Huckleberry Finn Completed -- 1894
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Introduction

Much of the writing and research on the subject of Mark Twain has been done in connection with his increasing pessimism in his later years, often attributed to such things as financial reverses, anxieties over his family, and a general disappointment in the American dream. This general attitude toward Twain's pessimism implies that it began to appear some time after his literary career was well under way and that the first indications of it are to be found in his later works, usually considered to be those after his greatest achievement, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. With these attitudes in mind, a casual reading and comparison of his Huckleberry Finn, begun in 1877 but not published until 1885, with The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson, a later work published in 1894, would seem to indicate that the two books are opposing expressions of the author's view of the world and the possibilities of freedom, reflections of entirely different states of mind in the author.

But a deeper consideration of the problem of the relationship of these two books seems to be indicated by various evaluations of the complexity of Mark Twain's thinking. In an introduction to Pudd'nhead Wilson, F.R. Leavis describes
Mark Twain as "no simple being" and maintains that "the complexity of his make-up was ordinarily manifested in strains, disharmonies, and tormenting failures of integration and self-knowledge."¹ Bernard DeVoto, well-known for his scholarship on Mark Twain, notes in an introduction to The Portable Mark Twain that Twain's gentleness and wit alternated with "an anger that was rooted in a revulsion between disgust and despair," suggesting a basic split that is clearly marked in Twain's personality and is evident in his books.²

And yet for all these seeming inconsistencies in Twain himself and in his writing, DeVoto comments in Mark Twain's America that "his final judgment of the human race was implicit in most of his books,"³ and Stuart P. Sherman that 
"[Twain] was essentially the same in all parts of his career."⁴ Perhaps Leslie Fiedler reconciles all these various views most usefully in an article on Pudd'nhead Wilson that he wrote for New Republic. He advanced the hypothesis that "the most extraordinary book in American literature has not survived as a whole; but its scraps and fragments are to be


found scattered through the work of Mark Twain."5

Keeping all these evaluations of Twain's thinking and especially keeping Leslie Fiedler's interesting assertion in mind, it seems that it might be especially fruitful to consider *Huckleberry Finn* and *Pudd'nhead Wilson* not as separate entities that are separated by a space of nine years and by a series of misfortunes in Twain's personal life, but as related parts of a continuum -- namely the mind of Mark Twain as a developing entity. This seems to be what F.R. Leavis is urging when he maintains that *Pudd'nhead Wilson* bears a very close relationship to *Huckleberry Finn* and that "to appreciate the lesser work is to have a surer perception of the greatness of the greater."6 It is clearly what Fiedler is implying when he says that "perhaps the best way to understand *Pudd'nhead* is to read it as a complement to *Huckleberry Finn*, a dark mirror image of the world evoked in the earlier work."7

When these two books by Mark Twain are considered as complementary, several similar or parallel elements become apparent. On the simplest level, the character of David Wilson, known to all the inhabitants of Dawson's Landing as *Pudd'nhead*, can be seen as *Tom Sawyer* grown up. The

6Leavis, p. 9.
7Fiedler, p. 17.
societies pictured in the two books may also be viewed as complementary, with the patriarchal world presented in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* being seen as the other side of the matriarchal world that dominates *Huckleberry Finn*. In addition, there is a series of similar elements that are given decidedly different emphases, reflected to a certain degree in the differing styles of the two works. Views of Hannibal, of Negro-white relations, of slavery, of the river, and of freedom are present in both, but the darker aspects of these that were merely vague undercurrents in *Huckleberry Finn* emerge into the foreground in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. 
From Tom Sawyer to Pudd'nhead Wilson

Several scholars interested in the work of Mark Twain have been struck by the close resemblance of David Wilson, who appears in Pudd'nhead Wilson as an admirer of the aristocratic code and unravels the mystery, and Tom Sawyer, who appears in Huckleberry Finn as a romantic fascinated by chivalry and the unraveling of a mystery. Henry Nash Smith comments on the connection in the sensationalist tendencies in both, saying that "closely tied to the solving of crimes is the sensational effect of the detective courtroom revelation of the identity of the criminal -- a motive that links Wilson retrospectively with Tom Sawyer . . . ."

James T. Farrell in an essay on Mark Twain also observed the similarities, pointing out that "Tom Sawyer is the type of boy who could grow up to be a Pudd'nhead Wilson." Fiedler in writing of Pudd'nhead Wilson makes the positive assertion that the protagonist is clearly Tom grown older.

The World of Mothers & The World of Fathers

A second point of comparison lies in the definitions of society set forth in the two books. As Fiedler points

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10Fiedler, p. 18.
out in Love and Death in the American Novel, Pudd'nhead Wilson portrays a Southern, patriarchal society while Huckleberry Finn portrays a Western, matriarchal one. The "sivilization" that Huck rejects is a world of mothers, of what Christianity has become among the women who maintain it just behind the advancing frontier -- a world whose goal is virtue, which is defined as keeping clean, wearing shoes, and praying for spiritual gifts. The male principle is represented, if at all, by the outcasts or scoundrels or some representative of nature like Jim. But in Pudd'nhead Wilson, it is the fathers who represent society, who are the defenders of a chivalric code. Here it is a patriarchal world of "honor."  

Fiedler points out elsewhere that Twain was at once a Westerner and a Southerner, just as the society he knew contained elements of both. These two views of society, then, could be seen as complements that, taken together, represent the whole for the mind of Mark Twain.

The "Fall" from the Poetic

In Love and Death in the American Novel, Fiedler also asserts that "The American novel is a novel of terror." 

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12 Ibid., p. 278.
13 Ibid., p. xxi.
and indeed, he finds elements of terror in both Huckleberry Finn and Pudd'nhead Wilson but maintains that they are softened in Huckleberry Finn by the style. Though the main story in Huckleberry Finn begins with a boy standing off with a rifle while his father has gone berserk with the D.T.'s and ends with the revelation of his father's death in a room scrawled with obscenities, the texture of the novel is so poetic that "one finds himself eternally doubting his own sense of its terrible import." But in Pudd'nhead Wilson the "lyricism and euphoria are gone; we have fallen to a world of prose, and there are no triumphs of Twain's rhetoric to preserve us from the revealed failures of our own humanity."\(^{14}\)

This poetic quality of the style of Huckleberry Finn is often commented upon. Both Walter Blair and E. Hudson Long have noted Huck's poetic sensitivity,\(^{15,16}\) and Lionel Trilling has referred to "the rhythm of the word-groups of speech . . ."\(^{17}\) that appear in the book. In Mark Twain: Jackleg Novelist, Robert Wiggins cited the visual, auditory, and tactile images as contributing to the poetic qualities

\(^{14}\)Fiedler, "'As Free as Any Cretur . . .','" p. 17.


of Huckleberry Finn. Helmut Gerber, however, has probably given the clearest expression to these views in his essay "Style and Point of View in Huckleberry Finn" when he succinctly names the elements that push the style of Huckleberry Finn toward the poetic: "the richly suggestive imagery, the connotative verbs, the economy of statement, the combination of introductory adverbial expressions and carefully molded parallelisms which create a slow, sustained, and quiet rhythm . . . ."

These elements and the lyricism that Fiedler refers to can be seen in such passages from Huckleberry Finn as this:

It was one of those regular summer storms. It world get so dark that it looked all blue-black outside, and lovely; and the rain would thrash along by so thick that the trees off a little ways looked dim and spiderwebby; and here would come a blast of wind that would bend the trees down and turn up the pale underside of the leaves; and then a perfect ripper of a gust would follow along and set the branches to tossing their arms as if they was just wild; and next, when it was just about the bluest and blackest -- fast! it was as bright as glory and you'd have a little glimpse of tree-tops a-plunging about away off yonder in the storm, hundreds of yards further than you could see before; dark as sin again in a second and now you'd hear the thunder let go rumbling, grumbling, tumbling down the sky towards the other side of the world, like rolling empty barrels down-stairs -- where it's long stairs and they bounce a good deal; you know.

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When contrasted with the prosaic style of *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, the difference is evident immediately. As Fiedler says, the "lyricism and euphoria are gone"\textsuperscript{21} from this passage, also describing a storm:

The Friday after the election was a rainy one in St. Louis. It rained all day long, and rained hard, apparently trying its best to wash that soot-blackened town white but of course not succeeding.\textsuperscript{22}

Part of the result of this "fall" is a much darker world than that pictured in *Huckleberry Finn*. This shift in style has a great deal to do with the changed tone, but the darker world of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* is also a result of the emphasis on the darker aspects of the same elements that are found in *Huckleberry Finn*.

The Matter of Hannibal

Forming the basis of five-sevenths of Mark Twain's books,\textsuperscript{23} what Smith refers to as the Matter of Hannibal is one of the elements that appears both in *Huckleberry Finn* and then with a darker aspect in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. Somewhat as Twain saw two aspects of society and expressed them as matriarchal and patriarchal worlds, he also saw Hannibal as having at least two aspects. As Smith points out in an

\textsuperscript{21}Fiedler, "'As Free as Any Cretur . . .','" p. 17.


\textsuperscript{23}Bernard DeVoto, *Mark Twain's America*, p. 46.
essay on the images of Hannibal that appear in Twain's writing, the Matter of Hannibal embraced both the glory of boyhood and the terror and guilt.  

*Huckleberry Finn* is usually thought of as being idyllic and the image of Hannibal that is projected as also being idyllic. But while Hannibal glowed through the eyes of idealism in *Huckleberry Finn*, there was also the penetrating eye of the realist that pierced through the placid surface to picture the ugly violence present in certain episodes.  

DeVoto senses something of this duality of Hannibal for Twain when he speaks of the idyllic nature of St. Petersburg in *Tom Sawyer* but qualifies it by saying that "even here a mood of melancholy [was] rarely far away . . . and beneath [this] melancholy [was] a terror or disgust that [might] break through in a graveyard at midnight or at the sound of unidentified voices whispering above the water." DeVoto saw this as a glimmering of the weary knowledge of evil that paints Hannibal in far different colors in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*.  

These two aspects of Hannibal are present both in *Huckleberry Finn* and *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, but the predominant aspect is what varies. In *Huckleberry Finn* there is something of a dream of innocence that surrounds the town, but even here

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it is associated not with the town itself but with the natural setting.\textsuperscript{27} In Pudd'nhead Wilson, however, the aspect of terror and guilt has moved to the foreground with the idyllic description of Dawson's Landing being followed by the chilling sentence "Dawson's Landing was a slaveholding town."\textsuperscript{28} This aspect of the Matter of Hannibal then becomes the controlling one for Pudd'nhead Wilson.

For Fiedler the complementary views of Hannibal are represented by the differing points of view. While in *Huckleberry Finn* we are already inside the town with no chance to step back and survey it, we see the mythicized Hannibal from the outside in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. "Only the outsider, the estranged adult Twain had become, rather than the unalienated child he remembered himself, offered an opportunity for perspective."\textsuperscript{29} The points of view represent for Fiedler, then, both the aspect of Hannibal that was the innocence of childhood and the terror that was there when he viewed it objectively.

Another important difference in the two towns is in their representation as Western and Southern, recalling again the fact that Mark Twain was both a Westerner and a Southerner. While the characteristics of the town in *Huckleberry Finn* are those of a Western town, Dawson's Landing is Southern

\textsuperscript{27}Smith, "Mark Twain's Images Of Hannibal," p. 9.

\textsuperscript{28}Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, p. 35.

\textsuperscript{29}Fiedler, *Love and Death in the American Novel*, p. 385.
not only as a slave-holding town but also in terms of the
code of honor to which everyone in the book subscribes.
All accept the principle that an insult can only be wiped
out in blood and that the ultimate proof of manhood is the
willingness to risk death in such an attempt. There is no
Huck to challenge the Colonel Sherburnes by rejecting courage
as just another temptation.30

The Hannibal that is pictured in Huckleberry Finn is the
Hannibal of innocence, with undercurrents of terror and guilt,
but the Hannibal that is pictured in Pudd'nhead Wilson is
that of terror and guilt seen through the eyes of an outsider.
Since both aspects were a part of the total image of Hannibal
for Mark Twain, the two versions of the town quite conceiv-
ably may be pictured as complementary versions.

Innocent Love, Profaned Love

The two pictures of Negro-white relations that are pre-
sented may also be viewed as complementary. The difference
lies in the participants in the relationships. While in
Huckleberry Finn the relationship involves a man and a
boy, in Pudd'nhead Wilson a man and a woman are involved.
As Fiedler points out in his article in New Republic, taken
together the two works "express both sides of a deep, unthought
American belief, reflected on the one side by James Fennimore

30Leslie A. Fiedler, "'As Free as Any Cretur . . .' II,"
Cooper and on the other by William Faulkner. This underlying belief is a belief that there are two kinds of relationships possible between Negroes and whites, two kinds of love. One of these is innocent and one is guilty, one saves and one DAMNS.31

The innocent relationship can exist only between men or between a man and a boy with the prototype for this being found in the relationship of Hawkeye and Chingachgook in Cooper’s Leatherstocking Tales.32 It is this kind of innocent relationship that Twain portrays between Jim and Huck.

It is, however, the damning relationship that is portrayed in Pudd’nhead Wilson. While Twain’s own judgment of black and white relations is not explicitly stated, "there seems no doubt that he regarded the union between Roxy and Essex with a certain degree of horror, regarded it as a kind of fall -- evil in itself and a source of doom to all involved."33 This is supported by Twain’s portrayal of Tom as the embodiment of the seeds of self-destruction that the relationship contained within it. If Tom is meant to represent the fruit of betrayal and terror and profaned love which join men in our society, then he must lie, steal, kill,

31Ibid., p. 17.
32Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel, p. 389.
33Ibid.,
and boast of his crimes until he reveals himself as a secret slave.\footnote{Ibid., p. 390.}

Thus, here again the two books may be viewed as complements to each other, expressing between them the unthought American view of race relations. Neither in itself is a total expression of either the American view or Mark Twain's view, but rather, both are necessary parts of a total picture.

Mark Twain's Specter

Just as the idyllic relationship darkens into the abhorrent one, so the generally idyllic world of Huckleberry Finn takes on darker aspects and becomes filled with terror in Pudd'nhead Wilson. The two views are not, as in the cases of the other elements, so absolutely clear-cut as this statement implies; it is really a matter of shading. A close examination of Huckleberry Finn reveals that the predominantly idyllic atmosphere is actually in a shadow, though this is masked by the style and Twain's manipulations of the plot. In Huckleberry Finn, however, Twain does not make it quite clear what has cast a shadow on his idyllic world. Fiedler expresses this as Twain failing to identify "what particular terror haunts his most nostalgic memories."\footnote{Ibid., p. 385.} It is not until Pudd'nhead Wilson that this shadow assumes a definite shape and Twain reveals his specter as "The Negro."\footnote{Ibid., p. 390.}
In Love and Death in the American Novel, Fiedler is concerned with the sources of terror in American literature, and he finds a particularly good subject in the study of Mark Twain. He sees the source of the shadow that lurks in \textit{Huckleberry Finn} as Twain's realization, however unconscious, that his innocence and joy, as well as the life that sustained them, were based on the labor and indignities of slaves. "Striving to return as a grownup to the limit of a boy's memory, Twain\textemdash arrived\textemdash at the fact of slavery."\textsuperscript{37} once as imperceptible to him as the town of Hannibal itself. Twain's plight, then, was that he was "forced to dream a boy's dream of freedom acted out in the world of slavery."\textsuperscript{38}

This paradox was at the heart of \textit{Huckleberry Finn}. It was present as a constant tension, but it was "camouflaged by the poetry and high spirits of the text." In \textit{Pudd'nhead Wilson}, however, "it falls apart into horror and horseplay."\textsuperscript{39}

A hint of the darker aspect of this element in \textit{Huckleberry Finn} can be seen in the incident near the end of the book where Tom, an adolescent Pudd'nhead Wilson, cries out and says of Jim, "They hain't no right to shut him up . . . . Turn him loose! He ain't no slave; he's as free as any creatur

\textsuperscript{37}\textit{Ibid.}

\textsuperscript{38}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 386.

\textsuperscript{39}\textit{Ibid.}
that walks this earth!" At this point Tom is blithely convinced that freedom is real, realer than the illusion of slavery, and at this point we believe him. But even though Twain refuses to see it, the joke is already there. In *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, David Wilson, Tom grown older, rises to answer his earlier cry: "Valet de Chambre, Negro and slave . . . make upon the window the fingerprints that will hang you!" With this, the double truth is complete: the seeming slave is free, but the free man is really a slave. The vague undercurrents that disturbed Twain in the writing of *Huckleberry Finn* take a definite form in this terror-filled assertion.

This theme that was present in shadowy form in *Huckleberry Finn* and took a darker and more explicit form in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* was the idea of slavery and every man's existence as a slave. Twain himself stated this theme in one of the final entries in his journal: "The skin of every human being contains a slave." With this statement we know in what sense Tom's earlier assertion "as free as any cretur . . ." is true and what was once an unconscious fear has become a conscious assertion.

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40 Fiedler, "'As Free as Any Cretur . . .'", p. 18.
42 Fiedler, "'As Free as Any Cretur . . .'", p. 18.
43 Ibid.
This terror-filled realization that haunted Twain and is voiced in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* had been present in the mind of Mark Twain for years. Even in *Huckleberry Finn* there was a hint of the conviction that man is born to be doomed beneath the assertion that man is the master of his own fate. Huck's decision to "light out" again is actually an acceptance of his fate, his fate to be neither hero nor citizen, son nor brother, but a stranger and outcast. In helping Tom "free" Jim, Huck had lost a sense of his own identity and it had become clear that he was not one of the masters of the world. At the end he is ready to take flight once again, to become himself once again. Huck had been shaped by his environment and could not avoid his fate, try as he would. This aspect is more than a hint in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. It becomes a positive assertion when Pudd'nhead, who may in this instance be considered the voice of Mark Twain, writes in his "Calendar" that "training is everything. The peach was once a bitter almond; cauliflower is nothing but a cabbage with a college education."* From a Dream of Freedom to a Vision of Death Just as there are disturbing hints of the slavery of

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*44* Fiedler, "'As Free as Any Cretur . . .' II," p. 17.
*46* Twain, *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, p. 66.
every man in Huckleberry Finn, so also there are hints of the darker aspects of the river and the positive side of slavery, the dream of freedom, that will emerge in Pudd’nhead Wilson. These darker elements are present in Huckleberry Finn but yet Twain refuses to fully acknowledge them, waiting until the writing of Pudd’nhead Wilson for the river to change from a symbol of hope to a symbol of despair and the dream of an escape to freedom to become a vision of an escape only in death.

For Twain the motion toward childhood was a motion toward the South, down the river, but he also thought of this trip as a "descent into hell." These two aspects, reminiscent of his ambivalent attitudes toward Hannibal and race relations, are represented by the different presentations of the river in Huckleberry Finn and Pudd’nhead Wilson. In Huckleberry Finn the river is presented positively as "the defining edge of the natural world," but in Pudd’nhead Wilson it is presented merely as a passageway into the darkness of the deep South.

In Huckleberry Finn the river is a god. It is a refuge from the sordid life that Huck and Jim encounter on the shore. On the river "time seemed suspended" and the attempted lynchings

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47Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel, p. 384.
48Fiedler, "'As Free as Any Cretur . . .'II," p. 16.
49Trilling, p. 52.
of Colonel Sherburns "mere eddies from some vague world that always receded around the next bend of the river." 50

The river is likewise a symbol of hope in the sense that it is the path toward freedom. In his interpretation of a dream, Jim lets "the big, clear river" symbolize the free states -- freedom. 51 Huck also viewed the river as the path to freedom, shown by his struggle with his conscience. "Everytime he danced around and says, 'Dah's Cairo!' it went through me like a shot, and I thought if it was Cairo I reckoned I would die of miserableness." 52

The image of the river has changed from one of hope to one of despair in Pudd'nhead Wilson, however. Where the southward motion in Huckleberry Finn meant freedom, it evokes feelings of terror in Pudd'nhead Wilson because it is the path to the ultimate in slavery. This motif is repeated over and over again in Pudd'nhead Wilson. When Mr. Driscoll threatens to sell all the slaves down the river if the thief does not confess, "it was equivalent to condemning them to hell!" 53 Again, as Roxy realized that her child might very


52 Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p. 114.

53 Twain, Pudd'nhead Wilson, p. 47.
well be sold down the river, she was so filled with fear that she could not close her eyes that night -- "the thought crazed her with horror." Later in the book when her own son had sold her down the river, Roxie cried, "I wouldn't treat a dog so!"

While it is true that there are darker elements such as the fog and the invasion of the raft by the Duke and the King connected with the river in *Huckleberry Finn* and there are hints of the terror of being sold down the river -- this is what causes Jim to run away in the first place, the southward motion, although it is contrary to face, is felt as a motion toward deliverance. The direction in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, on the other hand, is felt only as the way into the ultimate horror. The dream of flight that dominates the tone of *Huckleberry Finn* had become in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* what Fiedler refers to as "a nightmare of captivity."

This dream of freedom is asserted over and over again in the opening chapters of *Huckleberry Finn*. It is given voice repeatedly by Jim in such passages as those in which "he was saying how the first thing he would do when he got to a free state he would go to saving up money . . ." and his joyous cries that "pooty soon I'll be a-shout'n for joy,

54 Ibid., p. 49.
55 Ibid., p. 168
56 Fiedler, "'As Free as Any Cretur . . .'II," p. 16.
57 Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*, p. 114.
en I couldn't ever been free if it hadn' ben for Huck."58

But then as the book progressed, even Twain began to have trouble with this dream of freedom. Nearly seven years of the time that he spent working on Huckleberry Finn, he spent bogged down and unable to write a line. Once his initial impetus had taken him through the fifteenth chapter of the book as it now stands, he was at a loss. After the raft had been taken out from under him and his characters, he laid the manuscript aside, unable to continue, and considered burning it, declaring that he liked it "only tolerably well."59 The real heart of the problem was, however, that the darker aspects of Pudd'Nhead Wilson were already creeping in, and Twain was having a great deal of trouble reconciling these with the innocent dream of the flight to freedom.

Henry Nash Smith's close analysis of Huckleberry Finn in *Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer* reveals three major divisions in the novel. The first division involves the story of Huck's and Jim's adventures in their flight toward freedom, with Jim running from slavery and Huck running from the cruelty of his father and the "sivilizing" efforts of Miss Watson and Widow Douglas. The second major division involves the social satire of the towns along the river.

58Ibid., p.115.
59Long, p. 190.
and the last division involves the developing characterization of Huck. 60

Both Leo Marx and Smith note the impossibility of the quest for freedom succeeding. In an essay in which he discusses the farical ending of Huckleberry Finn, Marx asserts that, "the geography of the novel, the raft's powerlessness, the goodness and vulnerability of Huck and Jim, all prefigure a conclusion quite different in tone from that which Clemens gave us . . . . Through the symbols we reach a truth which the ending obscures: the quest cannot succeed." For Marx, the raft simply was not capable of carrying the burden of hope Twain placed upon it. 61 Smith likewise points out the failure of the quest generally asserting that it first fails when the raft drifts past Cairo in the fog.

A close look at Smith's analysis of the structure of Huckleberry Finn makes his indictment of the failure of the quest for freedom clearer. It can be seen that the narrative tends to increase in depth as it moves from the adventure story in the early chapters to the social satire in the middle section, and then to the ultimate psychological penetration of Huck's moral crisis in chapter 31 when Huck says, "All right, then I'll go to hell." 62 Although the initial

60 Smith, Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer, p.114.
61 Leo Marx, "Mr. Eliot, Mr. Trilling, and Huckleberry Finn," in Discussions of Mark Twain, ed. by Guy A. Cardwell (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1963), p. 80.
62 Twain, Huckleberry Finn, p. 273.
failure of the quest was the raft floating past Cairo, this moral crisis marks the actual end of the quest for freedom since it is a result of the shock of the definitive failure of Huck's effort to help Jim. 63

Smith then goes on to describe the dilemma that Mark Twain found himself in. According to Smith, "the difficulty of imagining a successful ending for Huck's and Jim's quest had troubled Mark Twain almost from the beginning of his work on the book." 64 After Huck and Jim leave Jackson's Island, no long-range plan is mentioned until the beginning of chapter 15 when Huck says that they intend to sell the raft and take a steamboat up the Ohio to the free states. But they drift past Cairo in the fog and their substitute plan of going back to the mouth of the Ohio in the canoe is frustrated when they lose the canoe. They then decide that they will have to drift downstream until they can find a canoe to buy, but this drifting downstream cannot be reconciled with the plan to free Jim by transporting him up the Ohio. For Twain the result of this dilemma was a temporary abandonment of the story, 65 his answer to the initial failure of the quest for freedom.

Marx lends support to the idea that Twain was vaguely

63 Smith, Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer, p. 114.
64 Ibid., p. 115.
65 Ibid., p. 116.
unnerved by the possibilities when he describes Twain as allowing the intensity of the readers' anxiety over Jim's escape to diminish after the raft has drifted past Cairo, with Twain falling back on the devices of low comedy. Twain dissipated the power of his major theme as if he were anticipating the dilemma that he finally had to face.66

After seven years, Twain hit upon the device of the Duke and the King to keep Huck and Jim floating southward. By holding Huck and Jim in virtual captivity, Twain was able to preserve the overall form of a journey down the river while providing opportunity for satire. But for all this outward appearance, the meaning of the journey had changed; the quest for freedom had come to an end, with Jim assuming an entirely passive role and Huck an essentially passive one, functioning as an observer. As Smith concludes, Twain was merely postponing the acknowledgement that the quest had failed although he would have to face it eventually.67

Evidence that he has at last admitted the failure is seen for Smith, in the deep depression that Huck feels as he approaches the Phelps farm. Since this depression, expressed by Huck in his references to an overpowering feeling of loneliness and a preoccupation with death, cannot be accounted for in the story, Smith theorizes that it must

66 Marx, p. 80.

67 Smith, Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer, p. 117.
result from Twain's conscious realization of the failure of the quest for freedom. The meaning of this realization for Twain was profound. "Because of the symbolic meaning the journey had taken on for him, the recognition was more than a perception of difficulty in contriving a plausible ending for the book." In order to write the final chapters of the book, he had to abandon the compelling image of the happiness of Huck and Jim on the raft and so acknowledge that the vernacular values embodied in his story were mere figments of the imagination.68

As Smith conceded, in a superficial way Huck and Jim do succeed, but he maintains that they cannot finally succeed. At the end Jim is technically free and Huck still has the power to light out for the territories, but Jim's freedom has been brought about by such an implausible device that the reader cannot believe in it and the notion that a fourteen-year-old boy could make good his escape beyond the frontier is equally unconvincing.69 Marx points out that Huck's decision to move ahead of the inescapable advance of civilization is a confession of defeat because it means the raft has to be abandoned.70

Walter Blair writes of this wavering of Mark Twain during

68 Ibid., p. 132.
69 Ibid., p. 115.
70 Marx, p. 81.
his writing of *Huckleberry Finn*, maintaining that the darker aspects were not represented until after 1879 or 1880, except as they are drawn in the single character of Pap Finn.\(^7^1\) Blair describes Twain as being obsessed by ancient problems of what the nature of man is, how man distinguishes evil from good, and what the wellsprings of human action are.\(^7^2\)

In 1874 Twain read Lecky's *History of European Morals* in which Lecky distinguished two types of moralists: those holding with him that man has intuitive powers that enable him to act virtuously, and those holding that uncontrollable forces shape man's character and selfish interests shape his actions. Twain worked steadily to build up a strong case against Lecky, and a few months after completing the manuscript of *Huckleberry Finn* (at least so Twain implies), he became a pessimist, meaning a determinist in his way of thinking. But, Blair insists, while Twain was writing *Huckleberry Finn*, he wavered between a logical conviction that Lecky's position was untenable and a pathetic hope that some men at least could live as Lecky held that all men could.\(^7^3\)

Fiedler also notes this wavering but points out that in the nine years between the completion of *Huckleberry Finn* and the writing of *Pudd'nmhead Wilson*, Twain had indeed

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\(^7^1\)Blair, p. 152  
\(^7^2\)Ibid., p. viii.  
\(^7^3\)Ibid.
The hints of these "dark aspects" of Pudd'nhead Wilson were present in Huckleberry Finn, but Twain was still struggling with them then. The reading of Pudd'nhead Wilson as a complement to Huckleberry Finn is especially productive in regard to the motif of freedom. While Twain does not abandon the theme of freedom in Pudd'nhead Wilson, he does render the "full treacherous paradox, only half of which he had acknowledged earlier."80

Twain's disillusionment and cynicism did not appear abruptly, but rather, were present from the beginning, threatening to erupt. Traces can be seen even in his earlier work, with the undercurrents growing and finally emerging into the foreground. This viewpoint of the undercurrents of Huckleberry Finn fully emerging in Pudd'nhead Wilson is especially applicable in regard to the similar elements of the societies pictured, the views of Hannibal, the views of race relations, and the presentations of the river and the possibilities of freedom.

"When the creative memories of [Twain's] youth dimmed and dulled, a brooding over a human race which simply did not, and would not, behave like a boy's dream but was stupid when it was not vicious, . . . captured a mind which under its gay fictions must have been sensitive to disillusionment

80 Fiedler, "'As Free as Any Cretur . . . '," p. 18.
from the start. The result of the fading of these nostalgic dreams that surrounded Huckleberry Finn, though faintly disturbed, was Dawson's Landing, the other side of St. Petersburg.

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