

GAME PLAYING AND THE FALL OF MAN:
A STUDY OF PLAY METAPHORS IN SELECTED WORKS BY
MARK TWAIN, 1893-1909

by

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Title of Thesis/Project/Extended Essay

Game Playing and the Fall of Man: A Study
of Play Metaphors in Selected Works by Mark
Twain, 1893-1909

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Abstract

Mark Twain made frequent references to game playing throughout his final years of writing. At the same time, he was preoccupied with the theme of the Fall.

Critics have taken some note of these facts, but to date no comprehensive study has been made of the probable connection between Twain's view of the expectations of game playing and the injustice inherent in man's Fall.

My thesis is confined to a close study of several short stories, written between 1893 and 1909, which draw their themes from the loss of innocence incurred by Adam and Eve. Two of the stories explicitly derive from the biblical account of the Fall: "The Diary of Adam and Eve" and "That Day in Eden". However, other short works during this period suggest the allegorical frame of the Fall, and also treat the same problems of freedom, blame, and the limits of responsibility.

The basic game metaphors used most by Twain and their general significance as analogy are examined in Chapter One. I explore the differences and similarities between God's cosmic game and the games of pre- and post-lapsarian man in a study of "The Diary of Adam and Eve" and "Letters from the Earth".

In Chapter Two I take full measure of the implications of man's adaptive, or 'expedient' innocence, which Twain suggests is formed as a result of the humiliating effects of the

"Moral Sense". Twain's argument is ambiguous as he contrasts the dangers of risk-taking and rebellion with the need to regain dignity, if not innocence. In this connection, "The Joke that Made Ed's Fortune" provides further insight into Twain's contradictory presentation of determinism.

This is followed by a discussion of "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg," in which I argue that the author tries to accommodate a satanic expression of excessive play, but finally must turn away from this expression of ridicule and endorse instead the relatively harmless mockery of the "boy" figure, Jack Halliday.

In the last chapter I consider two fundamental aspects of Twain's attempt to resolve the problem posed by natural rebellion against unfair rules. The necessary development of compensatory skills, like those of the con-man's tactics, does not, finally, provide Twain with a satisfactory answer to disappointed expectation. Nor does the author's response to the desire for a "New Eden" suggest that the creation of chosen, alternate worlds of fantasy may lead to regained innocence. Twain frequently counterpoints fantasy with the visages of decay and death.

Twain's use of the play metaphor indicates that when man's dream confronts reality irresponsible violence again betrays the spirit of homo ludens. Twain suffered to the end from a suspicion that the fair-play principle should, but does not, operate in the cosmic game.

I have not done a day's work in my life.

What I have done I have done because it has
been play. If it had been work I should not
have done it.

Mark Twain
Autobiography, I, 291.

Man proposes, but God blocks the game.

Mark Twain in letter
to Jean Clemens
(June 19, 1908)

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Introduction

Mark Twain was preoccupied most of his writing years with the metaphorical fall of man from innocence, and never more often than during the last fifteen years of his literary effort. Between 1893 and 1909 he wrote prolifically on the general theme of the biblical Fall, re-working with a special intensity peculiar to his last years the seemingly irreconcilable problems posited by two philosophies: determinism and free will.

While the first predicates that man is entirely circumscribed in his actions and nature by preceding causes and, in Twain's view, primarily and fundamentally by God, the presumption of free will Twain found was not only a more attractive idea but one absolutely necessary if man is to compensate for the humiliation of determinism.

Apart from this necessity, and directly related to man's innate ability to construct temporary alternate worlds, Twain clearly found it impossible to embrace one of these philosophical stances to the exclusion of the other. Indeed, his own alternate world depended upon retaining at great cost the fantasy of innocence, and by this an assurance that he was more than a puppet of the twin forces: temperament and training.

As Stephen Leacock has said about Twain, "he wanted it both ways."¹ It is a posture that implies contradiction. Evidence that the contradiction long survived his effort to resolve

it can be seen in the essay "What is Man?" which teeters back and forth between a humanistic wistfulness and cynicism. As the Young Man concedes, "It's an exasperating subject."

Exasperating as the subject was to Twain, there are at least two fundamental aspects of the author's ensuing presentation of this paradox which provide keys to his preferences. The first is Twain's use of game metaphors; the second, his use of all play as an expression of imaginative rebellion.

To suggest an analogy between Twain's ideological paradoxes and his preferential use of games and of play as a principle of life is not to presume to solve all the critical problems generated by his work. Instead, I hope, by drawing this analogy, to suggest a new approach to these problems, to show that within the scope of play Twain found a natural illustration for what he saw as unjust punishment, by God, of man's proclivity for creative expression.

My contention is that some of the paradoxes and problems created by Twain's treatment of the principal actors in the drama of the Fall can be, if not resolved, understood in terms of the functions of man--as not only "damned fool" but as homo ludens: man the player.²

In a general context the idea is not a new one. Several critics have taken note of the role of play in Twain's work. James M. Cox, for one, cites many instances of Twain's use of play both as theme and as analogy. Of Tom Sawyer he writes, "play was the central reality, the defining value."³ His criticism of The Prince and the Pauper rests to a degree on the claim that as a humourless book it failed "to create the world

as play" (p. 151). Cox makes another astute observation when he says that The Mysterious Stranger represents the conflict between innocent play and an excessive expression of "childhood audacity in the malicious hoax" (p. 275).

Also, Stanley Brodwin has noted, both in "The Humor of the Absurd: Mark Twain's Adamic Diaries" (1972) and "Mark Twain's Masks of Satan" (1973), that Twain's view of the Fall of Man was a serio-comic one that saw Adam, Eve and Satan as players in a pre-ordained game.⁴ Maxwell Geismar refers to Twain's constant return to two particular forms of play, the hoax and the practical joke. In this connection Geismar's assessment of Twain makes an important contribution. According to this critic, Twain had "an affection and curiosity and admiration--yes, and his own identification--with the false, the fraudulent, the mysterious scheming and cunning aspects of life itself."⁵ He claims that Twain was not, as is so often claimed, limited to revelling in childhood innocence, but finally "attained a maturity which had learned despite all the risks and gambles and losses and disasters and farces of experience, that the main purpose of life-in-death is to enjoy itself, and to play" (p. 289).

Although Geismar does not say so, it may be suggested that if Twain gained this point of view he paid a price that was entirely too great for his peace of mind. The problem lay in his ambivalent feelings about responsibility: on the one hand much of his work lays considerable emphasis on the obligation to assume duties and responsibilities. However, and often in the same work, he undercuts his argument by focusing on a delight in mischief and laziness.

In The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (Chapter II) he writes:

Tom said to himself that it was not such a hollow world after all. He had discovered a great law of human action, ...in order to make a man or boy covet a thing, it is only necessary to make the thing difficult to attain. If he had been a great and wise philosopher, like the writer of this book, he would now have comprehended that work consists of whatever a body is obliged to do, and that play consists of whatever a body is not obliged to do.

In a letter to W.D. Howells, Twain underlines this sentiment:

"Human life is maliciously planned with one principal object in view: to make you do the different kinds of things you particularly don't want to do."⁶ There is little doubt that Twain thought the world arranged not only to denigrate pleasure but to perversely counter man's natural impulse to seek fun through an avoidance of responsibility.

But Twain was not free of the suspicion that play is irresponsible and, therefore, morally dangerous. He cannot be said, then, to take a stand against his age, an age in which work was raised to the level of a virtue and play took on much the same meaning as idleness. When Twain asks, in "The Czar's Soliloquy": "Is the human race a joke? Was it devised and patched together in a dull time when there was nothing important to do?", admittedly the irony is directed at the Creator, but the question implies that idle improvisation is inferior to finding something important to do.⁷

Certainly, what is known of Twain's own life indicates that the problem of responsibility was paramount. Beginning with Van Wyck Brooks, considerable critical attention has centred on Twain's apparent assumption of responsibility for events which were obviously out of his control: the death of a hobo in the

Hannibal jail, the death of Twain's brother on the Mississippi, Jean's illness, and the demise of his favoured Suzy. It must be left to the psychological critics to provide theories which may more completely explain Mark Twain's exercises in guilt; it will suffice here to draw attention to the fact that he felt responsible and at the same time wished to extricate himself from that responsibility. Much of Twain's treatment of the theme of unfairness takes its impetus from the tension created by this dichotomy.

There is considerable evidence that Twain takes his model for a just state of affairs in the universe from a fair play principle that seemed to him to ideally govern the games of children. He equates Eden (a world of spontaneous, though illusory, freedom) with childhood, a time in which man is able to express his fantasies and indulge his explorations with the greatest degree of impunity.

However, it must not be lost sight of that although Twain seeks out that largely idyllic world in which the most permissible response to disappointed expectations may be made, he is never able to abandon for long his suspicion that fair play has little to do with the basically mechanical design of Creation, the rules of which must appear to man both irrational and unfair. In this connection Iago's irreverent claim: "I believe man is the joke of an unjust fate", finds confirmation in Twain's awareness of man as homo ludens. As he repeatedly gives exposition to: through the acquisition of the "Moral Sense" man assigns himself more responsibility for fair play than can, apparently, be expected from God Himself. Consequently, the question Twain poses,

though largely a rhetorical one, may be drawn as follows: If man is made "in the image of God" and is therefore naturally compelled to express himself as if he were a free agent, how is he culpable for this expression? The answer which may logically evolve from this reasoning, however, must, of course, be rejected; for unjust as it may be, man is punished nonetheless.

This thesis presents the claim that Twain's use of play as metaphor for rebellion, within the sanction of innocence, illustrates, more than any other single factor in his work, the defence of man's mischievous nature. Of necessity, it is a mischief characterized by paradox: Twain praises man's rebellion against what he cannot control and ridicules him as a damned fool for trying.

Twain's use of the motifs and symbols of gambling, joke-making, and practical joking, in particular, are presented here as expressions of man's efforts to restore a just balance to the game of life; to "even the odds" and insure at least the illusion of dignity.

This thesis concerns itself primarily with an examination and analysis of play motifs and symbols in the following short stories written between 1893 and 1909: Satan's "Letters from the Earth" (1900-1909), "The Joke that Made Ed's Fortune" (1896), "The Diaries of Adam and Eve" (1893 and 1905), "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg" (1899), and "That Day in Eden" (ca 1905). Passing attention, as supportive material, is also paid to three other minor works written after 1870. Also, although The Mysterious Stranger and Puddn'Head Wilson, as well as A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court are here referred to from time to

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time, no attempt is made in this thesis to examine Twain's novels of this period.

Taken as a whole, the body of work under examination suggests an increasing preferential use of the gamble and the practical joke as expository and allegorical devices, the implications of which I hope to reveal as the kinds of play used throughout this period are analysed in light of Twain's ambivalence toward rebellion.

Chapter One

There are at least two fundamental reasons why Twain's choice of the ideal rules of cosmic justice should be one appropriately drawn from the rules that govern game playing. The first may be seen as personal proclivity and is based on Twain's evident interest in the creativeness and amusement inherent in play structures, an interest found not only in his work but in autobiographical data.

The second reason is more universally applicable and an examination of the composition of play may throw additional light on Twain's use of the analogy. Any play mode may be formally or informally structured, according to the degree of rigidity expected from the ritual accompanying it. All play modes have in common the voluntary creation of a temporary alternate world: a respite or change from largely ungovernable and chaotic forces usually operating in everyday life.

Most play satisfies a human need for freedom from external control, despite the fact that the forms it takes often call for rigidly adhered-to rules in a largely invariable, predictable course of events within the frame of that alternate world. Games are satisfying to the player precisely because they are entered into freely and provide variation within expected form. The presence of agreed upon rules and the adherence to these rules with honour and fairness provides a fulfillment of expectation that is, in effect, the experience of promise-keeping.

The expression of imagination is given considerable reign at those junctures in game playing at which the players discover there is room in the structure of rules to challenge expectation. It is this attribute of game playing that offers an opportunity to express individual, egotistic ingenuity and to introduce the devices of bluffing, chance-taking, and an entire range of cunning deviations from a strict adherence to the 'letter of the law'. The purpose of deviation is to alter the actions of other players and thereby assure one's own victory. But within this variation of the accepted rules one must remain "a good sport".

A good sport is the player who abides by agreed-upon rules; he respects the other players though he competes with them all. He contributes imaginatively to the shape and exclusive aura of the game. Hence the familiar ad-libbing of those who play together: the continual surrogate "rough house", the humour, and the chiding. Above all, the good sport enters into the common illusion that this world within a world is the only valid one.

Significantly, the fun of playing depends on communal secrecy, undivided attention, and a complete exclusion of externally-imposed authority. For these reasons, the implicit understanding all players share is, at base, conspiratorial. In this respect, game playing is "serious". It is serious in its intense devotion to excluding the extraneous which, in effect, waits just outside the circle of play to spoil the fantasy world. The expression of this fraternal loyalty is jealously guarded. It follows naturally, then, that he who fails to play the game betrays from within the world of fantasy.

Human experience has necessitated including anti-play words in the language: tattle-tale, cheat, scaredy-cat, poor sport, fudger, killjoy and prig-- to name only a few. In play, identifying the spoil-sport is a serious matter and amounts to an ostracism of the one who has abused the rules of the game.

The spoil-sport's abuse of the rules of the game is particularly pernicious. He twists the rules to suit himself, often declaring that everyone else is wrong and that he alone understands how the game should be played. He readily betrays the other players, and ultimately undercuts that sense of defiant and mysterious secrecy endemic to play by introducing into the circle authority and censorship from the outside world. Unlike the good sport, he never believes, even temporarily, in the validity of the game.

From the viewpoint of homo ludens, then, the Creator is the ultimate spoil-sport. But as Twain often illustrates, assigning blame to Him is an exercise of impotency, since God plays by one set of rules and man another. Thus, when man expects "Providence" to provide justice as man understands it, he ignores the fact that the same rules do not apply in Heaven. Twain's famous remark that there is no humour in Heaven is but one demonstration of his refusal to ascribe to God those qualities found extant in human fair play and camaraderie.

Other examples of the difference between man's expectations of cosmic justice and the incomprehensible rules of "Heaven" that actually operate can be found in most of Twain's work, early and late. For this thesis, however, it must suffice to place attention on the dramatic irony with which Twain imparts

the disappointed expectation of justice as it encounters punishment for disobedience; and several stories written during the last years of his life demonstrate the discrepancy between chance and justice. The attention Twain gives to punishment for ignorance of cosmic rules animates all of the stories thematically concerned with the mythical Fall of Man.

Adam and Eve's ontological situation as "first innocents" is appropriate to the theme of betrayed expectation and unjust punishment. Twain's use of play motifs throughout the stories that re-tell this betrayal and punishment signal a preferential analogy between the game of life and play as it is understood by homo ludens. In the process of this analogous exercise it becomes apparent that man cannot win in God's game. The best he can do is to imitate the original impulse to create imaginatively which was God's initial prerogative. Nor does man have any choice in the matter: says Twain, it is his temperament to play and his fate to lose.

In 1902 Mark Twain wrote a parable called "The Five Boons of Life."⁸ It is offered here, not in explicit reference to Twain's Fall literature, but as an important example of the way in which Twain combines three aspects of the play world to draw an analogy between the game of life and games as exercises in fair play. Firstly, the parable demonstrates the part of choice and chance in game playing. Secondly, it shows the tragic difference between expectation and receipt, between promise and unexpected betrayal. Lastly, the frame of reference Twain uses is reminiscent of the fairy tale, enhancing further the illusion that there is something fundamentally wrong when "innocents" are

punished.

"The Five Boons of Life" tells the story of a "good fairy" who offers a young man a choice of five alternatives "as a boon" in his life. He first chooses PLEASURE, but discovers that pleasure is worthless. The "good fairy" offers him a second choice and this time he chooses LOVE. In time he sees that love brings him only grief. Now the young man is mature, and thinking that he is now wise enough to decide well, he chooses FAME when the benefactor returns. From fame he derives nothing but derision, which is, he says, "the beginning of the end".

At last he is left with but two from which to choose. From RICHES and DEATH he must select one. Disillusioned, the man cries out that "wealth appears to offer all luxuries, all joys, all enchantments of the spirit, all contentments of the body that man holds dear." Convinced that he has at last made the best choice, he speaks of the change of life's circumstances in language reminiscent of the story of the Fall as Twain treats the theme elsewhere:

I have lost much time, and chosen badly heretofore, but let that pass! I was ignorant then, and could but take for best what seemed so. (p. 474)

But within three years he is starving, alone and bitter. Now he curses all the world's gifts and when the "good fairy" visits him again he confesses that she was right, there is but one valuable gift among the five, DEATH. The man, now grown old, has come to expect the right to choose. Thus, he asks confidently for DEATH. But his 'benefactor' does not happen to have that particular "boon" anymore. The "good fairy" explains: " I gave it to a mother's pet, a little child. It was

ignorant, but trusted me, asking me to choose for it. You did not ask me to choose." The only thing that is left for him is "the wanton insult of Old Age", which the "good fairy" admits, "not even you have deserved."

The personal theme on which Twain draws is obvious. Writing in the last decade of his life, Twain was describing his own fate, with PLEASURE, LOVE, FAME, RICHES and DEATH. The latter "boon" he often praised as the only release from the disappointments and failures of life. It is evident in most of Twain's late work that much of the impotent anger he felt against the unfairness of the game of life stemmed from a disillusionment that reality must intrude upon the dream. When he wrote:

Whoever has lived long enough to find out what life is, knows how deep a debt of gratitude we owe to Adam, the first benefactor of our race. He brought death into the world.⁹

Twain spoke sarcastically, with his usual emphasis on measuring the broad disparity between promised potential and grotesque reality. But the story "The Five Boons of Life" reveals other, equally significant, parallels. It not only gives a disillusioned recital of personal disappointments but highlights themes that concerned Twain philosophically all his life: the question of free choice; the stigma of guilt unfairly placed on innocence; the possibility of a God not worthy of man's trust.

The young man in the story never truly learns to choose "wisely" because he cannot know until too late what constitutes wisdom. Similarly, the young man's ignorance is characteristically conditioned by two factors: his faith in justice and his expectation of benevolence from a "good fairy". If, as the

story also suggests, a man is a fool to be both trusting and ignorant, his position is none the less pathetic, for the "good fairy" tells him at the end that a child who fully trusted the decision of the boon-giver (God?) received death in return.

Twain does not leave us with the image of man as pathetic fool, unequipped by his innocence to attempt a restitution of an ideal balance between justice and responsibility. Throughout Twain's late work on the Fall, there is an implicit celebration of rebelliousness, of risk-taking in defense of the 'odds'. In this connection, it is necessary to differentiate between two kinds of "innocence" appearing in Twain's work, before we can understand the nature of his defense of rebelliousness.

There is, on the one hand, the exemplary innocence of the child, as represented--in the Myth of the Fall context-- by Adam and Eve. But there is a second innocence, the context of which can be found only in post-lapsarian man (child or adult); this innocence partakes of some of the aura which Twain usually surrounds Satan. This may be called an expedient innocence, as it is necessarily formed, Twain suggests, because although man cannot help that he is ignorant of the rules of Providence, he must pretend he is freer than he is. In defiance, then, of what he knows must be an inevitable defeat, he shows his dignity by laughing at his fate, and devises whatever means at his disposal whereby he may 'beat the game'. Hence, in Twain's late work, in particular, there are repeated references to hoaxing, practical jokes, gambling, jesting, and fantasy.

Each of these play-forms speaks to especial skills that Twain implies are perhaps deplorable extensions of the original

innocence (which is called here "exemplary"), but which are nonetheless necessary. It is true that his work contains many references, as well, to man as damned in both the senses of the word: man is doomed and he is the object of ridicule. The word "fool" refers to both foolish and tricked. However, in the same work, whether it be "serious" or humorous narrative, a ridicule of man's position goes hand in hand with a defense of his audacity and mischief.

A foundation for this defense can also be seen in Twain's frequent return to the illusion of hope that chance and accident provide the player who cannot believe in his own providential protection. In an 1870 sketch, called "Science vs. Luck",¹⁰ Twain tells of Jim Sturgis, the lawyer, who sets out to prove that the gambling game, "old sledge" or "seven-up", is not a game of chance but one of science. If he can prove it the game will not be outlawed in the country. No one believes he can prevent this happening, as it is obvious, say the townspeople, that the game is one of chance; after all, the men bet money in the game. However, Sturgis has a plan: he divides the playing group (who are also the jury in this case) into two and labels one "Science" and the other "Luck". Everyone agrees that whichever side wins determines whether the game itself is one of chance or science. The dramatic irony of the piece is, of course, that it is pure chance that the "science" side wins the game, and the "verdict" is as arbitrary as the so-called scientific test (p. 66).

The point is apparent: while there is no difference between so-called "science" and "luck", it is possible to win a verdict in the game of life by gulling the fools. Jim Sturgis

plays a practical joke and in so doing gambles that the joke, with its ostensible fairness and "scientific method", will convince all. If the group labeled "Luck" had won, the practical joker in Sturgis would have been victorious even if his career as a lawyer were to come to an end.

The story illustrates Twain's desire to equate all human effort with futility in the face of a determined universe; nonetheless, it further illustrates the power, in human affairs, of the audacious joker who gambles with the odds, assured that his fellow players can be easily fooled.

Mark Twain undoubtedly found excellent parallels between his own need to escape a puritanical environment and the relatively free and spectacular atmosphere of the gambler, the mesmerizer, and the cardsharp. But part of his lifelong concern about the assumption of responsibility found a characteristically ambivalent posture in regard to gambling and practical joking, in particular.

Before middle-age Twain had already begun investing funds in questionable inventions which invariably failed to return gain. Certainly, he admired and sought the company of gamblers throughout his life; and although it must be admitted that Twain, as a writer, cannot be seen as a gambler against great odds, he frequently gambled with the patronage and friendship of family and acquaintances, with much the same ardour for rebellion and arrogance that characterize his literary portraits of gamblers and practical jokers. It is likely that, had he been able to avoid the naggings of that much-maligned "Moral Sense", he would have emulated his characters to the full.¹¹

Significantly, much of Twain's fascination with the gambler and the practical joker derived from early contact with both reality and legend in which these colourful men provided thrilling contrast to the regular, the safe, and the ordinary. As Kenneth Lynn has pointed out, the Eastern tradition of carpet-bagger, chautauqua-wagoneer, and traveling salesman provided natural examples of the success of persistence and exaggeration. Gambling on the race track, steam-paddler, or at the card table—even on an occasion of frog-jumping in Calaveras county—were fundamental aspects of Southwestern life. Mark Twain was a product of both regions.¹²

The tenor of American life and the essence of the "American Dream" continually make it necessary to test limits and take risks. The West, in particular, fostered the emergence of the con-man who was provided with dudes and dupes of all sorts, most of them fearful to test the new limits and easily gulled by their less timid adversaries.

Twain drew from this tradition not only because he found it profitable, but also because his own nature responded to that which would not be confined by Huck Finn's hated civilization. Although Twain never really "struck out for the Territory", and certainly never took more than one foot out of civilization, he played with the idea. Clearly, although he traveled widely all his life, and collected in his travels the anecdotes and experiences that enrich his work, he was never able to get away from the first world of Hannibal, Missouri, in which had begun the philosophical dichotomy presented by the story of Genesis.

In Twain's view, Adam and Eve were fooled by their

Creator and there began the long line of descendants Twain referred to as 'damned fools.' The question of responsibility for the Fall obsessed Twain from childhood: was mankind to blame for succumbing to a desire placed in him by his Creator? And if damned forevermore by "original sin", was there no way out except through an obeisance to and worship of the very betrayer whose fault it must be?

Hence, it is easy to see how Mark Twain should interest himself in those examples of human defiance and imaginative rebellion which were capable of lending man at least an illusion of dignity despite 'cosmic' humiliation. Thus, in his work we see references to homo ludens as gambler and practical joker, in the act of trying to right the imbalance that an essentially fatalistic creed imposes on man's reason.

As if to deny any justification for the audacity and probable cruelty of the practical joker, Twain devotes considerable space in his (largely apocryphal) Autobiography to a spirited condemnation of this form of play.

During three-fourths of my life I have held the practical joker in limitless contempt and detestation; I have despised him as I have despised no other criminal.

The rest of the quote, however, presents evidence of his ambiguity concerning the practical joker, and underscores again the fact of an uneasy union of guilt and pleasure.

. . . and when I am delivering my opinion about him the reflection that I have been a practical joker myself seems to increase my bitterness rather than to modify it.¹³

Twain then equates a lack, rather than a surfeit, of creative imagination with the practical joker he vilifies.

I played many practical jokes . . . but they were all cruel and all barren of wit. Any brainless swindler could have invented them. When a person of mature age perpetrates a practical joke it is fair evidence, I think, that he is weak in the head and hasn't enough heart to signify.

He differentiates between the innocent "fun" of the child and what has been designated here as "expedient" innocence devised by adults in the act of practical joking.

In those extremely youthful days I was not aware that practical joking was a thing which, aside from being as a rule witless, is a base pastime and disreputable. In those early days I gave the matter no thought but indulged freely in practical joking without stopping to consider its moral aspects. (p. 320)

These emphatic condemnations of practical joking might be entirely convincing were it not true that the bulk of Twain's Autobiography presents several narrations in detail of practical jokes he perpetrated against friends and family, the tone of which is undeniably exultant, and against which 'mature' reflection appears at once both dreary and stilted.

Twain wrote practical jokes into much of his work after 1885, beginning with The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.¹⁴ In the book, Tom Sawyer plays a practical joke on Huck and Nigger Jim. Tom deliberately suspends knowledge of the truth: that Jim is already freed. He does so in order to play out an elaborate escape game. It is a disturbing episode because the joke seems cruel and disloyal, particularly as the rationale for it is, Tom says, "the adventure of it" (p. 333).

Later, Jim's obedient forgiveness of Tom is one of the aspects of the story that rankles most, although his characterization has not deviated sufficiently from earlier instances of

servility. He is bound to forgive and forget despite the humiliation the reader feels for him. But Twain does not fail to draw a sharp contrast between this particular practical joke and the relatively harmless pranks Jim has suffered earlier. The former are presumably, though to a degree, satisfying to all parties concerned; but Tom's trick on Nigger Jim is excessively one-sided: not even Huck is at home with it. Something happens here to Twain's earlier comic detachment and poise; the mood of the novel takes a turn toward a dark burlesque, as it does in Pudd'nhead Wilson, when Roxy exchanges the children, and again in the courtroom scene, where melodrama and a kind of frenzy holds sway.

Warwick Wadlington, in his essays on the confidence game in American literature, cites a Twainian device that defines well the ambivalent effect the author creates in the Tom Sawyer-Jim episode mentioned above. In typical Twain fashion, the least excuse for drama calls forth an accelerated and farcical treatment that is not always true to the material which it animates. The scene is presented, says Wadlington, in terms of entertainment first and when the notion of enjoyment is introduced, even ironically,

. . . it seems to provide the cue for further development by a comic conceit. The depicted ambience is inherently 'not entertaining'; but the people are represented as not only enjoying it but elaborating its possibilities with a game that requires no talent. For Twain, here as elsewhere, people are largely defined by what entertains them.¹⁵

Further on this critic describes how Twain turns his readers into a circus audience, "for whom, ideally, the tonal contrasts and Barnum-like combinations cannot be too sudden or grotesque."

Thus, Wadlington invites a comparison between Twain's abandonment of compassion and his sacrifice of restraint for the sake of creating an uneasy conspiratorial orgy with his audience.

The latent rationality and morality at the base of the comic . . . is something like that involved in gambling. In either case, rigid suppression destroys free reflection, action, and choice. Yet where there is no control of gambling (and no rational norms of the comic), the emotional powers of the imagination get out of hand, leading to senseless extravagance in thought and behavior.¹⁶

In the episode of Nigger Jim's "escape" Twain asks his reader, as he does in key episodes in Pudd'nhead Wilson, The Connecticut Yankee and in The Mysterious Stranger, to surrender to willfulness and mischief, to delight in the power of play to sanction even ruthlessness and insult. Only after the reader shares Twain's uncomfortable exercise in rebellion, does a compassionate treatment of man's foibles re-enter to relax the tension.

Much the same pattern of excused rebellion can be found in Twain's work "The Diary of Adam and Eve". However, the two archetypal 'children', Adam and Eve, are portrayed in such a way as to suggest not only the composition of exemplary innocence, but the manner in which homo ludens attempts to restore some measure of balance against the weight of God's prerogative.

Written for the most part in an affectionate, light tone with a focus on humorous incongruity, "The Diary of Adam and Eve" is a composite of two pieces intended from the first to dovetail. "Adam's Diary" was written in 1893 and "Eve's Diary" in 1906; they appeared side by side in The \$30,000 Bequest (1906).¹⁷ Despite an obvious effort to submerge recurrent ironic effect

beneath a light-hearted treatment of marital gaucheries and contemporary commercial parallels (such as "Niagara Falls Park"), the piece is undeniably pathetic, an effect largely derived from the confrontation of idyllic illusion and death. The sentimental 'postscript' addendum to Adam's diary serves as an open tribute to Twain's wife, Olivia, whose recent death lent its own pathos to the diaries as a whole.

Although the theme of the fall of Adam and Eve is the central allegorical frame for the work, Twain also uses expository conventions found in the pastoral form. Under the guise of diary reports of original 'rustics', he uses an idyllic rural life (Eden) as setting while actually presenting a clever and sophisticated point of view. As the convention calls for, the authorial pose is artificial; the values of the society pictured are not exclusively rustic. In effect, Twain depicts a pre- and post-lapsarian world simultaneously. The result is humorous but the incongruity thusly illustrated also opens to view not only the foibles of mankind but the tragic betrayal to which man, as innocent player, is subjected.

The argument regarding this betrayal rests, as it does in all Twain's work concerned with the Fall, on the problematic disparity between what man must do and what he dares not do for fear of punishment.

Stanley Brodwin makes the following observation about the milieu in which the central characters in the drama find themselves:

In the Adamic fables, the irony is created by counterpointing myth and reality in a way which is comically absurd. Here, the mythic figures of Adam

and Eve do not behave or speak as mythic figures . . . but rather as very 'real' people . . . making naive assumptions about reality.¹⁸

In "The Diary" these naive assumptions are clothed in the psychological garments of childhood and adolescence. To increase and sustain the pathos of the work, Twain equates an expression of free will with the playful activities of Adam and Eve. Experimentation, make-believe, love- and word-play, and joke making comprise those activities. In addition, the format of the piece as a whole is reminiscent of the speech and diary entries of a child and adolescent.

Each activity indulged in by the participants of the Fall is exploited for its comic and tragic potential. For example, experimentation which begins as disinterested activity for the pleasure derived from it results in disaster; word-play changes from an expression of the desire to control the total environment to a means through which the player is subjugated to a pre-determined fate. Likewise, the audacious jest is transformed from a gleeful experience of rebellion into suffering and remorse. Ironically, as the players individually attempt to shape the game, their characteristics determine that the game will instead shape them.

At the outset of the diaries Twain counterpoints two apparently different ways of playing the game, the schematic shape of which can be seen when Adam's activities and attitudes are contrasted to Eve's. As an experimenter, Adam is a conservative. His idea of play is entirely circumscribed within the boundaries of unthinking obedience to rules he does not understand. He plays alone, spending his time idly roaming about,

fishing, and "policing" his "estate". Contemplative, but unimag-
inative, he accepts the world as he finds it.¹⁹

It is from Adam's point of view that the reader first receives a picture of Eve as contrasting player. In "Part I, Ex-
tracts from Adam's Diary" it is learned that Eve is a nuisance because she disturbs Adam's solitude with unwanted companionship and "foolish schemes" to change the order of things. Adam consid-
ers her "a numskull" when she "bothers" the animals with experi-
ments instead of leaving them alone to their own devices. In his view, Eve's imagination is dangerous to them both and to the world they share (p. 275).

The irony is not lost on the reader, but more important-
ly, there emerges a sympathetic portrayal of Eve's energy, warm-
heartedness and irrepressible imagination. As a result, atten-
tion is drawn to the playful activities in which Eve indulges,
the nature of which appears increasingly more dangerous and more
admirable than do those of Adam.

From Eve's diary accounts it is learned that she intuits that they are "experiments" on earth. She, like her creator, is an experimenter—as her activities soon demonstrate. It is Eve's playful experimentation in gathering roses and later with fire that prepares her for the consequences of innocent, but nonetheless daring, curiosity (p. 282).

She derives two maxims from her experiences: "The scratched Experiment shuns the thorn" and "The burnt Experiment shuns the fire." As might be expected, the experience of pain teaches Eve to suspect more to lie behind beauty than at first appears (p. 284).

However, Twain focuses upon the peculiar nature of Eve's prudence, characterizing it as adaptive rather than inhibitive, for Eve continues to take possession of roses, climb forbidden trees, look for means by which the carnivores may be able to use their teeth, and to "create fire." In effect, she adapts to a fear of punishment by becoming increasingly clever and cunning in an effort to alter the outcome of her disobedience.

In Karl Groos' study, The Play of Man, there is a discussion of Jeremy Bentham's theories concerning what he had termed "deep play", or that play which is extreme, irrational and in violation of "the utilitarian ideal". Groos comments:

Bentham meant play in which the stakes are so high that it is irrational for men to engage in it at all . . . a situation in which the marginal utility of what one stands to win is clearly less than the marginal disutility of what one stands to lose . . . 'Deep play' is playing with fire. It is in this sense 'serious' play.²⁰

It is precisely the risk factor in the exercise of free-will that appears to fascinate Twain throughout "The Diary" as it does throughout most of his work as a whole. Here an amused celebration of Eve's audacity counterbalances the dramatic irony with which the Fall of the couple is presented. Adam's participation is more complex, and in its complexity may be seen other game analogies at work. For, as Adam has refused to be drawn into naming things, but finally succumbs to the competitive need to seem at least as imaginative as Eve, so he also reveals that he too possesses a rebellious spirit despite the many warnings he has directed toward Eve in regard to its expression.

At first it is only Eve who exercises her verbal powers

in an effort to gain control of her environment. She argues that she "knows" the names of things. Adam, for all his complaining, confesses a begrudging admiration for her strange "logic" and finally is lured into her games. About her insistence on testing out any idea he says, "It is the right spirit, I concede it; it attracts me; I feel the influence of it; if I were with her more I think I should take it up myself" (Diary, p. 291).

Their love-play assures that Adam and Eve will combine forces; only after Adam has succumbed to the delightful practice of reciprocal teasing, with its attendant physical closeness, does he begin to respond to the spirit rather than the letter of the "Word" of God.

Prior to this time it is Eve alone who tests words to see what they will invoke in the material world. The God of Genesis named ideas and in naming them made them manifest. Thus, in Eve's urge to name the new and thereby possess the unknown she imitates God's original act of creation; in effect, she plays God. In underlying Eve's energy and enthusiasm with affection, Twain enhances dramatically the imminent discovery that no one can out-play God; the game is 'rigged' and only He knows the real rules by which it must be played.

Here a significant parallel may be drawn between the attitude toward play held in "The Diary" and the model to which Twain seems to refer as constituting the fair play principle of children. Both the tone of the diaries and the authorial posture of amused sympathy conspire to create an enactment of the fair play principle previously discussed in this paper: neither Adam nor Eve intends to provoke wrath in their Creator; the

games they play are played to amuse themselves. In this sense, their innocence is complete for they neither understand the seriousness of their rebellion, nor are they motivated by any desire to disrupt reality.

This is an important point, particularly in view of one aspect of play itself, namely that its 'earnestness' is itself subsumed in an awareness of make-believe, an intuitive knowledge that the fantasy world designed is temporarily extraneous to reality.²¹

Although Eve often appears to presume that she can permanently alter reality, there are recurrent instances in the narrative that deny this. It is witnessed, for example, that she knows about deception and its possible consequences, though that knowledge is certainly 'amoral' rather than informed by the as yet unborn "Moral Sense". When the moon and some of the stars disappear beyond her view she supposes that they have been stolen by whoever is on the other side and adds, as she reflects on the moon's loss:

And besides, whoever gets it will hide it; I know it because I would do it myself. I believe I can be honest in all other matters, but I already begin to realize that the core and center of my nature is love of the beautiful . . . and that it would not be safe to trust me with a moon that belonged to another person and that person didn't know I had it. I could give up a moon that I found in the daytime, because I should be afraid some one was looking; but if I found it in the dark, I am sure I should find some kind of excuse for not saying anything about it.
(p. 283)

Similarly, although she is determined to pursue her game of trying to clod apples out of the tree, despite Adam's warning that it will end in "death", she finally recognizes that some

forms of play may be dangerous. After her experiences with scratches and burns she begins to differentiate between what she considers are harmless games and what are not, and regrets that she cannot explain it to Adam.

I tried once more to persuade him to stop going over the Falls. That was because the fire had revealed to me a new passion . . . fear. And it is horrible!--I wish I had never discovered it; it gives me dark moments, it spoils my happiness, it makes me shiver and tremble and shudder. But I could not persuade him, for he has not discovered fear yet, and so he could not understand me. (p. 290)

Thus, innocence is finally presented as expedient naïveté which, though it is no less poignant in the context of the Fall, nonetheless recognizes that the nature of man includes a natural proclivity not only for imitating the creative gestures of God but for compensating (for a relative helplessness) by cunning innovation.

Apparently it is Twain's intention in the diaries to dramatize that there is a vast difference between playing for fun and 'playing for keeps', and that the measure of that difference is cruelly exploited by God. Not surprisingly, the final game that Adam plays in the diaries demonstrates this exploitation.

Twain gives two versions of the Fall; the first places the blame for it on Eve, the second on Adam. It is from Adam's diary entries that the reader is offered both versions. Firstly, he describes what happens as a result of Eve's disobedience:

. . . as I was riding through a flowing plain where thousands of animals were grazing, slumbering or playing with each other . . . all of a sudden they broke into a tempest of frightful noises . . . and every beast was destroying its neighbor. I knew what it meant--Eve had eaten that fruit, and death

was come into the world. (p. 277)

Adam retreats beyond Eden, is met by Eve, and accepts the apples she has brought him. Ironic expediency keynotes Twain's treatment of the Fall in this first version: Adam excuses eating the apples on the grounds that although it is against his principles, principles have little meaning except when "one is well fed." The passage closes as the couple acquires modesty, and Adam decides that without Eve as a companion he would be "lonesome and depressed"—two states of mind unknown before the Fall. Significantly, the playful world they have known closes on the note that henceforth life will be dominated by work and pain. In contrast to the pathetic mood of this version, Twain makes a limp return to the farcical by Adam's closing comment that he will "superintend" his co-worker, Eve (p. 277).

Much more important is the second version of the Fall which follows immediately upon the first. Amid a tone of rollicking comedy, sustained throughout the next few passages, Twain seems to cancel out the previous version of the Fall. Using the comic vehicle of marital gaucherie, Twain presents a far more significant reason for the fall of the innocents, the nature of which speaks to the dangerous side of playful creative audacity.

Eve accuses Adam of bringing about their disaster by having something to do with chestnuts. She repeats the serpent's remark that chestnuts are the real forbidden fruit, not apples. In an effectively hilarious attempt to extricate himself from blame Adam protests that he certainly has not eaten any chestnuts. To this Eve answers, however, that "chestnut

is a figurative term meaning an aged and moldy joke." Dismayed, Adam admits that he has certainly made many jokes to pass the time and that he made a particularly "catastrophic joke" at the precise moment when chaos occurred in Eden. As he tells it, he was thinking about the beauty and wonder of Niagara Falls and said aloud, "How wonderful it is to see that vast body of water tumble down there." Then he is inspired to make up a joke, based on imagining a reversal of the order of things:

Then in an instant a bright thought flashed into my head, and I let it fly, saying, 'It would be a deal more wonderful to see it tumble up there!' (p. 278)

Adam adds, "I was just about to kill myself with laughing at it when all nature broke loose in war and death and I had to flee for my life."

Although the differences between the two versions are singular they complement each other when considered not as mutually exclusive but rather as two parts of a whole. The first version of the Fall may be seen as a sardonic demonstration of the adaptive abilities with which man, once betrayed, may attempt to make the best of a bad bargain. The second version, however, with its fundamentally satiric rendition of the fate of innocents at play, illustrates with particular poignancy the ease with which mere 'make-believe' becomes a 'life-and-death' matter. While the name 'Niagara Falls' puns in an exclusively comic sense, Adam's confession that he was about to kill himself with laughing sharply underlines the major theme of "The Diary": the conflict between an illusion of freedom and death.

Different as are Adam's and Eve's expressions of creative freedom, their fundamental illusions about innocent play coincide. When Eve defies Adam's warning about the forbidden fruit it is because she does not really understand the threat-word "death." Nor does she show that she has any confidence in Adam's translation of the word, limited as it is to a vague and fatalistic "sense" of its importance. Therefore, the risk she takes cannot be comprehended as existing outside the circle of make-believe. Adam is part of the same paradox; he persists in going over the falls, "first in a barrel . . . then in a fig leaf," because he can "see no harm in it" (p. 275). The primary impetus for actions is having fun; yet Twain imbues the events that precipitate the Fall with an almost wicked glee. Clearly, both Adam and Eve are characterized, in this light, as gamblers--as players who know they take a chance, but cannot know the nature of the stakes for which they play.

Adam and Eve test the power of words, but in effect they also test the love-play that has marked their development from isolated players to synchronized companions, bound by affection and an unconscious, common desire to recreate their world through make-believe. Eve's discovery that "a great and fine and noble education" means learning that play is punished by work ushers in the post-Eden roles of provider and co-worker. Similarly, Adam's "catastrophic joke" about the falls initiates the dreary cataloguing of curious species Adam discovers (including his own sons), and the lack of joyous spirit that had characterized the couple's earlier experiences. The world of work, responsibility, planned leisure time, and domestic

enervation replaces the delightful gamble of experimenting, teasing and joking. Furthermore, despite Twain's inclusion of the sentimental tribute to Eve, it is apparent that innocence and playful mischief are losses that cannot be taken lightly. Underlying this fact, and in conjunction with the shift in comic tone that marks the end of the diaries, the notation of time and its duration changes after the Fall.

While Adam and Eve are secure in the childhood world they make daily notations; after they leave Eden events are recorded under section headings such as "After the Fall", "Forty years later", and "At Eve's Grave." At first the two forms of noting time appear to be (if anything) a paradoxical clue to the changes which have taken place. For instance, the period in which the two spend their time freely seems incongruently recorded day by day. But it is well to note that only the days of the week, not the dates, are recorded (p. 290-295). After the sense of passing time comes to the couple, events or long passages of time are remembered as if in retrospect. Clearly, while they are innocent, freely playing 'children' they note time as children do--by the days of the week.

Before the Fall, playing is a natural expression of an unbroken sense of timelessness. After the Fall, playing becomes carefully allotted 'adult' leisure time. Robbed of his "property" and forced to work for a living, Adam notes in his diary that he can at last see a use for Sundays as they give him a chance to rest. But he has no time or inclination to "go over the falls"; the only play that now attracts him is to collect specimens and catalogue them. When Cain mysteriously

appears, Adam is obsessed with trying to explain 'it' and goes off for periods of time to try and find another one. He decides that if he cannot, he will try and kill the one at home and dissect it in order to better understand it "for science" (p. 279).

As for Eve, she loses all sense of wonder and no longer experiments with or defies things as they are. Her play centers wholly on entertaining Cain; play is usefully other-directed and affords her no further opportunity to have fun for the sake of fun alone.

In the final passages of the diaries it is not the reality of freedom but the dream of it that survives. Eve's recital of love for Adam is prefaced by these remarks: "When I look back, the Garden is a dream to me. It was beautiful, surpassingly beautiful, enchantingly beautiful; and now it is lost, and I shall not see it any more" (p. 295). She, (like Adam at the close of his diary entries), claims that, despite the loss of Eden, she is content because she loves her mate. This undoubtedly sincere tribute on Twain's part to his marriage to Olivia nonetheless fails to deflect the reader from a sense of the cosmic tragedy which has been inflicted on the original innocents.

The dawning of the "Moral Sense" as an adjunct to an assumption of responsibility for rebellion is illustrated best in Adam's closing remarks after he has been convinced that his joke-making caused the disaster in Eden. He laments, "Alas, I am indeed to blame. Would that I were not witty; Oh, that I had never had that radiant thought" (p. 278).

Here, being witty and radiant is equated with committing

a sinful act, and as Twain often reiterates, man had no concept of sin until he was made aware of good and evil through acquisition of the "Moral Sense." The theme Twain mounts here at the end of Adam's first true experience of rebellion is, apparently, that Adam's most joyous moment has been a lesson in unconscious disobedience. As a result, he is effectively denied the exercise of playfulness and, more importantly, creative imitation of God, as well.

It is made abundantly clear, throughout the diaries, that the Creator provided the example which Adam and Eve unconsciously follow. Eve intuits that she and Adam are "experiments;" soon after this entry she begins her experimentation, testing her environment and attempting to discover new combinations and alternatives to reality. After the serpent has revealed that the first joke (old chestnut) was perpetrated by the Creator--that it was "coeval with creation"--Adam realizes that his joke at the waterfall was an impudent imitation of the original joke. The irony is sustained as the reader is made aware of Adam's natural penchant for joking and the impossibility of resisting his inclination (p. 278).

The injustice of Adam and Eve's punishment for doing what is only natural receives full exposition in another Twainian work of this period. Although Satan's "Letters from the Earth" was written between 1900 and 1909, it did not appear in print until 1923, after Twain's death.²²

In the first letter, from behind the Satan mask, Twain offers an inside view of what it was like to see the Creator create men and animals. Enthroned, God puts on a spectacular

show for the benefit of his archangels. First he "thinks awhile", then "lets burst forth a fountain spray of fire" which materializes in space the objects of his imagination. He obviously enjoys himself unstintingly: the passage suggests a master showman giving his audience a thrill by demonstrating his magical arts (p. 39).

However, Satan is the only one who questions the value of the show. He is told that God has created an idea called "Automatic Law", requiring no watching, no correcting, and no readjustment. He also learns that man and animals are "Experiments", and that only time "will show whether they are worth the trouble." This last remark puzzles Satan, for the entire "exhibition", as God Himself has called it, has been more like a spontaneous inspiration accompanied by a show of fireworks than it has been any "trouble" (p. 40). At this juncture in the story Satan becomes an immediate vehicle for Twain's ironic commentary and the remainder of the letters focuses more or less exclusively on Satan's impressions and evaluations.

The effect of the first three letters is to suggest a portrait of the Creator as showman, mesmerizer and irresponsible player. As a direct consequence of this persuasive early portrait, the reader is made constantly aware throughout the work of the differences between this true God and the completely confusing God of the Christian Bible, who is discovered as sadistic and insane by Satan on his visit to Earth.

In letters four through eight, in particular, biblical accounts of a vengeful and jealous God reveal man's singular penchant for praising and placating a God he has seen as both

petty and cruel. The further Twain moves into a recital of biblical accounts, liberally embellished with details of God's punishment of the innocent as well as the guilty, the jaunty tone of Satan's earlier reports vanishes. In its place Twain steps from behind the mask of amused indifference and all pretense of humour is abandoned. Satan's role has not been judgmental in the moral sense; now the tone of the letters becomes self-righteously indignant and the effect is one of dreariness.

However, one important aspect of Satan's report about fallen man's illusions is the interjection of comment on sexual intercourse and "entertainment of the mind." Both are presented as evidence of man's ability to have fun, but to censor this fun by arranging that it be justified only by usefulness, and that it be expurged from any vision of "reward in Heaven." Considerable emphasis is placed on the hypocrisy of this position; moreover, Satan often reiterates throughout that hypocrisy is derived from man's fear of God and his own invention of the "Moral Sense".

Satan discovers that man has invented "something called the Moral Sense" which insures that he shall henceforth assume full responsibility for everything he does. Satan heaps scurrilous ridicule on men's "insanity" in this matter, for if God decides all, men can hardly expect themselves to be culpable for obvious iniquities perpetrated by God alone.

Inspired by the ridiculous self-punishment with which men seem to burden themselves, Satan compares the fate of fallen man to that of "the original couple", Adam and Eve. The result is that the reader pities the examples of pre-lapsarian man,

for they did not understand the odds against which they "played", and condemns post-lapsarian man for his cowardice, denial of honesty, and his servility to a God he cannot admire. Satan condenses these observations in a note to Gabriel and Michael. He says concerning the Fall:

As you perceive, the only person responsible for the couple's offense escaped; and not only escaped but became the executioner of the innocent. (p. 43)

Satan leaves no question regarding who is meant by "the executioner". As is true in the portraits of Satan given in The Mysterious Stranger, "That Day in Eden" (circa 1905), and "The Diary of Adam and Eve", Satan as tempter is effectively exonerated from essential guilt; more critical attention is placed on the Creator's responsibility for endowing man with natural tendencies which oblige him to enjoy and condemn him to suffer punishment for that enjoyment.

Throughout "The Diary" and Satan's "Letters from the Earth" there is an implicit celebration of rebelliousness, of risk-taking in defiance of unfair "odds". In this connection we may say that the audacity of Satan's disobedience finds some small measure of response in the portraits of Adam and Eve, the difference being one of degree rather than kind.

Chapter Two

Thus, particularly after 1896 Twain begins to exhibit characters who have a disturbing duplicity about them. Although they are often referred to as "boys" they represent post-lapsarian man, reduced to the expediency of conniving. Coexistent with Twain's growing disillusionment is an increasing reliance upon drawing the gullible man as foolish and the 'con-man' as admirable.

These are problems that find ample expression in his work and that often provide a contradictory thematic treatment. The American inventor, dreamer, and military general whose audacity in King Arthur's court begins as instructive benevolence and ends in a chaotic and excessive misuse of power illustrates this point, as does Little Satan's amorality in The Mysterious Stranger. Twain is in conflict concerning the degree to which any clever and courageous man may express himself creatively with impunity. He noted this himself throughout his autobiographical material, and often, it appears, linked these fears with an irrepressible need to defend the excessive play of the imagination. The basis of such a defence is grounded in his personal contempt for the dude, the dullard, and the hypocritically pious. Twain manipulates the reader into a position of agreement by mocking gullibility and cant. Here Twain makes ridicule tantamount to a virtue. Under the cover of this virtue the 'naughty boys' have more or less free reign.

It is probable that humour served Mark Twain as a natural smokescreen for more 'serious' attacks and that he was aware of its power to lure the reader into a false position. John C. Gerber remarks in his "Mark Twain's Use of the Comic Pose":

Fundamentally, there are two ways to confront life falsely. Either one can pretend that life is more agreeable to the spirit and more amenable to the will than it really is, or one can pretend that it is less so. One can exaggerate his superiority to human affairs or his inferiority to them. As the narrator 'Mark Twain', Clemens did both.²³

Although Twain consciously used the familiar literary device of making himself, as narrator, appear inferior to human affairs, implicit in all his work is a delight in gulling the vulnerable and trusting reader. It is, of course, part of the humourist's repertoire of tricks to do the unexpected, but the nature of Twain's attacks on expectation go beyond this, and, I believe, illustrate clearly his conflict of purpose: whether to settle for amusement or to push on to ridicule.

Yet, whether to amuse or ridicule becomes a moot question to the practical joker and consistently Twain celebrates this form of play. In his gambling and practical joke stories Twain is indulgent with the risk-taking and inventive characters and scornful of the blindly gullible who trust in the same pre-lapsarian way that Adam and Eve did in the biblical story of the Fall. However, the overall effect of such stories is often complex. It may help to understand why this is so if, at this juncture, a review is given of the major points discussed thus far.

Twain treats the subject of Adam and Eve's fall as a

completely unfortunate and unjust event, perpetrated by the Creator, who must have known that the natures He had given the couple in Eden would insure that they would disobey and be punished by pain and death. This betrayal of the naturally innocent, in turn, makes it necessary for future generations to acquire a tortured combination of the "Moral Sense" and cunning and inventive skills with which they try to avoid being overwhelmed by it. Therefore, while Twain never portrays cruelty and tyranny between men in anything but condemning terms, he is consistently lenient with 'naughtiness', often ranging from relatively harmless jests to the complex machinations of the practical joker.

Occasionally, as he does in The Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, and to a lesser degree in "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg", the excessive play of a character's imagination is sanctioned only, it seems, by Twain's own bitter delight in what Melville might term the return of the lightning to its source: or the imitation, in effect, of God's own exercise of power. For, after all, if man is starved psychically in his efforts to gain control over a pre-determined life, can he be blamed if he responds to the message that he is 'made in God's image'?

Two stories, written in the years between 1897 and 1900, clearly demonstrate Twain's fascination with gambling and practical joking. "The Joke that Made Ed's Fortune" and "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg" draw on the motif of the gamble expressed through the practical joke.

In his story, "The Joke that Made Ed's Fortune", Twain

depicts the interaction of two kinds of fool: the gullible and the devious.²⁴ It begins with the following epigram from Pudd'nHead Wilson's 'New Calendar': "Let us be thankful for fools. But for them the rest of us could not succeed" (p. 339).

Initially, two sets of fools appear: one, a trusting, good-natured and childlike rustic named Ed; the other, a group of fellow wharf clerks who are "boiling over with youth and spirits." The latter make a tedious life endurable by "contriving practical jokes and playing them upon each other."

But their favourite target is Ed Jackson because "he played none himself" and "was easy game for other people's, for he always believed what was told him." Ed plans to take a trip to the big city and the occasion provides the gang with a chance to play a joke on him. The proposed practical joke is recognized as cruel and is designed to humiliate him. While other pranks have been harmless, this one is dangerous to Ed and to themselves if he discovers that he has been gulled. Nonetheless, "it is too good a joke to waste" and they proceed (p. 340).

A fake letter of introduction is written to the wealthy Commodore Vanderbilt extolling Ed's virtues and claiming to have been penned by an old childhood friend of the Commodore. It asks that Ed be treated royally for the sake of childhood memories.²⁵ The gang fully expects the millionaire to throw Ed out when he presents the letter and that when the victim of this practical joke comes back to the Memphis wharfs he will be "bent on murder."

But events do not transpire as expected. The old Commodore's nostalgia for his boyhood is stronger than is his memory.

He adopts the lovable Ed, whose "sterling character" is found to be reliable and a means by which the millionaire may now acquire the 'son' of whom he has always dreamed. As a consequence of his good fortune, what might have been a tragic humiliation is turned into an astounding triumph (p. 341). Ed is given unlimited funds, a high position, and is told to go to the Memphis wharfs to recruit assistants in the Commodore's acquired interest in the tobacco industry. Ed is grateful for the fortuitous letter of introduction, and wants to recruit his 'benefactors' as his assistants.

Naturally enough, the practical jokers on the wharf fear otherwise. Terrified that their cruelty can now result only in punishment, they try to hide as Ed returns. When Ed approaches them in a friendly manner they distrust him: they are dissemblers, so must he be. Finally they have to admit that Ed's innocence is genuine and unchanged. But the reason is difficult to understand. They first think that the joke is on them, after all, for Ed must not have delivered their letter.

For the gang and reader alike the climactic irony occurs when Ed reports that he has indeed delivered the "blessed letter" and tells his friends what he thinks of them.

And it's all owing to you, boys, and you'll never find me ungrateful--bless your hearts, the best friends a fellow ever had! . . . I know you--I know you 'by the back' as the gamblers say. You're jokers, and all that, but you're sterling, with the hallmark on.
(p. 344)

The poker game metaphor is revealing on several counts, and each of these affords a different level of irony. When Ed says he knows the gang "by the back" Twain alludes to the poker

player's bluff that even the back of the cards of his opponent reveal what he holds in his hand. Thus, the remark by Ed merely underlines his blind acceptance of face-value appearances. The same metaphor also alludes to the backing a benefactor gives by endorsing (by money or patronage) the less fortunate. The irony plays on the meaning 'to show one's back' as a sign of indifference to attack. Although it is impossible to prove that Twain drew here from Shakespeare, it is interesting that Falstaff says to the Prince (Henry IV, Pt. I, II, iv.):

You care not who sees your back:
 Call you that backing of your friends?
 A plague upon such backing!

Ed underlines his naiveté when he claims that they are "sterling", the genuine article, "with the hallmark on". This remark, of course, echoes the Commodore's claim that his protégé is, indeed, of "sterling character." Twain manages to cut the irony both ways in this instance, for although Ed does have "sterling character" the Commodore has been most influenced in his evaluation of Ed by the false memories of childhood that the practical jokers' letter has inspired.

In this story, the practical joke is given less power as a determinate of general and accidental good luck as it has been given a sanctioned place in a succession of senseless acts that just happen, by accident and chance, to produce good results. However, the epilogue to Ed's story reads: "Yes, when the Moment comes, the Man appears--even if he is a thousand miles away, and has to be discovered by a practical joke" (p. 344).

There are several fools in the story, each who has his part in bringing about good fortune, but the fool whose actions

give substance to the actions of the others is Commodore Vanderbilt. And while all the fools in the story receive Twain's contempt, because they are susceptible to being tricked, the Commodore's gullibility offers the wharf gang and Ed alike the greatest prize, which is, when all things are considered, prestige, money and position.

Practical joking, then, is a means to an end, and, Twain suggests, perhaps the only way to 'beat the odds' in the game of life. The "Moment" that comes refers to that hypothetical moment in time at which all the conditions needed for any particular event are ripe and wait, in effect, for the opportunist ready to grasp the advantage. The fact that a practical joke brought about Ed's opportunity to gain prestige, money and position, reflects not only Twain's personal conviction that he had not been "lucky" in life, but also points to the haphazard and unpredictable nature of cosmic justice.

In this connection, Twain's identification with Commodore Vanderbilt is of particular significance. Like much of Twain's ambivalence toward Satan, for instance, his is a love-hate relationship with the tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt, on whom this portrait in Ed's story is based. On one hand the story clearly includes Vanderbilt in the circle of contemptible fools; and in the "Commodore" Twain apparently exposes his own childhood nostalgia and its unreliable memories. The portrait of Vanderbilt does more: it shows that Twain himself identifies with the unimportance of having wealth and prestige if one is without a son.

However far one may extend the unconscious and deliberate

innuendoes of Twain's identification with a key figure in "The Joke that Made Ed's Fortune", the major point in the story is that when the "Moment" arrives, the linking of audacity and gullibility can often result in good fortune for all. In this theme of 'all's well that ends well' it is the artificial separation of chance and design, as it is in "Luck vs. Science", that is repudiated.

Twain's dilemma regarding determinism and free-will is given much the same contradictory treatment in Ed's story that it is, in a serious vein, in "What is Man?" I use this comparison to illustrate how diverse are Twain's treatments of essentially the same ideology.

For example, Ed's story demonstrates, through comic coincidence and 'happenstance', how the appearance of free-will precipitates a chance falling of events that later prove generally fortunate. This would at first appear to be an argument for the concept of felix culpa in parallel with the myth of the Fall of Man. However, the story proves equally that the basic determinants are unchangeable ingredients in the nature of each participant. Similarly, the involuted arguments of "What is Man?" firstly propose that man is helpless but finally concede that responsibility for choice still lies with him. Both approaches to the enigma of handicapped man, which can find their beginnings in the fall of Adam and Eve and the subsequent necessity for Twain's maligned "Moral Sense", reach no conclusion other than to suggest that rebellion against such illogic must be natural.

It is undoubtedly a fatalistic conclusion from which

Twain seems to provide no lasting escape, other than in the occasional spectacle of life as a game of relative morality. Ed's story illustrates that an accidental set of circumstances contrives to reward the innocent through default rather than intention and to exonerate the guilty with equal objectivity.

Although it is true that Ed vindicates the Commodore's faith in him, in the end of the story a fool's faith in another fool is ridiculed. Also, Ed is presented as ridiculously naive, and as a result he is burdened with heavy ironic commentary. He would have been completely at the mercy of his 'benefactors' had it not been true that the Commodore needed, just at the right "moment," his particular sort of fool. As Ed's accolade to the gang illustrates, he carries his open-faced honesty and trust further than he should. He is a choice dupe for the more clever, more imaginative jokers. It is significant, as well, that at the end the gang no longer harbours any fear that punishment must necessarily follow a betrayal of trust.

Thus, the reversal of expectation that makes up the climax of this story shows that, despite deliberate transgression against the rules of fair play, practical jokers can escape what is coming to them if they are only cleverer and more devious than their adversary. The wharf gang is said to be "boy-like", not earnest; they can only be expected to play, had they not done so they would have been unnatural. Twain suggests here that, despite the mutual risk to jokers and victim alike, anything audacious and humorous is preferable to stuffy 'high seriousness'. The gambling player is vindicated in a world in which the act of daring to play for high stakes offers the only

possible expression of freedom.

While Adam and Eve may be excused on the grounds that they did not properly know the rules of the game, post-lapsarian man cannot be exonerated so easily. Thus, the wharf gang in Ed's story may be amoral, but at least they are not fools in the same molds as are Ed Jackson and the Commodore. Tom Sawyer had illustrated this earlier: Tom may push too far in tormenting Jim senselessly, but in the end the real onus is still on Huck and Jim because they forgive so easily 'in the name of the game'. A simple view of innocence is compounded by a second view provided by the character of the fool; as a result, Twain presents a story of relative morality, of accidental good and qualified evil--an evil largely excused by its perspicacity and imaginativeness.

When Twain lauds all fools as means to success, he refers in this context to the success that the amoral wharf gang attains. For, it takes the foolishness of Ed and the Commodore to make possible an outlet for those who 'fool' others: together all the fools constitute a fortunate and unexpected "success". Twain seems to exclude himself from the circle of fools when he prefaces the story with "Let us be thankful for fools; but for them the rest of us could not succeed." In one sense, of course, he is intentionally ironic. But Twain also places himself, as writer, in the same category as the practical jokers who exploit Ed's gullibility. For it is a false appearance only that the innocent are rewarded by virtue of their goodness. The truth is that without the practical joke, Ed would still be lifting bales on the Memphis docks.

Nonetheless, the impossibility of prediction or control in the expression of creative audacity is one of the themes punctuating Twain's later work. "The Joke that Made Ed's Fortune" presents not only the amoral and essentially determinist view of events, but the inherent danger in unpredictability and unrestraint. From the tension set up between design and chance emerges an implicit reference to morality.

In this connection, two factors invariably come to the fore when Twain concerns himself with the problem of preferability in the choice between design and chance; the first is the difficulty in finding a reason to desist from mischievous rebellion. As has already been discussed, Twain's recurrent use of the play modes of gambling and practical joking sometimes illustrates man's free-will, in an expression of rebellion against strictures, and sometimes shows that unrestrained mischief is a determined, and therefore inevitable, result of creation.

In addition to the difficulty in discovering a reason to restrain the expression of rebellion, Twain struggles with equating this rebellion to the standard of fair play. In this respect he may be seen to look for a justifiable morality, one which represents the retention of the dream of fairness while admitting to the reality of injustice.

In the present examination of "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg"²⁶ three pertinent points should be kept in mind. The first is that references to play abound and that these create a sense of opposing forces. Secondly, the instigator of the practical joke, around which the story revolves, is a gambler. The third—and major—point is that a mid-story thematic change

seems to take place, about which there does not seem, to me, to be any satisfactory critical commentary to date. The claim is made here that Twain's puzzling shift of thematic direction speaks significantly to his ambivalent attitude toward the risk of creative play.

The town of Hadleyburg, deliberately insulated against temptation and therefore untested, is ripe for a practical joker bent on exposing pomposity and hypocrisy. A "distressed stranger" is introduced who is well equipped to initiate the joke. His motive is revenge, his talent the elaborate bluff. He also has considerable insight into Hadleyburg's nineteen leading householders. He is introduced as he divulges his plan to avenge himself upon a community that has deeply offended him:

What he wanted was a plan which would comprehend the entire town, and not let so much as one person escape unhurt. At last he had a fortunate idea and when it fell into his brain it lit up his whole head with an evil joy. (p. 352)

Later, in the town-hall meeting, the Stranger's extreme anger at the time he received the "deep offense" is revealed in his caustic "postscript" in a letter to the citizens:

Any other man would have been content to kill one or two of you and call it square, but to me that would have been a trivial revenge, and inadequate; for the dead do not suffer. Besides, I could not kill you all-- and anyway, made as I am, even that would not have satisfied me. (p. 383)

These earlier sentiments of the practical joker are testimony to his intention to damn his victims; certainly their reformation does not figure in his plans. Nor, do I think, does reformation, or the role of Satan as saviour, play a significant part in Twain's intentions in "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg".

That the Stranger is supposed to be Satanic at the outset is, however, fairly certain. Images abound which connect the Stranger to the Satan figure, as may be witnessed throughout the first half of the story. The Richards describe him, variously, as stranger, foreigner, and tempter. They even see the last monetary rewards received from him as having "the hell-brand on them." No less than four times during the couple's post-town hall ordeal they either throw cheques and letters (sent by the Stranger) into the fire or threaten to do so. When the Stranger's letter of capitulation arrives, with its 'good sport' admission that he has been beaten at the game by Richards' honesty, the temptation it represents to Mr. Richards prompts him to say, "It seems written with fire--it burns so" (p. 388). And this remark is but an echo of the Stranger's own earlier postscript revelation in which he says, "Why you simple creatures, the weakest of all weak things is a virtue which has not been tested in the fire" (p. 383).

That this "stranger" represents Satan is also underlined during the "test" in the town hall: the whole humiliating affair is called by the townspeople, "to be work of an abandoned joker" (p. 379). Here "abandoned" calls forth the secondary meaning of the joker's unrestrained loosening of moral inhibitions, as well as the allusion to Satan's abandonment of God and the irredeemable position of the fallen angel.

If it is granted that Twain begins, in "Hadleyburg", to characterize the stranger as Satan, there are aspects of this portrait that pose important questions in regard to the considerable critical attention Satan's role as saviour has received.

The most comprehensive treatment is offered by Henry Rule, in his study of Twain's use of Satan in "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg". Rule claims that "Although his initial motivation may have been revenge, the result of Satan's machinations is to lead Hadleyburg, perhaps without his volition, to some degree of moral reformation."²⁷

While there is no doubt that Twain alludes to the conscious—or unconscious—effects of the town's fortunate encounter with the Stranger, and that this allusion evokes an image of the traditional idea of felix culpa, a close reading of the twists and turns that Twain gives the so-called "redemption" and "reformation" of the town of Hadleyburg prevents any straightforward interpretation of Satan's role as saviour. Stanley Brodwin warns against a non-ironic reading of the story, citing many instances in which Satan as tempter-cum-saviour can only be seen as ironic commentary on the believer who anticipates a genuine justice and reformation (p. 31).

However, although Brodwin accurately notes "the complex and ironic relationships Stephenson (Stranger) triggers, and which entrap him, too,"²⁸ his interest does not go beyond providing evidence that "the Fall was not all that fortunate or affirmative" (p. 209). Yet, Twain's abrupt reversal of Stephenson's role, first as Satan, and finally as just another fool among many, who is ultimately beaten by forces stronger, even, than he, speaks to the same pattern of scorn and ridicule, of betrayed expectation, that characterize "The Diaries of Adam and Eve", "That Day in Eden", and, indeed, most of his work written between 1893 and 1909.

The intention here is to show that Twain's choice of gambler and practical joker as apt vehicles through which to depict the "Satan" of this story signals the author's ambiguous treatment of the themes of the Fall, punishment and redemption, and further proves that Satan represents, not a true saviour, but a culpable sinner who must, like mankind, finally succumb to the determined course of "Providence."

Nonetheless, he begins as a heroic figure, of much the same stature as Milton's Satan: all-knowing, evil, and cunning. In fact, he is heroic precisely because he is early set against hypocrisy, self-righteousness, and cant.²⁹ His visage is terrible and his vengeance depicted as not only justifiable, but cleansing.

When he says he wants to "reform the town", however, the meaning is "to form again", and the shape of that reforming can readily be seen in the passages quoted above in which the Stranger declares his intention to destroy, to make all "suffer", and to "comprehend the whole town." The sort of comprehension Satan devises here is not mere knowledge of the town, alone, but the "taking in" of them all, in the sense of absorbing them. The consuming fury and hatred of the Stranger's declaration of intention contrasts revealingly with any redemptive aspect of his role as "saviour". It is true that, as Rule says, the redemption may come about without his volition, and this effect, when one looks at the last two paragraphs of the story, appears valid. However, in returning to Twain's choice of gambler-practical joker as the stranger's mode accompli an insight may be gained into the problem of whether the town is, in fact,

reformed in the sense of redemption.

The Stranger does not risk anything of worth: the gold he tempts the town with is "bogus" gold; therefore, he does not gamble in the usual way; after all, it is men's souls—not their money—that he gambles for. Thus, the Stranger himself is bogus for he has nothing to lose but the game for its own sake; also, his success is deemed inevitable at the outset: he knows how corrupt with avarice and duplicity is the town. A reversed Eden, Hadleyburg is innocent only in that it has not been tested by temptation; in every other way it represents the post-lapsarian world of bogus Christians.

There are, then, two ironies with which Twain plays in "Hadleyburg". The one is drawn from the unequal balance of Satanic power against fools ripe for exposure. The other, and less obvious, irony derives from hidden advantage possessed by those same bogus Christians; and Twain demonstrates the effects of this advantage in his characterization of Howard L. Stephenson in the act of being beaten at the game by the Richards.

He does this in several ways, the major expression of which can be found in the melodramatic but nonetheless effective portrayal of the Richards as very human sufferers. Sympathy is gained for them and as a result their duplicities and hypocrisies are muted; in the end their deaths not only show how disastrous the satanic temptation has been, but, more importantly, their deaths undercut the story's earlier attack on human frailty, making the fools of Hadleyburg almost regrettably punished.

Supporting this climax, Twain also demotes, as it were,

Satan's representation in Stephenson from a strong and powerful gambler-practical joker to that of a weak and ridiculously impotent player. This interpretation of the end of "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg" runs counter to the accepted one which is carefully supported by such critics as Henry Rule and Stanley Brodwin, for example.

Rule develops the claim that Satan acts in "Hadleyburg" as redeemer, an argument based on the premise that "Although his initial motivation may have been revenge, the result of Satan's machinations is to lead Hadleyburg, perhaps without his volition, to some degree of moral reformation" (Rule, p. 620). Although Rule provides here the conditional in his phrase "to some degree of moral reformation", his intention is clear: Twain's message in the story is to establish that some reformation has taken place--and one would assume, true reformation.

Yet, there is considerable evidence, in tone and development of theme, that Twain does not offer Hadleyburg as a falsely innocent town, which has (ironically), been reformed by the traditional tempter, Satan. Instead, he suggests that even the incisive exposure of falsity by Satan proves finally useless in the face of the town's inexorable survival of 'self-righteousness'. Witness, for instance, the much-quoted last passage in which is "published" the revised town motto: "Lead us into temptation" (rather than, "Lead us not into temptation").³⁰

It is true that Twain prefaces this with "It is an honest town once more, and the man will have to rise early that catches it napping again." But this is an ironic rather than straightforward preface, for nothing that has transpired in the story,

particularly since the town-hall meeting, gives genuine substantiation to the claim that the town now officially makes. Rather the contrary: the superstitious and generally fear-ridden qualities of the townspeople have provoked the dubious claim of redemption. The model for their ostensibly sincere confessions of guilt has been Richards' last bedside appeal for forgiveness. An example of that appeal immediately reveals that true redemption is as far from reality as it was at the beginning of the story.

It is important that Richards wishes his confession to be public; he protests when Burgess (fearful of his own reputation) asks that the room be cleared. Here Twain reverses the traditional Christian spectacle of public confession, ideally accompanied by genuine efforts toward cleansing the soul of cant:

'No!' said Richards: 'I want witnesses. I want you all to hear my confession, so that I may die a man, and not a dog. I was clean--artificially--like the rest; and like the rest I fell when temptation came. I signed a lie, and claimed the miserable sack. Mr. Burgess remembered that I had done him a service, and in gratitude (and ignorance) he suppressed my claim and saved me.'³¹

Then Richards reveals the real motive for his confession when he says that he was a coward long ago not to have offered testimony on Burgess' behalf. The irony emerges in the exchange that takes place between Burgess and Richards at this point: "My servant betrayed my secret to him--", says Richards, to which Rev. Burgess replies, "No one has betrayed anything to me."

Alas—Richards need not have made the confession at all, for Burgess had not known about Richards' betrayal of trust. It is an important nuance, and to miss it prevents the reader

from recognizing the real motives that continue to inspire "redemption" in Hadleyburg's citizenry. The falsity of a Christian confession made only under the duress of what is thought to be a guilt on the verge of being exposed by another is the true content of this passage.

Of equal importance in this connection are Richards' last words before he dies. Despite the on-going protestations of a puzzled Burgess, Richards cites the servant's betrayal of Richards' trust and then gets to the signal purpose of his public confession: he wants to tell all that he consequently forgives Burgess for exposing him "as I deserved . . ." In a cryptic play on the last words of Jesus Christ, Richards says, "Out of my heart I forgive him" (p. 392).

Twain again drives home the point that, underneath the publically revised motto of Hadleyburg, cant and self-seeking continue to hold sway. The subtle perpetuation of Hadleyburg's "Christian" vices explains, more than any other single factor, the mysterious 'disappearance' of Stephenson at the end of the story, and answers, in part, Clinton Burhan's query regarding the question of why the Stranger is the only one who never discovers that he has "won" against the town.³²

And certainly, not to know the end result of one's practical joke (and in this case, the winning of souls for Hades) runs counter to an expectation which is an integral part of the practical joker's (and gambler's) motivation. Ostensibly, Twain has cleared the decks of all but the result as it appears manifest in the town's "reformation". He begins this maneuver at the town-meeting, and to better understand what Twain affects

by the gradual change of Satan into the figure of a humanized and defeated Stephenson, a close look at the meeting episode is in order.

The first aspect to be noted in this key episode in the town-hall is the carnival or "circus" atmosphere, which runs contrary to conventional expectation, given the issues to be decided therein, but which is typical of Twain's predilection for intruding comic chaos at precisely that point at which reader expectation is keyed to serious drama. The nineteen respectable citizens are shown in their frightened and guilty demeanor, against which the bulk of the citizenry appear both bloodthirsty and scornful, although equally bent on appearing self-righteous. Each time a revelation of intrigue, guilt, or complicity is revealed by the auditor, Burgess, as he reads Stephenson's letter, or discovers a lie, the audience responds with a revivalistic fervour. They are the 'Greek chorus' who reflect gleefully the just exposure of vice; or, perhaps, the crowd at a cock-fight, enjoying with relish the destruction of the weak.

As other critics have noted, the chants and songs of the audience at the town-meeting are revelatory, sometimes recalling (in parody) religious hymns and barroom ballads. Gilbert and Sullivan's opera, The Mikado (1885) serves as comic frame for much of the crowd's taunting echo of the trick phrases Burgess gradually adds to the proceedings from the Stranger's letters, now read for the first time. "You are far from a Bad man" and "Corruptibles far from Hadleyburg are . . . but the symbols are here--you bet" combine an intended mockery of religious orthodoxy with The Mikado's popular satiric jibes at moral and

ethical hypocrisy; the sporadic barking of a dog completes the chaos, and enhances the image of a revival-turned-carnival.

Leading this display of playful "misrule" is Jack Halliday, who gradually emerges as the only player exempt from criticism in this story of a gamble for souls. Indeed, even outside the town-hall Halliday has been Twain's most reliable medium for gauging the relatively small degree of reformation possible in Hadleyburg.

Jack Halliday is a jester, not a practical joker. He, too, plays a game with the townspeople, but his methods and motives differ broadly from those of the Stranger, Stephenson. While the latter's plan to attack the town's false morality is seen to be motivated by hatred and revenge, Halliday's ridicule of the town's pretensions is conspicuously devoid of malice. The Stranger plans and executes a series of lure and guessing games, using cunning and bluff in an effort to win his bet with himself that he can corrupt them all. Halliday, on the other hand, consistently balances his ironic commentaries with slapstick antics designed as much to amuse others as to please himself.

The Stranger, as outsider, is—until the decisive town-hall meeting—unaffected by the defensive maneuvers of his victims. In contrast, Halliday, as the "loafing, good-natured, no-account, irreverent fisherman, hunter, boy's friend, dogs' friend, typical 'Sam Lawson' of the town", is an organic part of Hadleyburg. (p. 362) Although his characterization never changes, his relationship with the town is symbiotic, in that his show of jest and sarcasm is determined in form by the twists

and turns he observes in the town's activities. In return Halliday tellingly reflects the inner truth of the townspeople's moral and ethical stances.

It is said that Halliday "always noticed everything; and always made fun of it, too, no matter what it was." As the guessing game stage of the Stranger's strategy has its effect on the town,

. . . Halliday's comments grew daily more and more sparkingly disagreeable and disparaging. He went diligently about, laughing at the town, individually and in a mass . . . carried a cigar box around on a tripod, playing that it was a camera, and halted all passers and aimed the thing and said, 'Ready!--now look pleasant, please,' but not even this capital joke could surprise the dreary faces into any softening. (p. 363)

A few days later Halliday is disturbed because the faces of the nineteen householders are now unaccountably filled with "that expression of peaceful and holy happiness again." Halliday does not know yet that they have succumbed to the Stranger's latest false clue. Piqued, Jack Halliday must be content only to regret that his jibing remarks do not damage or disturb it, and he merely notes that "Providence is off duty today" (p. 368).

In all his observations, Halliday reveals that he knows the townspeople well, and is particularly attuned to their sanctimonious cant. Twain demonstrates in the final passages of the story that Jack Halliday has been a better gauge of the townspeople than has even the satanic Stranger. During the test in the town-hall, the Stranger's 'hangman's humour' is overcome by Jack Halliday's holiday spirit.

Thus, it is Halliday, not the Stranger, who best reflects the ubiquitous and enduring quality of fallen man's cowardice,

avarice, and hypocrisy, the measure of which Twain has also taken in the previously examined "Letters from the Earth." Jack Halliday, in "Hadleyburg", does this by remaining immune to the vices he exposes. In so drawing the character of Jack Halliday, Twain chooses to present affirmatively a representation of the mischievous, but not excessively cruel, childlike player: the jester and "wise fool", who, in a sense, is sanctioned in his mischief as were "the boys" on the wharf in "The Joke that Made Ed's Fortune." It is indicative of Twain's probable intention in the Hadleyburg story that he creates a contrasting withdrawal when he has both the Stranger and Jack Halliday 'disappear' in the dénouement.

Halliday's 'disappearance' cannot be imagined to indicate that he has changed nor that he will cease to be needed in Hadleyburg as a reflector, in ironic commentary, of the town's vices. He will serve, as always, as the only really admissible commentator on human frailty. Conversely, if the Stranger (as Satan) apparently escapes the town at the end, it is at least consistent with his role as the conventionally catalytic outsider. His disappearance, however, is inconsistent with his role as practical joker. Thus, to understand why Twain transforms the Stranger from vicious practical joker, intent on winning a gamble, to an innocuous and reformed man it is necessary to reflect on the thematic emphasis Twain assumes in the key episode of the town-hall meeting. To do so, the special appearance and demeanor of the Stranger needs reexamination in light of this shift in thematic emphasis.

As has been noted, the strength of the town-hall episode

is in its "carnival" and "misrule" effect; the definitive director of this effect is Jack Halliday. It is important to mark that, although the Stranger's earlier letters make up the plot-frame for this episode, they stand in marked contrast to his appearance and behaviour in the present. In contrast to the earlier physical spectre of "the mysterious big stranger", (p. 353) here he is described as "a stranger, who looked like an amateur detective gotten up as an impossible English earl." That the Stranger is in disguise is unquestionable, but the nature of this disguise bears closer study.

The wording of the description indicates that the Stranger has now become truly like an "amateur detective", then "gotten up" to appear an "impossible English earl" (p. 385). This interpretation is substantiated in the quote alone, by syntax and connotation. For example, for a formerly effective and astute gauge of human frailty to be an "amateur detective" would seem to show to what extent he is no longer a powerful Satanic figure; it also acts as a foreshadowing of his capitulation to Richards' presumed honesty. In other words, it indicates that Richards has out-manuevered him.

There is nothing in the passages that precede or follow Stephenson's "soliloquizing" that indicate either his desire to be overheard (and discovered) by others, or that he is not genuinely surprised concerning Richards:

This poor old Richards has brought my judgement to shame; his is an honest man:--I don't understand it, but I acknowledge it. Yes, he saw my deuces and with a straight flush, and by rights the pot is his. And it shall be a jack-pot, too, if I can manage it. He has disappointed me, but let that pass. (p. 385)

The language he uses is that of his earlier gambling terminology and the style of the speech is the same; the man behind the voice has apparently undergone a dramatic change. No longer does he show a lack of compassion for his victims, nor the confidence in his own powers that he has shown previously.

It is not enough to say that Satan here is exercising an elaborate deception; the entire dramatic force of his characterization has been diluted. Whether or not Twain makes a deliberate effort to do this of course must largely remain a rhetorical question. However, what cannot be ignored is the loss of momentum that the satanic quality receives, and as importantly, the significance Twain increasingly gives to the re-emergence of Hadleyburg's unreformable hypocrisy. Satan has exposed and ridiculed, but finally has accepted a "defeat" which the dramatic irony of the story must now charge against him.

In these passages his characterization as practical joker disappears and is replaced by that of a man determined to be just to what he thinks is a legitimate claim on the part of Richards. It is a significant point that Twain does not, however, allow Stephenson to abandon his role of gambler. But his weakened intention to wreak vengeance is now directed toward stamping the names of the guilty eighteen men upon the coins he has--not won--but bid for. The impetus for this plan appears to be a desire to further humiliate the guilty in order to separate them, for posterity, from the "honest" Richards.

The taming of the Stranger, even if interpreted (as Rule and others do) as Satan's deliberate pretense, breaks the

previous pattern to which the reader has become accustomed. If we are to see this change as part of the development of the story there is little recourse but to deplore Twain's abandonment of the earlier theme of satanic vengeance. For, during the time that the Stranger retains his all-knowing expertise, the sentimental intrusion of the Richards' anguish cannot otherwise detract from an inexorable justice. When the Stranger is demoted to an "amateur" and dupe, however, the suspicion must arise that Twain has opted, mid-story, for the dubious message that the poor, "fallen" couple (a jaded Adam and Eve?) deserve to win a victory, however false, over their nemesis.

Gladys Bellamy, in her study of "Hadleyburg", has described the confused themes thusly:

There is no continuity of motivation, no steadiness of emotional effect, no philosophical unity to the story. In it the moralist gives an out-of-bounds blow to the determinist, and Hadleyburg settles itself on a philosophical quicksand.³³

If, as this thesis claims, Twain continually manipulates, first this way and then that, the possibilities of human freedom of expression within the confines of social and cosmic strictures, he shows best in his use of play analogy to what extent he finds the problem impossible to resolve. In "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg" even the structure of the story is faulted in his efforts to come to terms with the dichotomy. On the one hand, Twain's delight in portraying Satan in the role of gambler/practical joker illustrates clearly the power of excessive play. At the same time, the spirit of mischievous mockery characterized in Jack Halliday satisfies Twain's desire to play at rebellion but to remain, somehow, on the side of decency, if not

respectability.

For, despite an almost fatalistic view of man's unchangeability as God's fool, and the recurrent themes of rebellion against this condition, Twain is bound to return to a celebration of fundamental, exemplary innocence that should be true, even if it is not in fact.³⁴

This is perhaps why, despite their faults (and even because of them) the Richards are made painfully human, that they suffer, and that they finally extract some measure of victory from the game that Satan has played against them. Perhaps, also, this is why Jack Halliday, as harmless jester—the one child-like figure in the story—is consistently treated with unabashed affection.

In Hadleyburg, the humanization of the Stranger parallels a development away from the supremacy of play-as-revenge and toward play-as-natural-mischief. Fortunately for the otherwise confused plot of "Hadleyburg", the practical joke as audacious gamble goes through to the end on its own momentum. Thus, we are told that the town is renamed; clearly "Hadleyburg" has suggested a hell-on-earth (Hades). The opposite of this is, by inference, some version of Eden or Paradise, and as has been demonstrated such a claim must be offered by the author as a sarcasm. Twain leaves little doubt that true reformation is impossible, given the nature of man and his Creator, and considering the training man gives himself in response to the dictates of the "Moral Sense".

The ironic re-naming of Hadleyburg, the false public pride provided by a revised town motto, as well as the inevi-

table sacrifice to temptation demanded by the working out of Satan's original plan not only attest to Twain's recognition of the needs of plot unity, but to his admission that the world is still Hades in reality and only a dream of Eden-returned. It is typical of Twain's conflicting views concerning creative expression that he manages to defuse Stephenson as Satan, and rocket the more wholesome, safe antics of Halliday above the events of the story. Twain is not quite willing to destroy the pattern he began celebrating in the town-hall meeting. But, in the end, order--even though it is corrupt--triumphs over the iconoclastic potential seen earlier in the figure of Satan.

Nonetheless, pity for the Richards and the affectionate endorsement of Jack Halliday's sort of rebellion coexist with bitterness. One aspect of this bitterness centres in the facts of infirmity and death. Throughout Twain's work on the Fall, the unfairness of punishment is reflected in the incisive contrast he draws between playful exercise of the imagination and its end in 'earnestness' and sorrow.

Twain's admission that Eden-returned is merely a dream and that man must suffer the realities of pain and death constitute the basis on which he sanctions a development of pragmatic and compensatory acts, such as joke-making, hoaxing, gambling, and other forms of play. The theme with which he imbues the use of these acts of defiance is a complex one. "That Day in Eden" (1905) is an apt example of the tension between inevitable corruption and original innocence, and explores the central issues of all Twainian Fall literature: without knowing "right" from "wrong" we would all do right. As Satan says to Eve:

You would not know any better; you have no idea of duty, command, obedience; they have no meaning for you. In your present estate you are in no possible way responsible for anything you do or say or think. It is impossible for you to do wrong.³⁵

The tone of "That Day in Eden" is similar to that of the earlier "Diaries of Adam and Eve": the innocents are inquisitive, obliging, and entirely unaware of their impending fate. Only Satan is different, for here he is a full-blown intermediary between the rules of the larger game of life and the two innocents who retain a childlike faith in justice and fair play.

Satan has the task of educating Adam and Eve to the meaning of words such as 'good', 'evil', 'pain', and 'death', while knowing that they cannot possibly comprehend. Nevertheless, Satan tries to explain the law that--if they could understand it--would tell them why they cannot understand.

Things which are outside our orbit--our own particular world--things which by our constitution and equipment we are unable to see, or feel, or otherwise experience--cannot be made comprehensible in words. (p. 669)

It is an impossible situation, and the irony is devastating--but not to Adam and Eve. The resemblance between Satan's hopeless recital of the law and the rules of a game that cannot be understood by all the players involved, is evident.

Next, Satan attempts to explain by word-association. The passages here closely resemble a grotesque version of charades. For the innocent couple, the gap between 'sleep' and 'death' remains impassable. Satan comments satirically on just how right Eve is when she answers that she would think death preferable if it were, as described by Satan, "much longer than

sleep" (p. 670).

If the play world of the ignorant child (natural fool) is brought into sharp relief, so too is the untainted world of the courageous child who dares to be defiant (wise fool). This is shown in Satan's lesson by analogy: he asks Eve if she would put her child in the river and leave it overnight even if Adam were to tell her not to. Eve answers, "Yes. If I wanted to." Satan decides that the difference between Paradise and the "real world" is that in the former everything is "amoral." According to him, moral laws exist outside the charmed circle of innocence. (p. 670)

As can be seen in most of Twain's uses of the Satan character, in "That Day in Eden" Satan straddles the ideological fence; he is amoral himself in that although he can differentiate between moral and immoral he shows no particular preference for one over the other. The game he plays with the original couple is a complex one. For, as was equally true of his characterization in "Letters from the Earth", he is spokesman for the rules beyond Adam and Eve's understanding while at the same time is sympathetic to their impossible position. In effect, however, Satan's role in "That Day in Eden" serves to highlight the injustice of the couple's betrayal. Through the contrast between his awareness of the seriousness of the game and Adam and Eve's attitude of trusting playfulness, there emerges a bitter irony.

Here, as in other works concerned with the Fall, the visage of a scornful Authority looms large. It makes all the more poignant those references to the transitory state of

innocence, of not knowing the necessary rules which might make winning possible. It is Satan's 'business' to dangle clues before Adam and Eve, in a pretense that they have some chance of guessing the meanings of these clues. Satan's case for the "Moral Sense" is an example both of his necessary deviousness and of the "catch-22"--'you are damned if you do; you are damned if you don't'--clue, the true meaning of which eludes the two it will most affect.³⁶

Satan tells them that they must develop the "Moral Sense", and Eve asks Adam if he would like to have it. Adam replies, "I am indifferent". It is all the same to him if he has this unknown (and presumably harmless) thing, or not. Then, using the word 'indifferent' in quite another sense, Twain presents us with Satan's reflections on the fate of Adam and Eve.

First, Satan preaches to them about the pains and bereavement that must follow disobedience of God's command. He completes the prophecy to himself, and muses: "and then desperation and the prayer for the release of death, indifferent that the gates of hell yawn beyond it" (p. 672).

Here Twain makes clear that the indifference Adam knows before the Fall is that of a trusting child; Adam's indifference after the Fall will be motivated by despair. The final irony is in the ultimate fate reserved for the innocent couple: their despair will earn them hell.

Louis J. Budd observes that Twain "was less consistent than ever during his last years," and that while he had "his nihilistic moods," he "kept adding to the confusion with occasional statements of faith."³⁷ It is true that in an effort

to reconcile mechanism with the hopeful and creative possibilities of free expression, Mark Twain often ventured into 'blind faith', if only to assert, in effect, the anomaly of "the spiritualized self which can detach itself and go wandering off upon affairs of its own".³⁸ However, Twain's infrequent excursions into an analysis of the dream-self reflect his response to intuition and imagination rather than make any definitive statement of religious faith.

What is important in such excursions is the effect they have on Twain's later work, and this effect cannot be divorced from his need to compensate in some manner for what he saw as a firm cosmic denial of free will as man understands that term. To Twain free will implied responsibility for man-made choices, and the loneliness of that contingency in the face of God's inimitable indifference Twain found impossible to accept. It was the fear of standing alone without the dream of a compassionate and constantly concerned creator that prompted Twain's short excursions into fantasy.

Chapter Three

In a universe deprived of free will the role of make-believe serves as a natural compensation. As Roger Caillois explains, "To the degree that he is influenced by play, man can check the monotony, determinism, and brutality of nature. He learns to construct order . . . and establish equity."³⁹ He restores the balance that has been destroyed by an unfair assumption of superiority by his Creator. The measure of this fundamental imbalance is taken in Twain's treatment of Adam and Eve awakening from the dream of a faith in fair play, and of their subsequent loss of innocence.

The construction of make-believe alternate worlds occupies considerable room in Twain's literary output, and represents the author's efforts to extend choice beyond the imaginary and into the areas of symbolic possibility. To do so Twain often contradicts his determinist creed in order to entertain the illusion that either man dreams life and may thereby perhaps hope for a merciful reprieve from the finality of death, or that (at the least) man touches upon a dignity, in make-believe, that is denied him without it.

This dignity, of course, presumes that man is capable of some degree of power over his environment and fate. To this extent, Twain's inclusion of make-believe in his work expresses the freedom inherent in the choice of a creative alternative. However, he is acutely aware of the dangers of make-believe

and expresses these dangers by accompanying each example of pretense with the shock of awakening to reality. The former is rarely free from terror, and the awakening is punctuated by both relief and despair.

Similarly, in "That Day in Eden", as in all the stories structured by the myth of the Fall of Man, Twain sets up an antithetical tension between the fantasy world of child-like expectation and its most grotesque refutation in sickness and death. Although Satan muses that one day Eve may welcome death as release from pain, his impassioned description of the couple's youthful bodies, their simple joy in each other and in their supposed power to create their own happiness, brings about an effective contrast to the projected picture of shame, fear and death that must follow.

The juxtaposition of fantasy and reality in Twain's work must be examined in light of what it tells us about the author's ambivalent celebration of creative play. Therefore, two central issues claim attention. Clearly the first must be that of the role of fantasy as temporary escape into an alternate world. However, it is impossible to separate this issue from that of the fundamental treachery of infirmity and death with which Twain invariably destroys his own fantasy world.

It is the transiency of dreaming away the demarcation line between the real world and the world of the imagination that receives Twain's attention; and it is not the efficacy of dreaming in which he believes, but its impotency. Consequently, when his work is examined in light of the stress placed on the destruction of alternate, self-created worlds, it is apparent

that death emerges as the final insult and the ultimate proof that man's creative power is an illusion.

Parenthetically, if the "No. 44" version is accepted as the valid one for The Mysterious Stranger, the admonition to "dream a better dream" represents a possible extension of human play. Conversely, though, Twain reiterates throughout his later works that if all life as we know it is merely a dream, rules of this game of dreaming remain somehow beyond the control of human imagination. The manuscript "The Great Dark" explores the fear that death may wait just outside the recurring circles temporarily made by dreaming.

The dreamer who tells the Connecticut Yankee's tale is an example of this contingency, as is the confused father in "Which Was the Dream?". In the latter the distortion between dream and reality is so complete that the piece describes the condition of alienation rather than suggests escape into a better world. Roger Caillois aptly characterizes the process of which Twain also appears to be a part:

When simulation is no longer accepted as such, when the one who is disguised believes that his role, travesty, or mask is real . . . he no longer plays another. Persuaded that he is the other, he behaves as if he were, forgetting his own self. The loss of his real identity is a punishment for his ability to be content with merely playing a strange personality. It is properly called alienation.⁴⁰

Furthermore, Johann Huizinga describes the composition of play that makes inevitable a continual mixing of make-believe and reality:

The play mood is 'labile' in its very nature. At any moment 'ordinary life' may reassert its rights either by an impact from without, which interrupts the game, or by an offence against the rules, or else

from within, by a collapse of the play spirit--a sobering, a disenchantment.⁴¹

Adam and Eve dream of power but that dream cannot withstand death, despite the audacity with which they attempt escape from punishment. As Serrano-Playa suggests, "With death there are no games that matter."⁴² Attention in "The Diary of Adam and Eve" is partly focused on the trick of death, the nature of which is emphasized by two commentaries in particular. The first occurs in the description of what happened when death was loosed on the world. Set in comic relief, the passages nonetheless evoke a sense of sickening carnage and unjust punishment--particularly in light of the fact that chaos has come about as a result of Eve's daring hopefulness and Adam's delight in a joke. In his diary Adam says that the animals tear each other apart; there are screams in the air, and his own horse is struck down beneath him.

The second commentary on what it really means to be a victim of death takes place when Adam makes his sentimental speech that tells of his love for Eve, a love which--he says--has made even the loss of Eden worthwhile. Despite the tender frame, it is painfully clear that Eve is dead and that he too will die. If they have abused the play instinct they have done so in unconscious imitation of their Creator. (p. 295) It is a bitter joke that their temperaments contained the necessary ingredients to commit an act that is designed to end in their deaths.

In "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg" the Richards' dying is given more emphasis and is prolonged further than seems

necessary to the narrative development. Here the couple's erratic returning to hope and to some clarity about their past deeds is set in poignant contrast to the despair that kills them. Over all the narrative hovers the singular image of a Goodson who, being compassionate and joyful, must surely have died.

The idea that death is somehow a grotesque rebuttal to the argument that man is endowed with a richly creative mind permeates most of Twain's later work. Only in The Mysterious Stranger does Twain attempt an awkward union between destructive and creative play; and in this story all the power resides in a grotesque child who is neither human nor Devil. For man's prerogative does not extend that far: not even in dreaming, risking, and joking is there escape from the final humiliation of death.

Against the fulcrum of alienation and the collapse of play as defiant escape, Twain constructs endings for his stories that try to deny the seriousness of disillusionment. 'It was just a game' is the cry that his characters often give amid various guises and dialogues. A variation on the claim that 'I was just kidding', such assurances manage to condition Twain's attacks on respectability in the social and religious context. Similarly, when he has, in effect, mocked both the guilty and the innocent in a repudiation of all meaning, he must claim, in the end, that what he has done is no more than "fun."⁴³ Despite the satiric quality of much of this claim, there remains in it a need to retract, to apologize.

For example, at the outset in "The Diary of Adam and

Eve", the couple experiments but does not innovate; the mood is one of curiosity, not defiance. It is when Eve champions the word of the serpent over the "Word" of God and Adam makes his "catastrophic" joke on the order of creation that the couple becomes more than naughty. As a consequence of this abrogation of safety in innocence, Twain feels obliged to end the story on a note of repentance and apology. Adam regrets what he has done, and also offers a sentimental tribute to his mate. In her turn, Eve is not allowed to feel anger at their betrayal by God--although she has been previously characterized as acutely aware of injustice--and instead contents herself with nostalgia.

After Twain has filled "Letters from the Earth" with a vitriolic attack on both God and man, he attempts to smooth over the excessive display of outraged dignity by returning, belatedly, to Satan's comic presentation of man's foibles. He makes a similar capitulation to convention in "The Joke that Made Ed's Fortune": at the tail end of his speech of praise for the wharf boys he must include a toast to "Mr. Vanderbilt" as "a great man."

In the same story, in which he has often delivered blows to several fundamental institutions, and has elevated accident and the practical joke above 'Providence', Twain closes in the following mood:

Then they settled to listening; and as the story [of Ed's exploits] deepened and its marvels grew, the amazement of it made them dumb, and the interest of it took their breath. They hardly uttered a whisper during two hours, but sat like petrifications and drank in the immortal romance. ("The Joke . . ." p. 344)

The passage evokes an image of boys sitting around a campfire, in rapt attention to--as Twain calls it--"the immortal romance";

it is Twain's inimitable way of softening the barely veiled sarcasms which have preceded this reminder that 'after all, it was just a game'.

The same softening has already been fully discussed in the study of "The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg"; in this story as in most of Twain's work an overview of the play metaphors used provides an insight into Twain's conflicting desires to ridicule to the point of hurting, yet to merely amuse and as a consequence, be acceptable and loved. The Stranger risks nothing, as has been shown; nonetheless, the fact that the figure of Satan represents a factor in human affairs that is unrestrained and can only 'play for keeps' intensifies the importance of Twain's choice. The story derives its momentum solely from the dangers inherent in gambling with Satan. Twain wishes to expose the hypocrisy and sham of Christianity in Hadleyburg, but, finally, not at the cost of elevating Satan's efficiency above that of the irascible Jack Haliday, who--though he is naughty--is not cruel nor evil.

It is the game of practical joking that best serves Twain as he attempts to reconcile his need to ridicule with the more respectable desire to amuse. For it is the practical joke whose composition makes it legitimate to attack with justification, because the final phase of every practical joke is, ideally, the mutual amusement of both perpetrator and victim. It is true that as often as not the victim is forced to laugh by virtue of those very 'rules' that constitute the fair-play principle to which Twain aspires. The victim of a practical joke must appear amused or be called a poor sport. Mark Twain--whether conscious-

ly or unconsciously--uses this blackmail in the name of fair play. His reason for doing so appears to be twofold.

G.K. Chesterton's 1910 tribute to Twain draws attention to Twain's wit as having "that quality of mad logic carried further and further into the void." It may be that Twain retreats from the edge of that 'void' by constructing literary safety valves such as the excuse of the practical joke, and the creation of fairy tale and romance moods into which the bile of his iconoclastic anger may be dissolved. Chesterton goes on to say: "While irresponsibility was the energy of his writings, an almost excessive responsibility was the energy of his character."^{4,3} Unable to resolve the tensions derived from antithetical convictions regarding free will and determinism, Mark Twain carried the weight of his own hated "Moral Sense" against the force of a pressing suspicion that homo ludens must always remain 'outplayed' by its Creator, and ultimately be without dignity.

Twain's work often concerns itself with the theme of this original loss of dignity, a loss which is coeval with the loss of an innocent self-consciousness and wonder. The antithesis of death, impotency, and shame is new life. The visage of the happy, creative, and hopeful child postpones, as it were, a realization of decay and disappointment. Twain did not significantly depart from his contemporaries in depicting the child as repository of all that was pure and as yet uncontaminated by the least attractive aspects of modern civilization.

In "That Day in Eden" the corruption of the child is described in almost mythological language:

She tasted--the fruit fell from her hand. It was pitiful. She was like one who wakens slow and

confusedly out of a sleep. She gazed vacantly at me, then at Adam, holding her curtaining fleece of golden hair back with her hand. (p. 672)

In Twain's "The Diary of Adam and Eve" and "That Day in Eden" stress is placed on the ability to endow activities with the aura of play, devoid of shame or fear of punishment, and on the barrenness that is a result of the loss of this ability. Satan says, in "Letters from the Earth", that when the couple exchange this gift of freedom for the Moral Sense, they make a poor bargain.

For Mark Twain, as for so many other American writers, the link between fallen innocence and the re-creation of an Eden in the modern context poses ironic possibilities and no solutions. For Twain the American Dream mythos was riddled with inconsistencies, not the least of them being the inroad that cynicism makes on the urge to build a better dream. In this regard Twain, perhaps more accurately than any other writer of his time, responded to the dangers inherent in 'free' creative expression: the question that apparently obsessed Twain is not only one of responsibility but of control.

In the act of playing Mark Twain's characters demonstrate to what degree the question of how to control freedom and the power it represents concerned the author. If, as this thesis has contended, anguished disappointment inspired much of Twain's treatment of issues whose theme reflected a betrayal of man's fundamental and exemplary innocence, the method by which Twain expresses this disappointment reveals that the line between creation and destruction is thinly drawn.

Twain goes to considerable length to test out to what

degree man can play the audacious and mischievous fool with impunity. As a result, excessive play is indulged to the point of describing not the urge to re-create an Eden but the urge to excite an imminent disaster. As if, in effect, man felt himself doomed and believed it preferable to exhibit his own power to embrace that fate, rather than to appear foolishly hopeful.⁴⁴

Nonetheless, Twain manages to endow his sufferers in the game of life with an aura of play-acting. He reminds us: they only toy with the idea of pain, destruction and death. In Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins a violent pretence makes up Dawson's Landing and its solution for punishing Count Angelo. Although the solution satirizes society's judicial decisions, on another level the reader is asked to accept as humorous the hanging of the guilty half of "the monstrous freak" and, in the process, to accept the grisly joke that the innocent half will have to die as well.⁴⁵

In The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Tom is asked to define the word "ransom" in the pirate game with the gang. The only thing he can think of is that it must mean "to kill"; when Huck asks him at the end of the book why he took so much trouble to set a free slave free, Tom replies, "I wanted the adventure of it and I'd 'a' waded neck-deep in blood to get it" (XIII, 400). As long as activity and the imagination that inspires it are viewed as games there are, it seems, no moral limits.

But it is only an appearance of immorality. For, as Twain is quick to remind us, the tales he tells are only tales. In the final remarks Twain makes at the end of Pudd'nhead Wilson

he explains the misplacement of the 'twin-monster' story by the tale of Roxy, Tom and Pudd'nhead: "It is not practicable or rational to try and tell two stories at the same time; so I dug out the farce and left the tragedy" (p. 295).

Like most of Twain's apologies made in defence of excessive mischief this one reveals more than the author's concept of what is admissible in the pursuit of a laugh. The farce that Twain says he has "dug out" is composed of the tragic elements of betrayal, humiliation and punishment, all of which he claims he left out. Without them there would be no farce; with them the farce becomes an expression of violent pretense, manifesting itself just this side of reality—indeed, in defiance of reality. To play with the ideas of death, violence, and all excessive testing of danger is to choose a rehearsal, not the action itself, and in doing so to remain safely within the circle of make-believe and to be excused from rebellious and "evil" intent.

Thusly, in conclusion, play analogy and game metaphors inform us of much about the nature of Mark Twain's conflicts concerning the necessity for and the dangers inherent in creative rebellion. It is an area of critical study that has been neglected. This thesis will have been worthwhile if it has succeeded in inspiring further and more comprehensive study in this regard.

The boys in William Golding's novel, Lord of the Flies, alone on their desert island, discarded their clothes, pretended to be savages and smeared themselves with clay to represent warpaint. It was at this stage, however, that they became so completely involved in their play that they also

discarded their normal behaviour and began to behave like real savages; caught up in their fantasy play it all became larger than life. There was no one there to remind them that after all this was merely play.

As Mark Twain worked over and over the theme of man's fall from innocence, it was this loss of the demarcation line between dream and reality that he sought to redeem.

Notes

INTRODUCTION

¹Stephen Leacock, Mark Twain (London: Davies, 1932), p. 90.

²The Latin term, Homo ludens, is used here in its basic sense of 'playing man.' The term is advisedly borrowed from Johann Huizinga's germinal study of play: Homo Ludens; a study of the play-element in culture (New York: Roy, 1950 reprint), and from Northrop Frye's Fools of Time (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1967), p. 83.

³James M. Cox, Mark Twain: the Fate of Humor (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), p. 147.

⁴Stanley Brodwin, "Mark Twain's Masks of Satan: the final phase," American Literature, (May 1973), p. 207; "The Humour of the Absurd: Mark Twain's Adamic Diaries," Criticism, XIV (Winter, 1972), pp. 49-64.

⁵Maxwell Geisman, Mark Twain: An American Prophet (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1970), p. 289.

⁶Mark Twain-Howells Letters, ed., Henry Nash Smith and William M. Gibson (Cambridge, 1960), I, p. 242.

⁷"The Czar's Soliloquy", North American Review (1905), pp. 321-22.

CHAPTER ONE

⁸Charles Neider, ed., The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain (New York: Hanover, 1957), p. 472.

⁹Twain, Pudd'nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins, "Pudd'nhead Wilson's Calendar", Chapter III. (New York: P.F. Collier & Son, 1899), p. 18. All subsequent references are to this "Authorized Edition."

¹⁰Twain, "Science vs Luck," The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain, p. 64.

¹¹In this connection, John T. Frederick, in The Darkened Sky (University of North Dakota Press, 1969), pp. 126-128, argues a convincing case for Twain's relative freedom from the rigidity of Calvinism. Of particular interest is his portrait of Jane Clemens, who, according to Frederick's conclusions, was hardly the embodiment of cast-iron Calvinism claimed by Van Wyck Brooks, for example.

¹²Kenneth Lynn, Mark Twain and Southwestern Humor (Boston: Little, Brown, 1959), p. 76.

¹³The Autobiography of Mark Twain, ed., Charles Neider (New York: Harper, 1959), p. 401.

¹⁴Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (New York: Harper & Bros., Author's National Edition, 1899). All subsequent references are to this edition.

¹⁵Warwick Wadlington, The Confidence Game in American Literature (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), p. 192.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 194.

¹⁷"Adam's Diary" first appeared as a souvenir book (The Niagara Book, Buffalo, N.Y., 1893). "Eve's Diary" was first published in Harper's Magazine (New York, 1905). References in this thesis are to the combined diaries as appear

in Neider's collection, The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain, pp. 273-295. All subsequent notes follow Neider's combined title, The Diary of Adam and Eve and will be referred to as The Diary.

¹⁸ Brodwin, The Humor of the Absurd, p. 50.

¹⁹ The Diary, p. 274.

²⁰ Karl Groos, The Play of Man (New York: Heinemann, 1901), p. 127. Twain himself comments on this matter in his Notebooks (p. 347): You can't depend on your judgment when your imagination is out of focus. He often disregarded his own warning.

²¹ Ibid., p. 202.

²² These are untitled letters (MS) which Bernard DeVoto arranged, entitled Letters from the Earth and published in his collection, Letters from the Earth (New York: Harper, 1962), pp. 39-51. All subsequent references to the letters are abbreviated as Letters and pagination refers to this DeVoto edition.

CHAPTER TWO

²³ John C. Gerber, Mark Twain's Use of the Comic Pose, PMLA, LXXVII (June, 1962), 299.

²⁴ Twain, The Joke that Made Ed's Fortune, ed. Charles Neider, The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain, pp. 339-344. The story first appeared in Following the Equator, 1896.

²⁵ It is significant that the most powerful of these memories has been that of games the Commodore wants to remember that he once played. (Text, p. 344).

²⁶ Twain, The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg, ed. Charles Neider, The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain, pp. 351-393.

²⁷Henry B. Rule, "The Role of Satan in 'The Man that Corrupted Hadleyburg,'" Studies in Short Fiction (Fall, 1969), p. 621.

²⁸Brodwin, "Mark Twain's Masks of Satan," p. 209.

²⁹That such a figure should be half-seriously offered as exemplary hero by Twain is not particularly surprising in light of his great distaste for the kind of heroic, 'saviour' figures chosen by Carlyle (Goethe, for one). When Twain makes Hadleyburg's Satan larger than life at the outset of the story he may do so in mockery of the Victorian adulation of heroes, as well as to lend Satan a stature impossible to ignore, as Milton does in Paradise Lost.

³⁰"Hadleyburg," p. 392.

³¹Ibid., p. 392.

³²Clinton Burhan, jr., "The Sober Affirmation of Mark Twain's Hadleyburg" American Literature XXXIV (Nov., 1962), pp. 382-384.

³³Gladys Bellamy, Mark Twain as a Literary Artist (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), p. 309.

³⁴This is not dissimilar to the effect Twain brings about in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. As Michael Hoffman remarks in "Huck's Ironic Circle," (Georgia Review XXIII, Fall 1969, p. 318): "In it [the middle section of the book] Twain can point out all the ills of society in a series of episodes and can show how attractive life is when lived outside it. And yet, he knows that escape is only temporary, that sooner or later one must return to make his peace with the established order."

³⁵Twain, "That Day in Eden," subtitled "Passage from Satan's Diary," as appeared in Europe and Elsewhere, ed., Albert B. Paine (New York, 1923), pp. 308-310. Not dated by Paine, but probably ca. 1905. Present references are to Charles Neider's collection, The Complete Essays of Mark Twain (N.Y., 1963), pp. 668-672.

³⁶The term is borrowed from Joseph Heller's novel by the same name: Catch-22 (New York: Delacorte, 1961).

³⁷Mark Twain: Social Philosopher (Bloomington, 2nd, 1962), pp. 188, 207-208.

³⁸Twain, Notebooks, p. 349.

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³⁹Roger Caillois, Man, Play, and Games (London: Thames & Hudson, 1962), p. 49.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 53.

⁴¹John Huizinga, Homo Ludens; a study of the play-element in culture (New York: Roy, 1950 edition, reprint of 1921 original), p. 40.

⁴²Arturo Serrano-Playa, 'Magic Realism' in Cervantes: Don Quixote as seen through Tom Sawyer and The Idiot (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970), p. 212.

⁴³In this connection, Caillois notes: "Tournaments are games, wars are not . . . To play war is permissible; injuries are possible, but not a part of the charade except by accident." When Twain has Hank Morgan, in The Connecticut Yankee . . . transform and extend the play of tournaments into the play of war, carrying over the mood of the first into the serious real-life business of mayhem and killing, he violates the unspoken

understanding of fair play. Something of the same sort of violation occurs in Hadleyburg, as the Richards suffer and die in what is ostensibly framed as a stranger's mocking practical joke. Taken too far, such play, says Caillois, "becomes an exercise in parody or sacrilege . . . The player can say, 'I am not playing anymore,' and return to the real world when the game becomes dangerous." p. 62.

⁴G.K. Chesterton, "Mark Twain," Mark Twain; selected Criticism, ed., Arthur L. Scott (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1967).

⁵Although the idea is reminiscent of 'existentialist' philosophy, it is too ambiguous a posture to truly qualify.

⁶Pudd'nhead Wilson, Epilogue.

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