CHAPTER III

STEAMBOAT ON THE RIVER

Oh, could I flow-like-thee, and make thy stream
My great example, as it is my theme!
Though deep, yet clear; though gentle, yet not dull,
Strong without rage, without O'erflowing full

--Sir John Denham, Cooper's Hill.

I

PRELUSION

The etymological meaning of theme is "something laid down." In literature it means the subject or topic of a discourse or a treatise. Sometimes the term is used to indicate the subject of a work. Generally it denotes the central thesis or an artistic presentation. A theme may be explicit or implicit. The inner meaning of the novelette, The Dead by James Joyce, for example, becomes clear after a second, third, or even a fourth reading. In 1894, M. Georges Patti, the well known French Critic, in Mercure de France, first turned his attention to themes. He divided the forces governing action into four classes: casual, biologic, egoic, and divine. Dahlstrom classified "literary situation" into five categories—physical, organic, social, egoic, and divine.
Owing to its limited canvas, the theme in a short story becomes its very element. It is, however, not the totality of the story. A good story is necessarily something more than the theme or the elements. The theme in a short story, as opposed to an allegory or a fable, becomes part of a greater whole. It may also be enriched by the existence of various sub-themes, which though held together by the main theme, express its variations and complications. Theme is time and again modified or touched upon by the atmosphere, tone, and style of a story. Sometimes the theme is hinted through the author's style or tone, it is also revealed through the interest and suspense in a story. The ultimate meaning of the story depends on and develops through theme. The significance and purpose of the story is best understood from the way the theme is manifested.2

II

REPRESENTATIVE STORY THEMES

In the field of story-writing there are mainly six representative thematic patterns. They are (1) Adventure (2) Romance (3) Social (4) Mystery (5) Melodrama and (6) Alien-encounter.

In the Adventure Story the tension is between ambition and obstacle. It is primarily the story of the two forces--
the hero and the baffling external or internal forces. The obstacles may be humans, natural forces, or even animals. In tragic adventure story the hero dies in the process. Thus the hero either overcomes the objects or dies heroically. The adventure-heroes also are of two-types. Super-hero is extra-ordinarily gifted and is generally depicted for children. James Pond and The Secret Agent are good examples of the super-hero. The ordinary hero is an ordinary person who is more often dragged into the conflict. This hero is meant for the study of adults. Sometimes the hero has a dual personality like that of the eminent British painter in Arnold Bennett's Buried Alive (1908); or the dissociation of personality of Arthur Lawford in John Walter De-La-Mare's The Return (1915).

The traditional romantic story idealizes permanent love-relationships. Shakespeare has fittingly said that "the course of love never did run smooth." The romantic story exhibits obstacles to love and these are not invincible. Misunderstandings and complications are finally resolved, ending the story with the marriage bells. The romantic story has shown that this relationship has weathered many storms resolving tension between the straight romance, the historical romance, and career romance. Pride and Prejudice, may be taken as an example of the archetype of the romance story in fiction.
Social story deals with incidents, episodes and ideas of social life. The novels of Dickens were the landmarks in this direction. Later the social story became a fertile source for social drama. To-day the social story is becoming increasingly popular especially in the field of short fiction.

Mystery story revolves round the detection of some hidden secret. There are various types of mystery stories e.g.:

1) Classic Detective Story,
2) Hybrid Detective Story,
3) Police Detective Story,
4) National Detective Story.

Charles Dickens serves as archetype in this kind of story. He created the character of the detective, Inspector Field in The Reprinted Pieces and Inspector Bucket in Bleak House. The detective characters of Dickens are as familiar as Sherlock Holmes.

In the Melodramatic story there are sub-plots within sub-plots. There are varieties of characters going through various experiences and they finally get poetic justice. During the nineteenth century, melodrama served to illustrate God's intervention in the affairs of man. In social melodrama the story affirms that there is some kind of
melodrama in the universe itself. The tension in the melodramatic story is generally between a moral order and chaos.

In Alien-encounter story, some human beings encounter a situation which is not human. There may even be human encounters with creatures of another planet. There may also be a monstrous figure like the snowman, a man-made monster, or a supernatural monster like Dracula. In modern times alien encounter theme is being exploited by science fiction. The Greek tradition (as in Oedipus Rex), is of course the archetype in this field. The tension here is between the human and the nonhuman forces.

III
TWAINIAN THEMES

In Mark Twain's short stories, the above-mentioned thematic patterns are broadly reflected. Like a seasoned writer, Mark Twain had his own favourite themes. These themes were the engendering factors of his larger works. They were repeated in his short stories.

Adventure Stories

In his adventure stories, Twain demonstrates that one of the chief difficulties of man is his inability to distinguish between appearance and reality. It is often a
fact that man generally takes a complacent view of things and accepts a belief in semblance, avoiding to probe the reality of a situation. One of the dictates of human temperament is that he must function out of an environment of order, and since his nature is conformist and imitative, he generally forms around himself a set of taboos and customs. Twain further exhibits that the mind of man often perceives truth but the temperamental urge for comfort intervenes and man ultimately turns his back upon reality, Mark Twain's Sunday School stories can be cited as illustration of society's hypothetical nature of acceptance of tradition without observation.) Jim Hunter remarks that "the children of Twain, or of Thomas Baily Aldrich are neither selfish nor malicious and they have a considerable instinctive reaction against what is evil, as distinct from what is merely against the rules." Mark Twain's Bad Boy discovers reality. He is aggressive and disobedient but not evil. His badness, in fact, is admirable for he is freer and more moral than the adults. Despite his own non-conformism, his life-style remains well within the framework of middle class morality and social standards. Twain's Bad Boy sowed wild oats and:

he grew up and married, and raised a large family, and brained them all with an ax one night, and got wealthy by all manner of cheating and rascality; and now he is the
infernalest wickedest scoundrel in his native village, and is universally respected, and belongs to the legislature (8).

He reminds us of bad boys in the nineteenth century American fiction who have the nostalgic yearning for an idealized past. In modern times they have their counterparts in Beatniks, Cowboys, and Hippies, who are disillusioned with the convention-bound society and whose life has become one with nature, romance, and original innocence.

The tale of "Edward Mills' and George Benton" (1880), is another burlesque of Sunday School stories. Edward Mills and George Benton are probably seventh cousins, adopted in their babyhood by childless Brants. They are told by their foster-parents to be honest and truthful. Edward is a source of comfort for Brants but George is disobedient, tells lies, and has to be bribed to behave. After a long wayward life, George kills his brother Edward. George is caught, tried, and condemned to death. Edward's family is eventually destitute, but people collect money and build a memorial church with the sum. The family continues to live in misery and distress and the name of Edward goes into oblivion unwept and unsung:

The cashier's family are in stringent circumstances, now, it is said; but no matter; a lot of appreciative people, who were not willing that an act so brave and true as his should go unrewarded, have
collected forty-two thousand dollars—and built a Memorial Church with it (148-49).

This is the picture of the superficial philanthropy of the society. George kills Edward but it is society that kills the very soul of George and is too proud to admit it.

"Mrs. McWilliams and the Lightning" is the story of the henpeckedness. Mr. Mortimer MacWilliams insulted himself at his wife's importunities during a thunderstorm, by standing on a chair placed on four glasses, being arrayed in militia helmet, pyjamas, and sword, and beating a gong. The climax was reached by the neighbours breaking in. Mortimer discovered the fantastical thunder and lightning to be nothing but the firing of a cannon on a neighbouring hill. "Experience of the MacWilliamses with Membranous Croup" (1875) is in the same line. Seeing their child Penelope chewing a pine stick, Mortimer suggests to his wife, Caroline, to put a stop to it. The wife says that there is no harm. When Penelope coughs, Caroline suspects that she is suffering from Membranous Croup. She orders Mortimer to fetch a doctor who reluctantly comes and after examining the child exclaims that the cough was due to some pine splinters lodged in her mouth:

... women cannot receive even the most palpably judicious suggestion without arguing it; that is, married women (99).
These words of Mr. Macwilliams convey the gist of the story. There may even be an echo here of Olivia's dominating nature.

"A Day at Niagra" recounts Twain's encounter with the Indians. They tore his clothes. They broke his arms and legs and took away his money. A policeman arrested Mark Twain for "disturbing the peace by yelling at people on shore for help, ..." (21).

"A Dying Man's Confession" in Life On the Mississippi (1883), is an example of Twainian tragic adventure story. Karl Ritter, a dying man, tells his story. He was living happily with his wife and daughter in southern United States. One night two soldiers entered the house. One of them, inspite of the protestations of the other, killed his wife and daughter and gagged and tied Karl Ritter. At the sound of voices the intruders ran away. Karl Ritter struggled himself free and traced at Napoleon (Arkansas), both the persons who were responsible for the death of his wife and daughter. The name of the assassin was Franz Adler and that of the milder companion was Kruger. Ritter inadvertently kills Kruger taking him for Adler. Many years later he learns about this mistake from the dying Adler. Now Ritter, in his dying moments, expresses the wish that the buried treasure of four thousand dollars belonging to Kruger (of which Ritter has acquired knowledge), be restored to Kruger's son.
The narrator wanted to go to Napoleon to fulfil Kruger's wish but came to know that the town had long been swallowed by Mississippi and nothing of it left "but a fragment of a shanty and a crumbling brick chimney!" (239).

There are many other adventure stories and folk tales by Mark Twain. "Cannibalism in Cars" (1868); "A Trial" (Roughing It - 1872); "The Joke That Made Ed's Fortune" (Following the Equator - 1897); "The Professor's Yarn" (Life on the Mississippi - 1883); and "A Story Without an End" (Following the Equator - 1897); are some of the prominent ones. The most remarkable feature in these stories is that the adventure consists in the exposure of some hoax or discomfiture. Another thing to be noticed is that Mark Twain never creates a super-hero in his adventure stories. His hero is usually of the folk type. He even directs many of his hoaxes at the reader in such a way that the reader learns that he is also not exempt from the penalties of Adam. Twain uses hoax to show how man's life consists of many illusions and only through laughter can man rise above complexes and illusions even if for a short time. Thus he uses hoax as a symbol showing the nature and condition of man.

Romance:

Turning to the romantic story one has to distinguish between romance and romanticism. Don W. Harrell is correct in suggesting that while he ridiculed romance and
sentimentalism in literature, Mark Twain had some affinity with romantic ideas.\(^6\) Inspite of his love for realism, Twain's regard for the intrinsic values of romanticism is seen in his exaltation of the individual, catholicism, rejection of the artistic conventions, and in his interest in nature. But when romance became commonplace and degenerated to sentimentality whether in love or in requiem for the past, Mark Twain was up against it. In his stories Mark Twain ridiculed "love at first sight and precipitate marriages." He takes a different view from Shakespeare who extolls romantic love. Twain comes closer to Bernard Shaw's observations in Preface to *Plays Pleasant*:

... for idealism, which is only a flattering name for romance in politics and morals, is as obnoxious to me as romance in ethics or religion.\(^7\)

For Mark Twain romance and sentimentality are obnoxious in literature also. He agrees with Shaw that marriage is a solemn contract, not a frivolous domestic excursion.

In the "Legend of Capitoline Venus" (1869), he shows how love is set a price upon and is put to base commercial use. George Arnold, a sculptor in Rome, and Mary love each-other. Her father, however, refuses to give his consent to their marriage unless George produces fifty thousand dollars within six months. It is only when George's
fame as a sculptor gets a meteoric rise through an artistic hoax, that Mary and her father burst in and he gives her hand to the bewildered George.

"A Medieval Romance" (1870), shows Constance, a princess, falling in love with Conrad, a woman in male attire. When spurned by the groaning female, Constance begins to hate Conrad. Suddenly Constance has a baby as her modesty had already been outraged by a villain. Constance names Conrad as the father of the baby. Conrad is not able to reveal that she is in reality a woman and swoons. At this point the author interrupts the narrative to show that he does not know how to unwind this plot. The situation recalls Shakespeare's Olivia in Twelfth Night falling in love with Cesario who is disguised Viola. Shakespeare resolves the situation with a superb touch of genius. Mark Twain leaves the situation with a deft touch of humour. Here also Twain points to the mundane nature of love in human relationships.

The burlesque of the love at first sight continues in "The Esquimau Maiden's Romance" (1893). Lasca is a lovely, slightly plump Esquimau girl. She tells Mr. Twain that her rich father's home is the pride of the tribe. Lasca says that one day a stranger named Kalula came and announced his love for her. Her father ostentatiously showed off his twenty-two fish hooks to him. It was the wealth that gave him the status of a millionaire in his tribe. Soon Lasca's
father accused Kalula of stealing a fish hook. The accused, after the tribal trial, was put to death. Even his beloved Lasca, after the trial, thought him to be a thief. Nine months later as the Annual Sacrifice approached, it was time for Lasca to comb her hair. In it she found the missing fish hook. Both Lasca and her father now began to repent. The romantic love story is further burlesqued in a mock-serious manner in "The £1,000,000 Bank-note" (1893). Henry Adams has a happy marriage with Portia Langham only after he has built a fortune. Extracts from the diaries of "Adam and Eve" show a very commonplace spectacle of the earliest conjugal relationship. Like Mortimer MacWilliams, Adam surrenders his personality before Eve, "Adam is portrayed, in typical domestic comedy, as the lone male who is pestered and harried by the unwelcome attentions of the busybody female; . . . ."  

8 Stanley Brodwin also agrees that Adam and Eve are pitted against the logical absurdities of God's creation. Adam's realization, "Wherever she was there was Eden comes to him only at her grave."  

"The Loves of Alonzo Fitz Clarence and Rosannah Ethelton" (1878) depicts a rich young bachelor falling in love with Rosannah Ethelton of San Francisco. Burley is Alonzo's rival in love. He taps the telephones of Alonzo and Rosannah. One day, copying Alonzo's voice, Burley insults Rosannah. She breaks off her engagement with Alonzo. After a long
time the misunderstanding is cleared, and Rosannah forgives Alonzo over the telephone. She and Alonzo agree to marry on the first of April at 8 A.M. On the appointed day Rosannah is telephonically married to Alonzo. Turley is annoyed at being thwarted and dies accidentally. The story presents a Shakespearean type of love triangle but the solution is very different. The element of parody is implicit in the introduction of telephone-courtship in a period when it was not thought of. 10

Thus all the love stories of Mark Twain have a sort of questioning attitude towards fanciful romance.

Social Stories

In his social stories we see a mingled picture of Mark Twain as an idealist, a realist and also, a humorist. Through this idealist-realistic-humorist relationship revealed in these stories, we become familiar with Twain's complex personality immersed in his personal, autobiographical world. Secondly, because Twain is deeply involved in society, he often leaves his personal world and plunges into the objective world of issues, events, politics, science, and technology. Mark Twain has written social stories on individual and social problems. His social stories deal with money, women, children, and some social problems.

Mark Twain devoted considerable part of his life
acquiring money but he fully realized its deceitful nature. That is why in his stories complementary views are expressed regarding money. In general, the earlier stories tend to allow the acquiring of money through honest or even sportive means. The only character who exhibits no interest in wealth is Satan in The Mysterious Stranger. Twain moves from a little optimistic attitude towards money through wholesome means, to the depiction of the consequences of ill-gotten wealth and finally to the deep distrust in the later works where the drive for riches is looked upon as the least desirable characteristic in man.

"The Facts in the Great Beef Contract" (1870), approves of the individual's efforts to acquire money and deplores red-tapism in Govt. offices for delay in payments. Commenting upon this story, Budd says:

"... 'The Great Beef Contract' [was] inspired by Senator Steward's anger at federal clerks who would not quickly tell him what he wanted to know; beginning obliquely about an inflated claim against the army for beef that was never delivered, it awkwardly switched emphasis near the end to lampoon party beaureaucrats and the windings of official procedure."

The story describes how John Wilson Mackenzie of New Jersey contracted with the Govt. to furnish General Sherman with thirty barrels of beef. Mackenzie followed Sherman everywhere but the beef could not be delivered. Mackenzie
was killed. His successor could not get the payment. At this point the narrator makes a gift of the contract to the clerk, who follows the same procedure and eventually dies.

"The £1,000,000 Bank-Note" (1893), narrates how Henry Adams, a starving American in London is given that sum to subsist for a month. He not only lives well for thirty days by showing the bill but, with the help of a friend, builds a fortune and wins a wife. This story shows that money can be beneficial to an upright man who can withstand the temptations of the "Yellow Peril." Ricki Morgan reminds us that Adams "earns his money not from any gift given him, but by using his intellect—honesty, and generously." Henry Adams has temptations towards wealth but they are of the modest kind and are excusable. His integrity rings true throughout and he is rewarded for his inherent honesty.12

"The Esquimeau Maiden's Romance" (1893), attacks people for adopting a servile attitude towards rich men. Later, Twain explained the background of the story in an essay that "It was a dull person that invented the idea that the American's devotion to the dollar is more strenuous than another's.13 Perhaps he wanted to defend American wealth-magnets by showing that they were much more sensible than the tribesman gloating over twenty-two fish hooks, brass-pieces and two slop-tubs.
"Cecil Rhodes and the Shark (Following the Equator, 1897) deals with the acquirement of money by chance. Cecil Rhodes earned his first million because, while a beach-comber in Australia, he found a London newspaper, only ten days old, in the belly of a shark he had landed. The paper contained the news of Franko-Prussian war. At that time it took a ship fifty days to make the Great Britain-Australia run. Rhodes, knowing that the price of the wool would soon go up in such a case, with the aid of a friend soon captured the market. "The Joke that Made Ed's Fortune" (1897), in Following the Equator, unfolds the sudden prosperity of Ed arising out of a joke played upon him by his friends.

With "$30,000 Bequest" (1904) Mark Twain shows us the other side of the coin. Sally and his wife "Aleck" are foolishly led to believe that they would inherit $30,000. They start fantasizing about speculations on amassing a fortune. Twain comments with an obvious moral tone, "Vast wealth has temptations which totally and fatally undermine the moral structure of persons not habituated to its possession." At the end he epitomizes his thoughts in the words:

Vast wealth, acquired by sudden and unwholesome means, is a snare. It did us no good, transient were its feverish pleasures; yet for its sake we threw away our sweet and simple
and happy life--let others take warning by us (522).

Thus Twain, who formerly treated windfalls sportingly, now brings about their tragic implications. The Fosters could not withstand the sin of avarice and it resulted in their annihilation.14

The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg (1899), and The Mysterious Stranger (1916), show the depraving and corrupting influence of money. The sack containing $40,000 left by a "mysterious big stranger," is sufficient to eat away the much boasted morality and integrity of the nineteen principal citizens of Hadleyburg and money becomes the cause of trouble for a noble soul like Father Peter in The Mysterious Stranger.

These stories, like his novels, show that Mark Twain has no objection to justly earned wealth within reasonable limits. He is, however, against the accumulation of wealth through unjust means or gloating over it in the manner of Lasca's father. He is against such wealth that kills the person's conscience. He "had no more conscience than a millionaire," remarked Mark Twain in his speech at the dinner of the "Freundschaft Society."15 While he was equally aware that "the lack of money was the root of all evil,"16 he also realized "The real yellow peril: GOLD:"17

In his attitude concerning money Mark Twain can be
compared with Shakespeare. In his sonnets Shakespeare raises gold to spiritual heights purifying it of all material taint. In his great tragedies like Hamlet and King Lear there exists a contempt for gold. Shakespeare, however, could achieve a cohesion of the material and spiritual modes and also maintain the aesthetic distance which Twain could not achieve. He seems to be obsessed with the material aspect of money as he is unable to get over its fears and doubts.18

Critics and reviewers have been generally unhappy about Mark Twain's delineation of female characters. The customary view holds that limitations of Twain's background together with his own faulty and derivative literary tastes in treating women, sentimentalized and generalized to a point of vaporous unreality. Bernard DeVoto complained that white women of marriagable age are not to be found anywhere in Twain. He laments that there is no love story in Mark Twain. "Women seldom have husbands and men seldom have wives unless they are beyond middle age."19 In his short stories, however, one meets white women of marriagable age. Mary in "Legend of Capitaline Venus" is married before her middle age. In "A Medieval Romance" the girl is of marriagable age. It is another thing that she gets into snares of love. "The Loves of Alonzo Fitz Clarence and Rosannah Ethelton," despite its melodramatic manner, ends in marriage. Marget of The Mysterious Stranger is again
a young lady capable of all self-sacrifice for her father.

Women in "The Trials of Simon Erikson," "A True Story," and "Was It Heaven? or Hell?" are mothers having tremendous love for their children. They substantiate that whatever be the circumstances, there is no ebb in mother's love for her children. Experience of the McWilliamses with Membranous Croup," and "Mrs. McWilliams and the Lightning" are examples of fussy dominating wives; while Mrs. Mayfair in "The Death Disk" and Henry's dead wife in "The Californian's Tale," represent wives of gentle and devoted disposition.

"Eve's Diary" too, portrays a woman having possessive love for Adam. Twain also satirizes Eve's passion for ornamentation and her tendency of undue interference in the affairs of men. Mark Twain's diaries of Adam and Eve, while depicting human relationships also illuminate the central concept of the binding force of humour in terrestrial existence and also in God's creation and man's fall.20

There is thus a comprehensive variety of female types throughout his short stories. These female figures can, on occasion, achieve a complexity comparable to Twain's most memorable figures. This complexity stems mainly from their involvement in the issues and ideas that continue to account for much of interest in Twain's writing. While
Shakespeare enthrones woman as the queen of his comic world.

Mark Twain, like Ruskin, sees woman as the queen of her own garden. He is in agreement with Ruskin:

And wherever a true wife comes, this home is always round her. The stars may be over her head; the gloworm in the night-cold grass may be the only fire at her foot; but home is yet wherever she is; and for a noble woman it stretches far round her, better than ceiled with cedar, or painted with vermillion, shedding its quiet light far, for those who else were homeless. 21

Mark Twain respects woman as a true wife, and a loving mother like Virgilia and Volumnia in Shakespeare. Along with women, Mark Twain had great love for children. Very few children figure in his short stories. It is obvious that he had sympathy for boys who commit youthful excesses. His story "Bad Little Boy" is akin to Stevenson's essay "Apology For Idler's." The only little girl that appears in his short stories is the little Abby, of "The Death Disk." She is a fanciful little creature. Mark Twain was more realistic in his picture of boys than of girls, though in real life he had preference for girls. 22

Many of Mark Twain's short stories have a humorous satire directed against social problems. They assail the elongating social problems. They attack the dilatory habits of the Govt. offices, yellow journalism, the tricks of watchmakers and canvassers. The stories, also, at places,
draw one's attention to gimmicks of lawyers and the protracted judicial procedure. His story "Luck" (1888) shows how merit is not the sole criterion for promotions in army and other Govt. undertakings. "The Belated Russian Passport" (1902), makes a dig against long winding diplomatic process of the passport system. These stories exhibit Twain's hatred for sham. Mark Twain was a great social critic. He was not always factually correct or consistent but he cared deeply for the rights and happiness of the individual. He wanted the American society to improve its image as the shining example for the world to emulate.

Even in these stories he does not fail to exploit the comic modes of writing, notably "Literary Purlesque."

**Mystery Stories**

Charles Dickens and Edgar Allan Poe were among those who attracted Mark Twain's attention as a young man. Although he said that he owed nothing to Dickens, Twain was all praise for Poe's art as late as 1896. Dickens and Poe have one common achievement to their credit. Dickens created the first detective story in English literature; Poe was the father of the detective story in America. Soon after their success in the genre, there was a boom of detective story writing in America which inundated the reading public. The standard, however, of most of the mushroom growth in this newly emerging genre
was awful. Franklin R. Rogers has illustrated the absurdity in detective novels. In his introduction to Mark Twain's *Simon Wheeler Detective* (1963), Rogers shows how Allan Pinkerton's detective stories have accumulation of unnecessary details and result in waste of time and effort. The detective novels were looked upon as depraving. Nevertheless, many writers and publishers of such novels and stories, despite their humble stature, amassed great fortunes through the fantastic sales that their thrillers enjoyed.

Among the most popular writers were Allan Pinkerton, Anna Katherine, and at the end of the nineteenth century, the most successful of all, Arthur Conan Doyle. The fact that Mark Twain read some of these best selling authors is indicated by the slight general influence in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer*. The more distinct evidence of Twain's having read Pinkerton and Conan Doyle is there in two of his short stories. His satirical treatment of the workings of the detectives as well as the police is seen in the stories, "The Stolen White Elephant," (1887), and "A Double Barreled Detective Story" (1902). In tales like "The Stolen White Elephant," says Mr. Brooks, "he delights in general smash up of a world that does not seem to be worth saving." Elaborating the observations of Brooks, Louis J. Budd has observed that Mark Twain wants to stress the fact that law and order
cannot be maintained through its hired protectors. The travesty of truth at the hands of detectives, their dishonesty and hollow inefficiency are vigorously highlighted.  

Some critics have found Conan Doyle's "A Study in Scarlet" as a possible source for Twain's "A Double-Barreled Detective Story." Jeanne Ritumano thinks that in this story Mark Twain conveys that "life is not so neat as fiction." Kraus W. Keith also notices parallel developments in the two stories. However, the two stories differ in that Doyle takes the reader through a series of well-ordered events to the triumph of justice whereas one finds no attempt in Mark Twain's story to "balance the scales of justice." Mark Twain portrays the detective as alienated from the society as the criminal. Even before 1882, Twain was ridiculing the inept detective. In 1877 he attempted to complete a play based on the character of Simon Wheeler Detective. Returning in the mid 1880's to Simon Wheeler, Twain, still without success, attempted to transform the play into a novel. His failure with Simon Wheeler, however, did not prevent Twain from succeeding in Pudd'nhead Wilson and Tom Sawyer - Detective. But the characters Pudd'nhead Wilson and Tom Sawyer, unlike Simon Wheeler and Sherlock Holmes of "A Double-Barreled Detective Story," are successful as detectives and as such are not subject to ridicule.

Although unable to resist the temptation to continue
satirizing detective, Mark Twain, after completing _Huckleberry
Wilson_ and _Tom Sawyer Detective_, devoted most of his time
and energy to depicting a serious type of detective. As
Mark Twain became more and more intrigued by and involved
in the concept of duality, he created a character that would
best reveal the division of many to himself. That character
was known by such names as the dream-architect, the
superintendent of dreams, Satan Jr., or Philip Traum, very
likely evolved as a result of Twain's interest in the
detective.

The serious type of detective and _The Mysterious
Stranger_ share the common task of discovering or of helping
man to discover the inner reality. It is no wonder that
the two are merged into one. Thus it is seen that the man
who corrupted Hadleyburg, the mysterious stranger to the
town is described as "an amateur detective," that Satan in
the body of William Meidling is a detective who flees
from Father Peter.

In the "Print Shop" version of _The Mysterious Stranger_,
Satan cries "I am your servant, have revealed you to
yourself and set you free." Like a detective, the mysterious
stranger in his various guises forces a man to recognize
his own duality and acknowledges both the artificial and
the real selves; evil and the good together reside in him.
It seems Mark Twain hopes that such recognition will result
in man's liberation from the inherited, perverted illusions that enslave him. The above tales display Mark Twain's interest in mystery stories. It would however be attributing too much to Mark Twain if the contention of Max Byrd that "one of the most prolific American detective writers, surprisingly, was Mark Twain," is accepted. Inspite of the high incidence of crime and mystery, "Twain cannot be called a writer devoted to detective story-writing."  

Melodramatic Stories

Some of the stories are in the melodramatic tradition. They are sentimental in nature and have a conventional climax. Not all of his stories in this category are traditional in nature. The themes of many of Mark Twain's short stories are a deliberate refutation of the traditional treatment. They are generally not the vindication of poetic justice. Twain, like Shakespeare, believed that poetic justice is in flagrant contradiction with the facts of life.

"Cannibalism in Cars," and "The Invalid's Story" are both "railroad adventures." The first yarn reminisces a situation of a group of men marooned in a snow-storm. When their food is exhausted, they elect fellow candidates for breakfast, dinner, and supper. "The Invalid's Story" portrays a middle-aged man gone prematurely old. His health got shattered when he accompanied the decaying dead-body of his friend in a rail car. The coffin package got exchanged
and there was actually a box of rifles with a package of lumburger cheese placed upon it. Here, also Mark Twain achieves a melodramatic effect through burlesque. "As the penetrating, nauseating odor mounts, Clemens rises to the height of comic invention." The story is coarse yet it compels a smile in the midst of indignation. The story-effect is further heightened by the use of colloquial understatement.

"A Curious Experience" and "The Death Disk" are burlesques of historical romance. The time of the former is the American Civil War. In it, a boy fond of staging dime-novel-adventures is mistaken for a confederate spy and is the cause of much ado about nothing. The latter story is sentimentally melodramatic. Abby, the heroine and the charming little daughter of an army officer under Oliver Cromwell, unknowingly, almost sends her father to the firing squad for showing Sergius-like heroism. Later, with equal childlike innocence, she saves him.

Another group of tales in this category is the "moralized legends." They also treat the Hadleyburgian theme of sudden wealth. There is of course no big mysterious stranger here. This lends comparatively, more of a human element to the stories and also makes them more realistic. However, they lack, to some extent, the universal appeal of The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg. "Was It Heaven? or
Hell?" (1903), concerns with the puritan New England morality. It conveys the idea that sometimes a well-meaning lie is better than the devastating truth. The family is forced to lie to let an ailing woman die in peace. "The Five Boons of Life," is a grim fairytale. The man is not able to choose the "dear sweet, kindly gift" - the gift of death. He finds himself left with "the wanton insult of the old age."

"The Californian's Tale" (1893) gives a sentimentalized account of the melancholic fits of a brooding widower. The Californian miner's wife went to see her people six months after her marriage nineteen years ago. While she was returning on a Saturday, the Indians captured her and she was never heard of again. The husband used to get periodical fits of mental depression when that time of the year came round. Then he would imagine that she was coming back, His good neighbours would come and drug him to sleep. Then when he got up he would be normal for another year. Thus the fellow miners kept the Californian back from getting wild.

"A True Story" develops the familiar theme of mother-child separation, the sufferings of mother and their accidental reunion. "'A True Story'" - "the story of the old negress - was a really great thing, amazingly natural & humorous, & touching even to the drawing of tears." The story creates a feeling of nostalgia rooted in the
author's personal reminiscences in retrospect. However, there is rather so much of extravagance that it becomes telling on the "bounds of artistic restraint," In fact the story is the revelation of the latent pity in the author's self in strife with rage.

In many of these sentimental and pathetic tales in Mark Twain, dealing with human and social misery, the waif is the major theme. The waif is generally the naive observer of social folly or he is the clever, plucky ragamuffin who thrives on adversity while thumbing his nose at the establishment. With his realistic tendencies, Mark Twain uses waif as the instrument of social criticism portraying the plight of the street urchins and middle-class children, unsympathetic with elders and worldly-wise men. In using waif as the central character, Mark Twain falls in line with Dickens and Hugo. The waif is a symbolic victim and an ingenuous onlooker of society.

Alien Encounter Stories

Mark Twain's stories often accord us a view of human encounter with other forces. They may be dream fancies or, animals showing human attributes or supernatural agencies. His alien-encounter stories reveal him as a satirist, an analyst, and one seeing through the mind's eye.

As a literal event in sleep, dreams provided him with
a fascinating subject for discussion. Generally he found them to be a source of entertainment or emotional cathartics. Late in life, he developed a theory of man's Dream-self. Upon this point, Mark Twain was repeatedly insistent: dreams are not simply phantoms but are rather experiences of another world. The story "A Curious Dream" (1870) is "an exposure of the condition of an unkempt cemetry." The narrator meets in dream, corpses who are leaving a cemetry because of its dilapidated condition. The stately remnant cautions the narrator thus:

... The community that can stand such graveyards as those we are emigrating from can stand anything a body can say about neglected and forsaken dead that lie in them (39).

The Mysterious Stranger illustrates Mark Twain's theory of man's Dream-self. At the end Satan takes Theodor by surprise:

'It is true, that which I have revealed to you; there is no God, no universe, no human race, no earthly life, no heaven, no hell. It is all a dream - a grotesque and foolish dream..." (676).

Here, dreams provide Mark Twain with a fictional arena in which, from a comic point of view, mankind's preposterous self-delusions are caustically exposed.

Though attracted by dreams, Mark Twain was not a dreamer. Bellamy is correct to say:
His inclination to engage in dream fancies, to parade dream figures in his mind, was not the last resort of a tired old man, wrecked by personal disasters; the tendency had grown in him steadily, from the early travel books on.31

For Twain, dream was a versatile metaphor, a charming subject for intellectual speculation, and at times even a nocturnal muse. Throughout his life he remained sensitive to the complexities of dream phenomena and the uses of dreams in his literature reflect this complexity. The problem of Twain's protagonists is to distinguish dream from reality, but in his final works they find that reality and dream are synonymous.

Twain has treated man's encounter with the animal world in a unique manner. He utilizes the animal world to create humour through language that is fresh, concrete, vivid, and strikingly accurate. In applying animal imagery to describe human traits, Twain uses the sharp sensorial impressions derived from the beast to magnify a character's personality so that he appears ludicrous. The humour derived from the incongruity of character, language, and action identifies burlesque and often satirizes the precise human action under scrutiny. Animals visualize scenes and allow Twain to create a mood and temperament through which he projects his character's thoughts and feelings or foreshadows events. Mark Twain's use of animals is different
from other South-Western humorists. In the animal-world, Twain is a participant rather than the spectator of a narrative action. Twain avoids rather than revels in the details of sex, brutality, and death and has decorum which is absent in most of the Southwestern humorists.

Mark Twain begins his animal lore with the popular humorous folklore sketch of "Jumping Frog." He became well-known to the public with this lofty vein of humour. Then comes "Tom Quartz" the "dynamite cat" of Roughing It (1872). Twain was always very fond of cats. In his notebook he wrote:

Of all God's creatures, there is only one that cannot be made the slave of the lash. That one is the cat. If man could be crossed with the cat it would improve man, but it would detriorate the cat. 32

This was Mark Twain's fancy for cats in life. But it is different with cats on his pages. Here he derives fun at the cost of the cats. In "Tom Quartz" while he retains the anecdotal and dialectical nature of the "Jumping Frog," there is also an element of caricature and cruel surprise. 33

"Jim Baker's Bluejay Yarn" brings forth a jay which tries to fill the knot-hole in the roof of a house with acorns. He calls many jays from the distance to witness the feat. One of the jays discovers that the hole is in reality a house. They have to content themselves with
laughter at their own cost. R. Galen Hansor, recognizing the disassembled human traits in the story writes:

One of the most profound methods of shedding light on the behaviour of the human creature is by the indirect use of lesser creatures and their doings which, when examined, provide a looking glass for our own self-understanding. It is this genius that lurks behind every word of Twain's 'What Stumped the Bluejays'.

The subject matter of the story arises from the artistic blending of the imaginative fancy and an allegory of human life.

Insects become more active in "Some Learned Fables For Boys and Girls" (1875). Forest insects hold a convention to send a commission to explore the human world. The scientific expedition is used to expose with tall tale-humour the hollowness of human pretensions.

An active role is given to animals in "A Dog's Tale" and "A Horse's Tale." This may be less realistic but it is more appealing in approach to the animal world. In these tales the author implies that we, through better and better understanding of man, can come to love his fellow-creatures and treat them with due tenderness.

Mark Twain inherited kindness to animals from his mother. In 1904, he recorded in his notebook that he was staying at Tyringham in a rough weather—"we built a fire
in my room. Then clawed the logs out and threw water, remembering that there was a brood of swallows in the chimney." In the portrayal of animal character with human attributes, Twain can be compared with Chaucer and Spenser. His animal stories have much resemblance with Chaucer's Nonne's Priestess's Tale and Spenser's Mother Huberd's Tale. In all of them there is a fine admixture of human and animal traits and animals are used dexterously to "comment upon human nature and institutions."

Cosmic atmosphere is introduced in "Extracts from Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven." This visit belies all traditional belief about celestial bliss. It shows that even in heaven human weaknesses remain so. Stormfield represents Twain's ambivalence towards theological and philosophical questions of existence. The blending of Mark Twain's disposition with that of intrepid sea-captain who dares the gates of heaven is a mild satire on fundamentalist Christian belief, a satire humbled with verve and humour.

The introduction of Satan in The Mysterious Stranger shows Mark Twain's sympathy with the "Archangel ruined." Blake said that "Milton was of the devil's party without knowing it." Mark Twain was of the same party, knowing it very well. Satan shows that material progress is of no value as human nature remains "morally inert." In stories like "The Five Boons of Life," and The Mysterious
**Stranger** Mark Twain introduces the human encounter with death—the only boon in life. It is looked upon as an escape from persecutions which are primarily the result of man's exploitation. The ending of life thus plays a vital role in Mark Twain's writings. Shakespeare wavered whether "To be or not to be," R.L. Stevenson was not certain whether the only realisable wish of death was worth-realizing. Mark Twain is grateful to Adam and Eve for bringing death into the world. For him the only gift of the fairy is death.

**IV**

**WIDE VARIETY**

Mark Twain's short stories, cover a wide variety of themes. They reveal his personal, objective, and abstract or universal experiences. These themes present Twain's background, personality, and character shaped by his experiences on Mississippi. They also explain the sources of his literary power and his views on education, journalism, politics, morality, and literature. His story themes display alternating moods of high and low spirits. In order to ease the tension he gives the stories a sort of comic relief through humour and adventures in folklore. His adventure-stories have a picaresque element in which the central figure moves aimlessly through the plot and the events evolve more or less haphazardly.
The stories written in his later period are a little sardonic, not having the overwhelming optimism of the earlier period. Critics find the writing of the later period less interesting than his great works like "The Jumping Frog." Many critics have charged Mark Twain of cynicism due to his later writings. While the charge is open to question, the fact remains that stories like *The Mysterious Stranger* are predominantly low-spirited.
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12. Ricki Morgan, "Mark Twain's Money Imagery in 'The $1,000,000 Bank Note' and 'The $30,000 Bequest,'" Mark Twain Journal, 19, No. 1 (Winter 1977-78), 6-10. In subsequent citations the above journal is abbreviated to MTJ.


17 Ibid., p. 12.


22 See Wagenknecht, Mark Twain, p. 127; and Tonny Tanner, "The Literary Children of James and Clemens," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 16 (December 1961), 205-18. Tanner shows that while Mark Twain used a boy protagonist, James used a girl protagonist. Both these protagonists have the effects of sowing on "the barren strands" of adult morality, "the seed of the moral life." Both of them have to face the threat of having their inward, pure morality polluted by adult social codes. The young Jamesian heroines die or lose their moral innocence by gaining moral insights, Mark Twain, however, saw no dividend in the exchange of innocence for maturity.

23 Cf. Budd, p. 71; also see Howard G. Eketzhold, "Of Detectiv es and Their Derring-Do: The Genesis of Mark Twain's 'The Stolen White Elephant'," Studies in American Humor, 2 (1976), 183-95; Ellery Queen have shown series of stories parodying Sherlock Holmes. They have, however, not listed "A Double-­Arreled Detective Story" in the list in their article "The Detective Short Story," The Saturday Review of Literature, Nov. 22, 1941, pp. 5-7. Ellery Queen is the pen-name of two, writers, Manfred B. Lee and Frederick Dannay.


26 Baldanza, Mark Twain, p. 101.


30 Baldanza, p. 179.

31 Bellamy, p. 218.


36 See Wagenknecht, Mark Twain, p. 133.

37 See Budd, Mark Twain, p. 181.
CHAPTER IV
THE TROUBLED AIR

If to look at truth in the face
and not to resent it when it's unpalatable
and take human nature as you find it,
... is to be cynical, then I suppose
I am a cynic. --

-- William Somerset Maugham: The Pack of Beyond

I
MARK TWAIN AND CYNICISM

Cynicism is one of those words that have undergone much of semantic deterioration. The history of Cynicism as a movement is also rather irregular. The original sources to the study of cynicism are almost extinct. Our knowledge of it is limited to anecdotal accounts or doxographical material. Originally, it was propounded as a way of life by Antisthenes in ancient Greece, a disciple of Socrates. Diogenes later carried forward the principles of cynicism. The main postulate of this conception was that real happiness could be gained only through "virtuous action." A cynic looked upon extreme asceticism as an ideal state of life reducing material needs to the minimum and that was often fulfilled through charity. Many cynics were, however, more