CHAPTER II

TWAIN'S TECHNIQUE
The history of Twain criticism points to two different modes of critical response. On one side are the detractors of Twain who present him as a thwarted genius, reducing him to the stature of a mere buffoon and an unskilled artist. The second stand is taken by critics who stress the richness of themes and the presence of what may suitably be termed as 'Americanness', in Twain's work.

This current of opposing opinions was first triggered off by the Brooks-Devoto controversy of the early thirties. Van Wyck Brooks, in his highly influential book, *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* (1920), called Twain a 'wounded genius' whose work suffered artistically because of his concern for the popular taste of his times and the adverse effect of the restricting frontier conditions. Using psycho-analytical tools, Brooks also held responsible Twain's mother, his wife, his friends particularly William Dean Howells, and his editors for exercising a harmful control on his work. Brooks' charges were answered one by one by Bernard Devoto in his almost equally impressive book *Mark Twain's America* (1932). Devoto considered Twain as the embodiment of the best in western culture and asserted that far from being thwarted by the frontier conditions, Twain's genius really flourished under them.
Most of the critical judgement about Twain is derived from the positions taken by Brooks and Devoto. However, judging from the perspective of age it can be said that Brooks is hardly convincing in his assertion that humour proved the undoing of Twain the serious artist. In fact Twain owes his evergrowing popularity to his fusion of humour with social criticism. Brooks’ charge that Twain was not a satirist because he did not have any system to substitute for the one he was criticizing is also not very tenable. Throughout his literary career, despite the pessimism of later years, Twain emerges as a great humanitarian concerned with fundamental human problems. His love for an instinctive and pretension-free life, his hatred of dictatorship and imperialism and his trust in democracy, and his contempt for the stifling influence of institutionalized religion are issues which eluded Brooks’ analysis.

Devoto’s position is also not very sound. His work gives the impression that he was a better historian than a literary critic. Hence his arguments about the literary merit of Twain’s work, which are very few, are to be taken very cautiously.

Though pitted against each other, Brooks and Devoto stand on the same platform in at least one respect: in
missing the various dimensions of Twain the man and the artist. Ironically, both fail to appreciate that Twain was both a skilled craftsman and a thinker who had much to offer by way of his acute observations on life. And because of the influence of Brooks and Devoto the criticism on Twain appearing after them, seems largely devoted to Twain 'the man and the thinker' rather than Twain 'the artist and the thinker.' Another reason why Twain 'the artist and the thinker' has not been studied, is the critics' undue reliance on Twain's own pronouncements about his art. He projected himself as a non-literary person and a 'jackleg novelist,' a myth which was further perpetuated by Devoto.

Whatever be the reasons, the man dominates the artist in Twain criticism. Thus Edward Wagenkecht's monumental work _Mark Twain: The Man and His Work_ (1935) highlights his personality rather than his works and his art despite the writer's intentions to study his works and his art. In fact Delancy Ferguson was the first critic who in his book _Mark Twain: Man and Legend_ (1943) pointed out that Twain was not a folk humorist but a highly skilled man of letters. After Ferguson, some other critics like Gladys Bellamy, Edger M. Branch, Richard P. Adams and James M. Cox turned to what Lewis Leary describes as "the legitimate province of literary criticism— concern
with what a man wrote rather than why he wrote it."¹

The present researcher feels that Twain's artistic method was unique in many ways. His art implies a vision of the universe, a philosophy of life and a system of values. However, if this philosophy of life had been presented in the form of a sermon or treatise it would not have stood the test of time. The ideas of philosophers and religious teachers lose their force with the passage of time simply because they appeal to discursive reason. But a novel is neither a religious sermon nor a textbook of sociology. It appeals to imagination and distributes and then realings sympathies. Its success cannot be judged in rational terms because a poet or a novelist is not a thinker in the ordinary sense of the term. He is, rather, a presentational thinker.

Twain was also, like any true literary artist, a presentational thinker. Incapable of sustained logical speculation, he could never have expressed himself in terms other than literary. He approaches every problem in terms of action, character, setting and metaphor. His greatest work The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is remarkable as much for the values which are arranged in a coherent scheme as for presenting a moral judgement in an artistic manner.
In his other writings especially of his later period because of his mental dilemmas and the shattering of many of his illusions, he could not fully succeed in achieving either consistent thematic unity or a detached point of view or a plausible moral judgement. Despite this his later writings are read even today which is a pointer to the fact that he was able to transmute his vision of life into art forms.

In the present chapter an attempt is made to throw some light on Twain's artistic method. Twain's reliance on realism and humour, his experiments in the field of point of view and his presentation of certain characters for the twin purposes of comedy and satire will be discussed during the course of this chapter. A study of Twain's use of masks and the problems it presented before him, will also form part of this chapter.

II

A very notable feature of Twain's art is his reliance on realism as a literary technique. His decision to portray life truthfully in his novels guided his themes, plots and characters. The age-old truism that a writer's life provides him material for his writings is especially true
in the case of Mark Twain. His personal experience was of primary importance to him. In fact he pointed out on many occasions that a writer should not attempt anything which he has not lived through and experienced. Thus when a budding writer asked for Twain's advice, he suggested:

"Literature is an art, not an inspiration. And its capital is experience — and you are too young, yet, to have much of that in your bank to draw from... Is it hypocritical to notice these little blemishes? No - not in this case; for I wish to impress upon this truth that the moment you venture outside your own experience you are in peril — don't do it."

Twain was also very clear about how a writer gains this experience. A writer builds up a store-house of experiences not only by conscious observation of reality but more importantly, by unconscious absorption of the facts of life. And this store-house of experience is very often provided by the writer's acute observation of the life of his own immediate surroundings. Twain's essay "What Paul Bourget thinks for us" gives an idea of the role of the novelist's experience in the making of his art. He writes:

"Does the native American novelist try to generalize the nation? No, he lays
plainly before you the ways and speech and life of a few people grouped in a certain place — his own place — and that is one book. In time he and his brethren will report to you the life and the people of the whole nation... 3

However, experience alone does not make a writer a writer. "The observer of the peoples has to a classifier, a Grouper, a Deducer, a Generalizer, a Psychologizer, and, first and last a Thinker." Twain wants to see these qualities in a novelist because, in his opinion, the novelist's task consists of not merely reporting the exterior of a nation but also its interior — its soul, its life, its speech and its thought. His view of realism does not admit of mindless adherence to literal reality. His emphasis is not on facts but rather on a sense of facts, a seeming of reality which distinguishes his realism from the crude photographic realism of a writer like Theodore Dreiser.

This approach to realism is particularly reflected in his treatment of history in his works and his opinion of historical writings. He was greatly influenced by what has been called as the interpretation of history. "What he considered one of the highest literary arts was that of vivifying history, of evoking what was essentially life in the flux of time. Toward that intellectual art, realism
of the sort... was an intelligent stepping stone."

Of all the historians he read — and he read so many — Lord Macaulay held the greatest artistic interest for him. It was particularly Macaulay's genius of imbuing history with life or, to put it in other words, his transmutation of life into history that appealed to Twain. He fully agreed with Macaulay that history is not merely an organization of facts arranged in a chronological order; rather it provides him an imaginative vivification of the past. In *A Connecticut Yankee* Twain set out to picture the life of sixth-century England. In *The Prince and the Pauper* his intention was to give a sense of the harsh and inhuman laws of the fifteenth century. The meditative passages of *Following the Equator*, particularly the ones where Twain speaks of his inexplicable fascination for India, bear the influence of the Macaulayan art of historical realization.

However, it must be said that Twain's comprehensive view of realism and his appreciation for Macaulay's approach do not run counter to his emphasis on a writer's personal experience as providing him with literary material. Twain's broad view of realism also takes into consideration the lesser aspects of realism. It was because of his broad view that he was able to use his own past in his fiction.
William Dean Howells, a close friend of Twain and a powerful influence on his work, is generally considered the father of the movement for realism in literature in America. Twain's support to the cause of realism is generally overlooked simply because critics do not take his opinions on art and the technique of literature very seriously. Another factor behind their neglect is Twain's own work which is a fine blend of realism and idealism. However, in his criticism of other writer's work, he fully identified himself with the cause of realism. He appreciated Zola's gloomy view of human nature which illuminated some of his own agonies. Howe's *The Story of a Country Town* moved him because of its attained sense of life. In the case of William Dean Howells Twain was more emphatic and clear in his praise. His evaluation of Macaulay, Howe and Zola was not meant for publication, gathered as it is from his desultory statements on artistic method, but he extolled Howells in print and was all praise for him throughout his life especially for Howells realistic portrayal of life and his artful mastery of his material.

Giving his support to the cause of realism, Twain vehemently criticized James Fenimore Cooper and Sir Walter Scott. In the essay "Cooper's Literary Offenses" Twain
took Cooper to task for his defiance of the 'eternal laws of nature.' In his opinion The Deerslayer belongs to the decadent domain of romantic fiction. However, Twain is hardly justifiable in his evaluation of Cooper's art because he misses its symbolic and mythic implications.

Talking about Twain's criticism of Cooper's work, Sydney Krause points out that "from one situation to the next the theme reverberate that Natty's is the celebrated idyll of the new Adam, redeemed by Christian sensibility and restored to Eden. To these reverberations Twain is deaf."6

In fact the most important reason behind Twain's vitriolic attack on Cooper was his feeling that with the revival of the historical novel in the 1890s Cooper and Scott had threatened the very basis of realism in America. By criticising Cooper as the symbol of dead and decadent romanticism, Twain was simply defending himself as well as the cause of realism in an aggressive manner.

Twain's criticism of Sir Walter Scott for failing to write realistic fiction is even more bitter. He feels that Scott's protagonists are not truly human and admirable; his characters are not real types, and his sentiments are false and insincere. In the second part of Life on the
Twain noted that Sir Walter Scott had a very evil influence on the southern writers. He is of the opinion that there is a lot of talent in the south but "its work can gain but slight currency under present conditions; the authors write for the past, not the present, they use obsolete forms and a dead language." As is clear from this criticism, Twain slightly exaggerated the things. But here, as in his assault on Cooper, Twain was speaking as an advocate of the cause of realism, southern realism in this instance.

It will be interesting to see how much Twain himself conformed to his theory of fiction. His own experience of life, particularly of his town Hannibal and his river years, provided him the material for his fiction at least upto the writing of *A Connecticut Yankee*. After this book his success in transforming his experience into art was only sporadic simply because he came to have doubts about his experience itself.

Twain repeatedly said that during his years as boat-pilot, he got the opportunity of meeting a variety of people. He was able to observe the life-style of sophisticated people as well as those of primitive types. His fiction also shows his life-long concern with Ordinary and
simple individuals who have an essentially primitive and folk mind. The most important characteristic of this folk mind is its reliance on common sense. A number of his characters like Huck, Jim, Captain Stormfield, Joan of Arc, Laura before her seduction, Tom though partially, and others have something of folk mind in them.

The interest in the primitive mind not only provided Twain his protagonists, but also some patterns of story and plot. Robert A. Wiggins develops the thesis that in most of Twain’s stories “the hero dreams of performing some action embodying one of the aspirations of the folk; the dream finally comes true, and he actually does become a hero. The basic plot embodies all the folk conceptions of what on a philosophical level may be referred to as the problem of appearance and reality.” Thus the dream of success in *The Gilded Age*, Tom’s essentially elemental dreams for success and adventure in *Tom Sawyer*, Huck’s noble dream of a just order in *Huckleberry Finn*, Tom Canty’s dream of being a king in *The Prince and the Pauper* and Hank Morgan’s dreams of creating an ideal, progressive society in *A Connecticut Yankee* are only variants of the essential dream of the folk mind. Wiggins further notes that “the only discipline Twain had for
controlling his material was his realistic style, which made him render the general forces he was trying to control into concrete, specific, accurate prose.  "9

In his fiction Twain was very careful to provide a factual basis for various events. However, he was concerned more with the inner reality of events and not merely with the surface realism of the naturalists. Thus in The Gilded Age he parodies actuality and is very selective in the presentation of various details. In Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn also Twain wants to achieve moral truth to nature. Huckleberry Finn is especially dependent on his personal experience. The same is true of Roughing It and Life on the Mississippi which are fictional autobiographies of Twain.

Not only was Twain concerned with the actuality of events, but also with characters who existed in real life. For this he was heavily indebted to his childhood, his family, his acquaintances and the reports of newspapers. He in fact never intellectually left his town Hannibal. Thus in The Gilded Age the Hawkins family is modelled on Twain's own family and the idea of Tennessee land scheme is suggested by Twain's father's preoccupation with the land he owned. Laura was either an early sweetheart of Twain or the famous Laura whose trial evoked a lot of controversy in his time.
In the preface of *Tom Sawyer*, Twain himself says that Tom's character has been modelled on three boys he knew and that Huck existed in real life.

The writing of *A Connecticut Yankee* proved to be a turning-point in Twain's experiments with the technique of realism. In this novel Twain slightly departed from his theory because of his propagandists's intentions. His writing, from *A Connecticut Yankee* onwards show his gradual drift towards the Fantastic and the Absurd. Time and again the naive philosopher in him comes in the open doing immense harm to Twain the novelist. The early style was suitable only for describing the life and the environment of the essentially folk characters. But now he could hardly rely merely on realism to present his mechanistic theories. Life had become meaningless for him, bereft of any purpose. He had lost faith in God too. In this hopeless situation his obsession with fantasy was not only essential but also natural. The disharmonious relationship with the universe resulted in a fantastic, absurdist and non-realistic mode. Wiggins is hardly convincing in his assertion that Twain being unaware, "could not understand the modifications necessary for effecting a successful break with the folk mind in applying his later mechanistic doctrines." The fact is that Twain was conscious of the suitability of his early realistic mode to
his subject. In the same way he knew that his realistic technique alone was not enough for transmuting his dark vision into works of art. He did understand the need of modifications as his dip into the realm of fantasy and his persistent efforts — though not successful for the most part — to use symbols of despair testify.

Twain's interest in the figure of the ironic stranger in his later fictional writings marks the beginning of his drift into the Absurd and the Fantastic. The stranger generally appears in complacent and dull communities. He is distinguished from other members of these communities by his superior wisdom and technological know-how and is always instrumental in exposing the true nature of the community by using his abilities. However, in the end his presence in the community proves to be repressive rather than liberative. Disillusioned himself in the end, he comes to share the author's belief that man is a slave to himself and his community and lacks dignity, free-will and selflessness.

This ironic stranger first appeared as Hank Morgan in *A Connecticut Yankee*. Like the hero of any absurd play, he is displaced, alienated, restless and ill at ease. In his futile efforts to reform the people of Arthur's England, he himself becomes completely disillusioned with the human
race and is convinced of the impossibility of any worthwhile reform. However, it is not true to say that Twain completely casts the status of realism in doubt in this novel. Peter Messent takes a very erroneous view of Twain's technique in *A Connecticut Yankee* when he says that in this novel "science on which realism bases itself is not superior, in terms of its results at least, to the occult. Equally — and I think this is the implication of the ending where Merlin's 'magic' finally defeats Hank — Realism is not allowed superiority over fantasy." Messent fails to appreciate the fact that in Twain's work fantasy only serves to balance his realism. Science is simply amoral and the disasters and destruction in the novel can be attributed to Hank's evil intentions and to Twain's pessimistic view of mankind. The end of the novel presents a very fine blend of fantasy and realism. Twain had to bring the Yankee back to the nineteenth century because he knew that no technological revolution really took place in the sixth century and for this reason Yankee's return to the nineteenth century was a historical necessity. Moreover, in all the encounters of magic and science, it is science that is shown as triumphant.

As a literary form fantasy is greatly dependent on plotting. Twain's growing absurdist vision could find a
proper expression only after he could pay more attention to plot rather than characters. In *Pudd'nhead Wilson* Twain presented another stranger in the form of Wilson. His character is not fully developed and the novel retains its interest chiefly because of its tightly-knit plot and the exploration of an existentialist problem. It deals with the theme of alienation and the loss of identity. Roxana's act of changing two identical-looking twins — one black and the other white — results in a loss of identity for both the boys. With the help of this superior knowledge of science of fingerprints, Wilson reveals the true identity of both the boys and helps restore a corrupt social order based on slavery. Tom who was brought up as a white boy, is sold down the river and is forced to work as a slave. Though the novel deals with more fundamental issues than slavery, it must be said to Twain's credit that he fully succeeded in realistically presenting the issue of slavery. Neither sentimental, nor emotional, his handling of various types of slavery, is how it existed in the pre-civil War America.

The *Mysterious Stranger* is perhaps the clearest example of Twain's leap into the realm of fantasy and the Absurd. In his book *Mark Twain at Work* (1942), Bernard Devoto put forward the thesis that in his dark writings of
later years Twain was struggling with himself. In these works Twain is projecting the despair caused by a series of personal tragedies: "criticism is usually altogether unable to say how a writer's experience is transformed into works of art. In these manuscripts we can actually see that transformation while it is occurring." The Mysterious Stranger presents the world and a man's life in the form of a dream. Everything is a dream in the world and nothing really exists. Devoto inadvertently touches upon Twain's absurdist vision when he writes, "If everything was dream, then clearly the accused prisoner might be discharged. The accusation begotten by his experience could be stilled by destroying all experience." 

III

The manner of narration has been the chief concern of literary artists through the ages. While talking about how to represent an object in a literary work, Aristotle, the first major literary critic, suggested that in the manner of narration a literary artist may either "speak at one moment in narrative and at another in an assumed character, as Homer does; or one may remain the same throughout,
without any such change." The first part of Aristotle's statement touches upon the relatively recent concern of writers to detach themselves from their work. The second part refers to the direct expression of his feeling by a writer which in literary criticism is considered the decline of art.

In the work of Mark Twain both these elements are easily noticeable. His life-long concern with the use of varied personae in his fiction was the attempt of an artist to clothe his feelings in some kind of dressing. However, in his later writings he was not fully successful to disguise the destruction of his targets with his masks. But whatever success he achieved in the use of masks — and it was remarkable — it is his distinct contribution to the art of fiction especially in America.

The longest-lasting mask created by Mark Twain was 'Mark Twain'. However, even before this mask he had adopted some masks during his years as journalist. As W. Epaminondas Adrastus Blab, he had played the boastful and affected politician; as Sergeant Fathom, the scoffing parodist; as Thomas Jefferson Snodgloss, the unlettered rustic; as Quintus Curtis Snodgloss, the overpolished viewer of cheap pretenders; and as Josh the narrator of anecdotes.
In these earlier instances of his use of masks, Twain simply followed the conventions of South Western humorists. In the South Western tradition a pseudonym had a fixed identity and some fixed features. Twain's use of the 'Mark Twain' mask was neither a complete concealment of personality like that of Henry Adam's use of Francis Snow Compton, nor the displacement of original personality like that of Arovet's Voltaire or Mary Ann Evans's George Eliot. Rather, like Dickens' Boz, the pseudonym stood in the eyes of the reading public as a pseudonym. It was an extension of the personality of Samuel Clemens. However, all the experiences of Samuel Clemens should not be literally attributed to Mark Twain. James M Cox's opinion in this respect carries weight:

It is, after all, Mark Twain's nature to refract, exaggerate misremember, or forget the experiences of Samuel Clemens. These distortions are not, however fictions in the literary meaning of that term; they pivot always upon the world of actuality and are in a certain respect dependent upon it. They may show the deceptions of that world, may call it into question, but they never transcend it. That is why, if Mark Twain's world is a reconstruction of Samuel Clemens' experience, the reader is constantly in the process of reconstructing Samuel Clemens out of Mark Twain. 15
It is true that this pseudonym implied greater freedom than the pseudonym of other South Western humorists. However, as a humorous pseudonym it also clearly defined the areas of his writing as the reading public would not accept anything which was not humorous. The more Twain came to realize this, the more he resented the fate of the humorist. The serious writer in him was impatient to break the prison-walls of humour. It was a clear case of a conflict between Clemens versus Mark Twain.

However, the sensitive thinker and reformer that he was, Twain could not long keep himself confined to writing innocuous humorous pieces. He explored various possibilities latent within his pseudonym for expressing his social criticism. He also worked on other subtler methods, which would meet the expectations of the reading public as well as satisfy his humanitarian and artistic urges: the discovery of new personae, and the special efforts in the field of characterization.

His most important discovery was in the field of personae. Throughout his writing career Twain was expressing himself through the use of varied masks. Roughly speaking all his masks fall in three categories. On the one hand there is the mask of a fool which particularly appears
in his earlier work. The later work is dominated by Twain's mask of a growler, rebel, and reactionary all in one. However, these categories are not fixed as the fool very often takes the qualities of the growler and vice versa. The third important mask that Twain assumes is that of an empowered personality who completely dominates his environment.

The fool can be detected in most of Twain's memorable characters. Simon Wheeler, Colonel Sellers, Tom Sawyer, Huck Finn, Jim, Hank Morgan, Roxy and the Mark Twain of travel books are endowed with the characteristics of a fool. The fool is the spokesman of Twain's serious criticism. His opinions are always ironic because no one takes him seriously. He commits mistakes, pretends what he is not, deludes himself, but is also able to arouse the sympathy of the reader. Through the personae of the fool Mark Twain "heaps scorn on pecksniffery and disassociates himself from it, while at the same time the fool's argument contains legitimate criticism. The very fact of his being used as a critic makes this fool a good one, just as the very act of Mark Twain's trying to be a critic makes a fool of him."\(^1\)

In the *Innocents Abroad* the travelling Mark Twain, the narrator and also a fictional character partakes of the characteristics of a fool. He appears as an inspired idiot,
a moralist, a vandal, and as a very patriotic American. The inspired idiot is clearly evident in the fool's treatment of patronizing guides. Thus he constantly asks the guides, "Is Columbus dead," or about the mummy in Italy: "Is he dead?" As art critic he ridicules the works of old Masters as well as other artists though fully giving the impression that he does not know much about art. In his criticism of French dance cancan he poses as a moralist: "That is cancan. The idea of it is to dance as wildly, as noisily, as furiously as you can, expose yourself, as much as possible if you are a woman, and kick as high as you can, no matter which sex you belong to."¹⁷

Colonel Sellers of the *The Gilded Age* epitomizes the spirit of the materialistic age which is the object of Twain's satire in the book. Like Micawber of *David Copperfield*, Sellers has grandiose plans and myriad schemes to turn millions some day. He lives on wild hopes and is given to daydreaming all the time. By endowing him with the characteristics of fool Twain just suggests the age-old idea that the virtues of industry and labour and not daydreaming and rhapsodizing about the future ensure success in the world. Tom is a fool only in a very limited sense of the word. "He is a comic figure in the classical sense of being a victim of delusion."¹⁸ Thus he does not
recognize his cruelty towards Jim because he does not consider Jim a human being. So naive a character could hardly be a mouth-piece of Twain's serious social criticism. And yet in Twain's mocking attitude towards the Church, school and other inconvenient institutions of St. Petersburg, Twain partially identifies with him.

Mark Twain's use of Huckleberry Finn as a narrative persona is a landmark in the history of American literature. He portrays Huck as a fool, an eiron who is constantly put in situations where he has to rely on his common sense. The chief interest of the book lies in the reversal of Huck's moral sentiment. All the time he is berating himself for his supposedly wrong actions. However, the more he chides himself for his bad acts, the more he rises in the esteem of readers because his 'bad acts' are the noblest acts in reality.

The assumption of the mask of the rebel or grumbler was an attempt by Twain to satisfy his inner needs. Twain growled because he realized that there were many problems which required a critical appraisal. Through the mask of a grumbler Twain could release his aggression on countless issues.

Like the fool, the grumbler also is an unsophisticated person, free of cant, pretensions and fakery. He generally
identifies himself with low characters although he himself may not be so low in station. Conte, the narrator of *Joan of Arc* is better educated than most of his mates, but he seeks identification with the common people.

Though the grumbler was always there in some of the pronouncements of the fool, he really was discovered by Twain while gathering material for *A Tramp Abroad*. A letter written by him to William Dean Howells during the composition of the book, apart from throwing light on his mood, records the outlines of a grumbling character taking shape in his mind. Twain wrote:

> I wish I could give those satires on European life which you mention, but of course a man can't write successful satire except he be in a calm judicial good humour... Where I hate travel, and I hate hotels, & I hate the opera, & I hate the old Masters—in truth I don't ever seem to be in a good enough humor with Anything to satirize it; no I want to stand up before it & curse it, & foam at the mouth, or take a club & pound it to rags & pulp. 19

This hatred, so important a part of the grumbler's personality, has certainly gone into his criticism of the German language, Wagnerian opera, the long-respected myths, St. Mark's cathedral and most importantly the Italian paintings. Thus 'Mark Twain,' the grumbler rails against
Titian's Venus largely on moralistic grounds. To his mind it is "the foulest, the vilest, the obscenest picture the world possesses... It was painted for a bagino, and it was probably refused because it was a trifle too strong. In truth it is too strong for any place but a public gallery." Mark Twain also grumbles against the double standards that obtained between painting and literature in his time. In his time the description of Titian's Venus by a writer would be strongly disapproved because the "privileges of literature in this respect have been sharply curtailed (p.379). He cannot deal freely with the foul subjects of his time though, as he feels, the age of Fielding and Smollet could accept the grossness and obscenity of their works. But Venus as a work of art has a right to lie there in this manner because "Art retains her privileges; literature has lost hers" (p.381).

The same bitter grumbling is in evidence in Twain's experience of an unfamiliar German opera 'Lohengrin'. He felt tortured by the banging, slamming, booming and crashing of this opera and remembers with pain the "howling and wailings and shrieking of the singers, and the ragings and roarings and expulsion of the vast orchestra. (p.47)".

The persona of the grumbler enabled Twain to express
his disgust with the writers who deliberately make their writings abstruse by using many foreign expressions. He notes:

A man who writes a book for general public to read is not justified in disfiguring his pages with untranslated foreign expressions. It is an insolence toward the majority of the purchasers... these writers are flaunting those fluttering rags of poverty in the reader's face and imagining he will be ass enough to take them for the sign of untold riches held in reserve (pp. 214-15).

Not only in *A Tramp Abroad* but also in *Following the Equator* the travelling Mark Twain is something of a grumbler. In his diatribe against the white rulers of Australia and Newzealand, in his analysis of the Boer War particularly the role of Cecil Rhodes and in his various other pronouncements about life in general, Twain's persona sounds very vehement and bitter.

The same bitter growling is easily noticeable in his various non-fictional pieces. His anti-imperialistic writings like "To the person sitting in Darkness," *King Leopold's Soliloquy,* *Czar's Soliloquy* present a grumbling persona who is unremitting in his efforts to reform the world though his determinism very often leads him to pessimism and cynicism.
The later work of Twain shows his concern with a character who enjoys great power and intelligence but is something of a crackpot. Hank Morgan of *A Connecticut Yankee*, Dave Wilson of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and Satan of the *Mysterious Stranger* are some examples of what Paul Baender calls Twain's "transcendent figures." Without any sense of responsibility towards the human race, these characters unmistakably voice the bitter feelings of Twain and present a very negative view of mankind.

There have been two possible interpretations for the appearance of these characters. Paul Baender studying Twain in the nineteenth century context, traces the genesis of these figures to the South Western regional literature dealing with giant figures like Davy Crocket. In his opinion Twain was greatly influenced by "the more vulgar literature of the period... the heap of biographies and tales concerning Western heroes."21 The second possible source of Twain's interest in the transcendent figures as explored by James L. Johnson was the ideas of Emerson. He suggests that:

There exists a surprising correlation between Twain's power figures and the imperious self sketched so persistently in Emerson's work. For both men, the strength of the empowered self lies not so much in his ability to adjust to the world, as in his ability to make the world adjust to him. He does not manage
in the world so much as he manages the world itself... Twain and Emerson were much preoccupied... with the same problem: that of realizing in practical terms the capabilities they believed man harbored within him. 22

Both interpretations, though useful and interesting in themselves, do not emphasize the fact that the creation of this all-powerful character was an attempt of Twain to solve his own intellectual crises and emotional disturbances caused by a number of personal disasters and the observation of general corrupt state of mankind.

Identification with these characters did prove detrimental to his art. But as a sensitive thinker he could not keep himself detached from the day to day world which presented before him the spectacles of cruelty, callousness and brutality. When he could no longer endure his helplessness in ameliorating the world, his imagination, as Henry Nash Smith points out, "sought refuge in the image of an alternative persona who was protected against suffering by being devoid of pity or guilt, yet could denounce the human race for its cowardice and cruelty, and even take action against it." 23

Colonel Sherburn of *Huckleberry Finn* is the earliest example of this character. He murders Boggs with cruelty but is not smitten by any pangs of conscience. The
lack of conscience or moral sense is also a characteristic of Wilson and most importantly of Satan. Wilson brings about the ultimate tragedy of the novel that bears his name, but is not aware that he has given support to an unjust social order. His action is simply amoral. Hank Morgan of A Connecticut Yankee also never realizes his cruelty, not even in the cataclysmic battle scene.

Satan is the most classic example of the empowered figure. He is not limited; not subject to human conditions; is amoral and most importantly is omniscient and omnipotent. For him there is no separation between the self and the other. Endowed with these qualities he becomes an adequate vehicle for the expression of Twain's misanthropy. Twain's final verdict on mankind comes through his mouth. However, the persona of Satan is too thin to completely hide the nihilism of the aging writer. It just shows that ideology has registered a final conquest over art in Twain's artistic universe. The inability to disguise his message, a far cry from his successful use of a fool's persona in The Innocents Abroad, puts a stamp on the decline of Twain the artist.

IV

Mark Twain's great literary triumph in maintaining a
consistent point of view in *Huckleberry Finn* has been commented upon and acclaimed widely. It was, however, a culmination of a process of experiments that started with his early journalistic writings especially with his *Alta California* letters which were later published as *The Innocents Abroad*. This book then should be a starting-point for any discussion of Twain's achievement in the field of narrative point of view.

Since *The Innocents Abroad* developed out of travel letters, the point of view in this book is essentially that of a letter writer who intimately knows his reader. The narrator of the story refers to himself as 'I', to his fellow companions as 'we', and to the readers as 'you'. The letters covered a variety of subjects: simple information about some facts, description of places, social criticism especially of unchristian behaviour of Christians, and the burlesquing of some incidents. The treatment of these varied subjects in the same book made it necessary for Twain to narrate the story from different points of view.

The point of view of the supplier of useful information can be detected in passages dealing with the "stalwart bedouins of the desert," the proud history of the "Stately Moors," the venetian fleets and many other passages. In
these passages Twain very flatly describes the facts. Ironically his style follows very closely the style of the guidedbook writers whom he intended to burlesque.

The dull descriptive style of *The Innocents Abroad* is very often followed by the satiric passages that save the book from becoming merely a guidebook. In the role of the satirist Twain grumbles a lot and is angry at the slightest deviation from rational behaviour. This is particularly true of Twain's criticism of many unseemly Christian practices and the obnoxious behaviour of the believers. Thus in Italy he cannot control his anger in writing about the wretched condition of masses which stands in stark contrast to the riches of the Church. His criticism of the Old Masters who immortalized the tyrannical rulers of the past is also very much unrestrained. When he describes the behaviour of the Christians he continues to maintain this satiric pose. Thus describing the Holy Sepulchre, Twain remarks: "Christians of different sects will not only quarrel but fight also in this sacred place if allowed to do it" (p.445).

Twain once made a distinction between witty, comic and humorous style of story telling and concluded that humorous story telling which depended upon the manner of telling it was the most difficult for a writer to write. In *The Innocents*
Abroad Twain shows his artistry in the art of humorous story-telling. In the adaptation of the old anecdotes and more importantly in presenting his "experience" of the Turkish Bath, and numerous other "adventures" in the orient he is playing the role of a story-teller.

The various roles that Twain plays in the book have led many critics to say that the narrator of _The Innocents Abroad_ is highly inconsistent and it is doubtful if he really has any identity at all. The charge of the lack of consistency in the narrator can hardly be challenged. But the narrator does have an identity despite the shifts in tone and point of view. Henry Nash Smith says that the narrator "represents the meaning that Mark Twain, with his gift for recognizing mythical elements in his own experience, was able to extract from the confusions of the Quaker City excursion... he exists in the dimension of romance... and is an American Adam resembling in many respects his contemporary, the protagonist of _Leaves of Grass._" As Twain pointed out in the preface of the book, the narrator, true to the spirit of nineteenth century American culture, is not taken in by the so-called superiority of Europe or the much talked about splendour of the east.

By ensuring full participation of the narrator in
various events of the book, Twain transforms him into a
fictional character. And because the book developed out
of Twain's sketches, the character bears striking resemblance to Twain himself. However, the experiences of the
narrator are not the experiences of Twain but his values
are essentially the values Twain stood for and approved of
in his real life.

His values of common-sense and practical-mindedness
have been presented in sharp contrast to the values of the
pilgrims with whom he undertakes the journey of Europe and
the Holy Land. The narrator identifies himself with the
bunch of sceptical boys who are making fun of the pilgrims' activities all the time. In a way the narrator assumes the
role of a sinner that enables him not merely to view the
pilgrims critically but also the likes of them in his trip
to the Holy Land. Henry Nash Smith points out that "Mark
Twain recognized that the antagonism between sinners and
pilgrims gave concrete form to much of his subversive feeling about the dominant culture, and in his revision of the dis-
patches he tried to develop the antagonism into a narrative pattern for the book as a whole."25

In his first novel The Gilded Age, written in collaboration with Charles Dudley Warner Twain relied on the
omniscient point of view. He discusses at length the thoughts, feelings and motives of various characters. The intrusive narrator of this book is particularly noticeable in his treatment of Laura Hawkins and in his discussion of two possible conclusions of the narrative. Within this mode of narrative Twain tries to gain the intimacy of the reader by adopting many other devices like using italics, exclamations and even putting footnotes. Thus after narrating at length a rather boring conversation he points out in a footnote that the conversation actually took place in a drawing room of the United States. The influence of the narrator is also a striking feature of this book. It is clearly in evidence in his use of personal pronouns like "our heroine," "our hero," "our readers."

The publication of The Gilded Age in 1873 was followed by "Old Times on the Mississippi" (1875), Tom Sawyer (1876), and Huckleberry Finn (1885). These books are remarkable for Twain's attempt to capture the detached and limited point of view of a boy. In the "Old Times on the Mississippi" Twain identifies himself with a boy and tries to narrate those experiences which hold an appeal for a boy. In Tom Sawyer also he makes a partial attempt to move into the mind of a boy to narrate his story. The narrator of the story is unmistakably an adult and the intrusion of this
self-conscious narrator into the narrative is also a fact. But there are episodes in the narrative which are narrated from the point of view of a boy. Twain evinces special interest in portraying Tom's vitality, acute observations, and love of display and show off. Commenting on Twain's conscientious attempt to recover the boy's point of view, John C. Gerber notes that:

evidence for this intention can be found particularly in the much higher proportion of concrete material than we have seen before — and not only in the proportion of such material but in its quality as well. The details, taken as a whole, are more sharply observed, and the scenes begin to assume a third dimension. Perhaps one can see the influence of Twain's point of view, also, in the increasing interest in dialogue and in the constant manipulation of material for climax or effects. 26

In fact Twain assumes three poses which result in three points of view in the novel. When Tom is a foolish boy, Twain identifies himself with readers and feels amused at Tom's activities. He identifies himself with Tom when he is an innocent character, not corrupted by the false values of the town. This identification is clearly evident in the parody of Sunday School literature and in the portrayal of the inconvenient nature of institutions like Church and school. The third point of view appears towards the end of the book when Tom fully identifies himself with the
materialistic values of St Petersburg. Here Twain keeps himself completely detached from Tom and is even satirical of his activities. In fact he grew interested in Huckleberry Finn and was disgusted with the way Tom was likely to mature. In a letter to Howells he gave his reasons as to why he did not intend to carry Tom beyond boyhood. He wrote that "if I went on, now, and took him into manhood, he would be just like all the one horse-men in literature and the reader would conceive a hearty contempt for him."²⁷

Twain's growing interest in the character of Huckleberry Finn in the closing chapters of Tom Sawyer made him aware of a new fact. If he were to write a social satire, a character like Tom who embraces the values of dominant society, would be a poor medium for it. In Huck Finn he discovered a hero whose values run counter to the practised ideals of society. It is for this reason that he can be an ideal vehicle to carry any satirical message. In Huckleberry Finn he made a highly successful attempt to capture the limited point of view of a boy by narrating the story from Huck's point of view.

The use of Huck as first person narrator relieved Twain of the responsibility of analyzing explicitly his various mental crises, social problems and intellectual predicaments
because Huck is a boy of limited intelligence. The central irony of the book lies in the reversal of Huck's moral response to the problems he faces. What Huck considers his worst actions are in the reader's eyes his best. Thus the telling of the story from his point of view closes the method of direct satire for Twain because as a boy Huck lacks sense of humour and Twain can not take recourse to his usual comic devices of exaggeration and burlesque for satirical effect. They have to be toned down or transferred to other characters because in Huck's vernacular they look out of place. But the method of indirect satire that opens up before him makes Huckleberry Finn a very devastating piece of social criticism.

Huck's is the folk mind. He does not know anything about politics, economics or culture in the conventional sense of the words. However, he is endowed with folk wisdom which rests entirely on his humanitarian principles. In all his actions — his help in freeing the slave, his refusal to be 'sivilized', his analysis of King and Duke's behaviour — he is guided by his humanitarian instincts. The writing achieves satirical effect simply when Huck acts true to his folk nature.

There are reasons to say that Twain identified himself
with Huckleberry Finn and fully approved of his values. In a sense Twain's response to Huck is similar to that of any ordinary reader of the novel. Faced with many intellectual crises, Twain was trying to understand the incomprehensible march of events in the gilded age. With Huckleberry Finn he unconsciously tried to seek a solution to his mental dilemmas. As William C. Spengemann says, "when he retired into Huck's mind, he regressed into a world he could understand, a world he longed for with embarrassing regularity throughout his life." 28

After Huckleberry Finn Twain was never able to achieve a fully detached point of view. All his later writings show his concern with ideology rather than art. This certainly marks the decline of Twain the artist. A Connecticut Yankee was written to illustrate a thesis. The same is true of The Prince and the Pauper. The intrusion of Twain's personal despair and despondancy into his work also mars the literary worth of his works like Joan of Arc, Pudd'nhead Wilson and The Mysterious Stranger.

There are certain common features that characterize these later fictional works of Twain. All these works except The Prince and the Pauper and Pudd'nhead Wilson are narrated in the first person. The first person narrator
voices the pessimism of the writer. Hank Morgan's repeated references to the worthlessness of the human race, the anachronistic commentary of De Sonte on the extent to which human beings can be cruel to a person like Joan, the vulnerability of Theodore to Satan's bitter assault on the human race — all point to Twain's personal despair expressed through his characters in not so undisguised a manner.

Another important feature of some of these works is that the narrator maintains the perspective of a historian, a chronicler of events. In A Connecticut Yankee, the narrator talks about his experiences in sixth century England. However, because of his participation in the events his tale lacks objectivity. So is also true of the narrator of Joan of Arc. In this work, De Conte, the narrator, tells the story from the perspective of some fifty years. He comments on Joan's voices, the peasantry and the aristocracy of France, and most importantly on Joan's trial. Because of his superior intellectual attainments, a relatively passive participation in the events, and the perspective of age, his tale sounds more authentic than that of Hank Morgan in A Connecticut Yankee.

In Pudd'nhead Wilson, on the contrary, the narrative voice of the historian is very much aloof and detached but
authentic nevertheless. The omniscient narrator very clearly shows the ironic nature of the universe by presenting a set of characters and some melodramatic situations. According to the view presented in the novel, life is full of coincidences and fatalities and no human action can be called fully meaningful. Thus Roxana's act of exchanging babies — one black and the other white — brings only disaster. The good upbringing of Tom and the denial of luxuries to chambers do not yield the desired result. The narrative voice of the chronicler is able to realize that man is basically a tragic victim of his circumstances and his own inherent evil. This realization was completely denied to Hank Morgan and was achieved only partially by De Conte.

A very important characteristic of Twain's work is the constant shifting of point of view. The shift in point of view in *The Innocents Abroad* has been discussed elsewhere in the chapter. The most notable example of this shifting point of view is presented by Twain in *A Connecticut Yankee* where the meaning of the novel depends upon the wavering relationship of the author to the narrator. Like Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* the constant shift in focus in this work leads to a good deal of complexity. When Hank Morgan talks about the prevalence of superstition and dogma in sixth-century England and asserts the supremacy of democracy to
monarchy and scientific technology to magic, he is certainly
the mouthpiece of Twain's belief in the myth of progress.
But Hank Morgan is also a literary character and subject to
the frailties of mankind, a victim of his prejudices and
illusions. In this later role Twain views him with some
irony and keeps himself detached from him.

In *Joan of Arc* the narrator generally maintains a
reverent tone towards religion. However, there are occa-
sions when he voices his scepticism regarding the reliability
of Joan's voices. At another place speaking in almost pro-
phetic tone, he says that some day the peasant will rise
and fight for equality. Here, he obviously refers to French
revolution and the words which seem out of place in a work
set in the Middle Ages, were deliberately put by the author
in his mouth. These fluctuations in the attitude of the
narrator who poses as historian are a redeeming feature of
an otherwise rather monotonous work.

V

Humour is the most pervasive element in Twain's work.
From his earliest writings to the last, his works are informed
by his wit, humour and irony. However, the good-humoured
laughter that his earlier work evokes is totally different
from the dark and black humour of his later work. A study
of Twain's treatment of humour in his different books written at different stages provides an interesting commentary on the gradually changing vision of the writer.

Twain did not regard humour and social criticism as two separate things. He was perhaps not aware of the difference between humour and satire. Robert A. Wiggins accuses Twain of his "apparent lack of discrimination between comedy, burlesque, satire and humour." Thus talking about the everlasting qualities of humour, Twain once remarked:

Humorists of the 'mere' sort cannot survive. Humour is only a fragrance, a decoration. Often it is merely an odd trick of speech and of spelling... Humor must not professedly teach, and it must not professedly preach, but it must do both if it would live forever. By forever I mean thirty years. With all its preaching it is not likely to outlive so long a term as that. The very things it preaches about, and which are novelties when it preaches about them, can cease to be novelties and become commonplaces in thirty years. 30

In this passage Twain is talking about a humorist but his description is more applicable to a social satirist. The fusion or confusion of humour and social criticism is also to be noticed in his act of underlining those lines of Thackeray's essay on Swift which point to the inborn gravity of a genuine humorist: "The humorous writer professes
to awaken and direct your love, your pity, your kindness — your scorn for untruth, pretension, imposture — your tenderness for the weak, the poor, the unhappy... He comments on all the ordinary actions and passions of life about. He takes upon himself to be the week-day preacher.\(^3\)

In his writings also Twain fuses satire and irony with humour. There are only few pieces written by Twain like "Jumping Frog" story where the effect of the story is wholly humorous and the piece exists independent of satire.

The *Innocents Abroad* was the first book in which Twain fully realized his comic genius. The most important comic devices employed by Twain in his book are those of parody and burlesque. Various revered legends like those of Heloise and Abelard and the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus are parodied by Twain in an attempt to expose their falsity. In the same manner, referring to the legend of Petrarch and Laura, Twain feels sympathy for Laura's husband for having endured the humiliation of reading the sonnets written by another man in praise of his wife. Twain refers to him as "Mr Laura."

In his role of the public lecturer Twain's success owed a lot to his famous deadpan expression. In *The Innocents Abroad*, as James M. Cox, notes "the deadpan is implied by
the endless 'disappointments,' the exquisite 'sufferings,' and the repeated 'tortures' the narrator undergoes on his pilgrimage to the Holy Land." In these experiences the burlesquing Mark Twain is able to provide criticism as well as entertainment. Thus he had a very high opinion of the romance and splendour of the East but his 'experience' of the Orient shattered all his illusions. For years Mark Twain had dreamed of the romance and novelty associated with the Turkish bath. He had imagined himself breathing the 'slumbrous fragrances of Eastern Spices' filling the air, and 'passing through a weird system of pulling and hauling' the soft carpets, the sumptuous furniture and the drinking of delicious coffee while smoking the soothing narghili (p.297).

However, this illusion about the Turkish bath received a rude shock when Mark Twain actually had the ordeal of going through it. "That was the picture, just as I got it from the incendiary books of travel. It was a poor, miserable imposition. The reality is no more like it than the five points are like the Garden of Eden (p. 297)."

The same process of illusion and consequent disillusion is in evidence throughout the book. This method, apart from telling readers how to view Europe from their own eyes, is also successful in evoking laughter. Thus his final judgement
on the oriental scenes is a fine mixture of burlesque and satire:

Oriental scenes look best in steel engravings. I cannot be imposed upon anyone by that picture of the Queen of Sheba visiting Solomon. I shall say to myself, you look fine madam, but your feet are not clean, and you smell like a camel (p. 433).

In *The Gilded Age* also Twain successfully fuses satire with Dickensian humour which has its source in pathos. The book presents a satirical treatment of corruption in all walks of life. Yet in the figure of colonel sellers Twain was able to portray a truly humorous character who is a fool of his illusions. He lives in his created world of possibilities far removed from reality. Twain simply lets the character indulge in his wishful thinking without any authorial intervention. His portrayal of Sellers is marked by his tolerance for human frailties, a characteristic of a true humorist.

*Tom Sawyer* further proves Twain's excellence in employing the techniques of parody, burlesque and satire in writing a fully entertaining book. By portraying Tom as a bad boy who prospers, Twain burlesques the traditional opinion about a good boy. The elements of burlesque are evident
throughout the book in the reenactment of adult rituals by the boys. The love-affair of Tom and Becky burlesques the romantic and sentimental convention of love-pieces. In this relationship Tom does everything to impress her. He tries to become a hero in the eyes of the school mates; takes the teacher's whips for Becky and even indulges in thoughts of self-destruction. The feelings that Becky's rejection of him, inspires in Tom presents a fine parody of sentimental romantic literature. It is particularly made clear by the narrator's own comment at the end of the passage:

He entered a dense wood, picked his pathless way to the center of it, and sat down on a mossy spot under a spreading oak. There was not even a Zephyr stirring; the dead noonday heat had even stilled the songs of the birds; nature lay in a trance that was broken by no sound but the occasional far-off hammering of a woodpecker, and this seemed to render the pervading silence and sense of lonliness the more profound. The boy's soul was steeped in melancholy: his feelings were in happy accord with his surroundings. He sat along with his elbows on his knees and his chin in his hands, meditating it. It seemed to him that life was but a trouble, at best,... Now as to this girl. What had he done? He had meant the best in the world, and been treated like a dog — like a very dog. She would be sorry some day — may be when it was too late. Ah, if he could only die temporarily!

But the elastic heart of youth cannot be compressed into one constrained
shape long at a time. Tom presently began to drift insensibly the concerns of this life again. 33

The lamentations of the village folk, expressed in conventional language, on hearing the news of Tom's death are also burlesqued. The burlesque achieves comic effect because readers share the narrator's knowledge that Tom is not dead. So even a very serious passage describing the villagers' sincere grief produces laughter:

But there was no hilarity in the little town that same tranquil Saturday afternoon. The Harpers, and Aunt Polly's family were being put into mourning with great grief and many tears. An unusual quiet possessed the village, although it was ordinarily quiet enough, in all conscience. The villagers conducted their concerns with an absent air and talked little; but they sighed often. The Saturday holiday seemed a burden to the children. They had no heart in their sports, and gradually gave them up. 34

James M. Cox, in his perceptive study of Mark Twain's humour, puts forward the theory that Tom Sawyer is neither a burlesque nor a satiric novel. The truth is that, as he writes, "the narrator's impulse toward burlesque and satire is largely assimilated in his indulgent posture." Cox also suggests that the real commitment of the book is to a pleasure principle and Twain's burlesque-indulgent perspective
enabled him to dissolve entertainment into play. "It is, after all, a tale — an adventure — and its commitment is not to exposing sham, as in the case of satire; nor is it to mocking a prior art form as in the case of parody and burlesque. Instead, the positive force — the force to which the world of St Petersburg succumbs — is play itself."36

In *Huckleberry Finn* Twain was able to contain serious things within a humorous point of view. But he was not so successful in fusing humour with satire in *The Prince and the Pauper*. Twain had a serious purpose in writing this book and he deliberately chose a plot to illustrate a thesis. The result is a book which is definitely satirical but hardly humorous, despite the writer's commitment to humour and as Cox says "it betrays that impulse and forces humour to serve a noble purpose instead of forcing all purpose to serve humour."37

Like *The Prince and the Pauper*, *A Connecticut Yankee* was also written to a thesis. The very plot of the novel is full of comic possibilities. Hank Morgan's incongruous presence in the sixth century itself promises a lot of fun. The burlesquing or making fun of chivalry, particularly Twain's mounting the knights on bicycles or making them put on
placards, advertising products like Persimmons soap or Peterson's prophylactic toothbrushes, or using telephone are really the source of much humour in the book.

However, again like *The Prince and the Pauper* the novel turns out to be a scathing satire rather than a humorous book. The reason for this is the undramatized character of Hank who unmistakably becomes the mouthpiece of the writer intent on expressing his indignation and rage. The institution of chivalry that he originally intended to burlesque later fills Hank with determination to make war against it. Comparing this novel's failure to the success of *Huckleberry Finn* Cox makes an interesting observation:

> But whereas as the vernacular of *Huckleberry Finn* he had discovered a vehicle to convert the indignation which stands behind both humour and satire in the ironic observation, apparent indifference and mock innocence which constitute them, the vernacular of Hank Morgan lacked the inverted point of view which would convert the emotions of rage and hate into humor. 38

By Twain's own admission, *A Connecticut Yankee* was to be his last work. Though not his last novel, it does mark a turning point in his literary career. The novels written after *A Connecticut Yankee* are not humorous but very bitterly satirical. This is understandable because they
reflect his dark vision which also resulted in his experiments with some new comic techniques. The healthy, good-humoured jokes of the earlier writings were now a thing belonging to a dead past. The humour of these later works is bleak, cynical and anticipates in many ways the existentialist, dadaist and absurdist humour of twentieth century literature. Twain's relationship with his readers in his later period also reminds one of a dadaist writer's relationship with his readers. In his early period he was very careful about the taste of his readers. He would not serve the 'rowdy and slangy' western humour of his journalism days to a national audience in *The Innocents Abroad*. The idea to publish *The Prince and the Pauper* and *Joan of Arc* under his comic pseudonym was anathema to him because they were 'serious works' which the reading public did not expect from a humorist. This care for the taste of reading public was not to last forever. He wrote all his later writings for his own amusement, for the resolution of his own emotional crises and intellectual predicaments. Another reason behind this indifference to his audience was Twain's realization that some of these pieces were too strong to be published in his life-time.

The protagonists of Twain's later fiction are rogues
and anti-heroes. This brings Twain closer to the existentialist position. The world of these characters is amoral and purposeless. Hank Morgan, Dave Wilson, Satan, King Leopold and Czar are the major characters in Twain's later works. Such anti-heroes and rogues were present in literature before Twain but merely as minor characters and not major figures.

Twain is also preoccupied with dream, sleep and mental processes in his later writings. In "The Great Dark" Edwards comes across death, and many other agonising experiences in a dream. After waking up he confuses dream with reality which results in unrelieved frustration for him and produces an insane brand of humour. Walter Blair notes that Twain "substantially foreshadowed some of the central elements of contemporary fantastic and black humour... in his conversion of satire to diatribe, his exploitations of schizophrenia and dream worlds; and his movement toward absurdist uses of language."39

The maxims included in Pudd'n'head Wilson perhaps present the best example of Twain's cynical humour of his declining years. The maxims appear as chapter headings and bear some thematic relationship with the chapters. Thus readers come to know that Wilson the most intelligent
person of the village, is termed Puddn'head by the village people. However, the first maxim introduces this ironic idea much before their naming him so:

There is no character, howsoever good and fine, but it can be destroyed by ridicule, however 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. 40

The maxims appear also in *Following the Equator* where they do not have a direct relevance to text. In both the books the maxims are attributed to Dave Wilson, the protagonist of *Puddn'head Wilson*. However, they are unmistakably the unhappy pronouncements of Mark Twain himself and cover a variety of subjects like art, literature, humour and various professions. But the most important maxims are about man and his behaviour. Apart from their wit they are marked by a tinge of cynicism. Thus about friendship Twain says: "It takes your enemy and your friend, working together, to hurt you to the heart; the one to slander you and the other to get the news to you." Twain frames some maxims about months and relates them to human condition. Thus about February:
This is the blessedest of the months: there are two or three days less of sin in it, & toil, & weariness, & death, & expense.

Of April 1:

April 1 is the day upon which we are reminded of what we are on the other three hundred sixty four.

Many of the maxims show Twain's preoccupation with death and the idea of the worthlessness and absurdity of human life. These maxims foreshadow the ideas that playwrights like O'Neil later developed in their plays. Of man's basically faulty disposition he writes:

Everyone is a moon, and has a dark side which he never shows to anybody.

or

Men and women — even man and wife are foreigners. Each has reserves that the other cannot enter into, nor understand. These have the effects of frontiers.

The idea that death is a welcome relief from the worries and anxieties of the wretched life is made clear by the following maxims:

Why is it that we rejoice at a birth and grieve at a funeral? It is because we are not the person involved.
Whoever has lived long enough to find out what life is, know how deep a debt of gratitude we owe to Adam, the first great benefactor of our race. He brought death into the world.

Pity is for the living, envy is for the dead.

Each person is born to one possession which outvalues all his others — his last breath.

In his later years Mark Twain lost belief in the idealism of his early years. However, he felt that this idealism, though false, was necessary if he wanted to live: "Don't part with your illusions; when they are gone you may still exist but you have ceased to live."

It was in these maxims that Twain finally realized that "everything human is pathetic. The secret source of Humour itself is not joy but sorrow. There is no humour in heaven."

The pessimistic ideas contained in these maxims — particularly the ones expressing the worthlessness of life and the negative view of mankind — reappeared in The Mysterious
Stranger in the speeches of Satan. The novel lacks in humour, and even the satire of the novel turns into a bitter diatribe. The definition of humour presented by Twain through his personae of Satan just show how far he has come from the genial humour of The Innocents Abroad. In a very biting diatribe, Satan concedes that in the form of humour human beings have one redeeming feature:

You have a mongrel perception of humor, nothing more; a multitude of you possess that... for your race, in its poverty, has unquestionably one really effective weapon — laughter. Power, money, persuasion, supplication, persecution — these can lift at a colossal humbug — push it s little — weaken it a little, century by century, but only laughter can blow it to rags and atoms at a blast. Against the assault of laughter nothing can stand. You are always fussing and fighting with your other weapons. Do you ever use that one? No, you leave it lying rusting. As a race, do you ever use it at all? No, you lack sense and the courage. 41

This passage, however, should be understood as a definition of satire and not that of humour. The satiric laughter which can blow everything to rags is not to be found in the world of Tom Sawyer or Huck Finn. Rather it has its origins in Twain's pessimism, his intellectual crisis and his personal tragedies. It is not the zenith of Twain's
achievement in humour but as James M. Cox says "the epitaph disclosing how he had buried it."\textsuperscript{42}
NOTES AND REFERENCES


4. Ibid., p.29.


6. Ibid., p.129.


9. Ibid., p.20.

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17. Mark Twain, Innocents Abroad in Mark Twain, (New York, 1984), p.108. (Further references to this work are incorporated in the text).


21. Paul Baender, "Mark Twain's Transcendent Figure", unpublished dissertation, University of California (Berkeley), 1956, p.36.


25. Ibid., p.45.


34. Ibid., p.164.


36. Ibid., p.147.

37. Ibid., pp.154-55.

38. Ibid., p.207.

40. All the references to the maxims are from *The Portable Mark Twain*, Bernard Devoto (ed.) (New York, 1961), pp.557-567.

41. Mark Twain, *The Mysterious Stranger* in *The Portable Mark Twain*, pp.730-37. (Further references to *The Mysterious Stranger*, also from the same edition, are incorporated in the text.

42. *The Fate of Humor*, op.cit., p.286.