticut Yankee, op. cit., p. 106.

²⁵⁵Holmes, op. cit., p. 470.

hints at with Tom Sawyer. This civilized image must be closely associated with the metaphor of the machine; society is a great machine which Hank leads to destruction. Cox makes the interesting comment in this matter that Hank is the ultimate extension of the Paige typesetter which was destroying Twain's fortune during the writing of this book.²⁵⁶ Whatever the case, clearly, Hank is a mechanical character rather than an organic vernacular one, and his language level is, therefore, as enigmatic and paradoxical as the true nature of his character.

On the matter of language, the story has a language level conflict, but it is only explicit in one episode. Implicitly the conflict arises as Hank's machine-shop colloquial language collides with the Maloryese which Twain ascribes to the subjects of Arthurian England.²⁵⁷

As Smith points out, the best example of the explicit language level conflict is in Hank's quest with Alisande (or Sandy).²⁵⁸ Hank and Sandy play out the role of vernacular speaker versus the acceptable language level which is the standard thing with Twain by now. At one point, Hank asks Sandy for a count of the miles which they are to travel, and Sandy says,

²⁵⁶James M. Cox, "Connecticut Yankee: The Machinery of Self-Preservation," Yale R, L (September, 1960), 102.

²⁵⁷Cox, Fate of Humor, op. cit., p. 90.

²⁵⁸Smith, op. cit., p. 140.

Ah, fair sir, it were woundily hard to tell, they are so many, and so do lap the one upon the other, and being made all the same image and tinted with the same color, one may not know them . . . except they be taken apart, and wit ye well it were God's work to do that . . . for ye will note. . . .²⁵⁹

At which point Hank says, "Hold on, Hold on!" The hard-headed vernacular seems to be in conflict with the establishment language level. Which it is with Sandy. However, in the implicit conflict with the Arthurian culture, the language levels are not so clearly drawn.

As Spengemann writes, Morgan is not really a consistent vernacular character; he often sides with the innocents in name, but he finally fights to destroy them.²⁶⁰ Actually, Hank's speech is not a true vernacular at all; it is more a modern business jargon than a true language level.²⁶¹ It is full of clichés and is finally just slang.²⁶² Twain was not familiar with the Eastern speech which is one reason why Hank's language level is false, but, also, Hank's nature as the civilizer must make his language paradoxical. Hank appears to be an innocent just as his language appears to be the vernacular, but he is really an establishment man, and his language level is, therefore, a false one. The implicit

²⁵⁹Clemens, Connecticut Yankee, op. cit., p. 70.

²⁶⁰Spengemann, op. cit., p. 99.

²⁶¹Ibid., p. 89.

²⁶²Cox, Fate of Humor, op. cit., p. 213.

conflict, however, does have a victor of sorts. As Hank moves through Arthurian time, his language slowly picks up small bits of the Maloryese demonstrating Hank's slow change. This parallels Hank's character development because he finally comes to love the world which he has destroyed. At the end of the story, he dies thinking back on Camelot and the world of the innocents. Connecticut Yankee was to be Twain's last long work using the narrative persona, and without a clear vernacular tradition, it is only a fragment compared to his earlier works. In his last novel, Pudd'nhead Wilson, Twain does not even use the persona, and the vernacular has almost completely eroded.

In Pudd'nhead Wilson (1894), Twain discarded the narrative persona technique altogether. The narrator is not dramatized at all and is, instead, a simple omniscient observer. Also, the vernacular language is represented in Roxy who is more closely related to Nigger Jim and Aunt Rachel than she is to Huck. The language level of the innocent has taken a downward step. The genteel language level is also blurred. It is represented by Wilson who appears to be the hero of the tale.²⁶³ The conflict between Wilson and Roxy is as vague as the definitions of their respective language levels. Pudd'nhead Wilson seems to be an outcast in the vernacular tradition, but he is, really, just another disguised genteel character, another Tom

²⁶³Regan, op. cit., p. 163.

Sawyer or Hank Morgan. His only goal in the story is to become a part of the culture which has named him "Pudd'nhead."²⁶⁴ Incidentally, the only attempt at a persona in the book is through Pudd'nhead's "Calender" with its bitter, ironic comments on mankind, but it is hard to believe that he speaks these condemnations since he really is a Pudd'nhead by wanting to join such a rotten culture. This use of the "Calender" only serves to blur further the image of the hero. Pudd'nhead, like Tom Sawyer, is the antagonist of the book; his joke about killing half a dog is carried out seriously in his destruction of Roxy's son whom she calls a dog.²⁶⁵ Pudd'nhead has killed half of Roxy, the true protagonist of the story. She is also the only vernacular character, and like most of Twain's vernacular people, she is vibrantly alive.²⁶⁶ Her conflict with Wilson is never completely brought out in the open. Even in the courtroom scene, Wilson destroys Roxy indirectly through her son, but it is a clear defeat for the vernacular anyway as Roxy fully realizes; she states in her last speech, "De Lord have mercy on me, po' misable sinner dat I is!"²⁶⁷ The vernacular tradition has come to be embodied in a poor, almost

²⁶⁴Chase, op. cit., p. 150.

²⁶⁵Cox, Fate of Humor, op. cit., p. 236.

²⁶⁶Chase, op. cit., p. 153.

²⁶⁷Samuel Clemens, Pudd'nhead Wilson, p. 212.

white, slave who has no chance of even the smallest victory over the malicious innocence of the genteel character. Twain has taken the vernacular persona from the naive but complete triumph of Simon Wheeler through the sad victory of Huckleberry Finn until it comes to rest with the vibrantly alive Roxy who ends in complete defeat.²⁶⁸ Twain could never use the narrative persona much less the vernacular persona again. In "The Mysterious Stranger," for example, the narrator's only purpose is to set the convention rather than to disclose character; Theodore Fisher always seemed more conventional than individual.²⁶⁹ Fisher and his story are not nearly as effective as Simon Wheeler and his tale which started Twain on the development of the vernacular voice so long ago and which led him to one of the greatest accomplishments in American literature.

²⁶⁸Smith, op. cit., p. 182.

²⁶⁹Cox, Fate of Humor, op. cit., p. 274.

CHAPTER VI

". . . THERE AIN'T NOTHING MORE TO WRITE ABOUT,
AND I'M ROTTEN GLAD OF IT . . ."

The purpose of this study was to show that the works of Mark Twain are integrally associated with his use and development of point of view. His works follow a steady progression in point of view from the very first tale, "The Jumping Frog," down to his last books. Whenever he succeeded in a book or story, the success is linked to his use of the language, especially the vernacular and genteel personae characters with which his fiction abounds. Mark Twain's works are completely dependent upon the use of the persona, and they flourish only when he uses this technique.

Mark Twain was such a strong personality, himself, that he dominated his works before his death in 1910 and long after that. The criticism of Brooks shows that the clear emphasis in Twain scholarship was on the man rather than on his works even into the 1930's. Even Devoto, who took it upon himself, along with many others, to refute Brooks' criticism, still emphasized Twain's life. Not until the 1940's and earlier 1950's did attention turn away from Twain and towards his literary legacy. Such men as Lionel Trilling and T. S. Eliot were among the first to see the true nature of the man called "Mark Twain." Since then, critics have shown that Twain was

a completely literary person who saw this aspect of his life as the most important. He put much time and effort into his works, and they are not the creations of some clown humorist but the careful work of a highly talented artist who knew his trade well.

Twain's early tales and stories are the evidence of his experimentation in writing which was to prove so important to him and to American literature. His first story, "The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" shows, interestingly enough, all of the elements which he was to develop to such a high degree in later tales and stories. It uses the "frame" story technique which allows for the development of two first person voices within one tale. These two personae are representative of the types which are another extremely important element to Twain's work. This is the genteel speaker and the vernacular speaker. Using these two voices, Twain was able to establish the basic conflict which pervades his fiction, that is the conflict of the two language levels, the genteel versus the vernacular. Lastly, "The Jumping Frog" shows the beginnings of what Gerber has come to call the comic poses of Mark Twain. These poses were to dominate the travel books giving them some of their most effective passages but, also, causing them to show a lack of unity because of the obvious shifts in the pose of the narrator. The two basic poses are the pose of the Superior and the pose of the Inferior, but there are many sub-divisions of these

poses as Gerber points out. Many of his other early tales can be grouped according to the elements which he started in "The Jumping Frog."

First, Twain has a group of tales which show him experimenting with the "frame" story technique. Using this technique, Twain varies the importance of the persona. In "Cannibalism in the Cars" (1869), he has a fair balance. The "frame" narrator is important in setting the attitude of the reader. In another story, "A Curious Dream" (1870), the "frame" narrator has been de-emphasized until he is hardly a character at all; he is more a device to start the tale. The effect is, of course, to make the story narrator more important. By the end of this tale, the reader is laughing directly at the story narrator, himself, with little thought to the "frame" narrator. In 1874, Twain wrote one of his most effective stories using the "frame"; it is called "A True Story." At first glance it appears to be like "A Curious Dream" having little or no "frame" persona characterization. However, in a very subtle way, Twain does characterize the "frame" narrator as a typical white man who sees black people as stereotyped clowns. This is done so well that it still allows the reader's full attention to be on the story persona who is "Aunt Rachel," a former slave and servant of the "frame" narrator. To complete the irony, "Aunt Rachel" tells her story of the hard times which she endured as a slave both before and during the war. In telling her tale, which is a sad one although a cliché,

she reveals her character just as the "frame" narrator has. By the end of the tale, it has become obvious that "Aunt Rachel" is still a slave; she believes fully in the caste system which defines people's worth by their station in life. Just as the "frame" narrator is wrong about "Aunt Rachel" having an easy life, "Aunt Rachel's" view of the world is tragically mistaken. In the last story used to demonstrate the "frame" technique, "What Stumped the Bluejays" (1880), Twain again de-emphasizes the "frame" narrator almost completely and allows the vernacular story narrator, Jim Baker, to tell his own tale. The experiment, here, is in irony; Baker is an unreliable narrator who states things without realizing their full meaning. This is an important addition to Twain's range in point of view.

Another group of stories demonstrates the language level conflict which is central to Twain's works. "A Day at Niagara" (1869) shows the genteel Easterner playing the role of sufferer at the hands of the vernacular Irish. In "Journalism in Tennessee" (1869) the language level conflict is explicit. Again, the genteel Easterner with his concomitant language level, is defeated at the hands of the vernacular language level with great suffering on the part of the narrator. In "How I Edited an Agricultural Paper" he uses the same explicit language level conflict with the persona losing his genteel air at the end to reveal the satire on newspaper writing. In another group of stories Twain plays with the domestic conflict

and the satire of romantic literature using a ponderously naive persona. "The Story of the Bad Little Boy" (1865) shows the satire on juvenile literature through a persona who refuses to see the reality of boyhood and, therefore, is unable to understand the success of the "bad" boy. With the McWilliams tales Twain takes this naive persona and puts him in a domestic setting. The husband is always defeated by superstition and myth at the hands of his wife. He is always the Sufferer who allows himself to be most horribly used. In all of these tales Twain has his persona put on various masks such as the Moralist.

Finally, in a more sophisticated group of tales, Twain shows various personae with multilevel consciousness. In one of the first of this type, "Political Economy" (1870), the narrator assumes the pose of the genteel while writing a political tract, but he is really the naive innocent as he demonstrates, clearly, by his own words. In "The Invalid's Story" (1882), Twain has a persona who plays the man looking back on a past experience with the double level of awareness which this calls for. Finally, in a late but most sophisticated tale, "The Diary of Adam and Eve," Twain uses two personae who view the same events from their two view points. Also, he shows them achieve a change in character through a growth in awareness. All of the short tales demonstrate Twain experimenting with the language and especially with point of view, and all of these experiments become important to the travel books which represent the next step in Twain's development.

Innocents Abroad (1869) shows Twain in his first extended work. The basic persona is, of course, that of the innocent. However, Twain plays many sub-roles of the innocent. The first is the Sufferer who is constantly plagued by waiters, guides, and chambermaids throughout the boyage. Another is that of the Moralizer who is shocked at the immorality of the liberal Europeans. Twain does not play this role too seriously since he cannot pass up the chance to poke fun at him. One of his most original roles in Innocents is that of the Simpleton who will believe anything including that Adam was buried in "Adam's Tomb." At this same place in the holy land, Twain assumes one of his best masks which is much like that of the Simpleton; it is the mask of the Sentimentalist who cannot help but weep at the grave of a long lost relative in that far off land. Another main type of role which Twain assumes is that of the Tourist. With this persona Twain pleases the Americans by laughing at the old mother, Europe, and pleases the Europeans by playing a role tha they approved of for Americans, the ignoramus.

The problem with Innocents comes from these very roles that Twain uses so effectively; the book lacks unity because of the jumps in point of view which lie at its very heart. However, the beginning of the innocent narrator is to be a basic persona which Twain is to develop to the highest of artistic achievements.

In his next book, Roughing It (1871), Twain again uses the basic persona of the innocent as his narrator. The story represents one step back in time for the innocent, but it is one step forward in the development of the vernacular persona. It is almost a "frame" story because the structure of the book has a wise old-timer who is looking back on his tenderfoot youth. The point of view slips back and forth between these two positions to establish the basic irony of the story. The reliable old-timer comments ironically on the unreliable view of the romantic tenderfoot. The story's theme is that of initiation. The innocent sets out on a high adventure only to find disillusionment in the reality of the West. The story of the journey is one of the most unified things that Twain had written to this time, but after reaching Carson City, the unity ends because the persona is no longer the innocent but an old-timer himself. The book returns to the story telling of the earlier work.

In a series of articles written in 1875, Twain wrote the story of the innocent and his disillusionment again in the setting of the Mississippi River. He called it "Old Times on the Mississippi," and it became the first part of Life on the Mississippi. Again the book is a step back in time and a step forward in the use of the persona. Twain uses the old-timer looking back on his innocent youth, again. The theme of initiation is embodied in the idea of "learning the river." The

innocent persona starts out in the familiar pattern of the romantic youth who searches for adventure, glory, and fame. During his initiation into piloting, he learns the realistic truth that it is all hard work and dangerous. After his disillusionment, he finds that he is changed; he can no longer see the romantic and naive beauty of the natural world embodied in the river. He sees only the reality which is hidden under the surface. Significantly, the consistent metaphor in this section of the book is one of language. Twain compares learning the river to learning to read and write. So, the writer loses something too, which for Twain can only be recaptured by assuming a persona. The answer to the dilemma is to assume the mask of Huck Finn, of course. In the last (and longest part of Life), Twain reverts to the reporter of facts and the teller of stories. The section was written long after "Old Times on the Mississippi," and it shows what happens to the unity of Twain's books when he loses the narrative persona of the developing innocent. The progression from Innocents to Life taught Twain the method through which he could develop a completely unified story, and he applied this technique in his greatest books, Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn.

Twain had to tell his story of boyhood twice; first he told it in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (1876) and later in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1884). The point of view in Tom Sawyer follows the pattern established in Roughing It

and Life. He uses an adult narrator who views ironically the adventures of youth. Twain modifies the structure significantly in Tom Sawyer by making the adult an effaced narrator whose only characterization is that he takes a rather romantic view of the boy. This makes his comments, although usually intuitive, slightly unreliable. There is no strictly reliable narrator in Tom Sawyer as there was in Roughing It. Two kinds of irony arise from this situation. The obvious irony is the narrator laughing at the childhood adventures of the boy; the hidden irony is the reader's laughter on the romantic narrator. One of the bad side-effects of this structure in Tom Sawyer is to remove the emphasis from the boy's perspective. When this happens, the descriptions become trite and almost Victorian. When the descriptions become more a part of the boy's experience, they become much sharper and original. In Huckleberry Finn, Twain tells his story of boyhood from the purely vernacular persona point of view. The irony which results is far more effective than that in Tom Sawyer. Huck works as the unreliable innocent of the earlier books, and the irony arises as Huck reports appearances which he sees as reality. The reader perceives the difference to the advantage of Huck. His view is so uncomplicated and morally defensible that the actions around him suffer by comparison. The emphasis, then, is on Huck. He describes the world around him with one of the clearest eyes in literature. His descriptions have all of the strength of the very best ones in Tom Sawyer.

These two books represent the ultimate extension of the language level conflict which is an essential part of all of Twain's better fiction. However, in these two books, the conflict becomes a synthesis of everything that language can possibly stand for. Language is all. It embodies the conflicts of culture, civilization, character, and, finally, conscience. Tom represents the established culture and social values in conflict with the outcast, Huck, who represents the natural, organic values. Tom represents the official civilization, and he proves to Huck that it is rotten. Tom's conscience teaches him to embrace the rules and codes of his society; Huck's conscience teaches him most clearly that he must reject these values and remain an outcast. However, Huck's victory is essentially tragic since he can only triumph by escape, an escape which is futile.

After Twain's great classics, he was never able to write a unified long work again. In Connecticut Yankee (1889) which was started right after Huckleberry Finn, he came the closest. The form seems to be the one with which he had had so much success in Huckleberry Finn; Hank Morgan is a narrative persona who tells his own story after the manner of Huck, but it is not the same story because Hank only appears to be a vernacular character. Actually he is the ultimate extension of the official culture, and he has his roots not in the vernacular of Huck, but in the genteel tradition of Tom. He appears to be a

savior of the innocent people of the sixth century, but he is actually a seducer and destroyer. His language runs a perfect parallel to character. Just as he is a false vernacular character, his language is a false vernacular; in actuality his language is slang rather than a true language level. The implicit conflict between his speech and the speech of Arthurian England is not worked out clearly, but it does result in a triumph of the innocent's language. At the end of Hank's life, he has changed his speech patterns to conform with theirs, and he wishes only to return to the innocent land that he has destroyed.

In Pudd'nhead Wilson (1894), the language levels and the character roles are again confusing. Wilson appears to be a vernacular character, but he proves to be from the establishment tradition. He appears to be the hero, but he is not; Roxy, the vernacular slave is the hero, and she suffers complete defeat at Wilson's hand. The defeat is indirect as is everything in this work. Perhaps, Twain could not recapture the voice of Huck because Huck had said all that there was to say; perhaps, Twain was just too old to view his tales through the vernacular persona. Whatever the case, he had taken the vernacular persona to a high point in American literature, before losing it.

The purpose of this study has been an ambitious one. Hopefully, the reader will never again be able to view the

works of Mark Twain without being acutely aware, that with Twain, point of view is everything.

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