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YAŞAR ÜNİVERSİTESİ

SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ

İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALİ

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

CONFLICT, COMPROMISE, AND RESOLUTION IN MARK TWAIN'S *PUDD'NHEAD WILSON*

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Danışman

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YAŞAR ÜNİVERSİTESİ

SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ TEZLİ YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZ JÜRİ SINAV TUTANAĞI

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Kenneth John VIRZI

İmza

ABSTRACT

Master Thesis

COMPROMISE AND RESOLUTION IN MARK TWAIN'S

PUDD'NHEAD WILSON

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This thesis aims to demonstrate the methods used and decisions made by Mark Twain in his novel *Pudd'nhead Wilson* to both attack society and the dominant class as well as withhold criticism in order to sell his books. In writing the novel Twain was motivated by a dual goal: financial gain to recoup the losses of a recent bankruptcy and exposure of the rampant inequality in a society tainted by the effects of slavery. The principal target of his attack is the privileged upper class that upholds and perpetuates the socio-racial divide. Through a close reading of the text and reference to an earlier draft manuscript of the novel it will be shown how the author balances his passion to expose the injustice and folly of racism and inequality, with his need to earn a living. While these competing goals result in a somewhat disjointed text, the epigrammatic calendar quoted at the start of each chapter resolves this tension to appease and criticize simultaneously.

Keywords: Twain, slavery, aristocracy, Pudd'nhead

ÖZET

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

MARK TWAIN'IN PUDD'NHEAD WILSON ESERINDE ÇATIŞMA, UZLAŞMA VE ÇÖZÜM

Kenneth John VIRZI

Yaşar Üniversitesi

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü

İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Yüksek Lisans Programı

Bu inceleme Mark Twain'in kitaplarını satabilmek için eleştirileri durdurmanın yanı sıra hem baskın sınıfı ve toplumu eleştirmek için Pudd'nhead Wilson romanında aldığı kararları ve romanda kullanılan yöntemleri göstermeyi amaçlamıştır. Bu romanı yazarken Twain ikili bir hedef tarafından motive edilmişti: En son yaşadığı iflası ve verdiği kayıpları tazmin etmek için ekonomik bir kazanç sağlamak ve köleliğin etkisiyle toplumda artan eşitsizliğe maruz kalınma durumu. Bu saldırısının asıl amacı ise sosyo-ırksal bölünmeyi devam ettiren ve arttıran ayrıcalıklı üst sınıf idi. Metnin ve referansların romanın el yazısı taslağından yakından bir okunması ile yazarın yaşamını devam ettirmeye olan ihtiyacı ile eşitsizliğin ve ırkçılığın mantıksızlığının yanı sıra adaletsizliğe maruz kalışını anlatma hırsını nasıl dengelediği görülebilir. Bu çatışan hedefler ortaya bir nebze tutarsız bir metin çıkarırken, her bölümün başındaki alıntılanan nükteli takvim ise bu gerginliği yatıştıran ve eş zamanlı olarak eleştiren bir çözüm ortaya koyuyor.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Twain, Kölelik, Aristokrasi, Pudd'nhead

LIST OF CONTENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The Civil War came to an end in 1865, but the battle for equality had just begun. While the abolition of slavery in America soon followed the end of the war, the enactment in 1890 of the Jim Crow laws on racial segregation defined race relations in the southern states. The infamous "separate but equal" ruling established systematic and institutionalized racism resulting in economic, social, and educational disadvantages for the former slaves. Although freed from the yoke of slavery, African Americans were kept in a state of tacit servitude. Three years prior to the publication of Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, evidence that racial unrest had not been confined to the south is found in the First Omaha Race Riot where 10,000 white people stormed the courthouse and beat and lynched a Negro for allegedly raping a white child.

Twain had lived amongst slave owners as a child, and throughout his life he had witnessed the effects of slavery on American society, culture, and thought. Twain first addressed the issue of slavery in *Huckleberry Finn*, but after ten years of observing the deterioration and infringement of the rights for freed slaves, the author's tone in *Pudd'nhead* becomes more cynical and bitter. In *Huckleberry Finn* the language is raw as Huck crudely speaks his mind:

> It was fifteen minutes before I could work myself up to go and humble myself to a nigger—but I done it, and I warn't ever sorry for it afterwards, neither. I didn't do him no more mean tricks, and I wouldn't done that one if I'd a knowed it would make him feel that way. (Twain, 1982, p. 709).

The sweet sentiment and transformation of Huck overshadows the racist language indicating that past conditioning can be overcome. This hope is lost with the advent of *Pudd'nhead* as even the enlightened Wilson appears entrenched in his prejudice:

> The drop of black blood in her is superstitious; she thinks there's some devilry, some witch-business about my glass mystery somewhere; she used to come here with an old horseshoe in her hand; it could have been an accident, but I doubt it. (Twain, 1982, p. 940).

Gone are the children and the hope of a better future. *Pudd'nhead* resigns itself to what its author perceives to be man's inability to evolve.

There is remarkably scant scholarship on *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. The earliest published articles on the subject appeared in the 1950s with Leslie Fiedler bringing the novel into critical discussion. Writing in the *New Republic* (1955), Fiedler delared that *Pudd'nhead* was within reach of being "the most extraordinary book in American literature". This newly opened dialogue resulted in a closer inspection of the text, and two years later an article by Anne Wigger (1957) examines the manuscripts prior to publication as well as the author's personal correspondence during the writing of the novel. Wigger provides a valuable look at the author's personal views and decisions while constructing the narrative, especially regarding his desire for financial profit and his process of text redaction. But while Wigger makes reference to Twain's express need to earn money from the book, she does not stress the urgency of this need nor recognize it as a key factor in his decision to temper his attack on slavery in the novel. Instead,

Wigger concludes that Twain's less forceful argument against slavery is simply a stylistic flaw that undermines the author's objectives:

> But the major weakness in the final version is Tom, for Twain partially defeated his own purpose by making Tom's function so unclear that at least one critic has interpreted him as being innately corrupt because of his Negro blood, not because of slavery itself. (p. 99-100)

Robert Wiggins (1963) vehemently disagress with Fiedler's vaunted estimation of the novel, and by utilizing the same manuscripts cited by Wigger argues that the novel is a failure due to Twain's carelessness and tendentious style:

> Many of the episodes seem contrived. There is an air about them of having been selected as evidence supporting several related theses. Again the conflict between his rational philospohy and his emotional sympathies mars the unity of the work. (p. 183)

Wiggins is correct in stating that the novel seems conflicted, but whereas he perceives the nature of this conflict to be that between rationality and empathy, I will argue that it is between conviction and financial need.

Barbara Chellis (1969) contends that Twain's use of *Pudd'nhead* to criticize slavery points to contrition and atonement as the emotive source of this work and one that is comparable to Twain's act of sponsoring a Negro student through Yale:

> Mark Twain's *Pudd'nhead Wilson* seems to be another such act of reparation, an exposure of the white man's moral decay resulting from Negro slavery, as well as an expression of Mark Twain's sympathetic understanding for those who, he

> believed, suffered most from that decay, the products of miscegenation, those who are white in color, yet Negro by that American "fiction of law and custom" that labels a man, and thereby condemns him, for the merest drop of Negroid blood. (p. 100)

I agree with Chellis that Twain's attack on slavery is rooted in profound moral conviction, but the latter's particular empathy for those born of miscegenation seems misplaced. I will argue that the characters of Roxy and "Tom", products of miscegenation, do not serve the purpose of attacking white skinned slavery, but rather of exposing the folly and injustice of inequality based on skin color.

The responses to Fiedler's praise of the novel collectively lament the failure of Twain's attack on slavery and attribute this failure to the seemingly haphazard construction of the text. George Toles (1982) attempts to provide an explanation for the conflicted nature of the author's work by looking at Twain's personal situation during the time of authorship. He astutely recognizes that Twain's bankruptcy and misfortunes had a serious impact on his work, but further argues that the author's resulting lack of clarity and conviction regarding slavery seriously mar the novel. Toles' main thesis is that the upheaval in Twain's life underpins the novel's tone of pessimistic uncertainty, but while Toles draws attention to the effect of Twain's bankruptcy on the tone of the novel, he does not go far enough. As I shall argue, it was Twain's need to sell his books that compelled him to blunt the tone of his attack on slavery.

The slavery argument is taken a step further by Michael Ross (1973), who cites ideas of equality as pivotal to Twain's position in *Pudd'nhead*. The novel's main point of attack was not slavery, he argues, but the "caste system" in America:

> The central target of Twain's satire in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is the inescapable propensity of any society—even of one that claims officially to be classless—to accept and abide by a rigidly hierarchical caste system. The real subject of the novel is thus not miscegenation, nor even the "peculiar institution" of Negro slavery, but the presence in the New World of a variant of the feudalism Twain had lately treated in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Authur's Court (1889)*. (p. 246)

Ross' main contribution to *Pudd'nhead* scholarship is his focus on Twain's representation of the aristocracy and the iniquity of the class system. Although I disagree with Ross regarding his de-emphasis of slavery as the novel's central critique, his introduction of what he refers to as the "hierarchical caste system" into the discussion of *Pudd'nhead* is central to my work. I will attempt to demonstrate the ways in wich Twain uses *Pudd'nhead* to expose and attack the architects and beneficiaries of that caste system, namely the aristocracy.

Twain's dual attack on slavery and aristocracy finds epigrammatic expression in "Pudd'nhead Wilson's Calendar". This calendar is both a work written by the character Wilson and alluded to as such in the novel, as well as the source from which every chapter derives its epigraph. Little critical work has been undertaken on the calendar and that by James Caron (1982), while offering insight into a more general application of the

aphorisms, opines that the reason for Wilson's reticence regarding the evils of slavery raises the following question:

> if Wilson sees the larger problems of Dawson's Landing, why doesn't he speak out? why doesn't he act? The answer is that Wilson already knows … [that] the attempt to effect moral reform often results in new evils, and it is best not to try, especially if one wants to be socially successful. (p. 469)

Admittedly, Twain is fairly cynical regarding his view of society and societal change, but clearly he is making an attempt to bring about such change through his writings, including the calendar. Thus, whereas Caron does not view the calendar as anything more than epigrammatic expressions of the author's exasperation, I will argue that it is not only a tendentious but an effective critique.

In the following study I will present the argument that the tone and content of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* are dictated by two conflicting motives: moral indignation and material need. Twain's compulsion to denounce slavery and the aristocracy that upheld such a system, coupled with the urgent need to earn money as a result of his recent bankruptcy, led him to temper the tone and modify the content of the novel. This conflict arises out of the fact that the author's customers/readers would be those he is criticizing, thus preventing either goal from being realized.

In the first chapter I will examine Twain's principal authorial projections, Wilson and "Tom". Wilson will be seen to reflect the positive qualities of the author, whereas "Tom" will be seen as a vehicle for the exposure of the author's vices. Chapter two discusses Twain's attack on slavery and the aristocracy, and the symbiotic relationship between the two. Chapter three takes a look at the author's decision to protect his

investment by blunting his attacks on the immoral and illogical nature of what he sees as a feudal society. And in the fourth and final chapter, I contend that where the novel fails, the calendar succeeds insofar as the latter broadens the author's critique to embrace not only the prejudices and injustices of society, but the nature of man and the folly of religion.

CHAPTER I

Twain's Authorial Projections

Mark Twain was primarily a storyteller as well as a story re-teller. His first published work, *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County*, was a story he was told by a bartender about a gambler. Twain's skilled storytelling filled with wit and satire brought him great acclaim, and his further writings followed a similar formula. Having retold the story of a gambler, Twain began to write about his own life and experiences. *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, for example, is based on Twain's childhood, with the character of Tom as a representation of Twain and that of Huckleberry Finn as his neighbor and crony Tom Blankenship. The setting for the novel is a town on the Mississippi River, St. Petersburg, closely modeled on Twain's boyhood town of Hannibal. The use of real life experiences, places, and characters is found in all of Twain's novels, with the author often using himself or those close to him as characters. But whereas Tom Sawyer is clearly based on young Twain, the author's role in *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* is much less obvious; it is however indubitably present, as this chapter will argue.

In *Pudd'nhead*, Hannibal is once again used as the setting, but rather than plot being the driving force of the narrative, it is the psychological complexities of characterization. The characters are more subtly drawn in terms of authorial projection so that instead of basing a character on himself in a direct way, Twain incorporates opposing

elements within his own personality into two contrasting characters: Wilson and "Tom" (in the novel the slave baby Chambers is switched with the white baby, Tom, and thenceforth assumes the identity of Tom, hence the scare quotes.) Wilson reflects Twain's interests, insights, and outsider status, while "Tom" encapsulates his problems, vices, and desperation.

Wilson enters the novel as an outsider: his relocation to Dawson's Landing places him in physical proximity to the townspeople, but historically, familially, and philosophically he is quite different. His interests and endeavors are set apart through the topics of conversation he involves himself in, his reactions to peculiar entanglements, as well as his pastimes such as fingerprinting. Wilson's sophistication stands in stark contrast to the town's provincialism highlighting an enlightened perspective that mirrors Twain's own fraught relationship with Hannibal. Although Twain was raised in Hannibal, he spent much of his life in different locations resulting in a growing sense of alienation which, by the time he wrote *Pudd'nhead*, was pronounced. His experiences and viewpoints were radically different from those of his Hannibal peers to whom he could no longer relate. Wilson's exposure to the world occurred before moving to Dawson, whereas Twain had expanded his ideas through exposure to different cultures after leaving Hannibal. Nonetheless, the result is the same: both men are a part of a community to which they do not belong. Hannibal, a slave holding town, was a place which the well traveled anti-slave advocate Twain could no longer claim as his own.

Twain's outsider status is not simply demonstrated in the character of Wilson, but reinforced through the location of his dwelling. Wilson's house is situated at the furthest

edge of Dawson's Landing, indicating both his connection to and detachment from the townspeople:

> Pudd'nhead Wilson had a trifle of money when he arrived, and he bought a small house on the extreme western verge of the town. Between it and Judge Driscoll's house there was only a grassy yard, with a paling fence dividing the properties in the middle. (Twain, 1982, p. 922)

Wilson's house is not simply on the verge, but on the "extreme verge" of town; there is nothing further west than his dwelling. The physical representation of separateness is both natural, the "grassy yard", as well as chosen, the "paling fence". This mirrors the two-fold genesis of Twain's separation: one that is chosen, namely his views on slavery, and one that is not, namely his slave-holding family. Twain relates as an outsider, both in Hannibal where his anti-slavery views clashed with the slave-owning townspeople, and in Connecticut which was not his true home either.

A barrier and frustration for both Twain and Wilson was being treated by the townspeople as little more than a pleasant entertaining guest. Wilson is misunderstood and seen as a simpleton, although as a multitalented man of much thought and theory, he has more to offer the town than anyone else in Dawson's Landing. Derided as a pudd'nhead, Wilson is repeatedly dismissed and scoffed at when presenting his ideas: "When the audience recognized these familiar mementos of Pudd'nhead's old time childish "puttering" and folly, the tense and funereal interest vanished out of their faces, and the house burst into volleys of relieving and refreshing laughter" (Twain, 1982, p. 1047). Episodes such as these reflect similar experiences in Twain's life. While revered

as a great author, Twain was better known as a comedian, which meant that he was rarely taken seriously as a social critic. His biographer Archibald Henderson confirms this when he writes: “There are still many people, however, who resent any demonstration that Mark Twain was anything more than a mirthful and humorous entertainer.” (Henderson, 2013, p. 200). Susy Clemens, Twain’s daughter, corroborates this view in a letter to Grace King: “How I hate that name [humorist]! My father should not be satisfied with it! He should show himself and the great writer that he is, not merely a funny man. Funny! That's all the people see in him — a maker of funny speeches” (Trombley, 1994, p. 156). Towards the end of his life Twain moved away from being a humorist and concentrated on exposing the ills of society, a shift partially reflected in Wilson’s successful shedding of the title Pudd’nhead, although for Twain, the epithet “funny man” largely remained despite his fervent wish to be recognized as a trenchant social critic.

Twain felt a passionate commitment towards public enlightenment, a profound need to expose the prevailing worldviews through a keen sense of observation and superior insight. These qualities are clearly demonstrated by Wilson when he discerns without difficulty what the people of Dawson are unable to see. It is Wilson who first mentions to Roxy, the mother of Chambers her son, how similar her baby is in appearance to the master’s son, Tom, leading to the exchange between the slave child and the aristocratic heir. Just prior to this incident, Wilson had overheard two slaves conversing outside his window and had reacted to them as human beings rather than as property. He later befriends the twins, two other characters who enter the town as outsiders, and acts as their defense lawyer, being the sole member of the community who

upholds their innocence. In both cases his judgment is sound, demonstrating his superior insight into the character of men. Twain bestows this gift of insight upon Wilson as an attestation of his own gift and upon which he greatly relied for his lectures and manuscripts. Treating slaves as people and befriending outcasts was typical of the author even at a young age and in his writings he exposes the injustices of slavery and inequality by shaping characters who defend those whom the majority scorn. His powers of observation can also be discerned in his travel writing where once again he exposes prejudice and social injustice.

Twain's southern culture was steeped in hierarchical systems through which all relationships were filtered, and the author himself was not free from the allure of the aristocracy. Born into a family of modest means, Twain was left without any inheritance and constantly tasted the bitterness of struggle. The aristocratic families around him with whom he enjoyed genuine friendship nevertheless provided a sharp contrast to his own situation. While his family worked hard to meet basic needs, the aristocrats' easy and abundant wealth gave them the right to dictate the legal, political, and business conditions that permitted such pronounced social inequalities to remain in place. Twain often railed against the inequality of wealth and power as well as its drawbacks: "Being rich ain't what it's cracked up to be. It's just worry and worry, and sweat and sweat, and a-wishing you was dead all the time." (Twain, 2007, p. 200). His disdain for the aristocracy conflicted with his desire to host the wealthy and powerful aristocrats of his day as a means of being at the center of social discourse. Henry Huttleston Rogers, for example,

was one such aristocrat upon whom Twain developed a financial dependence as well as a close friendship. Those subscribing to Twain's philosophy on aristocracy and wealth were shocked to learn that he was accepting what they referred to as "tainted" money. He simply retorted: "It's doubly tainted: taint yours, and taint mine." This dissonance in his relationship with Rogers was one that Twain felt comfortable with and which provided him with a unique position from which to critique the privileged class. Twain was gratified to be accepted by many of its members, but it was not Samuel Clemens the person, but the celebrated Mark Twain they embraced. This was likewise the case with Wilson's interactions with the ruling class of Dawson.

Without family or social history Wilson is devoid of any standing in the social order of Dawson, yet he aspires to be accepted by and a part of those who were deemed important by the town. Judge Driscoll represents the epitome of the local aristocracy with his wealth, bloodline, and code of chivalry. It is with him that Wilson forms a friendship and participates in the Free Thinkers Society, the intellectual gathering of the town consisting solely of these two men. Wilson also embraces the aristocratic code through his participation in duels. Thus, while his independent thinking places him in opposition to the system of aristocracy, he derives great satisfaction from being accepted by the town and being elevated to the position of mayor. Like Twain, it is not Wilson the man who is socially embraced by Dawson, but the town's caricature of him as a pudd'nhead.

Basking in the glory of public acceptance did not prevent either Wilson or Twain from publically criticizing the stratum of society they both courted. Twain's use of the

stage and pen to espouse his views and criticize society are exhibited in Wilson's character primarily through the courtroom. The first example of this can be seen in Wilson's efforts to acquaint the town with the true nature of the twins after popular opinion turns against them. "Tom's" accusations against these outsiders, combined with the charge of murder after they were found at the scene of Judge Driscoll's death, contend with Wilson's determination to disclose the truth about the matter and the men. The conflict culminates in the grand court scene where Wilson displays the conclusive fingerprint evidence in order to reveal the truth that had been shrouded by the societal systems, principally slavery. Wilson also discloses deeper truths while expounding the science of fingerprinting: "There is hardly a person in this room, white or black, whose natal signature I cannot produce, and not one of them can so disguise himself that I cannot pick him out from a multitude of his fellow creatures and unerringly identify him by his hands." (Twain, 1982, p. 1050) Wilson is not simply explaining fingerprints but indicating that African Americans are people, not commodities as the narrator's alignment of slaves and animals had intimated when describing Roxy's slave owner as "a fairly humane man toward slaves and other animals" (Twain, 1982, p. 926) Wilson validates the humanity of African Americans by demonstrating how the science of fingerprinting does not differentiate between a black and a white "natal signature". Wilson's reference to "white or black" exposes the separation between the ethnicities shared by all in the room yet emphasizes that they have been as equally treated by the lawyer as the science of fingerprinting.

During Twain's childhood, slaves, and thus African Americans, were considered

property in America, effectively creating a sub-species to the white people. The deliberate recognition of both blacks and whites in Wilson's courtroom speech is an ingenious device used by Twain to address two audiences simultaneously: Dawson's Landing and Twain's America. By referring indiscriminately to both white and black fingerprints Wilson simultaneously acknowledges and pillories the race issue. Using both terms alludes to the perceived difference, while the science of fingerprinting, which is based not on perception but on fact, establishes everyone as a human being.

Wilson's legal crusade is his primary conveyance of truth concerning the persuasion of the populace regarding African Americans, whereas for Twain it was his lectures and writing. Twain spent much of his energy attempting to reveal a truth that was actively being hidden, especially regarding the humanity of African Americans. His first effort is inscribed in the writing of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, prior to which he had been deeply affected by Mary Ann Cord, the cook at his sister-in-law's estate. Cord was a former slave who recounted her story to an attentive and concerned Twain who transcribed and published it at great risk. This work commenced his literary efforts that culminated in *Huckleberry Finn*. Twain also lectured, using humor to espouse his wisdom: "The older we grow the greater becomes our wonder at how much ignorance one can contain without bursting one's clothes." (Twain, 2004, p. 7249). It is in this observation that we find the condemnation of society as fundamentally ignorant, and Twain's efforts are an attempt to remedy this ill. A substantial portion of his life's work was directed toward public enlightenment and overflowed with insights and challenges to

collective prejudice and ignorance, especially with regard to the common perception of African Americans. Twain felt that a necessary first step in overcoming these societal wrongs involved an honest assessment of one's own shortcomings.

Twain's honest self-evaluation of himself can be traced through a gradual distancing, both in his correspondence and literary works, from the prevailing racist views. In a letter to his mother in 1853 he writes: "I reckon I had better black my face, for in these Eastern States niggers are considerably better than white people." This early comment shows Twain's high estimation of African Americans, and yet he still refers to them with the lowly term of "nigger". *Huckleberry Finn* contains the most humane portrayal of a slave in literature up to that point, yet Jim is referred to as "Nigger Jim" and is depicted as both superstitious and simpleminded. For example, when Tom and Huck put Jim's hat on a tree branch while he is sleeping, Jim is reported to have said upon waking that "the witches bewitched him and put him in a trance, and rode him all over the State, and then set him under the trees again and hung his hat on a limb to show who done it" (Twain, 2009, p. 10). This episode in *Finn* is not integral to the plot, but simply a playful moment to develop character. Twain's stance here is that African Americans are people but still very simple and childlike.

Wilson is also not completely free from racism even though he acknowledges African Americans as human. Although he personally treats the slaves as people, he never directly speaks out against slavery nor rejects the system outright. His acceptance of slavery as a system is demonstrated through his acknowledgement of and natural

dealings with the slaves, particularly with the completely white slave boy that Dawson accepts without question. While Wilson's lack of racial prejudice is evident in his reception of everyone in the town, black or white, as a human being, he still exhibits cultural prejudice. For example, upon noticing Roxy's strange behavior, resulting from her fear that Wilson might detect the infant exchange, he dismisses it as typical Negro superstition: "The drop of black blood in her is superstitious; she thinks there's some devilry, some witch business about my glass mystery somewhere; she used to come here with an old horseshoe in her hand; it could have been an accident, but I doubt it" (Twain, 1982, p. 940). This response is both instinctual and spoken in the presence of a slaveholder, thus placing him amongst those who accept the belief that African Americans are property. It is clear from this scene that he still upholds some collective stereotypes.

The connection between Twain and Wilson is not limited to philosophy and agenda; the author also incorporates into Wilson's character elements of his personal life, including his feelings of loneliness and disconnectedness. Surrounded by admirers and an adoring public, Twain's contemporaries would have been shocked to discover the depths of his internal isolation. Born in the south, yet residing in Connecticut and spending extended periods of time traveling generated a dislocated identity. Just prior to authoring *Pudd'nhead*, Twain was suffering from extreme financial hardship which served to expose a complete lack of friends from whom he could solicit help. The extent of this alienation intensified with the death of his wife and daughter, and his withdrawal into the emptiness of his cold house. Writing afforded him an escape, and in Wilson there is a

palpable transference from author to character, creating life for the latter and evading life for the former.

Wilson exhibits not only the isolation of Twain, but also the author's unfulfilled craving for human connection both for himself personally and for society collectively. Like Twain's Connecticut, Wilson relocates to Dawson and establishes there a home without roots or family. This disconnect is discernible in the author's omission of background details, including Wilson's birthplace. Lack of inquiry into such matters by the townspeople, coupled with the absence of visitors or any mention of relatives, reinforces the image of a disconnected man who seems to have begun his existence upon entering Dawson's Landing. The aspirations of Twain begin to surface in Wilson's burgeoning friendship with the twins, so different in nature to the rapport, limited by a disparity in class and origin, that he created with Judge Driscoll. Wilson shows no evidence of feeling lonely, yet until the twins arrive he is without community. Seconding the twins in the duel establishes Wilson's connection and genuine friendship, the very thing that Twain lacked and yearned after.

The personal connection in *Pudd'nhead* between author and character encompasses an immense appetite for learning, the natural curiosity of an explorer, and a avid interest in the latest trends and technologies. Twain spent many years traversing new lands, speculating for gold in the west, and writing for travel journals in exotic places such as the Sandwich Islands. His sense of adventure and risk led to innumerable undertakings and speculation such as the Paige Compositor which was the source of his bankruptcy. This indomitable quest for novelty is captured in the character of Wilson and

displayed in two primary areas: fingerprinting and palmistry.

Fingerprinting was a new science in the author's time and his interest in the subject is transferred to Wilson. It is through this new science that Wilson discovers what no one else can see, and his findings are not determined by public opinion or prejudice; fingerprinting thus provides a non-biased arbiter on the issue of racial identity. Twain's initial reference to fingerprinting can be found in his most famous non-fiction work, *Life on the Mississippi*, where he recalls the tale of a man who used fingerprinting to apprehend his wife's murderer. Twain's account is credited with introducing the new technology to society several decades before it became a viable and utilized form of identification. In *Pudd'nhead*, Wilson is the pioneer who introduces the town to fingerprinting and through the application of this unknown science brings clarity to Dawson's primary mysteries: the identity exchange and the murder.

Palmistry also plays a role in the novel and reflects Twain's interest in the same. Cheiro, a popular occult figure in Twain's day, was visited by the skeptical author who left a revealing message in the guestbook: "Cheiro has exposed my character to me with humiliating accuracy. I ought not to confess this accuracy, still I am moved to do so." (Cheiro, 2009, p. 239) Twain's inquisitiveness and skepticism finds expression in the opposing characters of Wilson and "Tom". Remaining curious and optimistic, Wilson accurately reads the palm of one of the twins while "Tom" remains skeptical. It is at this moment that the dichotomy within Twain emerges in the form of two conflicting characters.

The foregoing argument has demonstrated that the author crafts the character of Wilson around his experience and personality thereby facilitating the espousal of his views, but the unique aspect of *Pudd'nhead* is that it is not only one, but two characters who display aspects of Twain. In previous works, Twain had combined several of his friends into one fictional character, but this is the first time that he ascribes two facets of his personality to two discrete fictional characters. Reinforcement of this device is constituted through the opposing roles of the two characters: Wilson the protagonist highlights Twain's enlightened self, while "Tom" the antagonist displays the author's prejudice and weakness.

The primary vice plaguing both "Tom" and Twain is that of gambling, or speculation, coupled with a lack of restraint precipitating financial ruin. "Tom" becomes addicted to gambling after being introduced to the vice while traveling: "He brought back one or two new habits with him, one of which he rather openly practiced—tippling—but concealed another, which was gambling. It would not do to gamble where his uncle could hear of it; he knew that quite well." (Twain, 1982, p.941) "Tom's" concealment of his new vice implies that such behavior was unacceptable among the aristocratic community, and "Tom" was aware of the fact that revelation of this "new habit" would lead to his disinheritance. Not only would gambling jeopardize his fortune, it would also endanger his reputation; yet despite multiple declarations of immediate relinquishment, the vice inexorably followed.

The author contrasts reason with appetite to illustrate his own personal battle with speculation, which is represented in the novel by the less honorable form of gambling.

Like “Tom”, Twain self-induces a desperate bankruptcy which if exposed would result in great humiliation and ignominy among his peers and fans. It is in Wilson, through his calendar (to be discussed in chapter four), that Twain opposes reason to this vice: “There are two times in a man’s life when he should not speculate: when he can’t afford it and when he can.” (Twain, 1897, p. 535) In the same way that “Tom’s” appetite repeatedly overcomes his resolve, Twain’s addiction to speculating on new technology cost him everything and was a constant source of embarrassment to him.

These vices threatened the social standing of both men in their own contexts leading to further transgressions. The solution for both involved securing large sums of money by way of less desirable methods. “Tom” resorted to theft, masquerading as a woman to avoid detection while pillaging the town; Twain undertook what he considered a pilfering of his own, assuming a pseudonymous identity and embarking on the lecture circuit. The birth name and true identity of the author, Samuel Clemens, was exchanged for more than a pen name; an alter ego was born, and this persona was expected to perform. Lecturing was not something he was fond of: “I most cordially hate the lecture-field. And after all, I shudder to think that I may never get out of it.” (Fischer *et al*, 1992). Why would he return again and again to something so loathsome? The answer is money, the same motivation that led “Tom” to robbery.

For both “Tom” and his creator, escape presented itself as the easiest viable solution to their self-inflicted problems. Removal from a small town and adoption of different lifestyles resulted in further alienation, which in both cases took place in the

East. “Tom” regularly relocated to St. Louis, but it was his studies at Yale that led to the most radical changes, changes not appreciated by the people of Dawson: “Tom’s Eastern polish was not popular among the young people. They could have endured it, perhaps, if “Tom” had stopped there; but he wore gloves, and that they couldn’t stand, and wouldn’t; so he was mainly without society.” (Twain, 1982, p. 941) Clothing is a metaphor for identity and when “Tom” sheds his Dawson clothes for Eastern ware, the author endorses the metamorphosis: “He brought home with him a suit of clothes of such exquisite style and cut in fashion—Eastern fashions, city fashion—that it filled everybody with anguish and was regarded as a peculiarly wanton affront.” (Twain, 1982, p. 941-2) The connection between “Eastern”, “city”, and “exquisite” highlights the author’s sartorial style, but more importantly it discloses the view that the lifestyle and perspective embraced by small parochial Mississippi towns like Dawson was rejected by both “Tom” and Twain.

Changing clothes in order to change identity is a dominant motif in the novel, and “Tom’s” adoption of urban style is symbolically relevant due to both the repudiation of it by the hidebound residents of Dawson and the former’s decision to embrace a new ideology. Not one for subtlety, “Tom” makes a show of his ascendency: “He enjoyed the feeling which he was exciting, and paraded the town serene and happy all day.” (Twain, 1982, p.942) This dandified exhibitionism harks back to images of Twain prancing around the streets of New York in a splendiferous white suit, exhibiting a flagrant disavowal of the town and its ideas. “Tom”, being the least honorable character in the

novel and the one who rejects Dawson through his adoption of a new style serves to demonstrate just how low the author's opinion was of his hometown, Hannibal.

Although in "Tom" we find the negative aspects of Twain's character, the fundamental element of change, especially one of total identity, is paramount to the author's goals in writing fiction. Like "Tom", Twain was born into a slave-owning town, exposing him to prejudice as a child primarily through his uncle's twenty servants during the summer. In his unpublished autobiography Twain reflects on the views with which he was indoctrinated as a child:

> In my schoolboy days I had no aversion to slavery. I was not aware that there was anything wrong about it. No one arraigned it in my hearing; the local papers said nothing against it; the local pulpit taught us that God approved it, that it was a holy thing, and that the doubter need only look in the Bible if he wished to settle his mind—and then the texts were read aloud to us to make the matter sure; if the slaves themselves had an aversion to slavery they were wise and said nothing. (Twain, 2010, p. 212)

Through personal experience satirically shared, Twain uncovers the bias he has overcome in his progression towards wisdom. Writing with the express aim of exposing and repudiating the prevailing prejudices was only possible through a personal transformation. This overriding aim to eradicate inequality is inversely manifested in the character of "Tom". Born a slave, "Tom" assumes the identity of an aristocratic slave owner, in effect mirroring Twain's shift in reverse. Although the direction is different, by

using “Tom” as a representation of the nefarious side of himself, Twain underscores the crucial need for social change.

CHAPTER II

Twain's Attack on the Symbiosis of Slavery and Aristocracy

In his early novel *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Twain (1982) writes the main character through the lens of his own life and childhood, and in the non-fiction account of his life as a riverboat captain, *Life on the Mississippi* (1982), he devotes several chapters to his childhood. It is not until *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1982), however, that the author intentionally focuses his attention on slavery. Twain sometimes wrote for money, but his deepest desire was to be listened to, for his words to have weight. This was most true when he attempted to bring about a cultural shift in society regarding racial prejudice. The considerable value he attached to cultural influence and personal recognition is hinted at through Twain's decision to reward the protagonists Tom and Huck beyond popularity and wealth:

> Wherever Tom and Huck appeared they were courted, admired, stared at. The boys were not able to remember that their remarks had possessed weight before; but now their sayings were treasured and repeated; everything they did seemed somehow to be regarded as remarkable; they had evidently lost the power of doing and saying commonplace things; moreover, their past history was raked up and discovered to bear marks of conspicuous originality. The village paper published biographical sketches of the boys. (Twain, 1982, p.208).

This passage exposes the true aspirations of the author: fame, respect, and honor, all of which ultimately eluded Twain. Having what he considered to be great insights, being

well traveled and well read, made him feel that his ideas should be taken seriously. More importantly, he wrote to bring about change, especially change to the society in which he lived. Of all his novels, the greatest frustrations with and criticisms against society are to be found in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*.

While *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* presents the reader with a slave who is more compassionate, more humane than the other characters in a novel which subtly criticizes slavery through humor and satire, readers either failed to see the criticism or just chose to view the writing as entertainment. Many years later, when Twain was writing *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, the lack of progress regarding racial prejudice and social inequality led to a frustration that could no longer be contained. From this exasperation came an attack on society that was less couched in humor and overtly expressed. Slavery and aristocracy were the two discriminatory social systems which Twain sought to dismantle, and although diametrically opposed to each other, they are intrinsically and symbiotically linked. Twain attacks both racism and aristocracy, but in doing so he is really criticizing the same core problem: inequality based on erroneous reasoning and tradition.

In *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, slavery, and thus racism, is the most obvious issue that Twain is attacking, primarily through the characters of Roxy and her son "Tom", but simultaneously through the town itself. In the middle of the first chapter, embedded within the description of the town, the reader is confronted with this matter of fact statement: "Dawson's Landing was a slaveholding town" (918). This indicates that for the town this was not a bad thing at all, but simply an accurate description of the place. The

predicate “slaveholding town” not only describes the town, but the people in it and the system by which the entire society functions. When reading this line the modern reader experiences a significant jolt due to the previous depiction of a quaint river town. Such a sentence would now be seen as an affront at worst and an anomaly at best, unlike Twain’s contemporaries who had grown up in such towns. In 1894, the year the novel was published, thirty years had passed since the emancipation proclamation and the ratification of the thirteenth amendment abolishing slavery. But it would be another sixty years before the civil rights movement would seriously challenge the core of the system, racial discrimination, and bring about real change. It was this type of change that Twain was aiming at in *Pudd’nhead*, and the inclusion of those six words is a demarcation separating a pro-slavery mindset from an anti-slavery one. The problem, however, was that although slavery was illegal at the time, Twain’s original audience would most likely not have reacted to this statement as a modern reader would do.

Twain’s more obvious attacks on slavery commence in the second chapter with the introduction of Roxy and her child. The former is first introduced through dialogue in which the idiom of a slave is clearly discernible. More is revealed about the character Roxy when Wilson first looks out of the window to see who is talking: “From Roxy's manner of speech, a stranger would have expected her to be black, but she was not. Only one sixteenth of her was black, and that sixteenth did not show.” (Twain, 1982, p. 924) The provocative point the narrator is making here is that a white woman is a slave, but Twain writes in such a way as to keep it hidden from those who would refuse to

countenance such an idea. This subversive criticism clearly brings into question the core tenet of slavery and racism, namely that the color of one's skin determines value and status. It is not explicitly stated that Roxy appears to be white, but rather that she is not black. If she is not black she cannot be a slave, and yet she is. This paradoxical situation is simply accepted by the town, and the text dwells no further on the point. Nevertheless, by depicting Roxy as "beautiful" and "strong", the narrator further calls into question her status as a slave.

Twain amplifies his criticism of slavery through Roxy's son: "Her child was thirty-one parts white, and he, too, was a slave, and by a fiction of law and custom a Negro. He had blue eyes and flaxen curls like his white comrade" (Twain, 1982, p. 925). This obvious satire cleverly exposes the absurdity of the situation. For if the aristocratic child whom Roxy cares for bears no visible differences to that of her own child, then the foundational reason for slavery (skin color) is removed, leaving only the social system. The allegedly necessary connection between slavery and race in the Deep South is articulated by the Confederate Vice President Alexander Stephens in his notorious 1861 "Cornerstone Speech":

> [Thomas Jefferson's] ideas, however, were fundamentally wrong. They rested upon the assumption of the equality of races. This was an error ... Our new government is founded upon exactly the opposite idea; its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the negro is not equal to the white man; that slavery—subordination to the superior race—is his natural and normal condition. (Stephen, 1861)

Twain's satirical depiction of the predominantly white Roxy and her son is effective then in showing both the power of the "fiction of law and custom" as well as the blind acceptance of the said fiction by the citizens of Dawson's Landing. The obvious anomaly of a beautiful white woman and her blue-eyed son being slaves registers Twain's vigorous opposition to slavery: for the author the idea of slavery is just as nonsensical as the satire by which such absurdity is exposed. What is visibly obvious to the reader about Roxy's son and his "white comrade", namely their common physical traits, reveals what is equally obvious to Twain, namely the predication of human value on skin color.

The Negro part of Roxy enslaves her, yet her character demonstrates a rectitude superior to that of the aristocratic white men. While the wealthy, aristocratic men feel the need to prove their bravery, it is Roxy who appears most fearless. When "Tom", a child bred by white privilege, flees in terror from a duel, Roxy moves toward the danger resulting in her being grazed by a bullet. Her bravery and honor is exhibited in her honesty, uprightness, and self-sacrifice, the very same qualities that are used to solve "Tom's" problems as he repeatedly relies upon Roxy to do what his resources and education patently cannot.

Roxy's solutions are not only knowledgeable and resourceful but often sacrificial in nature, paradoxically positioning Roxy as the most noble amongst the nobility that enslaves her. Her first attempt to save her son involves switching the two babies, thus giving her son to her master and thereby subjecting herself to her son's authority. He treats her with cold indifference while she continues to do everything in her power to ensure that his privileged position is not jeopardized. Her most self-sacrificial act is her

willingness to be sold back into slavery in order to get “Tom” out of financial trouble with his gambling debts: “Here is de plan, en she'll win, sure. I's a nigger, en nobody ain't gwine to doubt it dat hears me talk. I's wuth six hund'd dollahs. Take en sell me, en pay off dese gamblers.” (Twain, 1982, p. 1013) This creates an intriguing conundrum for the reader. To disregard this act of sacrifice would be to deny the goodness of the ultimate self-sacrifice, but to accept it would be to acknowledge that in the novel a slave carries out the highest human act. In this scene Roxy is a Christ-like figure insofar as she gives herself up to save her son, and yet she is technically black. Could someone who is deemed to be not fully human do such a thing? If black people are inferior to white people, could they act in a more noble way than the nobility? While Twain makes the reader wrestle with the humanity of Jim in *Huckleberry Finn*, it is Roxy, his most powerful slave character, who is an affront to slavery in every way.

Twain’s searing criticism of slavery through the characters of Roxy and her son is most prominent early in the novel when Roxy switches the two babies. Almost sold down the river by her slave owner, Roxy is overcome with fear at the possibility of this happening to her baby and in her over-reaction rashly concludes that death is a better fate than going further south. She is ready to kill both her son and herself by drowning in the river, and puts on her best dress to die in. She decides to dress up her baby also and upon doing so becomes aware of the similarity between the two children. A new plan is born and she switches the children’s positions in life by swapping their clothes: “Now who would b'lieve clo'es could do de like o' dat? Dog my cats if it ain't all I kin do to tell t'

other fum which, let alone his pappy." (Twain, 1982, p. 931) The switch becomes a key element of the story as the slave-born son grows up as the aristocrat "Tom". The idea that the babies could only be identified by their clothing represents Twain's belief that skin-color is no more constitutive of a man than the clothes he wears. If one can go from slave to noble and vice versa by something as external and artificial as wardrobe, then defining the nature of a person by their apparel is as erroneous as defining a person by their skin-color.

Roxy's baby is raised with a false identity and name, "Tom", and is also raised in an aristocratic family. For the author to pursue his critique of slavery one might expect him to draw "Tom" as an intelligent, upstanding citizen thereby demonstrating that slavery is a man-made system based solely on skin-color. Twain, however, does not write "Tom" in this manner, but presents him as a debauched child, a reprobate, and the least honorable character in the entire town. He is cruel to his slaves; a gambler, a liar, and a thief; a coward who dodges dueling with one of the twins; and an individual who generally behaves reprehensibly. It is given to Roxy, his mother, to voice the effect of slavery not only on the psyche of the white owners, but also on the slaves themselves insofar as she attributes "Tom's" corruption to his sliver of "blackness":

> "Pah! it make me sick! It's de nigger in you, dat's what it is. Thirty-one parts o' you is white, en on'y one part nigger, en dat po' little one part is yo' soul. 'Tain't wuth savin'; 'tain't wuth totin' out on a shovel en throwin' en de gutter. You has disgraced yo' birth." (Twain, 1982, p.1000)

This scene presents two problems that need to be addressed: Twain's depiction of "Tom" as a scoundrel and Roxy's racism.

Regarding "Tom's" reprehensible behavior, it is clear that at the narrative level "Tom" acts as a foil for both Roxy and Wilson. By juxtaposing "Tom" and his mother, Roxy, the latter functions as the vehicle through which Twain delivers his harshest judgments on slavery. "Tom's" reliance on a poor, ex-slave to solve his problems portrays Roxy as a heroine and in doing so sets into relief the depravity of her son. Likewise, "Tom" acts as a foil to Wilson, highlighting the nobility of the lawyer who, ironically in the case of "Tom", humanizes all the Negroes in the town. There is also a simple plot function in place whereby the degenerate "Tom" is necessary for narrative impetus, but perhaps the most striking reason "Tom" is given such depraved characteristics is to expose the racial prejudice of the town who embrace "Tom" simply because his perceived birth places him in the white, aristocratic class.

Roxy's paradoxical racism towards her own people is harder to explain. One explanation might be that the link between slavery and aristocracy provided by Roxy is a means of dramatizing the extent to which aristocratic supremacy, underwritten by the system of slavery, was not only accepted but admired by those it subjugated. For example, when contemplating the wisdom of switching the positions of the two babies, Roxy justifies her decision by citing the example of white people. Recalling a story she once heard a preacher recount in church to illustrate the need for a savior, she is able to reconcile her deed with her conscience. In this story, a commoner of England switched the clothes and position of her child with that of the Queen's and then sold the royal child

down the river. Roxy is relieved and delighted: “it ain't no sin, 'ca'se white folks done it. Dey done it—yes, dey done it; en not on'y jis' common white folks nuther, but de biggest quality dey is in de whole bilin'. Oh, I's so glad I 'member 'bout dat!” (Twain, 1982, p. 932) Implicit in these words is Roxy’s acceptance of the false notion of white superiority, for if white people had “done it” it cannot be a culpable act. Her belief in the correlation between white aristocracy and goodness is also evident in her response to “Tom” when he asks her about his birth father. She takes great pleasure in telling him about his white father who was from a prominent family. Instead of resenting the sexual abuse of her former white master or even the miscegenation of the birth of her son, she is proud of his heritage: “Dey ain't another nigger in dis town dat's as highbawn as you is. Now den, go 'long! En jes you hold yo' head up as high as you want to—you has de right, en dat I kin swah.” (Twain, 1982, p.967).

A slave claiming value for her slave son through the aristocratic system of bloodlines would of course have been offensive to those residing within the realm of the privileged. And yet, while Roxy endorses the order established by the aristocracy by idealizing them, she also discredits both the inhumanity of racial slavery and the alleged purity of the aristocracy. Roxy’s oxymoronic descriptor of “Tom” as a high-born slave indicates a social order borrowed from the aristocracy which she then applies to slavery, thus humanizing the Negro and discrediting aristocratic purity by demonstrating the lack of pure blood amongst the slave owners.

The narrator further criticizes the social system when describing the group mentality of the Dawson’s Landing community. After being introduced to the “slave-

holding" town in the opening of the novel, we encounter the average town folk who collectively decide that Wilson is a simpleton as a result of their failure to understand his sarcasm about a dog's constant barking:

> "I wish I owned half that dog."
>
> "Why?" somebody asked.
>
> "Because I would kill my half."
>
> The group searched his face with curiosity, with anxiety even, but found no light there, no expression that they could read. They fell away from him as from something uncanny, and went into privacy to discuss him. One said:
>
> " 'Pears to be a fool."
>
> " 'Pears?" said another. "Is, I reckon you better say."
>
> "Said he wished he owned half of the dog, the idiot," said a third. "What did he reckon would become of the other half if he killed his half? Do you reckon he thought it would live?" (Twain, 1982, p. 920)

Here, the inability to understand a simple parcel of wit reveals the simple literal-mindedness of the townspeople who ironically consider themselves of greater intelligence than the man they are ridiculing. If it had been an individual who thought Wilson a fool, it could be considered humorous in that the one not understanding would be laughed at, but as it is the entire group, the idea of collective and cultural misunderstanding reveals the collective small-mindedness and myopia. It is not simply the men in the bar who

judge Wilson to be a pudd'nhead; the entire town unquestioningly endorses their judgment. This group mentality persists throughout Wilson's life and his career is doomed as a result of this group of simple-minded people who perceive him to be a simpleton. The prevailing ignorance demonstrated here is representative of the collective sheep mentality necessary to maintain the "fiction of law and custom".

Twain also uses characters from outside of Dawson's Landing to show the slow-witted provincialism of its residents, thus establishing a lack of credibility regarding the structures of inequality so firmly in place in the town. Just as Wilson hails from another town, so the twins come from Europe and are treated by Dawson's denizens as celebrities. The rumor that the twins have a distant connection to royalty is enormously exciting for the town, as it had been for all the other provincial towns the twins had visited. This explains the twins' underwhelmed reaction to their tour of the town presided over by an exuberant Judge Driscoll:

> For the twins admired his admiration, and paid him back the best they could, though they could have done better if some fifteen or sixteen hundred thousand previous experiences of this sort in various countries had not already rubbed off a considerable part of the novelty in it. (Twain, 1982, p. 951)

Similarly, the well traveled Twain often found himself being treated as a celebrity when entering new places and in this passage he is projecting his conflicting feelings of superiority on the one hand and his contempt for those who hold him in such high esteem. There is thus a sense of judgment and self-criticism in the voice of the narrator in

his depiction of twins are both gratified and condescendingly cordial in their endurance of such adulation. This is an assault on the provincialism that Twain felt so keenly when he returned to Hannibal after his sojourn in the East. The same sentiment is expressed earlier in the novel when all the residents come to the house where the twins are staying in order to get a glimpse of them. With everyone present the twins proceed to play the piano to the entrancement of their audience. The people are mesmerized not simply because the twins are accomplished pianists, but because "They realized that for once in their lives they were hearing masters." (Twain, 1982, p. 950) It is the phrase "for once in their lives" that points to the parochialism of those upholding the institutions of aristocracy and slavery.

While the twins represent Twain's educated cosmopolitanism, it is Wilson who more fully embodies the author and through whom Twain delivers his most caustic attacks. Despite having much wisdom to offer the town, Wilson is ignored and the people suffer from their dismissal of his ideas and clever quips. One example of this is Wilson's aforementioned fascination with the new technology of fingerprinting. This functions not only as a useful plot device, but as a symbol of ontological parity between those of white skin and those of black. The evolution of criminology brought about this innovation, and what Twain wanted to show was a radical new way of viewing society. Just as Wilson's community scoffed and mocked at what they could not understand in fingerprinting, so Twain's society dismissed his ideas of equality. At the end of the novel Wilson uses fingerprinting to uncover a truth that had been hidden for many years and the entire town

accepts this disclosure even though it destroys their earlier illusions. By the same token, Twain writes in the hope that the reader will experience a similar illumination with regard to inequality and slavery. Unfortunately for Twain, novels are not scientific documents, even if he believes his ideals are as objectively true as scientific fact.

Twain's sustained attack on the societal prejudice is further exhibited in Wilson's exhortation to the people, urging them to use their common sense and dismiss the charges against the twins: "Let us not slander our intelligence to that degree." (Twain, 1982, p. 1046) These words express the author's plea to the people of his day to dismiss these baseless and harmful prejudices. In another exchange with "Tom", Wilson challenges the prejudice head on: "And you would feel as I do, Tom, if you were not prejudiced against those young fellows." (Twain, 1982, p. 1041-42) This particular prejudice was not one of race but of misunderstanding and pre-judgment, a mistake "Tom" had made about the twins because he had made false assumptions about them. This is exactly what Twain was trying to change: it is prejudice that allowed racism and privilege to continue, and throughout *Pudd'nhead* Twain attacks the racial discrimination in which the society's injustice is grounded.

In *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, Twain tries to show that both aristocracy and racism are rooted in a fiction. Most of the novel's principal aristocratic characters are endowed with low character and poor judgment. When "Tom" asks about his father, Roxy enthuses: "'He wuz de highest quality in dis whole town—ole Virginny stock. Fust famblies, he wuz. Jes as good stock as de Driscolls en de Howards, de bes' day dey ever seed.' She put

on a little prouder air, if possible…" (Twain, 1982, p. 967) Once again, Roxy is seen to accept the caste system despite the questionable virtue of abandoning one's own "slave" child. Implicit in the paternity of this particular aristocrat is his discreditable behavior which belies his apparent respectability and calls into question the erroneous assumptions about aristocratic families.

The exception in the novel regarding the baseness of the aristocracy is Judge Driscoll, the informal leader of the patrician class in Dawson, who behaves according to the aristocratic code of honor. Being in a position of respect does not vouchsafe independence, but entails a greater need to conform, thus resulting in less freedom than others:

> These laws required certain things of him which his religion might forbid: then his religion must yield—the laws could not be relaxed to accommodate religions or anything else. Honor stood first; and the laws defined what it was and wherein it differed in certain details from honor as defined by church creeds and by the social laws and customs of some of the minor divisions of the globe that had got crowded out when the sacred boundaries of Virginia were staked out. (Twain, 1982, p. 985-86)

This code, based on nothing other than itself, completely rules the lives of those who follow it. More controlling than religion or other social norms, the unwritten laws have such an impact that dueling over common insults is seen as honorable rather than a base and barbaric practice. When "Tom" avoids a duel, Judge Driscoll, "Tom's" guardian, suffers physical pain upon learning of it: '"A coward in my family! A Driscoll a coward!

Oh, what have I done to deserve this infamy!"' (Twain, 1982, p.988) This disgracing of the family was consistent with "Tom's" behavior. As a child he commanded his slave to beat his classmates instead of fighting his own battles; he was an easy liar and a cheat; and due to his desire to punish the very one whose identity he stole he wants to sell him down the river out of jealousy of his skill, thus forcing Judge Driscoll to purchase the slave to prevent family dishonor. All of these offenses grieved Judge Driscoll, but it was "Tom's" fear of dueling, above all else, that caused the most despair, as evidenced in the exasperated exclamation cited above. Aristocracy is thus shown to be dishonorable, and these men who are supposedly the freest in the society appear to be enslaved to the system that spawns them.

Twain's attack on the vices of the aristocratic code is of secondary importance to his attack on the aristocrat's defense and strengthening of slave ownership. Roxy's master is used by Twain to expose the slaveholders' belief that they had a right to own their slaves. In the following passage, the narrator describes the slave owner's thoughts moments after he has spared all his slaves by choosing not to sell them down the river:

> Like a god he had stretched forth his mighty hand and closed the gates of hell against them. He knew, himself, that he had done a noble and gracious thing, and was privately well pleased with his magnanimity; and that night he set the incident down in his diary, so that his son might read it in after years, and be thereby moved to deeds of gentleness and humanity himself. (Twain, 1982, p. 928)

The narrator is accurate in this description, as only a god would hold the eternal fate of humans in his hands. Of course, this man is not a god, and the arrogant immortalization of his great act of mercy tarnishes any imagined benevolence associated with the act. The irony is that the slave owner's grand gesture is no more than a gesture as he is actually saving the slaves only from himself. There is no need to sell anyone down the river; it is simply his threat to do so in order to draw out the thief that raises such a possibility. Withholding an act that was his to decide is neither gracious nor magnanimous, and yet both the slaveholder and his slaves believe it to be a benevolent act. This is where Twain is at his best, showing the reader the inconsistent and self-aggrandizing elements of the system and exposing the depth and breadth of the problem through the full acceptance of the system by aristocrat and slave alike.

The most poignant prosecution of slavery occurs immediately after "Tom" discovers that he is not white but a slave born Negro. In a desperate soliloquy he asks:

> Why were niggers and whites made? What crime did the uncreated first nigger commit that the curse of birth was decreed for him? And why is this awful difference made between white and black? . . . How hard the nigger's fate seems, this morning!—yet until last night such a thought never entered my head. (Twain, 1982, p. 968)

The monologue brings the reader into the mind of "Tom" and confronts him with the injustice of slavery. Perhaps the greatest indictment here lies in his admission or realization that these fundamental questions concerning the inexplicable oppression of African Americans had never occupied his thoughts or concerns before. It is this very

lack of questioning or even thinking that allows inequality to prevail. Twain uses the unthinkable, a slave born child raised as an aristocrat, to produce a situation that demands such questions be addressed, not just for "Tom" but for the reader as well. Herein lies the author's attempt to expose yet again this "fiction of law and custom" by confronting the society with questions that although simple, were simply being avoided.

CHAPTER III

Money or Truth: The Competing Goals of Mark Twain

Just prior to writing *Pudd'nhead*, Mark Twain had lost his fortune due to a failed speculative gamble leaving his entire lifestyle in jeopardy. In a desperate bid to recoup some of his losses he struck a deal with a magazine to publish his novel in installments. He picked up an unfinished manuscript about Siamese twins that was intended to be a light comedy, sure to please the public, but it turned into *Pudd'nhead Wilson*: "I had a sufficiently hard time with that tale, because it changed itself from a farce to a tragedy while I was going along with it…I pulled one of the stories out by the roots, and left the other one—a kind of literary Caesarean operation." (Twain, 2010, p.2) His inability to withhold criticism was argued in the previous chapter, but it is clear that his need to be received by society and more importantly to have them buy his book was in conflict with his desire to expose the tragedy of an unchanged society living comfortably with the disease of prejudice. His awareness that the work needed to be palatable to his readers if it were to be successful is unambiguously stated in his prologue entitled "A Whisper to the Reader": "I could not offer the book for publication, for I was afraid it would unseat the reader's reason." (Twain, 2010, p. 2) Even before *Pudd'nhead* became the scathing critique that we have today, Twain's admission reveals a tension between his need to sell books and the public's "moral" sensibilities. Literary decisions were thus made to appease his audience, but to what end and at what cost? This chapter will argue that

Twain protected his investment in three ways: through satire, characterization, and redaction.

The wealth through which Twain hoped to recover his economic losses resided in the hands of those he wanted to attack. To challenge the very system that allowed those with wealth to remain wealthy would alienate the group most able to alleviate the author's financial woes. Twain's contemporaries were often rich due to either great profit from slavery in the past or inheritance from aristocratic family fortune. If Twain insulted the wealthy or presented a text found to be offensive or distasteful, his purpose in writing *Pudd'nhead*, namely to earn money, would fail. On the other hand, if he wrote purely for entertainment and said nothing of the injustice he so deeply despised, he would be betraying his passion and purpose in life. It seems that the "literary Caesarian operation" was Twain's refusal to pander to a society whose principles he rejected. Nonetheless, his need to sell the novel resulted in choices and compromises that would allow a bigoted racist to enjoy the novel regardless of the criticism.

Twain's choice of comedy as the main vehicle for such a critique was his primary method for communicating difficult ideas in an agreeable manner. While lecturing he relied on his wit and warmth to condemn his audience in a way that made them smile and laugh. In an article entitled "Concerning the Jews" Twain writes: "I have no race prejudices, and I think I have no color prejudices or caste prejudices nor creed prejudices. Indeed I know it. I can stand any society. All that I care to know is that a man is a human being—that is enough for me; he can't be any worse." (Twain, 1989, p. 528) Self-

deprecating humor was a common device that seemed to come naturally to the author, and he used it with great skill to endear his audience and to address serious topics in an enjoyable and entertaining manner. As the above quote demonstrates, it is not until the final five words that the joke is revealed. If there was an anti-Semite enraged by the first thought, those last words would turn everything on its head allowing the humor to soften the offence and keep the individual engaged.

In *Pudd'nhead* Twain applies humor through satire when introducing the characters through which his most trenchant critiques are delivered. Roxy is a prime example. A white woman by virtue of her skin color, she is accepted by all in the novel as a slave. While it was not uncommon for a slave owner to sexually exploit his slave girls, the characterization of Roxy is so exaggerated that it allows any reader who would find such commentary offensive to read it as comic fiction:

> To all intents and purposes Roxy was as white as anybody, but the one sixteenth of her which was black outvoted the other fifteen parts and made her a Negro. She was a slave, and salable as such. Her child was thirty-one parts white, and he, too, was a slave, and by a fiction of law and custom a Negro. He had blue eyes and flaxen curls like his white comrade, but even the father of the white child was able to tell the children apart—little as he had commerce with them—by their clothes (Twain, 1982, p. 924-25)

Roxy was the result of four consecutive generations consisting of a white "master" and a slave woman, and her son was the fifth generation in this line. It is not just statistically

improbable, but visually comical to consider a white slave with "blue eyes and flaxen curls". The phrase "like his white comrade" registers the moral stance of the author while at the same time blunting the attack through satire.

Aside from confusing the normative picture of a slave, Twain presents an extreme that is comically absurd. In other words, he asserts the invalidity of slavery through a *reductio ad absurdum*. A rhetorical device common among ancient Greek philosophers and often used by Aristotle, this form of argumentation reveals a statement to be false by showing the absurdity of a result that proceeds from its acceptance. To the discerning reader, Twain intends to demonstrate the absurdity of skin color as a basis for slavery through the characters of Roxy and her son, but chooses this *reductio* method to insulate the criticism. Through the extreme presentation of these critiques Twain skillfully gives the racist reader something to laugh at, thereby allowing the latter to ignore the challenge presented.

For Twain, the intrinsic connection between prejudice and slavery was self-evident. Those who had such views, therefore, either refused to recognize the connection, or simply lacked sufficient insight and discernment to read the characters as anything other than comic fiction. The real Tom, born into aristocracy, is switched as a baby and brought up as a slave. This is the center of the *reductio ad absurdum* whereby the author masks the most offensive plot element for any racist readers of aristocratic descent—that a high born baby could be raised as a slave—thus allowing them to overlook the criticism involved. Although a white boy becoming a slave is a necessary element of the plot as a

result of his literary "caesarean", it stands to be the most dangerous risk since the customers upon whom Twain relied to purchase the book might find such a thought repellant. Instead of portraying this character in a way that would facilitate the author's intended criticism of slavery, Twain crafts the boy in such a way that could be seen as validating the prejudice he is fighting against: that blacks are inferior in character and value. This high born slave boy is honorable in that he is discerning, honest, capable, athletic, and disciplined: qualities that elude "Tom", the born Negro. Another decision the author makes concerning the aristocratic slave is simply to ignore him. Some critics have argued that a more developed slave character would not only be interesting but a very powerful device for a satire intended to call into question the system of slavery. These same critics feel that by making the slave born "Tom" such a distasteful person works against the strength of the case, in that it confirms not that the label slave leads to bad behavior but genetics. In other words, the less honorable behavior of slaves could have been shown to be a result of slavery itself, but instead Twain seems to confirm the slave owner argument that Negroes were of inferior character. These critics may be correct, but for Twain the necessity to make money had a crucial impact on his decisions. Ignoring the high born slave boy is a key compromise in keeping his audience.

As argued above, Twain's choices regarding characterization was a means of protecting his investment. His decisions concerning "Tom's" behavior and character, which weaken any attack against race based slavery, can only be explained in light of his need to sell books, "'Tom' was a bad baby, from the very beginning of his usurpation" (Twain, 1982, p.934), asserts the narrator early in chapter 4. As a newborn he was unruly

and his transgressions worsened with age. Growing up as an aristocrat with the education and privilege afforded him, “Tom”, or so his readers would assume, will turn out to be respectable. This is not the case, however: “Tom” was a demanding and cruel child, and many of his despicable deeds were at the expense of the original Tom who was switched as a baby, given the slave baby’s name (Chambers), and subjected to the indignities commonly visited upon a slave child:

> Tom always made Chambers go in swimming with him, and stay by him as a protection. When Tom had had enough, he would slip out and tie knots in Chamber's shirt, dip the knots in the water and make them hard to undo, then dress himself and sit by and laugh while the naked shiverer tugged at the stubborn knots with his teeth.
>
> Tom did his humble comrade these various ill turns partly out of native viciousness, and partly because he hated him for his superiorities of physique and pluck, and for his manifold cleverness. (Twain, 1982, p. 937)

This passage demonstrates the vileness of “Tom”, a boy with neither honor nor respect: two vital virtues of the aristocratic family he was now a part of. What is also striking is that “Chambers” displays the strength of character sorely lacking in “Tom”, whose “native viciousness” would seem to validate the pro-slavery mindset in that it supports the false presuppositions used to justify the odious system of slavery, namely that black people are inferior and morally corrupt. On the other hand, had Twain presented these characters in the opposite manner, it would have been a very strong argument against the

prevailing prejudice, namely that neither heritage nor race, but environment and cultural expectations determined the quality of a person.

The decision by Twain to write the characters of Tom and Chambers as he did was, I would argue, necessary for sales. Had he shown "Tom" to be an honorable member of the aristocratic society it would have led to a rejection and condemnation of the work as so repugnant as not to be countenanced by the grandchildren of plantation owners. Acceptance of "Tom" as an exemplary aristocrat would have challenged both the system of slavery and the notion that African Americans were less than human. In fact, just three years after *Pudd'nhead* was published, Louisiana passed a "grandfather clause" law forbidding former slaves and their descendants from voting. Several other states followed, with Louisiana experiencing a drop of registered black voters from 130,334 in 1898 to only 730 by 1910. "In 27 of the state's 60 parishes, not a single black voter was registered any longer; in 9 more parishes, only one black voter was." (Pildes, 2000, p. 12). This indicates that during Twain's lifetime, racism was prevalent among a majority of those in power. If Twain's primary goal was to challenge the system, as argued in the previous chapter, he would not have sacrificed his most damning illustration. By giving those who are prejudiced a fictional narrative that validates their views the author is arguably sacrificing one goal for another: the need to challenge slavery and the need to make money.

A more direct affirmation of the invidious power structure is made through the character of Judge Driscoll, an aristocrat and the most important man in Dawson. Driscoll is shown to be intelligent, cultured, and honorable:

> The chief citizen was York Leicester Driscoll, about forty years old, judge of the county court. He was very proud of his old Virginian ancestry, and in his hospitalities and his rather formal and stately manners, he kept up its traditions. He was fine and just and generous. To be a gentleman—a gentleman without stain or blemish—was his only religion, and to it he was always faithful. He was respected, esteemed, and beloved by all of the community. He was well off, and was gradually adding to his store. (Twain, 1982, p. 918)

This passage typifies Driscoll's general behavior which remains constant throughout the novel. Driscoll validates the perceived virtues of the aristocracy and does nothing to challenge the system in any way; indeed, his very character works against Twain's criticism. Had the author simply penned disparaging thoughts emanating from Driscoll's tongue that would have been consistent with the ignorance and prejudice of the slaveholders, it would not only have been objectionable *per se*, but it certainly would have reinforced the challenge to the prevailing wisdom that birth and blood determine one's social standing. By leaving the character as he does, Twain once again makes a concession, either by commission or omission, to his readership and in doing so acknowledges that he may need them more than they need him.

The novel's counterpoint to Driscoll is the character of Roxy, who is presented as superstitious and uneducated, characteristics which confirm the slave stereotype. Although her otherwise strong character is the weightiest argument against slavery in the novel, the author depicts her as irrational in thought and erratic in behavior, especially in the scene where she contemplates suicide accompanied by the murder of her own child:

> She paused awhile, thinking; then she burst into wild sobbings again, and turned away, saying, "Oh, I got to kill my chile, dey ain't no yuther way—killin' him wouldn't save de chile fum goin' down de river. Oh, I got to do it, yo' po' mammy's got to kill you to save you, honey." She gathered her baby to her bosom now, and began to smother it with caresses. "Mammy's got to kill you—how kin I do it! But yo' mammy ain't gwine to desert you—no, no, dah, don't cry—she gwine wid you, she gwine to kill herself too." (Twain, 1982, p. 929)

This reaction comes from the slave owner's threat to sell them down the river as punishment for theft. The previous chapter in the book concludes with the slave owner's decision to sell his slaves locally, and he records his actions in his own journal. The juxtaposition of these characters, Roxy and the slave owner, highlights the arrogance of the aristocracy and yet frames the encounter in a realistic, albeit humorous, scene. Roxy is generally presented as extreme, emotional, and volatile in her dealings providing a possible reading that African Americans are less rational than Anglo Americans. This scene alone would reinforce the prejudice of a racist reader and diminish Roxy's later acts of heroism. Wilson, as the logical, reasonable outsider, also seems to confirm the prejudice that blacks are irrational: "The drop of black blood in her is superstitious; she

thinks there's some devilry, some witch business about my glass mystery somewhere; she used to come here with an old horseshoe in her hand" (Twain, 1982, p. 940). In referring to horseshoes, Wilson offers no explanation in the tacit acknowledgment that the "witch business" will be obvious to his audience. The author leaves these statements for the reader to interpret as either confirmation or repudiation of the societal systems of slavery and aristocracy. Those who agree with the author's implicit criticism can dismiss Wilson's comment, while the bigoted reader can absorb the prejudice as confirmation of his own views.

Stronger evidence of the author's desire to appease those he is attacking is found in the original manuscripts. This is the third mechanism the author uses to protect his investment: redaction. Just before the final draft of *Pudd'nhead* was submitted to the publishers, Twain excised a portion of "Tom's" monologue in which he ruminates over the tragedy of being slave born. What appears in the redacted published text is the following:

> Why were niggers and whites made? What crime did the uncreated first nigger commit that the curse of birth was decreed for him? And why is this awful difference made between white and black? . . . How hard the nigger's fate seems, this morning!—yet until last night such a thought never entered my head. (Twain, 1982, p. 968)

As much as this is a clear attack on slavery, a closer inspection reveals it to be quite weak. "Tom" does not conclude anything other than the weight he personally feels now

that he has learned he is a “nigger”, but prior to that last statement there are three questions that form the content of the monologue.

The first question “Tom” asks himself is a general question about the creation of a dichotomy and the purpose or rationale for such a creation. According to the Christian worldview, the answer to this question is that all people, regardless of color, are created in God’s image and are thus equal. Given that plantation owners considered themselves to be Christians, this answer would condemn slavery outright. Nevertheless, while the prevailing thought at the time was that all men were created equal, it was also believed that the curse of Ham brought about both black skin as well as the justification for slavery. In other words, a slave owner would already have an answer to this question, and one that implicitly condones his racism.

The curse of Ham is a misconception of the curse of Canaan given by the Biblical character Noah upon being found naked and drunk. The incident occurs in Genesis 9:20-27 when, after the flood narrative, Noah’s son, Ham, discovers the patriarch in a shameful state. The said curse is over Ham’s son Canaan and states that his descendants will be subject to those of his brother’s, primarily Israel. This is a relevant point for our discussion in that the so-called curse of Ham was misinterpreted not only as naming the wrong recipient of the curse, but also through the addition of skin color of which there is no mention in the Biblical text. In practice, however, the curse of Ham was the primary justification “Christian” slave owners used in subjecting those with black skin to slavery.

The second question further interrogates the "curse of birth" by pondering upon the original "crime" that brought about such punishment. Once again both pro- and anti-slavery camps can find respective solace in the question. For the abolitionist, the question raises two main issues: the crime *per se*, and whether the punishment fits the crime. As intimated above, the curse of Ham has not been hermeneutically verified by Biblical scholars but was often used to justify slavery. "Tom" wonders why walking into the tent at the wrong time deserves such abuse, and why nudity would provoke such a severe reaction. If Noah's drunkenness caused the outrage, why should Ham be held responsible? The inequitable meting out of generational slavery for thousands of years is also challenged by "Tom", just as Ham's transgression had been thousands of years prior to the fulfillment of the curse on the Canaanites. The supporters of slavery would simply read this question and find immediate satisfaction in answer provided by the curse of Ham.

The last question, which focuses on the difference between black and white, exposes the main weakness in the Ham theory, namely that there is no reference to skin color in the Genesis passage and that the curse pronounced by Noah was on Canaan, not Ham. The verse reads: "Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be to his brothers." (Genesis 9:25 English Standard Version). It is thus the relationship between Ham's sons rather than that between Ham and his two brothers that is at issue here. Furthermore, there is no evidence that Canaan's descendants were black, and even if they had been, the curse was satisfied in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 20:17, the command is given to destroy the Canaanites, thus fulfilling the curse. "Tom's" question

uncovers the fallacy of the curse of Ham, but once again those who subscribe to such a theory find the answer to the question of "why the awful difference is made" within the very premise it is designed to question. That is, the answer for the slave owner is the curse of Ham, even though the question challenges the curse. What is written in the passage we have just looked at is benign in that it only asks questions that have already been answered, albeit falsely, by those Twain is challenging.

If we now turn to the original manuscript passage, before much of it was redacted in order to protect sales, Twain's original attack will be seen to be much more strident. In contrast to the published passage examined above, the manuscript contains a far more expansive and condemnatory rumination. The first sentence shifts the entire conversation away from questions and looks at "answers": "In his broodings in the solitudes, he searched himself for the reasons of certain things, & in toil & pain he worked out the answers" (Twain, 1893, p. 241). As discussed above, questions allow for different answers, but here the narrator alludes to specific answers reached. The language is direct and the tone is markedly different to the passage that finally went to press. In the opening to the extant passage it simply states that "'Tom' began to think." In the manuscript passage, however, far more didactic language is used, such as "reasons" and "answers". This introduces "Tom's" thoughts not as simple pondering but as a search for answers, a challenge to slavery.

The ratiocination that follows is one in which "Tom" examines his own cowardice: "Why was he a coward? It was the "nigger" in him." (Twain, 1893, p. 241)

By associating cowardice with skin color “Tom’s” thoughts appear to confirm the racist stereotypes of the slave holding society, but by giving “Tom” these thoughts the author is flattering the prejudices of those he is criticizing in order to draw in his opponents and challenge the system of slavery from a new perspective not prone to automatic dismissal by such devices as the curse of Ham.

This challenge occurs in an abrupt shift of tone, tempo, and argumentation: “The nigger blood? Yes, the nigger blood degraded from original courage to cowardice by decades & generations of insult & outrage inflicted in circumstances which forbade reprisals, & made mute & meek endurance the only refuge & defence.” (Twain, 1893, p. 241) One might argue that the acceptance of something called “nigger blood” as well as the specific use of that derogatory term would actually be detrimental to an attack on slavery, but herein lies the subtlety of Twain’s approach. Instead of interrogating Biblical hermeneutics or appealing to the basic tenets of humanism, the author attempts a new approach by employing the rhetorical method of counter agreement. Whereas the published passage contents itself with easily answered questions, the redacted text focuses on answers. These answers clearly articulate the current state of the African American as not “original”, but “degraded”, the implication being that “niggers” are not born but manufactured by slavery. “Tom’s” emphasis on the degeneration of “courage” to “mask and mute endurance” is an indirect attack on the core value of the aristocracy as demonstrated in the novel.

The attack on slave owners continues with a condemnation of the practice of inflicting “insult & outrage”, making the argument that the degradation was a process that

affected both slave and owner. *Pudd'nhead* takes place more than two hundred years after slavery arrived on the shores of America. The majority of slaves at that time were born into slavery and after seven or eight generations an entire new class had been created. The conditioning of this slave class was cruel, and the constant berating and reminder that the slaves were less than human had been the script for so long that the slave class was forced to accept these false premises. Even worse than the insults was the "outrage". Forbidding education and separating families were institutional methods of control, but the beating, the killing, and the raping of slaves moved beyond methods devised for the purpose of protecting one's investment to a level of violence that in effect damaged the investment of the slave owner as these abuses would lead at best to loss of strength and production, and at worst to total loss in the event of suicide.

The conclusion of "Tom's" answer to the question of whence his cowardice comes focuses on "circumstance", while his answers to two unasked questions are revealed simultaneously. The "circumstance" of slavery included being powerless and under constant threat of pain, punishment, and death in the event of any form of retaliation. The result was one of silence and compliance as "the only refuge and defence". Implicit in this statement is the answer to the first unasked question or assumption that African Americans are "mute & meek" and so unfit to lead and naturally made to be subject. Twain's alternative narrative is that such submissiveness is a result of "circumstance", namely brutal conditioning. The second unasked question is similar: why don't slaves revolt? The answer given by the slave owners was simply that their being slaves was in the natural order of things. Some would even go so far as to argue that they

were happy and better off as slaves as they were better housed and fed then they would have been in their native Africa. Through "Tom" the author clearly states that silent submission is the slave's only reliable defense. The blame is laid fully upon the slave owners who have created the stereotype and employ it as cause rather than effect.

Twain continues his condemnation of slave ownership by having "Tom" focus on the negative effects that such a slave system has had on those who owned slaves:

> Whence came that in him which was high, & whence that which was base? That which was high came from either blood, & was the monopoly of neither color; but that which was base was the white blood in him debased by the brutalizing effects of a long-drawn heredity of slave-owning, with the habit of abuse which the possession of irresponsible power always creates & perpetuates, by a law of human nature. So he argued. (Twain, 1893, p. 241)

Beginning with yet another question, the redirection of focus is away from a single flaw, cowardice, towards the assumption of duality. Human nature is divided, and the question of the provenance of "high" is raised. The answer is not elaborated upon, but there is an implicit acknowledgement that there is such a thing as "high" blood. There is no denial of this ethic, but rather a declaration that any race can produce persons of good character. The word choice is deliberate and in the inversion of "high" to "base", the determination of each is grounded in responsibility. The argument, then, is not that there is some value in "Tom", but that he is in himself able to rule as he did "Chambers", demonstrating that in the reversal of circumstances the roles were assumed not due to color but position.

That “which was high” did not come from being black or white nor from being a slave or an aristocrat, but from being human.

A dramatic shift occurs when “Tom” turns to answer the question of where baseness comes from, and the most direct condemnation of a race is directed away from African Americans and placed squarely on “whites”. Instead of agreeing with the slave owners that their slaves were base, Twain inverts it by claiming that it is the former, not the latter, who are base. What appears to be a racist remark against white people is actually a statement about power and “human nature”. The ruling class is base because “irresponsible power” inevitably “creates & perpetuates” a people or class that are corrupt and ignoble. The intrinsic connection between generation and degeneration creates a parallel argument to that against slavery in the previous paragraph as over time the black slave became “meek and mute” while the white master became base and brutal.

These omitted sections contain blatant attacks on slavery and would certainly have been repugnant to those who came from plantation wealth as well as to those who were still prejudiced against African Americans. If Twain’s sole aim was to attack society, the most plausible reason for his removal of these incendiary passages would be the self-censorship of a man who put remuneration before the rigor of rumination.

CHAPTER IV

From Compromise to Consolidation: The Calendar

It is not unusual for a novel to open with an epigraph, but *Pudd'nhead Wilson* does so in a unique way. In *Pudd'nhead* what is being quoted at the head of each chapter is a calendar entry ostensibly extracted from a calendar that forms part of the narrative and is purportedly written by one of its characters. The other distinction lies in the lack of connection between what is quoted and the novel itself. Although James Carron (1982) attempted to find a link and argue that there is a pattern relating to the text, I would argue that the calendar is an independent entity that only has a pattern within itself. That is, the calendar entries draw upon a few general themes such as man's ignorance and the iniquity of slavery and authority. In the following chapter, the calendar entries will be shown to be the resolution of Twain's conflicting goals of criticism and sales as they bridge the divide and lead to the success of both.

To quote from a fictional calendar created by the author and to use that quote as an epigraph would suggest that the author sympathizes, or even identifies, with the views expressed in the latter. In previous chapters the case for Twain's identification through authorial projection has been established, and in the calendar we find a more extreme example of this transference. In this chapter I will contend that the insights and opinions found in the entries are unequivocally those of the author.

First we will look at the only direct interaction between the main text and the calendar in order to demonstrate Twain's authorship of the epigrams. This connection between text and calendar is found in the opening scene of chapter 11:

> Wilson got out his Calendar, by request, and read a passage or two from it, which the twins praised quite cordially. This pleased the author so much that he complied gladly when they asked him to lend them a batch of the work to read at home. In the course of their wide travels they had found out that there are three sure ways of pleasing an author; they were now working the best of the three. (Twain, 1982 p.973)

The epigraph preceding this opening scene shares the wisdom that the twins had learned in their travels: "There are three infallible ways of pleasing an author, and the three form a rising scale of compliment ..." (Twain, 1982 p. 973). This scene has no further purpose other than to incorporate the calendar from which we have read since the beginning of the novel. Perhaps there is some character development of the twins as they are shown to be wise in the ways of the world, but since this knowledge of how to flatter an author comes from them, who learned it from whom? Are the twins responsible for this entry or has Pudd'nhead's calendar traveled and reached the twins prior to their arrival? These questions arise from Twain's playfulness, but the identical words in both epigraph and novel suggest Twain's authorship. A stronger argument for Twain's authorship of the calendar is the fact that it covers many subjects that Wilson makes no mention of and have no direct connection to the novel. But the strongest evidence of all is found both in the word "author" that appears in the aforementioned epigram and in the creation of the

"New Calendar" that is included in a later work that bears no relation to *Puddn'head* bar its incorporation of the "New Calendar".

Wilson is a lawyer, an accountant, and a fingerprint enthusiast; he is not, however, an author, and this simple calendar is merely a collection of sayings. Why then, does Twain choose the word "author" to both describe Wilson and make it the subject of the epigraph? A lawyer who ventures into publishing and produces a single, modest work would still refer to himself as a lawyer, whereas an author, such as Twain, would assume anything written is done so by an author. Twain's own viewpoint supercedes that of a neutral observer, hence the descriptor "author" in both the words of the narrator in the text and of Wilson in the calendar. Although unlikely, it is still possible for Wilson to be referred to as "author" when mentioning his calendar, but it is far less plausible that Wilson would craft an epigram on the subject of being an author.

Wilson had not shared his calendar before, and as it was his only literary work there would be no reason to include a calendar entry on authorial gratification. In chapter 5 the idea of the calendar is introduced into the text itself: "For some years Wilson had been privately at work on a whimsical almanac, for his amusement—a calendar, with a little dab of ostensible philosophy, usually in ironical form, appended to each date" (Twain, 1982 p. 942). If indeed this was a private work written for his own amusement a comment about the different ways of pleasing an author would be alien to him. Twain, on the other hand, would have many things to say about how an author is encouraged or experiences praise. It is thus not Wilson, but Twain, who is expressing these thoughts, and they derive not from Wilson's experience of life, but Twain's.

That the voice of the calendar, and by extension that of Wilson, is Twain's is further established by the penning of a second collection of epigrams entitled "Puddn'head Wilson's New Calendar". This collection was inserted into a later book entitled *Following the Equator* and presented in the same manner as that of the original calendar in *Pudd'nhead*, namely as epigraphs. This later work is a non-fiction travelogue in which Twain shares his experiences and opinions. Using Puddn'head Wilson in such a way would seem to be the author's extended use of a pseudonym. Having already taken on the fictional name of Mark Twain, adding Pudd'nhead to his collection should occasion no surprise. Samuel Clemens wrote both fiction and non-fiction under the pseudonym Mark Twain, and there is no argument that Twain's voice is his. In *Equator*, we can make the same connection and conclude that Puddn'head's voice in the calendar is also his. The calendar acted as a conduit through which Twain could dissemenate his more radical thoughts and ideas in a way that was non-confrontational and therefore more acceptable.

The voicing of Twain's views lay at the heart of the calendar, but there was also the very real motivation of earning money after his disastrous speculation left him bankrupt. The calendar proved to be the most succesful part of *Puddn'head* in raising the needed funds. The novel was serialized in a monthly periodical entitled "The Century Magazine", one of the nation's most widely read publications. Although the entire novel was eventually printed in this magazine, portions of the novel were re-printed and circulated earning commission for the author. The most widely recirculated part of the

novel, however, was the calendar, which was printed in numerous newpapers and journals throughout the country.

"The Century Magazine" distributed the calendar as a way to increase their subscriptions, and as a result of its immense popularity produced a pocket calendar for 1894, with the eprigram for each month taken directly from Puddn'head's Calendar. This marketing venture was so succesful that the pocket calendar went through at least one reprint as evidenced by different versions of the calendar, one of which ended with a picture of Mark Twain by a photographer named David Wilson. In his biography of Twain, Albert Bigelow Paine, who was 33 years old in 1894, wrote about the calendar's popularity:

> The Century had issued a tiny calendar of the Pudd'nhead maxims, and these quaint bits of philosophy, the very gems of Mark Twain's mental riches, were in everybody's mouth. With all this going on, and with his appearance at various social events, he was rather a more spectacular figure that winter than ever before. (Paine, 2003, p. 144)

The reason the calendar was such a success in monetary terms was precisely due to its marketability and popularity. Here in the calendar Twain not only found his voice, but a way to criticize society and make good his financial losses. The calendar was indeed the perfect balance the author had failed to find in the novel itself.

The calendar spread Twain's influence both in respect of his written wisdom and his personal popularity, which led to more public appearances thereby increasing his audience and influence even more. From Minnesota to New York and many states in

between, the maxims extracted from Pudd'nhead's Calendar were celebrated and quoted in reprint after reprint. His popularity was at a new high not just stateside, but internationally as well. Twain set off on a series of lecture tours covering Canada, Australia, India, and South Africa. It was during this period that the calendar wisdom attributed to Wilson was claimed and shared by Twain. The two worked together to gather larger audiences, affect more people, and raise more money. The calendar was found to be the means by which Twain's dual purposes in writing *Pudd'nhead Wilson* could be realized.

Having earned money and favor with the calendar, the main question still to be answered is that of its message. What was Twain saying through the wisdom of Wilson? Although the maxims seem varied and random, I will argue that there are some common themes which disclose both the targets of his attack as well as the scope. As stated in the previous chapters of this thesis, Twain's main target was the grotesque lack of equality manifest in slavery and sustained and perpetuated through racism and wealthy land owners who saw themselves fit to own slaves. In the novel this compromise between scathing criticism and withholding offense in order to sell books kept Twain from doing either as well as he would have liked, but in the calendar we see a boldness packaged in a clever way that accomplishes both simultaneously. We will also see that through the calendar we move from the local town of Dawson's Landing to more general observations applicable to all mankind. Lastly, the calendar takes the initial arguments against slavery and aristocracy and expands them to include the nature of man and God.

Broadening the criticism from the merely local, the calendar no longer confines its maxims to character or plot but stands on its own as general wisdom for all, thus expanding the condemnation from a small town in Missouri of a past time, to everywhere and for all time. The first calendar entry to appear in the novel is the epigraph to the prologue, and it is immediately apparent that this is a general word for all:

> There is no character, howsoever good and fine, but it can be destroyed by ridicule, howsoever poor and witless. Observe the ass, for instance: his character is about perfect, he is the choicest spirit among all the humbler animals, yet see what ridicule has brought him to. Instead of feeling complimented when we are called an ass, we are left in doubt. (Twain, 1982, p. 915)

Here is a good example of the nature of the calendar itself: witty, humorous, questioning the status quo, and slightly opaque. The opacity lies in its deeper meaning, if indeed there is one. Is the author intimating that what we have deemed to be true may or may not be? Is it a maxim that questions traditional wisdom and inverts the status quo? Is it a criticism on the nature of reputation and how easily it can be misunderstood and distorted? Or is it simply entertainment devoid of any philosophy? While Twain the entertainer often told stories and jokes just for the fun of it, there is reason to look deeper as we delve further into the novel and the calendar.

The principal motif of the calendar is arguably that of character, but there is also a challenge to the prevailing wisdom of the day. The epigraph to the first chapter of the novel is as follows: “Tell the truth or trump—but get the trick.” (Twain, 1982, p. 917) This gambling reference illuminates both the view of life according to the author as well

as the nature of those in power. Twain was addicted to speculating, a grand form of gambling, and often viewed the nature of life as one big gamble. With the issue of slavery it was the contingency of being born black or white that determined everything; this is the very substance of "Tom's" monologue after learning he was of Negro descent. The grand dice roller has no consideration for the dice, but simply wants to win the game.

In one sense, the idiomatic expression "the end justifies the means" is applicable to both those whom Twain is attacking as well as to himself. For Twain, it was perfectly acceptable to trick racists into buying his book while insulting them at the same time. And for slave owners, it was also perfectly acceptable to do whatever was necessary to remain in power. Was the justification for slavery truth or trump? For Twain, the trump needed to be exposed, but for the slave owner the only thing that mattered was to "get the trick". The author was uninterested in the rules of honor established by the aristocratic old southerners, for that was part of the problem that created the divide and perpetuated the inequality. With simply nine words, Twain condemns those in power for upholding a façade in a Wizard of Oz attempt to control, while justifying his own methods.

The method of challenging society found in the chapter 1 calendar entry is seen more clearly in the entry for chapter 6: "Habit is habit, and not to be flung out of the window by any man, but coaxed downstairs a step at a time." (Twain, 1982, p. 946) What is implied here is the exigent need for habit to be altered, not by oneself but by another. Twain had lived through slavery, the Civil War, and an evolving nation only to recognize that inequality, racism, and the status quo that supported those in power were

still prevalent. He had learned that these "habits" that so desperately needed to be changed could not simply be discarded, neither by him nor even Abraham Lincoln. Acknowledging that the necessary change could not be effected immediately and completely led Twain to a more incremental approach. It is important to note that those who need habit adjustments are at the top of the stairs, and need to come down. In other words, it was not the bottom drawer disenfranchised and less privileged members of society who needed to adjust, but those on the top floor. The calendar was an attempt to be part of this "coaxing".

The mendacity that upheld slavery and aristocracy was something that Twain desperately wanted to "coax downstairs", but its resilience had been protracted beyond reason as stated in the calendar entry for chapter 7: "One of the most striking differences between a cat and a lie is that a cat has only nine lives." (Twain, 1982, p. 951) A folk myth is used here to demonstrate that the lie of slavery and inequality lacks substance and truth and is based on a fictional inequality promulgated by those at the top of the stairs. It is a reaffirmation that the grounds upon which these reprehensible "habits" were formed is nothing more than fabrication. Slavery could only exist if the lie that Negroes were inferior or cursed continued to be upheld. The fiction that some families were more noble or more important than others on account of their bloodline also rested on a lie. Even after a civil war and the emancipation proclamation the problem of racism continued, as former slaves were not treated as equal citizens. This deception lived, and continues to live, well beyond nine lives, and Twain was perhaps more prescient than he realized.

The very simple calendar entry for chapter 11 subtly addresses this lie by intimating that privilege and racism both survive through descriptors: "As to the adjective: when in doubt, strike it out." (Twain, 1982, p. 973) Slave boy, Negro boy, and black boy would be the same as rich boy, high-class boy, and white boy were the adjective simply struck out: they would all be boys. The question of doubt is demonstrated through the characters of Roxy and the two boys. She appears to be a white woman, and the boys, one white, aristocratic, and free and the other white but slave born, look so similar that a switch was possible. Based on appearance there was much doubt as to where these characters belonged, but even after Wilson exposes the ruse and the two boys switch adjectives, the problem, the habit, and the lie remained. The doubt then is in the nature of the categorizing. Is it beyond reasonable doubt, apposite legal language for the courtroom climax in *Pudd'nhead*, that black is inferior to white, or that blood makes you superior? While habits needed coaxing downstairs, the societal descriptors that allowed the injustice to continue needed to be fully exposed.

The scope of Twain's criticism moves beyond the specific problems of inequality explored thus far, and penetrates deeper into the nature of man himself and the corruption that leads to such discrimination. There are several calendar entries that ridicule man as a fool. In the chapter 21 epigraph the calendar entry is dated Aprils Fool's Day: "April 1. This is the day upon which we are reminded of what we are on the other three hundred and sixty-four." (Twain, 1982, p.1044) Here is another example of Twain's use of humor to make the criticism not only acceptable to, but also enjoyed by, those he is targeting. In

this case, the author is judging all of us and by using the pronoun "we" he includes himself, further disarming the barbed maxim.

The inclusion of himself in the criticism is a feature of certain calendar entries that comment on the nature of man. One such entry is the epigraph to chapter 9: "Why is it that we rejoice at a birth and grieve at a funeral? It is because we are not the person involved." (Twain, 1982, p. 963) This pessimistic view of life is closely tied to the fault of man. Twain believes that man has ruined the world and therefore it is a place neither pleasant to enter nor unpleasant to depart from. He elaborates on this idea further, but moving away from self-inclusion he adopts the third person: "All say, 'How hard it is that we have to die'—a strange complaint to come from the mouths of people who have had to live." (Twain, 1982, p. 968) Indeed, it is in the third person that some of his more caustic criticisms are couched.

Man's folly is the subject of the epigraph to chapter 17: "July 4. Statistics show that we lose more fools on this day than in all the other days of the year put together. This proves, by the number left in stock, that one Fourth of July per year is now inadequate, the country has grown so." (Twain, 1982, p. 1017) This maxim is a clever way to tell his audience that they, and the world they inhabit, are littered with fools, and his proposed solution is to be rid of them. There is a progression of sorts, where the author begins with "coaxing habits", follows in the first person with the doomed nature of life due to man's conduct, and moves to an outside condemnation that calls for termination. The grimness of the sentiment also increases as evidenced by the epigraph to chapter 16: "If you pick

up a starving dog and make him prosperous, he will not bite you. This is the principal difference between a dog and a man." (Twain, 1982, p. 1013) It would be a high insult indeed to be called a dog, but Twain goes further by asserting the superiority of dogs. Although the calendar entries have become more trenchant, they are still witty enough to be embraced and shared. The calendar was the ultimate success since those who were being pilloried paid for the privilege.

The subject of the calendar entries is not only centered on man, but extends to both religion and God in the same critical manner. The epigraph to chapter 13 provides a transitional entry that encompasses the condemnation of people while incorporating the even larger scope of the afterlife: "When I reflect upon the number of disagreeable people who I know have gone to a better world, I am moved to lead a different life." (Twain, 1982, p. 990) Written in the first person singular, the author is measuring the quality of his former acquaintances who have been declared by family and ministers to now reside in heaven. It is not only the character of these men that he is condemning, but the religious beliefs and systems that validate those who were slave owners, swindlers, and upholders of systems of inequality. Perhaps the deeper meaning is more sinister, and more a denunciation of God himself. One possible reading of this entry is that Twain would rather go to hell than be in the company of the Christian God and those who meet with his approval. If this were the only calendar entry that made reference to God it would be a difficult argument to make, but in light of other entries it is a plausible reading.

After the initial, chapter 1 entry about getting the trick, three subsequent chapter epigraphs make reference to Adam and the Genesis story. The epigraph to chapter 4 is little more than facetious, but it reflects the author's overall dismissal of the Biblical creation narrative: "Adam and Eve had many advantages, but the principal one was that they escaped teething." (Twain, 1982, p. 934) The crux of the joke is the exaggeration of the pains of teething, but the maxim clearly displays Twain's disdain for the Christian worldview. The "advantages" Adam and Eve shared are not stated beyond the generality, but as they were believed to be the first people who lived in a garden of paradise, had no sin or suffering, and physically walked and talked with God, the advantages would be clear to most of his Christian readers. The assertion that escaping teething was the greatest advantage of them all, taken together with the previous maxim about heaven's undesirability, testifies to Twain's view that favor with God and the promise of an alleged paradise are merely another species of lie.

In the epigraph to chapter 3 we find another ironic reference to Adam and to the religion of the slave owners: "Whoever has lived long enough to find out what life is, knows how deep a debt of gratitude we owe to Adam, the first great benefactor of our race. He brought death into the world." (Twain, 1982, p. 929) This entry rehearses the black humor that presents death as a gift and life as a curse as found in other quips, but here Twain places the blame on Adam for such a condition. According to the belief of Twain's readers, it was Adam's sin that introduced death into the world and the satirical proverb heaps praise upon such a gift. Implicit in Twain's attack, of course, is the Christian belief in a being who is credited with the creation of both man and the earth he

inhabits. Twain's dismissal of the creation story is a veiled condemnation of those who use Biblical sources to justify their profoundly unchristian behavior.

Adam is also the subject of the calendar entry for chapter 2: "Adam was but human—this explains it all. He did not want the apple for the apple's sake, he wanted it only because it was forbidden. The mistake was in not forbidding the serpent; then he would have eaten the serpent." (Twain, 1982, p. 922) The phrase "but human" underscores what for Twain is man's natural, if perverse, desire to want what is forbidden. Twain's criticism in this epigram is directed at both the absurdity of forbidding knowledge (the apple) and the even greater absurdity of creating a fictional devil (the serpent). Implicit in his attack is the alleged wisdom and intelligence of Adam's alleged creator. To suggest that "God" made a "mistake" is a bold, even blasphemous assertion that gets overshadowed by the humorous anecdote. Once again, a highly provocative statement becomes acceptable to those who would otherwise condemn it. It is the brilliance of the calendar to be this irreverent with a churched audience and still be celebrated as a humorous work.

The critical transition from slavery and aristocracy to God is even clearer in Twain's final novel, *The Mysterious Stranger*. Although the speaker in the following excerpt is Satan, the characterization bears the unmistakable imprint of Twain's worldview as expressed in his other works:

> A God who could make good children as easily as bad, yet preferred to make bad ones; who could have made every one of them happy, yet never made a single happy one; who made them prize their bitter life, yet stingily cut it short; who

> gave his angels eternal happiness unearned, yet required his other children to earn it; who gave his angels painless lives, yet cursed his other children with biting miseries and maladies of mind and body; who mouths justice, and invented hell – mouths mercy, and invented hell—mouths Golden Rules, and foregiveness multiplied by seventy times seven, and invented hell; who mouths morals to other people, and has none himself; who frowns upon crimes, yet commits them all; who created man without invitation, then tries to shuffle the responsibility for man's acts upon man, instead of honorably placing it where it belongs, upon himself; and finally, with altogether divine obtuseness, invites this poor abused slave to worship him! (Twain, 2004, p. 241)

For Twain, the Christian God of the slave owner "gods" is the ultimate privileged aristocrat who makes all of mankind his slave while living in blind hypocrisy. This citation is also an indirect allusion to the slave owner and its use of the word "slave" is very telling. Twain blamed the Christian idea of God for the misery of the world and man, including the pains of slavery. He also blamed the slave owners who saw themselves as gods and subjected human beings to forced servitude. Twain interchanges the two parties freely, for it is the fiction of the Christian God that enables the fiction of slavery to continue.

CONCLUSION

In his later years, Mark Twain became increasingly antagonistic towards society and his criticism correspondingly darker and more acerbic. The first sign of this shift appears in *Pudd'nhead*, for while the latter rehearsed Twain's earlier attacks on slavery, it marks a decisive turning point in the author's tone and aggression. An indisputable reason for this stridency of tone was the fact that the prejudice upon which slavery had rested remained a palpable force in America and led to continuing inequality and abuse. What, in Twain's literary output, had begun as illumination and tempered criticism of the practice and views of slavery slowly metamorphosed into bitterness and resentment against a society that refused to evolve.

John Matteson, Professor of English at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City, is currently offering a free eight-week course on "Literature and Law of American Slavery". The inspiration for such an offering comes from recent racist attacks, involving the death of black citizens at the hands of white police officers. If Twain were to visit the American south today he would find race riots in the streets and an entrenched two-tier system of inequality. Perhaps the author's cynicism and pessimism were well founded, for in the course of his lifetime and despite political reform he experienced the resounding defeat of nascent cultural enlightenment.

Prior to *Pudd'nhead* there is humor and even hope amidst the darkest passages in Twain's work, but in *Pudd'nhead* are sown the seeds of frustration and bitterness. His personal situation continued to deteriorate as he experienced tragedy after tragedy. Just

prior to writing *Pudd'nhead*, Twain had experienced a total financial loss; later, he would lose two daughters and live through the long illness and eventual death in 1904 of his wife. It is in these later years that the dark and bitter tone becomes more pronounced. Gone were the childhood stories of *Tom Sawyer*, and in their place appeared works such as *The Man Who Corrupted Hadleyburg* (1899), *What Is Man?* (1905), *The Mysterious Stranger* (1916), and *Letters from the Earth* (1962).

Hadleyburg was still an attempt by Twain to raise much needed funds, but the tone is more caustic than that of *Pudd'nhead*. The theme of disillusionment coupled with the author's deepening pessimism make for a harsher criticism of American society. *Stranger* and *Letters* continue in the same vein, damning the existence of man and lamenting the debasement of the human. Twain's need to vent his moral indignation finds a voice in *Pudd'nhead*, but the subdued anger expressed in that novel would escalate into a torrent of criticism and a virulent animus towards man: the problem to which there was no solution.

What is Man? is Twain's most philosophical work and one which he withheld from publication during his lifetime. This treatise on the nature of man makes the following assertions as adumbrated by Paul Tice in his introduction to the work Twain referred to as his "bible":

> 1) We are nothing more than machines and originate nothing—not even a single thought; 2) All conduct arises from one motive—self-satisfaction; 3) Our temperament is completely permanent and unchangeable; and 4) Man is of course a product of heredity, and our future, being fixed, is irrevocable—which makes

life completely predetermined. (Twain, 2007, p. i)

This wholesale indictment of man is the end of the road forged by *Pudd'nhead*. Twain's dual goal of social change and cultural enlightenment had failed, culminating in a fatalistic view of man that the author would carry to his grave. In *Pudd'nhead Wilson* we have the beginning of the end of Mark Twain both as a humorist and a literary force for change.

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