Dream Imagery in the Fiction of Mark Twain

by

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Thesis Director's Signature:

J. R. Ward

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To my husband,
for his support and understanding,
and also to my mother, father, and sister,
for their encouragement throughout the years.
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ABSTRACT

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Roberta Goodall Boman

The purpose of this thesis is to examine Mark Twain's use of the dream motif in his fiction. Twain's life and art are inseparable in this study of the growing importance of vision and illusion; therefore, this thesis focuses not only on imagistic concerns of the dream, but also on the disgruntled idealist and his constant identification with visionaries and their fantasies.

Chapter I is an introduction which defines "the Twain dream" and briefly traces its evolution through four books: The Innocents Abroad, The Gilded Age, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, and The Mysterious Stranger. Each of these works represents a specific period in Twain's development of this prominent and revealing motif.

The second chapter is a detailed study of Twain's dream "origins" in The Innocents Abroad. This early travel book is filled with lyrical, dreamy language, superstition and illusion, and ugly reality juxtaposed to the beautiful ideal, three aspects of the dream which prefigure the visions of later fictional works.

In Chapter III Twain's preference for the dream motif again emerges in The Gilded Age, a rambling tale of numerous visionaries in a fanciful age of vision. Again, the author's own identification with his imaginative characters emphasizes the integration of art, life, and psyche.

Chapter IV is an analysis of the dream as both form and substance of the satire, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. In this
book are glimpses of miraculous visions within visions, supernatural power, frantic escapism, and nightmarish destruction, all of which intimate disillusion and rejection of reality.

The final chapter explores the bizarre solipsism of *The Mysterious Stranger*, a culmination of Twain's artistic and personal obsession with illusion. This section is an attempt to examine the dream as all-encompassing symbol, the Dream anticipated and partially explained by dream imagery in the three previously cited works.
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

I didn't see no di'monds, and I told Tom Sawyer so. He said there was loads of them there, anyway; and he said there was A-rabs there, too, and elephants and things. I said, why couldn't we see them, then? He said if I warn't so ignorant, but had read a book called "Don Quixote," I would know without asking. He said it was all done by enchantment.\(^1\)

Much of Mark Twain's art "is all done by enchantment," enchantment which, like the tales of Don Quixote, asserts the powerful existence of fantasy, magic, and dream. Twain had, in the words of critic Hamlin Hill, "a personality that had never been quite able to endure itself."\(^2\) This tendency, coupled with an underlying idealism, serves as the basis for a study of his dream imagery: "The Taj Mahal of his imagination was some 35 or 40 times finer than the reality, and therefore... more valuable than the reality... He always expected too much of life, too much of himself, and too much of mankind."\(^3\) Thus, simply speaking, "the Twain dream" is the beautiful ideal, the purest and best thing, person, place, or concept. Completely untarnished, the ideal is therefore divorced from reality. This vision takes various forms in Twain's fiction, but in each book one finds an underlying dream of perfection. The man and his art move from early recognition of the dream as distinct from, and often subordinate to, reality, to the radical perception of reality itself as mere dream. Twain's idealism struggles with financial disaster, death, sickness, and philosophical torment, "until, at last, when old age was upon him, he could remember only the things that had never happened."\(^4\) The dream beyond reality is his refuge, and when this dream can no longer
be set apart from the ugliness of existence, he negates that existence in his art.

The emergence, development, and culmination of dream imagery, and finally of dream symbolism, is portrayed uniquely in each succeeding book. In *The Innocents Abroad*, the dream is merely Twain's preferred way of perceiving the world. A rigid dichotomy between ugly reality and distanced, beautiful ideal is established on this pilgrimage abroad, and at the conclusion of the travel book one sees clearly these separate, but equally experienced worlds. Twain labors in the midst of reality to visibly, tangibly render his dreamy ideal, and he does so successfully by using the journey metaphor. In *The Gilded Age* one encounters yet another aspect of the dream motif with which the author so closely identifies: the rampant nineteenth-century American Dream. All characters in this book, and the nation as a whole, have grandiose illusions based on two things: self-dissatisfaction and blatant idealism. Colonel Sellers, both magician and artist, manipulates appearances and aggravates the conflict between fantasy and realism. A forerunner of Satan in *The Mysterious Stranger*, this omnipotent spinner of illusions also anticipates one of Twain's best-loved wonder-books, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. This satire makes only brief contact with "reality," for almost all of the tale occurs in a dream-vision, and Hank Morgan, the dreamer, immediately sets out to rebuild, to redream, the dream. As long as the ideal is unrealized, it remains untainted; when Hank Morgan actually lives in an illusory world, he finds it wanting, and labors unsuccessfully to reconstruct his fanciful Camelot. Dream is no longer a happy escape in *A Connecticut Yankee*: the illusory world is
destroyed and The Boss is the dreamer damned by Merlin to lengthy
death-like sleep. "LIFE ITSELF IS ONLY A VISION, A DREAM. . . NOTHING
EXISTS SAVE EMPTY SPACE--AND YOU!" exclaims Satan in The Mysterious
Stranger. In this later work Twain's dream is elevated to a symbol,
for it represents the whole of existence and encompasses all characters
as well as readers of the tale. Illusion "conquers" reality by denying
it, and thereby ends a study of Twain's dream motif and the failure to
"arrive at that contemplative mood of sadness and large peace which
enfolds the aesthetic response to such an experience." Satan says that
the problem of ugly reality does not exist, but he fails to solve it. Nevertheless, Twain does succeed in affirming his belief in creative
imagination and the overwhelming power of the dream. Near the end of
his art and life, Mark Twain chooses the "active despair" of Vincent
Van Gogh:

Now I possess... something else, called soul. I
am told that the soul never dies, is always searching
and searching... Instead of succumbing to my
homesickness, I have told myself that my home is
everywhere, and instead of giving myself up to passive
melancholy, I have chosen active despair...
CHAPTER I: NOTES


6 Bellamy, p. 204.


CHAPTER II: THE INNOCENTS ABROAD—"A HALF-WAKING SORT OF DREAM"

O Fantasy, that at times does so snatch us out of Ourselves that we are conscious of naught, even, Thought a thousand trumpets sound about us...

On June 8, 1867, Mark Twain went aboard the sidewheel steamer Quaker City and thereby began his five-month sojourn, a tour of Europe and the Middle East which furnished material for his first success, The Innocents Abroad (1869). Twain's first book is written as the result of humorous and serious travel observations, not the least of which include memorable impressions of his Quaker City companions, their prayer-meetings, and their obsessions with "culture" and "great works." In his earliest travel book, Twain, whose artistic origin is in the telling of humorous tall tales, reveals a penchant for dreams and fantasy, an inclination grounded in an inherent tension. At this point in his artistic travels, Twain can discern the difference between reality and dream. Of course, he much prefers the latter, but in 1869 he has not yet rejected the real world as a pale imitation of a Platonic dream existence. He vacillates between an unhappy loyalty to reality and a staunch adherence to his beautiful ideal: the Twain dream. Wrestling with himself, he not only observes but often encourages an alliance with the fanciful. An examination of this retreat into the fables of Twain's own creation involves mention of both the man and his art, for "the dream is the myth of the individual." Maurice Le Breton says that Twain makes "no effort to diffuse his work with fantasy; his temperament impelled him naturally in that direction." In The Innocents Abroad, the author-speaker is The
Naive American, an idealist by nature who is ripe for dream-thought. Like Huck Finn, Twain the traveler has a peculiar "innocence" conducive to floating on a raft and dreaming. Huck muses:

... there warn't no home like a raft, after all. Other places do seem so cramped up and smothery, but a raft don't. You feel mighty free and easy and comfortable on a raft.4

Both Huck and Twain the traveler are independent thinkers set adrift, and both take comfort in the freedom of fantasy. The author of The Innocents Abroad lets the current carry him along, as he basks "in the happiness" of "drifting with the tide of a great popular movement."5 Travel offers manifold opportunities to participate in illusion, for this journey is an epic departure from the North American continent. Five months give the author time to witness the ugly, the novel, the bizarre, the quaint, and the beautiful. On such a journey Twain experiences the distance and closeness, the idealism and disillusion so crucial to his developing perception of dreams. Because this somewhat visionary traveler is predisposed to fantasize, because the boat and foreign lands furnish abundant raw material for these "dreams," and finally, because he is permitted to see both ideal and real, the noted American "realist" often embraces the dream. In embracing the dream he does three things: Twain fills the book with much lyrical, dreamy language and many passages pertaining to fantasy; he exposes himself and the reader to foreign magic, superstition, and illusion and thereby accepts the universal importance of fantasy and ritual; and most importantly, the author recognizes that, for him, dreams are beautiful ideals in some way divorced from the ugly
actualities of existence. Twain's visions loosen the fetters of a burdened heart. The Innocents Abroad is a crucial starting point from which to begin an analysis of Twain's preoccupation with dreams, his spiritual food. In this work one receives what Leslie A. Fiedler calls, "the doubt of reality which becomes the belief in dream."\(^6\)

Gladys C. Bellamy speaks of the serious dream passages in The Innocents Abroad, and the rage and disappointment resulting from these flights of fantasy.\(^7\) Certainly the Preface to Volume I is an invitation to fantasy:

This book is a record of a pleasure trip. If it were a record of a solemn scientific expedition, it would have about it that gravity, that profundity, and that impressive incomprehensibility which are so proper to works of that kind. . . . it is only a record of a picnic. . . . it has a purpose, which is, to suggest to the reader how he would be likely to see Europe and the East if he looked at them with his own eyes. . . . (v.i., Preface).

Thus, Twain establishes a rapport with his reader, whom he urges to engage in "the great Pleasure Excursion" which is to be "a picnic on a gigantic scale" (v.i, 45), a holiday on a marvelous steamship, in exotic lands, surrounded by history itself. Twain exclaims that "Nothing, that any finite mind could discover" (v.i, 51), can make the journey more irresistible. Such a prelude expands and swells the imagination. "It was a brave conception; it was the offspring of a most ingenious brain" (v.i, 46). This exalted language reveals high expectations and an undaunted vision. The travelers aboard the Quaker City frolic in a dream world "lighted by no meaner lamps than the stars and the magnificent moon," a moon which romanticizes those who "dance, and promenade, and smoke,
and sing, and make love, and search the skies for constellations" (v.i, 46). The journey itself metaphorically suggests a launching out into the unknown, and Twain quite willingly allows himself to be taken into a sea of dreams:

... and in my berth, that night, rocked by the measured swells of the waves, and lulled by the murmur of the distant surf, I soon passed tranquilly out of all consciousness of the dreary experiences of the day and damaging premonitions of the future (v.i, 59).

Both the form and the content of this passage reveal a verbal artistry greatly inspired by, and dependent on, dreams. In his notebook, Twain recalls the dream journeys of sleep:

Waking, I move slowly; but in my dreams my unhampered spiritualized body flies to the ends of the earth in a millionth of a second. Seems too—and I believe, does.

The dream, when not upheld by reality, is sustained by sleep or imagination.

Throughout Volume I, the reader discovers a tendency toward the musical, evocative power of illusion. Certainly it is in the passages of this early work that Twain draws a line, although a somewhat hazy one, between the real world and the world of dreams. The ideal is elevated. Of The Innocents Abroad the author himself says: "The world has a weakness for its illusions: the splendor that falls on the castle walls, the glory of the hills at evening, the pathos of the days that are no more." The same painterly quality of expression that Twain uses in the beginning of Chapter XIX of his classic, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, surfaces fifteen years earlier in the dreamy, romanticized passages of The
Innocents Abroad:

But the vessel climbed aloft as if she would climb to heaven—then paused an instant that seemed a century, and plunged headlong down again, as from a precipice. The sheeted sprays drenched the decks like rain. The blackness of darkness was everywhere. At long intervals a flash of lightening clove it with a quivering line of fire. . . (v. i, 95).

Twain speaks of the charms of mystery and the "fascination in the spot" (v. i, 147) where the Iron Mask was imprisoned. The unknown captive shrouded in forgotten history provokes more interest than mere facts, for here mystery abounds. In a later passage, France is declared bewitching and charming to the eye: "Such glimpses of Paradise, it seemed to us, such visions of fabled fairy-land!" (v. i, 149). Paris is hailed as "the sport of a beautiful dream" (v. i, 156) and Versailles, the celebrated Garden of Eden. Twain's language describes mountains as "vast, dreamy, bluish, snow-clad" (v. i, 256), or as "veiled in a dreamy purple haze" (v. i, 260). The author recalls the Venetian legend of the holy ashes, ashes which, if stolen, would cause the city to vanish, Twain says, like a dream. Its foundations would be buried forever "in the unremembering sea" (v. i, 292). The Innocents Abroad unveils dreams of history, "myths and shadows of that old dreamy age" (v. i, 322), but it is history looking its best by moonlight.10 The Cathedral of Milan has stains and cracks hidden only in moonlight: "... in some future day, when the memory of it shall have lost its vividness, shall we half believe we have seen it in a wonderful dream, but never with waking eye" (v. i, 236). "It was a vision!—a miracle!—an anthem sung in stone, a poem wrought in marble!" (v. i, 226). In this travel book the author
gazes at history from a vantage point similar to that of one feasting his eyes upon the Hannibal, Missouri of Life on the Mississippi. Many years removed from his remembered home, he senses time's unreality: "I had simply been dreaming an unusually long dream." 11

In Volume II of The Innocents Abroad, one finds the continuation of frequently-used dream passages. This volume concentrates on the eastern part of the journey, and it is important to note the intense idealization of the Holy Land and the acute interest in the Roman Empire as it pertains to Christian history. All myths interest the traveler. Perched on the side of Mt. Vesuvius, he surveys Naples, vague and far away, "a vast mosaic of many colors; the lofty islands swimming in a dreamy haze in the distance" (v. ii, 30). At Pompeii, Twain again lapses into a reverie on the solemn mysteries of the Venerable Past, when suddenly the high-pitched train whistle rudely interrupts his vision. Each new land brings to mind spells, mysteries, and heroes "marching in ghostly procession through our fancies" (v. ii, 58). The author is sensitive to the fanciful expectations of the pilgrims when they visit the Sea of Galilee: "For many and many a year this very picture had visited their thoughts by day and floated through their dreams by night" (v. ii, 250). Well-acquainted with the recurrence of dreams and fanciful thought, Twain respects the idealizations of his fellow travelers. "Palestine is no more of this work-day world. It is sacred to poetry and tradition--it is a dream-land" (v. ii, 393). Bellamy reminds the reader that Twain's dreams, pictures, and scenes are sustained more by imagination than by reality, 12 and this observation equally applies to the author's use of language in the preceding passages. The description of Damascus serves
as an example of language which allows "reality and fiction to coalesce in such a way that the writer is drawn more and more into his creation." This coalescence is mentioned by James M. Cox in an essay discussing Twain's gradual withdrawal into the world of dreams.

This is the picture you see spread far below you, with distance to soften it, the sun to glorify it, strong contrasts to heighten the effects, and over it and about it a drowsing air of repose to spiritualize it and make it seem rather a beautiful tray from the mysterious worlds we visit in dreams than a substantial tenant of our coarse, dull globe" (v. ii, 199).

"Pudd'nhead Wilson's New Calendar" warns: "Don't part with your illusions. When they are gone you may still exist but you have ceased to live." Much of the concern of The Innocents Abroad with illusion surfaces in frequent references to the superstition, magic, and ritual of foreign peoples. The author had already noted such a phenomenon in his own country, and certain aspects of the supernatural emerge later in such characters as the carpenter in Life on the Mississippi who conducts séances which affect Twain's dreams, and Jim of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, who tells Huck about spirits in the air, hairballs, witches, dreams, voodoo, and falling stars that "got spoiled and was hove out of the nest." The Moors of Tangier duly perform their rituals at the fountains, and these rites are no less dependent upon magic and superstition than are the Notre Dame sacred corpses and relics. The author remarks that a piece of the true cross rests in every cathedral, just as does an idolized sarcophagus ablaze with the Christian jewels of an "Aladdin's palace" (v. i, 234). Moonlit Venice is described in terms of the supernatural, "of blotted shadows--of weird stone faces
creeping into the moonlight—of deserted bridges" (v. i, 298), all of which produce "a half-waking sort of dream all the time" (v. i, 303). Pictures formed from human bones, miracles performed with clotted blood, ghosts, spells, magic carpets, "vanishing" tents (v. ii, 180), mysteries surrounding the enigmatic Smyrnan oyster shells, and Ephesus' "legend of the Seven Sleepers" in which the Seven "be mad and dream dreams" (v. ii, 167), all underscore the miraculous and its place in The Innocents Abroad. References to the spiritual, illusory world culminate in the many accounts of Biblical miracles in the Holy Land. The Eternal City, Damascus, contains infinite reminders of an incorporeal world. "Signs is signs," Jim warns, and the world of Huck Finn is only one of those communities affected by Twain's imaginative affinity to signs and fantasy. In The Innocents Abroad the world reflects these things visible and invisible: "Man moves in a world full of ominous signs and portents; he must be constantly alert to ward off evil and must cultivate certain ritualistic practices to encourage good consequences." The reader, examining what has been recorded by the eyes of the author-traveler, observes Twain's frequent mention of the mystical outward forms of the cryptic, unspoken dream. His work mingle's his own "sheer love of fable-making" with a disposition predisposed to respect palmistry, faith healing, mesmerism, and spiritualism. Well-acquainted with his father's belief in the stars and in divination, Twain is always open to "the possible mysteries of an invisible world." This acceptance of the nonphysical is revealed in The Innocents Abroad.

What do the many dream passages and lengthy references to superstition and religion tell the reader about Twain's art in The Innocents
Abroad and in the works of his maturation? The author himself partly answers this question: "... the gods of my understanding have been always hidden in clouds and very far away" (v. ii, 222). The evolution of Twain's fiction can in many respects be understood in light of what Bellamy calls, "ugliness as reality, beauty as dream," for the author "could rarely turn away from the dream beauty to find beauty close at hand." The filth, death, and moral disintegration witnessed by the Quaker City group are described by Bellamy as the "Specters" which hover over all the travel books. In his confrontation with these Specters, Twain acknowledges only pain void of the dignity often inherent in human suffering. Throughout The Innocents Abroad are numerous contrasts between what the author imaginatively "sees" as ideal and what he repeatedly experiences as vivid reality. At this stage in his writing, Twain cannot altogether avoid the reality that must be faced, and he often accurately depicts vivid, sometimes disturbing details of woe.

Standing before "The Last Supper" by Da Vinci, he says:

> We can imagine the beauty that was once in an aged face; we can imagine the forest if we see the stumps, but we cannot absolutely see these things when they are not there" (v. i, 249).

The author cannot transcend the imperfections of the mundane world, just as he cannot let his dreams transport him to a better everyday existence. A separation is maintained. In Life on the Mississippi, written fourteen years later, the face of the river serves as a marvelous, intimate book which, for Twain, loses much of its grandeur when mysteries are translated into empirical knowledge: "... I had made a valuable
acquisition. But I had lost something, too. I had lost something which could never be restored to me while I lived. All the grace, the beauty, the poetry, had gone out of the majestic river!" Twain contrasts the gargantuan grapes of Canaan, pictured in his early Sunday-school books, with the grapes he actually examines in the Holy Land. He confesses that the books exaggerated a bit. The reader notes that in this travel book many a disillusion results from a Sunday-school book mentality which cannot satisfactorily assimilate idealism and observed realism. For Twain, the ideal is unalterably perfect, the real inevitably disappointing and bad, and with the exception of The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, the maturation of his art brings not a happy reconciliation of the two, but an escape from the ugliness of fact to the beauty of illusion.

Examination of the two worlds of Twain's fiction involves a recognition of distinct differences between the lovely and the unlovely, appearance and reality. In The Innocents Abroad, Twain makes abundantly clear his contrasting perceptions. He discovers quite a difference between the intoxicating legends of the French barbers and the shabby, obscure establishment in which he receives a shave: "My old, old dream of bliss vanished into thin air!" (v. i, 159). The ancient grandeur of Venice by moonlight can hardly be compared to the unpoetic, pedestrian daytime city, robbed of "the charitable moon" (v. i, 283). Crucial to the whole of Twain's future fiction are detailed contrasts exhibited in this early work. A great chasm separates the gilded cathedrals and the acute poverty from which they spring. The deceptive verbiage of Wm. C. Grims parodies the barren Palestine he describes. The author recognizes
Christianity's incongruous high precepts and sordid birthplace, home of lepers and sore-eyed children. At every step this sensitive artist meets "only another delusion" akin to that optical enigma, the ingenious, deceptive painting: "No one could have imagined the park was not real" (v. i, 240). Twain leans on, but cannot trust that for which he yearns, illusion. A closer look brings one in touch with "an eternal circus" (v. i, 80) peopled with dwarfs. Constantinople appalls the traveler with its excess of misery, and it is here that one finds almost a parody of the notion that real life is lovely and acceptable. Legs, eyes, arms, and stubs protrude from monsters whose distortions are the great business assets of beggars. No wonder it is that Twain prefers the animated picture of fashionable desmoiselles shrouded in the light of gas-lamps and made enticing by deceptive fashion and romantic music (v. i, 213).

Twain, both gifted and cursed with "a loftier dream than ever King Arthur knew," is, according to Edward Wagenknecht, "always mixing on his palette the colors of fact and the colors of hope." But these colors depend on the magnification or the reduction of objects, for distance plays a key role in Twain's early perception of dream and reality. As long as the American flag represents an ideal, faraway homeland, then it is revered and hailed with tears and waving handkerchief: "She was beautiful before--She was radiant now" (v. i, 98). Ugly particulars vanish in the presence of an overwhelming symbol. The poverty and chaos of Naples and her crowded streets diminish in proportion to Twain's physical and temporal distance: "Distance clothed him [a beggar] in a purple gloom, and added a veil of shimmering mist that so softened his rugged features that we seemed to see him through a web of silver gauze"
(v. ii, 56). The Grand Duke and Duchess are gods when viewed from afar, mere mortals when viewed at arm's length, and "... if I chose I could knock him down" (v. ii, 126), says the traveler concerning the Duke. Palestine is very large in the imagination of a young Christian boy, and very small when surveyed by a tired, dusty man. Constantinople is quite a noble picture when dreamed of in Eastern books of travel, "But its attractiveness begins and ends with its picturesqueness. From the time one starts ashore till he gets back again, he execrates it" (v. ii, 80). The pyramids are "airy nothings of a dream" when studied from a distance of several miles, but are "a fairy vision no longer" (v. i, 407-08) when meticulously examined by hand. The list goes on and on, for in this first travel book one finds too many memorials, legends, and art treasures with which he may become disillusioned. When the author sees, first-hand and once too often, the "true" nails of the cross and the "actual" crown of the Lord, he, like Napoleon III, carries his dream into exile and sits upon a throne "in fancy" (v. i, 173). The words of Matthew Arnold's poem "Dover Beach" aptly describe Twain's dilemma in The Innocents Abroad:

... for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

An examination of the dream in The Innocents Abroad reveals the tension inherent in Mark Twain's world view. "He sees life steadily,
but he fails to see it whole,"^26 appraises one critic. In this early work Twain delineates what is dream and what is reality, but he rests uneasily when forced to juxtapose the two. Blessed with independence and a "raft" upon which to dream, confronted by numerous opportunities to fantasize, and given both the distance and the closeness crucial to his illusion and disillusion, Twain incorporates the dream into his first travel book. Thus, the humorous, factual particulars of a travel journal mingle with lyrical, dreamy language, plentiful references to foreign magic and ritual, and allusions to the beautiful dream and the unlovely reality. Twain is in search of a theater equal to the magnificent human spectacle set before him:

Our thoughts wander constantly to the practical concerns of life, and refuse to dwell upon things that seem vague and unreal. But when the day is done, even the most unimpressible must yield to the dreamy influences of this tranquil starlight.(v. ii, 272).

One can comprehend it [Galilee's brilliance] only when night has hidden all incongruities and created a theater proper for so grand a drama (v. ii, 273).

In Twain's early fiction, the dream is often the only artistic mode appropriate for the task of portraying the distant, the beautiful, the good. Likewise, all realistic descriptions are void of dreamy inspiration and confront only ugliness, deception, and pain. The author expects such evil, but continually reacts to it by escaping into raptures and reveries. "Such is life, and the trail of the Serpent is over us all" (v. ii, 286), mourns the traveler. Incapable of reconciliation,^29 Twain repeatedly returns to the marvels of an enchanted fairy land viewed through "the yellow glass," and creates his own "carefully contrived
accident of a framework that casts it [the scene] into enchanted distance and shut out from it all unattractive features" (v. ii, 285-86). The Innocents Abroad initiates a journey into reveries. This vision of fantasy is not unlike that of Chaucer's Romaunt of the Rose, for both works of art initially thrust reader and speaker into a dream vision affecting the perceptions of all concerned. Just as Chaucer's use of the dream defines the artistic limits and ramifications of his romance, so does Twain's early experimentation with "the great Pleasure Excursion" (v. i, 45) lead him to articulate his own creative guidelines and preoccupations.

Chapter I, volume i, of The Innocents Abroad recalls the medieval dream-vision and its slumber, a lulling of the senses prerequisite to profound reverie. Twain's dreamy introduction is reminiscent of Chaucer's lines:

For this trowe I, and say for me,
That dremes signifiaunce be
Of good and harm to many wightes. . .

That it was May, thus dremed me,
In tyme of love and jolite,
That al thing gynneth waxen gay. . . 28

The Innocents Abroad anticipates the fanciful self-deceptions of The Gilded Age, the fantasy of A Connecticut Yankee in the Court of King Arthur, and the nihilistic dream symbolism of The Mysterious Stranger, for these later fictional works, viewed both individually and collectively, have a thematic origin in the illusions of the first travel book. Twain's impression of the Sphinx, so full of pathos, so lonely and grand, illuminates his personal and artistic reliance upon the dream: "It was MEMORY-RETROSPECTION-wrought into visible, tangible form. . . the stony dreamer solitary" (v. ii, 418). The overwhelming desire to visibly,
tangibly render his dream, as well as the desire to discover his ideals in visible stone, provide the impetus for much of Twain's artistic success and struggle.
CHAPTER II: NOTES


2 Cox, p. 80.


5 Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1899), i. 55. All subsequent references in this chapter to this edition are included in the paper.


10 Bellamy, p. 214.


12 Bellamy, p. 211.


16 Ibid., p. 365.

20


20 Bellamy, pp. 201-07.

21 Ibid., p. 205.

22 Mark Twain, *Life on the Mississippi*, p. 83.

23 Wagenknecht, pp. 3-4.

24 Bellamy, p. 218.


26 Bellamy, p. 203.

27 Ibid., p. 213.

CHAPTER III: THE GILDED AGE--"A GAUDY PAGEANT OF DREAMS"

Lysander: My lord, I shall reply amazedly,  
Half asleep, half waking...

Oberon: ... When they next wake, all this derision  
Shall seem a dream and fruitless vision.¹

In 1873 Mark Twain worked in collaboration with his friend Charles Dudley Warner, and together they produced what is often described as a *român a cîlf*: The Gilded Age. Charles Neider attributes fifty of the sixty-three chapters and a majority of the characterization, to Twain, from whose fecund imagination emerges memorable portraits of Sellers, Laura, Washington and others.² Six years after his first travel book, The Innocents Abroad, the author maintains his interest in the dream and in a dilemma founded in the unreconcilable ugly real and beautiful ideal mentioned in his notebook:

Now, as I take it, my other self, my dream self, is merely my ordinary body and mind freed from clogging flesh and become a spiritualized body and mind with the ordinary powers of both enlarged in all particulars a little, and in some particulars prodigiously.³

Though primarily satirical, The Gilded Age reveals much of Twain's identification with the dreamer, for the author transmits his own great capacity for illusion to characters whose lives also contain an inherent tension, an unreconcilable dilemma. Each character, Sellers excepted, suffers the disillusion of a conflicting "dream of flight" and "nightmare of captivity,"⁴ and frequently each wakes from an "amazed" sleep only to move "from a lesser to a greater dream."⁵ Twain's emphasis on a distinct duality between the real and the dream filters through both the characters
and their gilded age, and as these characters fantasize, the reader sees discrepancies between each dream and its corresponding reality. Visions of power, money, and romance culminate in widespread self-deception and false optimism, for Twain's book reveals his increasing awareness of the danger inherent in dreams unchecked by the controls of reality. In Sellers' world are many Sellers-like characters enchanted by a dream they cannot forsake. Sellers is singular in that his dreams are dreamed for their own sake; thus, he is the Artist. In this satire he symbolizes the virtues and failings of fantasy divorced from reality. Philip, Ruth, Alice, Eli, Hawkins, Laura, Washington, and Dilworthy, are also visionaries in their own right, and they constantly weave spells which entrap others. In *Life on the Mississippi*, Twain observes that "The people don't dream; they work. The happy result is manifest all around in the substantial outside aspect of things." In *The Gilded Age* the people don't work; they dream. Sorely needed in this world are people who do both. "If I had my way I would sail on forever and never go to live on solid ground again," says Twain in *A Tramp Abroad*, for as his art progresses, its primary allegiance is to illusion. Le Breton says that Twain's frontier humor "must ... spring from the conflict of realism and fantasy; there must be a counterthrust of common sense to burst the soap bubbles, deflate the pretensions, and leave man incorrigible, no doubt, but for the moment humbled." The counterthrust of reality but momentarily arrests fantasy, for Twain's characters "love the grandiose, the sensational, and ... for them the limits of possibility have been rolled back toward infinity."

In *The Gilded Age*, Twain captures a national climate which in part fosters dreams, and in part exists merely as the result of the nineteenth
century American dreamer. Magic and wonder abound in this fresh new frontier country ripe with untapped mines, undiscovered oilwells, unsold lands, and unrealized human potential. This age encourages The Great American Dream of quick wealth, explosive prosperity, and instant happiness. Every village and city is, in the words of Bernard DeVoto, "lively with the stench and tumult of its era."¹⁰ The ideal and the real are very far apart, and each man participates in the evanescent Tom Canty dream; thus, all would be Prince. "Signs is signs,"¹¹ says Jim in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, and no character in The Gilded Age can resist numerous signs and feverish prophecies of a promised Utopia. In Beriah Sellers' "umbrella dream" he mistakes congressional applause for thunderclaps, and he thereby symbolizes the essence of this age, so often caught dreaming when it could be acknowledging reality. Twain exclaims: "Who shall say that this is not the golden age of mutual trust, of unlimited reliance upon human promises?"¹² The author vividly recreates society's peculiar susceptibility to the dream and to one extraordinary seer of that vision: Colonel Sellers, a prophet whose imaginings encompass every person and thing in this book. At the conclusion of The Gilded Age, Washington's lament exposes a man who cannot temper his evasive dreams with hard reality:

I have chased it years and years as children chase butterflies. We might all have been prosperous now; we might all have been happy, all these heart-breaking years, if we had accepted our poverty at first and gone contentedly to work and built up our own weal by our own toil and sweat--. . . Instead of that, we have suffered more than the damned themselves suffer. (v. ii, 330).

According to Wiggins, Twain's heroes often embody the folk aspirations
of a community or nation, "an elemental phenomenon fraught with awful significance for the primitive mind." In this satire, Philip, Harry, Ruth, Eli, Alice, Hawkins, Laura, Washington, Dilworthy, and Sellers embody the dreams of a gilded national consciousness torn between appearance and reality.

Philip Sterling bears the standard of The American Dream, for although he is a bit more realistic than his comrade, Henry, Philip is a willing believer and pursuer of dreams. A Yale graduate liberally endowed with assorted talents, he plunges deeply into the heart of frontier opportunities, and thereby spends much of his time sampling this profession and backing out of that one. His fancy is unbounded, and is reminiscent of Twain's:

The fact was, though Philip Sterling did not know it, that he wanted several other things quite as much as he wanted wealth. The modest fellow would have liked fame thrust upon him for some worthy achievement; it might be for a book, or for the skillful management of some great newspaper, or for some daring expedition . . . Sometimes he thought he would like to stand in a conspicuous pulpit. . . (v. i, 134-35).

The adventurous young dilettante does embody the aspirations of the nineteenth century folk dream, for his step has in it that elasticity of the buoyant American Ideal of the heart which "exulted with a conscious ability to take any of its [life's] prizes he chose to pluck" (v. i, 133). Philip is persistently faithful to the illusion that Harry will reimburse him, that Sellers is great, powerful, and all-knowing, that Ruth can be tamed, and that he himself will unveil a frontier fortune. This undying fount of hope is crucial to Twain's dream motif, for in this book much
of what goes on is mere illusion glittering in the mind of an incorrigible idealist. Philip adores the theater: "Delightful illusion of paint and tinsel and silk attire, of cheap sentiment and high and mighty dialogue!" (v.i., 134). To the undaunted young frontiersman there are few real worlds which cannot be confronted and conquered by the ideal. The author explains:

To the young American, here or elsewhere, the paths to fortune are innumerable and all open; there is invitation in the air and success in all his wide horizon. He is embarrassed which to choose, and is not unlikely to waste years in dallying with his chances. . . . He has no traditions to bind him or guide him (v. i, 32-3).

But Philip attains success and wins Ruth's hand only after a series of disillusions. He and Ruth are the characters whose dreams are, to some degree, realized. Philip can weave spells that enchant Eli, Alice, and Ruth, but he remains vulnerable to the tensions between dream and fact: Eli's fortune depends on Philip's actions, not his optimism; Philip's platonic friendship with Alice falls far short of her dream of love; and Ruth's career expectations conflict with idealistic domestic contentment. The limits of possibility are indeed rolled back by his imagination, but tension is ever-present in Philip's life.

Henry Brierly, a glib and frivolous young dandy, forever dramatizes his fantasies. Shimmering appearances mean more to Harry than do all the realities in the world. "Nobody dressed more like an engineer than Mr. Henry Brierly" (v. i, 19), but this pose is merely one in a long series of assumed roles. Only in his imagination is he ever summoned to Washington, Boston, or Montreal. A manufacturer of myths, he dangerously disregards distasteful particulars of money or circumstance: Harry relies
on his own illusions and the illusions of others, and his visions culminate in widespread self-deception. "Harry thoroughly believed in all his projects and inventions, and lived day by day in their golden atmosphere" (v. i, 182). Mrs. Bolton inquires: "Thy friend, Henry Brierly, appears to be a very worldly-minded young man. Does he believe in anything?" Philip laughingly replies: "Oh, yes... he believes in more things than any other person I ever saw" (v. i, 337). Harry dotes on the opera, about which he knows nothing, and he gives "his imagination full range in the world of fashion" (v. i, 250). But this young dandy fails to consummate Sellers' business scheme bloated by the exaggeration of two dreamers; Harry also fails to win Laura, his make-believe princess, and even following Laura's murderous act, Harry will not relinquish hope. A tremendous discrepancy between drab reality and gorgeous fiction surfaces in this character, who "saw everything connected with himself in a large way and in rosy hues. This predominance of the imagination over the judgment gave the impression of exaggeration... which sometimes conveyed the impression that he was not speaking the truth (v. ii, 138). Harry resembles Boggs in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, a man all bombast and illusion: "If he'd a chewed up all the men he's ben a gwyne to chaw up in the last twenty year, he'd have considerable reputation, now," says one town loafer. Totally absorbed in illusion, Harry anticipates Twain's nihilistic final works revealing "a dream that was so ingeniously dreamed that it seemed real all the time," Twain's later definition of existence.

Ruth Bolton and Alice Montague have vital dreams of their own. Ruth's ambitions conflict with love interests, and sometimes she looks
away "with that abstraction of vision which often came into her gray eyes" (v. i, 162). She is the offspring of a mother who "had sometime beaten her young wings against the cage of custom, and indulged in dreams" (v. i, 164), and a father who believes in every Mr. Small, in every promising appearance. Ruth's home is a veritable hotel accommodating illusory figures viewed "in a rose-colored light" (v. i, 290). Her family's wealth is "as unsubstantial as a dream" (v. i, 289), for she inhabits what she describes as a house of cards. Wagenknecht says that Twain's life and art often succumb to "a false light thrown over life, an attempt to live by illusion instead of facing the truth." A false light bothers Ruth, and for a time she pursues a dream of medicine that is both beautiful and real. But her grasp on this tangible ideal loosens, and the vision of a career drifts into the realm of unattainable fancy. Like Ruth, Alice harbors in her heart a dream of Philip's love which is unapproachable in real life. Like most characters in The Gilded Age, Alice discovers that the imagined and the actual rarely meet, and their confrontation brings misery.

Twain introduces Hawkins as the first character in the book. The "Squire" sits "contemplating the morning" (v. i, 13) as it slowly overtakes Obedstown, Tennessee, a village consisting of fifteen tiny houses. "If he only depended on his eyes for information" (v. i, 14), Hawkins would never see beyond this depressed community; but he is a dreamer "fuming with this grand inspiration" (v. i, 19). Hawkins is obsessed with possibilities "that will make men dizzy to contemplate" (v. i, 20), for he seeks "a higher place" where his children will be "princes of the earth. . . courted and worshipped" (v. i, 22). Squire Hawkins' Tennessee
lands constitute 75,000 acres of Promised Land. Thus begins the marvelous myth of the Tennessee Land, a dream magnified by both wealth and poverty. The journey to the Promised Land initiates Hawkins' children into a "new realm of enchantment," "a magician's throne," "the very heart and home of romance, a realization of their rosiest wonder-dreams" (v. i, 43, 41). For these children, dream has a grand impact on this pilgrimage:

Whatever the lagging dragging journey may have been to the rest of the emigrants, it was a wonder and a delight to the children, a world of enchantment; and they believed it to be peopled with the mysterious dwarfs and giants and goblins that figured in the tales the negro slaves were in the habit of telling them nightly... (v. i, 33).

Hawkins clings to every hint of fortune and is elevated to the title of "Judge." But appearances fail and bankruptcy introduces a grievous temptation to sell the Land. Hawkins turns his eyes away from the tattered clothes of his family and clings to his ideal, for he never loses his capacity to believe in the efficacy of the dream. In his deathbed speech he entrusts his family with this treasure:

I am leaving you in cruel poverty. I have been--so foolish--so short-sighted. But courage! A better day is--is coming. Never lose sight of the Tennessee Land! Be wary. There is wealth stored up for you there--wealth that is boundless! (v. i, 110).

Hawkins' admonition carries with it none of that balance between the real and the imagined so sorely needed, particularly by Laura and Washington. Hawkins' intense longings warp the family. Once again in Twain's work the dream assumes monstrous proportions, for in The Gilded Age dreams run rampant in a climate of self-delusion.
Laura partakes of Twain's "unbounded confidence in fantasies." This beautiful orphaned child fulfills romantic dreams only to see them repeatedly shattered, and she is the Duchess of The Gilded Age. Laura moves from lesser to greater dreams, and in desperation uses her powerful charms in order to enslave others, forced to accept the illusion she creates. Laura's first dream, the ardent belief in her family origins, collapses as she discovers letters casting doubt on her descent. At this early age romantic imaginings take firm hold of the psyche: Twain's emphasis on mystery and fantasy again finds an outlet:

She had just reached the romantic age—the age when there is a sad sweetness, a dismal comfort to a girl to find out that there is a mystery connected with her birth... She had more than her rightful share of practical good sense, but still she was human; and to be human is to have one's little modicum of romance secreted away in one's composition (v. i, 118).

Disappointed with the poverty and uncertainty of her lot, Laura delights "in the exercise of her fascinations upon the rather loutish young men who came her way and whom she despised" (v. i, 206). She turns to the world of books, "romances and fictions which fed her imagination with the most exaggerated notions of life, and showed her men and woman in a very false sort of heroism" (v. i, 206). Such material confirms expectations of the beautiful ideal and scorn of the ugly reality. Laura's immersion in progressively grander illusions coincides with Twain's tenet that "reality may fade into the dream." The affair with Colonel Shelby proves to her that "It was all true... the romances she had read, the bliss of life she had dreamed of" (v. i, 207). Shelby's faithlessness later serves as a grand disillusion leaving Laura with a beauty that
shines with the knowledge of good and evil, but not with a disdain for the dream. The characters in *The Gilded Age* cannot bear to let their dreams die. Desiring wealth and luxury, the Duchess "experiments" with Harry and makes him "forget that the Hawkins house was nothing but a wooden tenement" (v. i, 216), for "Laura had her dreams" (v. i, 217). "It was a keen delight to Laura to prove that she had power over men... it pleased her imagination to fancy herself a queen." (v. i, 219). She rises to power in Washington, but her dreams are destructive and undetermined by reality. Limits to this power seem not to exist, and for a while Laura completely mystified society with a great glittering dream of noble sacrifice for the down-trodden Negro: "... as soon as one listener had absorbed the story, he turned about and delivered it to his neighbor" (v. i, 12). Washington, stunned by this alliance of beauty and philanthropy, stands "weltering in his dreams" (v. ii, 45), and likewise, the book-store clerk is mesmerized by Laura's words, "music to his ear" (v. i, 62). Upon Shelby's return, Laura again depends on the gorgeous dream of romance; she moves from lesser to greater illusion, and downfall is inevitable. Driven by false optimism and an unquenchable thirst for perfection, Laura is at last driven to murder, an act which does not kill the last of this heroine's visions, although "the dreamy look was gone out of her face" (v. ii, 317). Laura is still able to manipulate the jury with the myth of helpless, gorgeous womankind, and one last dream remains: the lecturer's platform. A "Queen of romance," she anticipates the "rapturous intoxication" and "the next day's hour of ecstasy" (v. ii, 318-19) awaiting a brilliant woman orator. The first and last stage performance reveals "Only a vast, brilliant emptiness"
(v. ii, 321), the ultimate disillusion revealed by Satan in *The Mysterious Stranger*. Harassed by "failure, disappointment, misery--always misery, always failure" (v. ii, 321), Laura dies a gorgeous "forlorn presence" (v. ii, 323), her memory lingering on the dream of young girlhood. Pascal Covici says of the later Twain, "the mind... out of fear creates its own world. In despair, in retreat, Twain allows the Great Dark of existence to press in on a haunted consciousness that can tolerate no more." Laura's "heart disease" prefigures this incapacity to balance ideal and real, an inability observed in all characters in *The Gilded Age*.

Washington's role in this book follows a pattern similar to that of the other characters, for his self-deception is grandiose. A "dreamy-eyed stripling" (v. i, 76), Washington "was one of that kind of people whose hopes are in the very clouds one day, and in the gutter the next" (v. i, 100), for his eye is fixed on the Tennessee Lands, and he is gladly distracted from reality by any glittering dream. Colonel Sellers overwhelms the young man by "influencing his dreams" (v. i, 93), and by hypnotizing him with schemes as outlandish as their names: "Beriah Sellers' Infallible Oriental Optic Liniment and Salvation for Sore Eyes--the Medical Wonder of the Age" (v. i, 98). Sellers accuses the young visionary of dealing in trifles, contenting himself with the narrow horizon of the common herd, and seeing no farther than the end of his nose" (v. i, 99); Sellers thereby encourages Washington to move from smaller to larger fancies that often vanish when the sorcerer disappears. "The poor room lost its glitter and resumed its poverty" (v. i, 100), when the Colonel departed. Hawkins' deathbed command fills Washington with possibilities which he can never realize, and these ideals are
reminiscent of Twain's own tendencies summarized by Bellamy: "It were better not to attempt a confrontation of hard fact or of harsh reality, without benefit of veil or dream or tinted glass." At the age of thirty, Washington continues to invent useless contrivances and spend his years deprived of wife or wealth, for he is absorbed in "dreaming and planning to no purpose," "a blissful dream of the coming of enormous wealth" (v. i, 203). Willingly entrapped by dreams, he tries to convince others of the validity of his own illusions. Swept along with the tide of Laura's fleeting popularity, Washington believes himself to be transformed into an intellectual marvel, for his every remark seems to compel applause and confirm "the great wealth that was hovering in the air" (v. ii, 43). Thus, in his race to sell to the senate his "gaudy pageant of dreams" (v. ii, 160), Washington grows gray-headed and finally succumbs to reality: "... let it all be just a dream that is done and can't come back to trouble us any more. I am so tired" (v. ii, 226), he sighs. Washington tears the tax bill and lets the breezes scatter the pieces of a curse imposed by an overwhelming, beautiful dream.

Senator Dilworthy is a man motivated to perpetuate a myth. A politician and religious hypocrite worthy only of scorn, he invokes "Divine Blessing" (v. i, 221) on the Columbia River appropriation, insists on family prayers, pompously lectures Sunday School children, and emancipates the poor "nigro." His particular dream is that of success as a "good man" (v. i, 222). In every speech, he touches "reverently upon the institutions of religion, and upon the necessity of private purity" (v. i, 228). This ideal is not at all commensurate with the sham reality of the man who "keeps" Laura, a gorgeous young opportunist.
Dilworthy maintains the pious countenance of a Christian "laborer in the public vineyard" (y. ii, 135). Like Sellers, an optimist Twain compares to a cork, the Senator cannot sink for long, for he is a resilient dreamer who will, by any means, teach his illusions to a populace hungry for belief. In The Gilded Age, one testament to the importance of visions is the enthusiasm with which the people clamor for Dilworthy.

Beriah Sellers radiates hope: he serves as a focal point for Twain's dream motif in The Gilded Age. Mrs. Hawkins says: "... he can out-talk a machine. He'll make anybody believe... that'll listen to him ten minutes..." (v. i, 24), for Sellers' dreams encompass everything and everybody. The Colonel effortlessly transforms the poverty of his home to luxury and beauty: "The Colonel's tongue was a magician's wand that turned dried apples into figs and water into wine as easily as it could change a hovel into a palace and present poverty into imminent future riches" (v. i, 93). He is "such stuff as dreams are made on," and exerts an artist's imaginative control over the fantasies around him. Void of carpet and furnished with an old haircloth sofa, Sellers' parlor is heated by a hearth composed of a candle and a transparent door: "What you want is the appearance of heat, not the heat itself--that's the idea" (v. i, 91), says the magician. Eloquence and beautiful ideal produce these "oracles and gospels," the "bread of life" (v. i, 87) for the Sellers' family. An ancient broken clock mends itself in the hypnotic presence of this visionary of The Gilded Age, for he can work miracles: "But Sellers began to speak now, and the storm passed" (v. i, 90). The Great Accommodator, this man draws every distasteful circumstance into the confines of his dream, and when his family is reduced to a feast of
turnips and cold water, Sellers exhibits his extraordinary capacity for illusion: he awaits the consummation of his railroad scheme while "feeding his pinched family upon the most gorgeous expectations with a reckless prodigality" (v. i, 246). Self deception leads the Sellers family to poverty, false optimism convinces Philip and Harry that the Columbia River can be widened, deepened, straightened, and lengthened, and a magnanimous performance furnishes Sellers with liquor, food, and Havana cigars. This "Aladdin" is Twain's Master of Ceremonies, for he calms the mob by leading its imagination to the realm of dreams:

They had a liking for the Colonel, but still had some ideal of hanging him. ... But they made the mistake of waiting to hear what he had to say first. Within fifteen minutes his tongue had done its work and they were all rich men (v. i, 280).

When the Colonel leaves these spell-bound men, they remain in a world that "lost its glitter and resumed its poverty" (v. i, 100), for their real destitution cannot be denied by the momentary triumph of illusion. In many respects, this character mirrors the author of The Gilded Age, for both manufacture "gigantic schemes... speculations of all sorts" (v. ii, 88), both command the greater and lesser dreams of others, and both fail to balance the importance of real and ideal aspects of life. Sellers is an enterprising Artist larger than life, whose constancy gives stability to the dream life of this book: "... the most airy scheme inflated in the hot air of the capital only reached in magnitude some of his lesser fancies, the by-play of his constructive imagination" (v. ii, 141). Both Sellers and the author are story-tellers in a grand sense, for Twain willingly takes part in the speculations so common in The Gilded
Age: "If Philip had adopted some regular profession. . . If Senator Dilworthy had not made that visit to Hawkeye. . . If Henry Brierly had been blown up on the first Mississippi steamboat he set foot on. . . If Mr. Bolton had said the little word 'No'. . ."(v. ii, 205-206).

The Gilded Age is a parade of the gaudy, flamboyant dreams prevalent in nineteenth century America, and Mark Twain's interest in the dream is particularly well-suited to this era and its people. In Mark Twain--The Man and His Work, Wagenknecht suggests that Twain and his work are very closely related, that each is best explained in terms of the other. If this be true, then this satire is a telling stage in Twain's development of the dream motif, for Philip, Harry, Ruth, Alice, Eli, Laura, Washington, Dilworthy, and Sellers, are endowed not only with a great capacity for illusion, but with an inherent tension, a discrepancy between unacceptable reality and beautiful ideality. The characters weave enticing spells which they themselves cannot escape; the possible has no boundaries and unchecked visions culminate in widespread self-deception and destructive optimism. Colonel Sellers assumes the essential roles of magician and artist, and his creative, insistent presence emphasizes the importance that dream has in Twain's writing in 1837. In this book, the characters cannot accommodate both aspects of life, both the illusory and the concrete:

Washington was so dazed, so bewildered--his heart and his eyes had wandered so far away among the strange lands beyond the seas. . . that he was now as one who has been whirling round and round for a time, and, stopping all at once, finds his surroundings still whirling and all objects a dancing chaos (v. i, 100).
CHAPTER III: NOTES


9 Le Breton, p. 32.


12 Mark Twain, *The Gilded Age* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1901), i, 292. All subsequent references in this chapter to this edition are included in the paper.


18 DeVoto, p. 155.


20 Bellamy, p. 220.

21 Shakespeare, The Tempest, IV. i, 156-57.
A MOST RARE VISION--A CONNECTICUT YANKEE IN KING ARTHUR'S COURT

BOTTOM: I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was--there is no man can tell what. Methought I was--and Methought I had--

In 1889 Mark Twain published A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, a satire which claims the dream as its overwhelming structural device. "Lest he reveal too much, he burlesques his dreams," says Robert Regan concerning Twain's tale. In this book a Hartford master mechanic finds himself in sixth-century Camelot, after he receives a head injury. This injury occurs in the same Colt factory where, in actual life, Twain's new typesetter was being constructed. In A Connecticut Yankee Twain again identifies with the dreamer, and this dream journey focuses on the mechanic who cannot awaken from slumber, the pragmatic Yankee converted to fantastic knight errantry in a distant, romantic epoch. A combination of "satire, the tall tale, humor, democracy, religion, progress, and the damned human race," A Connecticut Yankee persistently beckons its reader to a belief in the world as dream, a conviction anticipating Philip Traum's dire pronouncement and dismissal of reality in The Mysterious Stranger. The former book does recognize tangible realities of Twain's nineteenth century, but few pages dwell on the present, the actual time of the story-telling; both ugly real and beautiful ideal--all things--now are embraced by the dream. Justin Kaplan says that "Mark Twain himself, though glorying in the present and
in his sense of possession, sometimes felt as dislocated in time as the Yankee: his Hannibal was the Yankee's Camelot," for sometimes he "felt like the oldest man in the world, one of the vestiges of creation." Kaplan goes on to observe: "... the dream, or nightmare, is explicitly a form of time travel, a narrative and imaginative mode particularly appropriate to Mark Twain's concerns. ..." Three important aspects of this dream motif recur in Twain's Arthurian satire: the tale as a medieval dream vision, the supernatural link with fantasy, and the affinity for escapism and destruction no longer dormant in Twain's art. As Twain's writing becomes increasingly indebted to the dream, it includes in its fantasy the ugly real so long excluded from the beautiful ideal. "An inverted Utopian fantasy" is James M. Cox's description of *A Connecticut Yankee*, for as Lewis Mumford says in *The Story of Utopias*:

> Utopia has long been a name for the unreal and the impossible. We have set utopia over against the world. As a matter of fact, it is our utopias that make the world tolerable to us: the cities and mansions that people dream of are those in which they finally live.

The world of sixth-century England is very far from perfection, but it signifies a new direction in Twain's dream motif. The dream which he now creates and controls in 1889 admits unsightly realities, but also provides for a dreamer, The Boss, who labors within the dream in order to produce another vision "of heroic proportions"—his utopian democratic society; hence, once again Twain transcends a tarnished existence with another, more beautiful idea.

An illustration in Hank Morgan's journal depicts "The Tale of the Lost Land," for *A Connecticut Yankee* participates in the medieval dream
vision tradition, a genre contributing much to the spell woven by Twain's dreamy fairytale. "A Word of Explanation" serves the same purpose as a Chaucerian invocation to sleep in *The Romaunt of the Rose* or *The Book of the Duchess*: the introduction to the "curious stranger" at Warwick Castle, not unlike the introductory chapter of *The Innocents Abroad*, prepares both speaker and reader for a journey into the imagination. The "restfulness" (p. 1) of the stranger's company as well as his lyrical words, charm and soothe his newly found friend. Hanke smiles an ancient smile, "not a modern smile" (p. 2):

As he talked along, softly, pleasantly, flowingly, he seemed to drift away imperceptibly out of this world and time, and into some remote era and old forgotten country; and so he gradually wove such a spell about me that I seemed to move among the specters and shadows and dust and mold of a gray antiquity, holding speech with a relic of it! (p. 1).

Sir Bedivere, Sir Bors de Ganis, Sir Launcelot, and Sir Galahad all summon by magic spells enchanted chivalry and gorgeous deeds. "You know about transmigration of souls; do you know about transposition of epochs --and bodies?" (p. 2), inquires the curious old man. Following the disappearance of this apparition, the speaker, true to the dream vision tradition, sits by his fire and is "steeped in a dream of the olden time, while the rain beat upon the windows, and the wind roared about the eaves and corners" (p. 2). Absorbed in Sir Thomas Malory's book, he enjoys his own dream vision, for he "fed at its rich feast of prodigies and adventures, breathed in the fragrance of its obsolete names, and dreamed again" (p. 3). The spirit of enchantment intensifies with a knock at the door: "and my stranger came in" (p. 5). With characteristic
versimilitude, Twain contrasts the aura of illusion with a concise, almost curt self-description spoken by the obsolete stranger who, like Chaucer's medieval dreamers, finds himself spatially and temporally removed from reality:

I am an American. I was born and reared in Hartford, in the state of Connecticut--anyway, just over the river, in the country. So I am a Yankee of the Yankees--and practical; yes, and nearly barren of sentiment, I suppose--or poetry, in other words. (p. 5).

The stranger submits his yellow parchmented journal to the scrutiny of his bewildered companion and falls asleep. Thus begins "The Tale of the Lost Land," the dream vision integral to Kaplan's notion of time travel in Twain's work. Prior to Hank Morgan's "numerous picaresque adventures," he is set "adrift in space, unmoored from time." Hank's language conveys an ultimate sense of dreamy dislocation, and even alienation: "Then the world went out in darkness, and I didn't feel anything more, and didn't know anything at all--at least for a while" (p. 6). Like the dreamer in The Romaunt of the Rose, this pragmatic Connecticut Yankee finds himself transported to what appears to be an idyllic world, bizarre, yet beautiful:

When I came to again, I was sitting under an oak tree, on the grass, with a whole beautiful and broad landscape all to myself--nearly. Not entirely; for there was a fellow fresh out of a picture-book. He was in old-time iron armor from head to heel... (p. 6).

In The Book of the Duchess, the dreamer, meeting a curious "man in blak," is aghast at "The wondres me mette in my sweven [dream]." In like manner Hank confronts his enigmatic escort to Camelot, who guides him
"through glades and over brooks which I could not remember to have seen before—which puzzled me and made me wonder" (p. 7). He encounters the traditional nymph of medieval dream visions, a beautiful maiden wearing a garland of "flame-red poppies in a cataract of golden hair streaming down over her shoulders" (p. 10). In Chaucer's dream vision, The Romaunt of the Rose, the dreamer meets in the garden "ydelnesse," a maiden celebrated as the medieval ideal beauty:

Hir heer was as yelowe of hewe
As ony basyn scoured newe;
Hir flesh [as] tendre as is a chike,
With bente browis smothe and slyke. . . 13

Hank Morgan describes his first morning in Camelot in the lyrical, pastoral language of "a Tennysonian mirage of medieval charity":

It was a soft, reposeful summer landscape, as lovely as a dream. . . The air was full of the smell of flowers, and the buzzing of insects, and the twittering of birds, and there were no people, no wagons, there was no stir of life, nothing going on. The road was simply a winding path with hoof-prints in it. . . (p. 10).

Bellamy says that Twain's mind "had a primitive quality that would have distinguished him in the myth-making days when men told tales of giants and of dwarfs." Surely this quality emerges in the dream vision motif so prominent in A Connecticut Yankee. "I moved along as one in a dream" (p. 11), murmurs Hank, whose "slumber" is only fitfully broken by sporadic returns to reality. Indeed, Twain's prelude to the dream vision in A Connecticut Yankee echoes that of Chaucer in his famous romance:
Now this drem wol I ryme aright
To make your hertes gaye and lyght,
For Love it prayeth, and also,
Commandeth me that it be so.

Mark Twain's social and political satire subsists on supernatural, magical powers. Soothsayers, prophets, and magicians provide a link with fantasy in this book, and thereby Twain's dream motif expands, adopting much of Cervantes' fantastic idealism and extravagant dreams. Howells says that in this burlesque the author does not concern himself with how Hank arrives in King Arthur's realm, for this is essentially a wonder-book: "The whole story has the lawless operation of a dream. None of its prodigies are accounted for; they take themselves for granted, and neither explain nor justify themselves." Because supernatural power is an a priori force in this world of Morgan le Fay and Merlin, Hank must acknowledge and take advantage of these powers; but, realizing that his friends will not be born for thirteen hundred years, he struggles with the irrational reality of his situation: "Something in me seemed to believe... my consciousness, as you may say; but my reason didn't. My reason straightway began to clamor; that was natural... I knew that the testimony of men wouldn't serve" (p. 15). Superstitions and absurd appearances are always realistic and frightening to the dreamer of a nightmare, and yet Hank soon encounters bizarre beliefs in the supernatural, ideas running rampant in Camelot. Frightened of his strange garb, the childlike court strips Hank of his nineteenth-century clothes, thereby ridding him of malevolent spiritual influence. This society studies "how to scout for giants," what are the necessary "charms against enchantments," and which "salves and other rubbish" (p. 89) heal wounds.
Hank says:

There never was such a country for wandering liars... generally loaded with a tale about some princess or other wanting help to get her out of some far-away castle where she was held in captivity by a lawless scoundrel, usually a giant (p. 82).

In order for the bewitched alien to survive and become The Boss, he exploits the power of the dream: "You can't throw too much style into a miracle. It costs trouble, and work, and sometimes money; but it pays in the end" (p. 213). This philosophy is reminiscent of Tom Sawyer's "style" in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, as well as Jim's ardent belief in magic: "Doan' hurt me--don't! I hain't ever done no harm to a ghos'. I awluz liked dead people, en done all I could for 'em." The Boss fabricates his own visions, practical yet effective. With the help of Clarence and a gullible populace, he produces an eclipse, blows up Merlin's tower, and succeeds in reviving a cursed well. The Boss transforms all with his spectacular Yankee ingenuity and terrifying rhetoric. The earth is silent as his deep voice commands:

Go back and tell the king that at that hour I will smother the whole world in the dead blackness of midnight; I will blot out the sun, and he shall never shine again; the fruits of the earth shall rot for lack of light and warmth, and the peoples of the earth shall famish and die, to the last man! (p. 41).

In this burlesque world of enchanted pigsties, the Twain dream motif is emphasized through the use of bombastic humor and excessive superstition. Sandy threatens Morgan le Fay to renounce her pledge of death to a helpless old woman, or The Boss will "dissolve the castle and it shall vanish
away like the unstable fabric of a dream!" (p. 140). Incredible fantasy reigns in *A Connecticut Yankee*, and Merlin's awesome, yet comical presence testifies to that fact. A grotesque caricature calling to mind the sorcerers in *Morte d'Arthur*, Merlin the magician of Camelot vies for power with The Boss. Known as "the mighty liar and magician" (p. 25), Merlin, the "stump-tail prophet" (p. 269), inspires a holy terror that The Boss strives to surpass; it is noteworthy that Twain's central character, trapped in an illusory world of some sort, spends much of his time and effort outdoing the illusions of others. Merlin burns smoke-powders, paws the air, mutters gibberish, and in general "contorted his body and sawed the air with his hands in a most extraordinary way" (p. 208). Working himself into frenzies, he draws imaginary circles, makes passes in the air, and sends up small clouds of aromatic smoke (p. 58). The great magician consumes entire days and nights bewitching Sir Sagramor's arms and armor with "supernal powers" and conjuring "from the spirits of the air" (p. 386) a magic veil of invisibility. At the conclusion of *A Connecticut Yankee* Merlin, a disguised sorcerer, pronounces a not-so-comic curse of death-like sleep, for the same magic so dramatically burlesqued in this book also condemns Hank Morgan to thirteen centuries of dream. Despite its vivid satire, Twain's tale depicts an underlying respect for the unknown supernatural powers, an awe shared by the author whose own experiences on the mesmerist's platform, among other things, endowed him with keen appreciation for esoteric phenomenon. The medieval crowd examines a remnant of the miraculous restored well:
So they took it, handling it as cautiously and devoutly as if it had been some holy thing come from some supernatural region; and gently felt of its texture, caressed its pleasant smooth surface with lingering touch, and scanned the mysterious characters with fascinated eyes (p. 261).

The magic in *A Connecticut Yankee* recalls not only the foreign superstitions encountered in *The Innocents Abroad* and the fantastic spinner of illusions, Colonel Sellers, in *The Gilded Age*, but also anticipates Satan's omnipotence in *The Mysterious Stranger*. Merlin's faltering attempts at sorcery prefigure Philip Traum's ultimate control over physical and spiritual worlds alike; both of Twain's later characters are masters over illusion and reality, and both damn man to a dream existence.

In *A Connecticut Yankee* the dream itself takes on the attributes of real life and is indeed more real than "actual" existence. The Boss rambles in his deep sleep:

> It was awful—awfuler than you can ever imagine, Sandy. Ah, watch by me, Sandy—stay by me every moment—don't let me go out of my mind again; death is nothing, let it come, but not with those dreams, not with the torture of those hideous dreams—I cannot endure that again (p. 449).

Twain, who has a vivid, often terrifying dreamlife of his own, endows this medieval tale with two elements vital to his dream motif: escapism and destruction. The entire sixth-century society is encompassed by Hank's monstrous dream, and this creation is, surprisingly enough, totally annihilated during the final pages of Twain's book; thus, a great thrust toward imaginative escapism conflicts with a tremendous urge toward destruction also inherent in *A Connecticut Yankee*. In this
fictional work "Twain varied between dreams of omnipotence and visions . . . of total impotence," comments Maxwell Geismar. Initially, Hank Morgan's story details the route of escapism, a way out of nineteenth-century industrialization and pressure. For Twain, "Both the book and the machine [his progressive typesetter] were tests of his century's faith in democracy, technology, progress, the entrepreneurial motive, and the gospel of success. . . . an entire framework of aspiration." Hank receives a blow on the head and escapes to Camelot, a new, apparently bewitched land removed temporally, culturally, and spatially from Hartford, Connecticut. "For a time, I used to wake up, mornings, and smile at my 'dream,' and listen for the Colt's factory whistle; but that sort of thing played itself out, gradually. . . ." (p. 60), says Hank. This strange occurrence is difficult to accept, and yet The Boss speaks for the author when he verifies the lifelike intensity of illusion. Clarence explodes, "Oh, la, indeed! and is it a dream that you're to be burned to-morrow? Ho-ho--answer me that!" (p. 35). His bewildered, anachronistic friend muses:

"... I now began to reason that my situation was in the last degree serious, dream or no dream; for I knew by past experience of the lifelike intensity of dreams, that to be burned to death, even in a dream, would be very far from being a jest, and was a thing to be avoided, by any means, fair or foul, that I could contrive (p. 35).

The Boss finds his dream situation distasteful, and quickly decides to supercede this tarnished dream with his own imaginative creation, thereby continuing the motivation to escape which is so powerful in Twain's story. "Yes, there was no occasion to give up my dream yet awhile" (p. 301),
says this master of the dream within a dream. In addition to his successful campaign as Merlin's magical successor, Hank wagers war against what he perceives to be religious, social, and political atrocities widespread in sixth-century England: this pragmatist escapes his undesirable dream existence by laboring within this illusion to create a more palatable dream. Among other things, he educates an elite corps of formerly backwards Englishmen, he introduces the telephone, dynamite, and soap, and he severely questions slavery, divine kingship, and Catholic domination. Project after project reveals Hank's wish to build a new dream within another, unsatisfactory dream. Twain makes this statement about A Connecticut Yankee when he concludes it:

If it were only to write over again there wouldn't be so many things left out. They burn in me; and they keep multiplying; but now they can't ever be said. And besides they would require a library— and a pen warmed up in hell.  

Hank Morgan's enthusiastic desire to impress Camelot with his imaginative nineteenth-century ideal is a desire to escape both his former imperfect world and his present ugly existence. The beautiful dream world of Twain's fiction now is replaced by an inescapable, tattered illusion which encompasses all. The Boss ponders his predicament: "In my dream, along at first, I still wandered thirteen centuries away, and my unsatisfied spirit went calling and harking all up and down the unreplying vacancies of a vanished world" (p. 408). The vanished world is Twain's vanished perfect world of illusions, and with its disappearance goes all permanent escape from reality.
Kaplan notes that Twain's business affairs in 1887, during the writing of *A Connecticut Yankee*, were deeply pressuring him. Also at this time were hints of the numerous personal and family problems which would soon devastate the Twain household. "A cloud hung over his workshop, he complained, and the sense of 'fun' that had abounded when he began *A Connecticut Yankee* never wholly returned." This dark turn of events affects the handling of the dream motif in this book, for in both his life and his art Twain encounters disappointing illusions. He therefore chooses a path later followed in *The Mysterious Stranger*: the alternative remaining for this disillusioned dreamer is the way of destruction.

"ALL ENGLAND IS MARCHING AGAINST US!" (p. 430), cries The Boss as he realizes the destruction of his dream within a dream. He and his tiny band of men dynamite and drown the opposing forces:

As to destruction of life, it was amazing. Moreover, it was beyond estimate. Of course, we could not count the dead, because they did not exist as individuals, but merely as homogeneous protoplasm, with alloys of iron and buttons (p. 434).

One of the final chapters, "The Battle of the Sand-Belt," consists of wholesale destruction which several critics say approaches nuclear holocaust. "As for sounds, there were none. The stillness was deathlike" (p. 438). Surrounded by great ditches filled with dead Englishmen and electric fences studded with corpses, The Boss, Clarence, and their army witness the vomiting (p. 444): of death by fire and water. "Land, what a night! We were inclosed in three walls of dead men" (p. 443), exclaims Hank. Some are electrocuted by the dead bodies of their own friends, "Killed by a dead man, you see--killed by a dead friend, in fact" (p. 441).
The "armed resistance was totally annihilated" (p. 444), but as Hank's army conquers, it is in turn conquered, for the victors remain walled in by the slain enemy. De Voto says of Twain: "He could end his contention with the vengeful God and put away remorse forever by reducing all convention, vengeance, pain, degradation, guilt, sin, and panic to a lonely dream." In *A Connecticut Yankee*, all contention is reduced to annihilation or to everlasting dream, and by the end of this book Twain has begun to identify the two. Dream is no longer the beautiful ideal; illusion tarnished by ugliness is worthy only of destruction. Hank worries, "how was I to tell whether this was the sixth century or nothing but a dream?" (p. 47). Caught like his characters in "a trap of our own making" (p. 446), Twain, the disillusioned idealist, rather capriciously negates the fictional world of *A Connecticut Yankee*. Merlin dooms The Boss to a supernatural sleep which will forever confuse Hank's sense of reality. "And such dreams! such strange and waful dreams, Sandy! Dreams that were as real as reality--delirium, of course, but so real!" (p. 449), cries the ancient dreamer. Perhaps Twain identifies with Merlin, whose words spell doom for the imperfect dream:

Ye were conquerors; ye are conquered! These others are perishing--you also. Ye shall all die in this place--every one--except him. He sleepeth now--and shall sleep thirteen centuries. I am Merlin! (p. 446).

In this satire Twain uses one of his favorite comic techniques in which he creates the semblance of a scene, and then punctures it: in *A Connecticut Yankee* both Twain and his characters create the semblance of a dream, beguile themselves and the reader to belief in the truth of this illusion, and then puncture it.
Wagenknecht has said of Mark Twain that his standards were too high—his disappointment great, and perhaps this observation explains the progression from dream to nightmare to nightmarish reality in this satire. Published in 1889, this book appears four and a half years after *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, a deft handling of superstition, imaginative role-playing, and dreams. In "The Tale of the Lost Land" the author creates and controls a strange dream journey which immerses the pragmatic Yankee in illusory experience. Camelot, and the whole of sixth-century England, is seen through the haze of a medieval dream vision which intensifies, both in content and in style, the dream motif. Magic and supernatural powers form a link with fantasy in this book and exaggerate the notion that things are not what they seem. Thirdly, *A Connecticut Yankee* focuses on two overwhelming desires: compulsive escapism and the drive to destroy. The need to flee from reality coupled with man's inability to accomplish this end, even in a dream, result in utter frustration and destruction. In this fictional work the dream encompasses the whole of society, and the failure of the dream signals the elimination of this same society. Twain's obsession with dreams culminates in confusion and frustration, for his beautiful ideal is no longer divorced from ugly reality. The fiction moves toward his position in *The Mysterious Stranger*, in which dream is reality, and reality is merely dream: Hank says, "how was I to tell whether this was the sixth century, or nothing but a dream?" (p. 47).
CHAPTER IV: NOTES


5Kaplan, p. 144.


10Wiggins, p. 79.

11Cox, p. 120.


13Chaucer, 11. 593, 539-42.


17 Howells, p. 7.


19 Regan, p. 5.


21 Kaplan, p. 151.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.


27 Regan, p. 176.
CHAPTER V:

THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER--"A VAGRANT THOUGHT... WANDERING FORLORN"

The general function of dreams is to try to restore our psychological balance by producing dream material that re-establishes, in a subtle way, the total psychic equilibrium.

The Mysterious Stranger, written and rewritten between the years 1897 and 1905, is a novelette that Twain never really finished. Albert Bigelow Paine took the liberty of bringing together and editing four versions of the tale, and the work as it is read today is the result of his efforts. The narrative expresses all of Twain's fuming pessimism in the form of a surrealistic dream. Mere fragments of his once flaming faith remain as the author struggles with the question, "What is man?" Amidst the "fierce satire of disillusion, the cry of an idealist who realizes at last how greatly he has been cheated by his dreams," is Twain the artist who, in this, the best of his later fiction, once again returns to the dream as a favorite motif. His fiction is influenced at this time by Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, as well as by the works of Poe, Melville, and Hawthorne, Twain endures financial disaster, sickness and death in his own family, and constant personal religious questioning and guilt, while spiritual torment surfaces in his notebook filled with bizarre accounts of purposeless dreams and nightmares. Obsessed with insanity and the existence of another "dream" self, he "exposed himself to madness," psychosis, and delusion. In one tale written during this period, the narrator, reduced to microscopic size, goes on a horrifying journey within a drop of water; another narrative, "The Great Dark,"
chronicles the hideous experiences of a protagonist who encounters "The Superintendent of Dreams." In many ways a Melvillian "nay-sayer," Twain fills The Mysterious Stranger with a nihilism characteristic of his own shattered spirit and fearful dreams. The world of Father Adolf, Father Peter, Ursula, Marget, Lisa, Wilhelm, Nikolaus, Seppi, Theodor, and Satan himself, is a culmination of a lifetime of dream-thought, for in Eseldorf one sees images of "the passivity of man before the dark forces of the world, and the complete lostness of man." The Mysterious Stranger questions the very existence of reality, for in its concluding lines Theodor confesses the truth of Satan's nihilism; the universe itself is symbolic and man has lost the interpretive key to his world. This unusual tale is the final result of Twain's "inclination to engage in dream fancies, to parade figures through his mind," for "the tendency had grown in him steadily, from the early travel books on." As Twain's vision develops, he finds that he must disguise truth as a lie and deliberately control his illusions. The dream motif totally engulfs both the content and form of The Mysterious Stranger, and this chapter explores three aspects of Twain's later fictional work: Eseldorf and its people in a dream world, the role of Philip Traum as "master of ceremonies," and Twain the pessimist, the nihilistic artist. The existence and reality of Eseldorf frighten the author much more than does Satan's assertion that all is a dream.

If, at the end of this tale, Satan declares Austria of 1590 a dream existence, then the narrator also does so just as persuasively at the beginning of The Mysterious Stranger. Details are reduced and blurred
to create a mood, not an exacting picture: Twain's style is "more sug-gestive of a legend than a chronicle of actuality."\(^8\) In fact, Eseldorf is Hannibal, "softened by the mist of centuries"\(^9\):

It was 1590—winter. Austria was far away from the world, and asleep; it was still the Middle Ages in Austria and promised to remain so forever. . . it was still the Age of Belief in Austria. . . Yes, Austria was far from the world, and asleep, and our village was in the middle of that sleep, being in the middle of Austria. It drowsed in peace in the deep privacy of a hilly and woodsy solitude where news from the world hardly ever came to disturb its dreams, and was infinitely content.\(^10\)

In the lyrical manner of his story-telling, Twain calls to mind similar passages in *The Innocents Abroad*, *The Gilded Age*, and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. The tranquil river, clouds, vast castles, and "forest-clothed hills cloven by wintry gorges where the sun never pene-trated" (p. 631), evoke hypnotic, faraway fairy tales and dream-thought. Eseldorf is called a "paradise" (p. 632) where boys learn to be good Christians and where the role of the supernatural is great. In this dream world the church is "magic" and astrologers wear tall, pointed hats covered with stars and carry a book and staff "known to have magic power" (p. 634). An old castle servingman, Felix Brandt, claims to have seen angels, ghosts, witches, and enchanters. The country at large partici-pates enthusiastically in witch-hunts and fireside yarn-spinning. Indeed, the people are obsessed with the Evil One who pursuades young girls to ride through the air on broomsticks to the witches' Sabbath. Twain's dreamy language and suggestions of mystery lull the reader into a kind of sleep, until he, like the boys, sits "wondering and dreaming and blinking" (p. 651). The people of Eseldorf are a "spectacle and a dream
the symbolic dream of human experience that Mark had been trying
to write in such travail for so many years." When Eseldorf is dis¬
traught with fear of supernatural evil, its people resemble T. S. Eliot's
"Hollow Men":

... they were white and haggard and walked like
persons in a dream, their eyes open but seeing
nothing, their lips moving but uttering nothing,
and worriedly clasping and unclasping their hands
without knowing it.(p. 689).

We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men. . .
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless. . .
Shape without form, shade without colour,12
Paralysed force, gesture without motion. . .12

In this bewitched world Ursula adjusta quickly to the "lucky" cat which
gives silver groschen; priests meet Satan face to face more than once
and defy him; everywhere neighbors are suspected of being heretics. The
land is ripe for a stranger who can make fire, fruit, squirrels, gold
coins, fine wine, or even storms and earthquakes. Twain's lyrical lan-
guage and suggestions of the supernatural are fitting prelude to the
entrance of Philip Traum. Snugly nestled in dreamy innocence rests
Eseldorf, a child-like creation, which is the scene of Satan's bizarre,
amoral frolics and blasting denunciations.

Satan assumes the role of Artist, Creator, Master of Ceremonies.
The "fatal music of his voice" (p. 643) makes the villagers "drunk with
... joy" (p. 643). Twain feels "nearest Satan. . .who revolted against
the inexorable laws of the universe," for the author himself is described
by DeVoto "as a mysterious sojourner from somewhere outside the orbit of
As the key figure of this narrative, Satan weaves the spell of magic in a community predisposed to imagine. He is set apart from all others:

My mind creates! Do you get the force of that?
Creates anything it desires—and in a moment.
Creates without material. Creates fluids, solids, colors—anything, everything—out of the airy nothing which is called Thought. . . I think a poem, music, the record of a game of chess—anything—and it is there. This is the immortal mind—nothing is beyond its reach. Nothing can obstruct my vision. . . (p. 694).

The omnipotent Satan sees all, knows all, forgets nothing, and travels anywhere. His superiority, as well as his capriciousness, provoke "the dance of heaven" and "the bliss of paradise" (p. 646). His extraordinary beauty makes Marget forget her sorrow, for blood leaps, spirits rise, and all becomes cool and fresh when Philip's power touches the people (p. 684). Certainly these are the qualities of the initiator, the artist, the ultimate dreamer in a world of illusion. In many ways Satan is similar to Hank Morgan in A Connecticut Yankee, for The Boss is also an omnipotent magician bent on manipulating the people of Camelot as well as their illusions. Both Philip and Hank are grand Artists, for they work some miraculous changes in the "reality" of their respective worlds. Lewis Carroll's Alice is told she exists only because the Red King is dreaming her; likewise Satan as king tells the boys that they exist only as grotesque and foolish dream-thoughts in an empty eternity over which he has dominion. A being "possessed" (p. 685), filled with unlimited knowledge and cleverness, he prophesies Seppi's death, appears and wins the trial for Father Peter, transports the boys to China, and reveals the
world's wonders as well as ancient history. "It is nothing--anybody can do it! With my powers I can even do much more" (p. 685), exclaims the magician. One of the most stunning illustrations of Satan's artistry is his miraculous juggling act, in which he proves himself the superior master of art and illusion. Watching a brightly dressed juggler performing in the market-square, Philip says: "This poor clown is ignorant of his art. Come forward and see an expert perform" (p. 687). The angel whirls a hundred brass balls in the air, "adding, the oval lengthening all the time, his hands moving so swiftly that they were just a web or a blur and not distinguishable as hands" (p. 687). Satan, assuming the role of "maker," poses as Twain's nimble, instinctual creativity: the author "was thus proposing to play, in actual life, the role of the mysterious stranger, revealing to a young person the limitless power of a creative mind."15

Satan, the master of dreams, is a contradictory figure. Philip poses as both ideal illusion and ugly reality. Although he is over 16,000 years old, Satan is young and attractive, "realistic," and oddly at ease. Theodor watches the Stranger approach the boys for the first time:

Soon there came a youth strolling toward us through the trees, and he sat down and began to talk in a friendly way, just as if he knew us... He had new and good clothes on, and was handsome and had a winning face and a pleasant voice, and was easy and graceful and unembarrassed, not slouchy and awkward and diffident, like other boys (p. 637).

One who has mastery over time, distance, and the entire natural universe, Philip Traum represents a beautiful dream of perfect existence; but
Satan is a fallen angel, apt symbol of Twain's own tarnished ideal. Admirable and yet despicable, both handsome and heinous, creature of bliss and mortal woe, Philip is a mélange of those qualities that the author himself cannot reconcile. These same vices and virtues of the fallen world force Twain's dreamy tale toward the negation of all experience. The Stranger is detached, omniscient, "as if he were present at the creation of the universe," and he disturbs the community by unmasking it and "turning it upon itself." Twain finds himself simultaneously pulled in opposite directions, for "he admires noble deeds and aspirations and he thoroughly detests mean ones," and his condemnation of the "damned human race" mingles with the simple goodness of those Margets, Wilhelms, and priests of this corrupt world. Satan is a strange god void of the "moral sense," an angel who commits the wanton murder of two little quarreling workmen that he has just created: they are but insects in his sight. And yet he continues in "fascinating us, enchanting us, charming us in spite of the pitiful scene that was now under our eyes, for the wives of the little dead men had found the crushed and shapeless bodies and were crying over them and sobbing and lamenting. . ." (pp. 642-43). In this dreamy fairy tale Satan creates and destroys with equal grace. He has a poise, nobility, and Olympian detachment peculiar to reverie. The dream motif is crucial to the effectiveness of Philip Traum's words and actions, for he must be both believable and illusory, both a real youth and an evanescent angel. After Satan dissolves in the manner of a soap-bubble, Seppi sighs: "I suppose none of it has happened" (p. 651).
He thinned away and thinned away until he was a soap-bubble, except that he kept his shape. You could see the bushes through him as clearly as you see things through a soap-bubble, and all over him played and flashed the delicate iridescent colors of the bubble, and along with them was that thing shaped like a window-sash which you always see on the globe of the bubble. (p. 651).

At the conclusion of the tale, Twain can solve the bizarre enigma of Stan only by limiting his existence to the realm of the imagination: "I myself have no existence; I am but a dream—your dream, creature of your imagination. . ." (p. 742), says the Stranger.

The Mysterious Stranger reveals Mark Twain's later philosophy embodied in the dream motif. Twain's badly battered, fundamentally idealistic nature, his "perfectionist ideals," are the extremely high standards he sets for humanity. As man sinks lowest, Satan jeers: "an illogical, unreasoning race! And paltry—oh, unspeakably!" (p. 668). One senses Twain's shattered hopes for a mankind which has essentially "no intellect" (p. 668). Humanity is pitted against angelic omnipotence, and the difference is "abyssmal, immeasurable" (p. 692). The juxtaposition of mortal and immortal removes man farther from perfection: "It was wonderful, the mastery Satan had over time and distance. For him they did not exist" (p. 717). "An angel's love is sublime, adorable, divine, and beyond the imagination of man—infinitely beyond it!" (p. 694). Equally abyssmal is the "ignorance, cowardice, and stupidity of the human race in contrast to the noble actions of individuals" (p. 680). Satan's condemnation echoes that of Colonel Sherburn in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn:
The pitifulest thing out is a mob; that's what an army is—a mob; they don't fight with courage that's born in them, but with courage that's borrowed from their mass, and from their officers. But a mob without any man at the head of it, is beneath pitifulness. Now the thing for you to do, is to droop your tails and go home and crawl in a hole.

The Mysterious Stranger damns that portion of man in which Twain sees mirrored the possibility of nobility. More maddening than corruption itself is that hope which continually emerges in the writer's imagination. The original optimism cannot utterly vanish from sight as long as "Man's mind clumsily and tediously and laboriously patches little trivialities together" (p. 693), and struggles, however ignorantly, toward its feeble conception of perfection. "No sane man can be happy, for to him life is real and he sees what a fearful thing it is" (p. 735), Satan jeers. Twain adheres to this tenet. Two years after the death of his daughter, Susy, he lives in "a deliberate, self-induced dream state where dreams become reality." DeVoto aptly describes Twain's multiple sorrows as simply his "ordeal," a spiritual struggle with pain and disillusion which prompts him to respond in this manner to notice of a premature obituary: "The report of my death was an exaggeration." During his ordeal, the man and the artist struggle closely with a spiritual death more real to him than physical demise.

Deeply involved in the writing of Which Was the Dream? Twain experiments with the nightmarish chaos of The Mysterious Stranger. In the biography, Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain, Kaplan says: "With the Yankee, who is unable to wake from his dream [in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court], the comic possibilities vanished, and now, in the dark
mood of Mark Twain's old age, the confusion had another aspect. It had become, by itself, as nightmare." Cox comments: "Desperate resolution suggests a desparation behind the fiction, as if the writer were involved in destroying a part of himself, thereby breaking an identification with the threatening aspect of his psychic life." Occupied with the blurred distinction between dream and reality, Twain introduces the Dr. Jekyll of his personality to the Mr. Hyde, a second component of his consciousness; The Mysterious Stranger reflects this existential duality:

And you are not you—you have no body, no blood, no bones, you are but a thought. I myself have no existence; I am but a dream—your dream, creature of your imagination. In a moment you will have realized this, then you will banish me from your visions and I shall dissolve into the nothingness out of which you made me. . . . I am perishing already—I am failing—I am passing away. . . . But I, your poor servant, have revealed you to yourself and set you free. Dream other dreams, and better! (p. 742).

In his important essay, "The Symbols of Despair," DeVoto says that Twain tries to escape his broken dream by claiming that universal law is inexorable and often cruel, that he is helpless and guiltless as a sinful man, and that he will soon wake from a grand delusion anyway; therefore, when these rationalizations are found inadequate, he finally believes that "the accusation begotten by his experience could be stilled by destroying all experience." Philip Traum exclaims: "Nothing exists; all is a dream. God—man—the world—the sun, the moon, the wilderness of stars—a dream, all a dream; they have no existence. Nothing exists save empty space—and you!" (p. 742).
The fact that this writer captures his own despondency, shapes and molds it into lyrical artistic form, evidences a masterly control over his despair and an underlying conviction of the power of truth, even disguised truth, portrayed in literature. During the writing and the rewriting of *The Mysterious Stranger*, Twain is "forging symbols of despair in a frantic effort to win peace." Twain's reverie culminates in the "pretend" world of Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer. Huck complains about this make-believe world:

We played robber now and then about a month, and then I resigned. All the boys did. We hadn't robbed nobody, we hadn't killed any people, but only just pretended. We jused to hop out of the woods and go charging down on hog-drovers and women in carts taking garden stuff to market, but we never hived any of them. . . I couldn't see no profit in it.  

"The dream had closed the arc and permitted him to say what he must say." By reducing all to a lonely dream, Twain pays a dear price for peace and sanity. In *The Mysterious Stranger*, the dream is an all-encompassing symbol of annihilation; but this symbol saves the man, for it is the symbol of an escapism in which Twain finds it necessary to believe. One finds that Mark Twain does not "mellow" in his use of the dream motif; on the contrary, he begins with an interest in illusion and reverie, in *The Innocents Abroad*, and concludes with a culminating symbol which shields the author and his art from a hideous reality Twain finds unacceptable. After Huck witnesses Buck's bloody death, reality becomes nightmare: "It made me so sick I most fell out of the tree. I ain't going to tell all that happened--it would make me sick again if I was
to do that. I wished I hadn't ever come ashore that night, to see such things. I ain't ever going to get shut of them--lots of times I dream about them. Twain, too, wishes he had never seen such things, and he also is tormented with tarnished dreams. Death, insanity, and illusion protect people from unbearable reality in this book. The martyred village lady, dead and hanging on a rope, her troubles forgotten, represents the ultimate escapism sought by Twain. Seppi, drowning at an early age, will neither suffer nor be corrupted by time and experience. Father Peter, rendered insane by constant cruelty and absurdity, escapes into illusion. Philip Traum explains this to Theodor and his friends:

I said he would be happy the rest of his days and he will, for he will always think he is Emperor and his pride in it and his joy in it will endure to the end. He is now, and will remain, the one utterly happy person in this empire (p. 735).

Twain opts for every alternative to ugly reality except that of acceptance. But although in his fiction he fails to finally arrive at what one calls the proper contemplative mood, he is successful in finding an artistic means to give "shape" to this failure of accommodation. The dream motif evolves as does the man and his fiction.
CHAPTER V: NOTES

1Carl G. Jung, Man and His Symbols (New York: Dell, 1975), p. 34.


5Tanner, p. 168.


7Kaplan, p. 173.


10Mark Twain, The Portable Mark Twain, ed. Bernard DeVoto (New York: The Viking Press, 1960), p. 631. All subsequent references in this chapter to this edition are included in the paper.

11DeVoto, p. 156.


13DeVoto, pp. 49, 47.


15John S. Tuckey, Mark Twain and Little Satan (West Lafayette: Purdue University Studies, 1963), p. 81.


Kaplan, Mark Twain and His World, p. 72.

Kaplan, Mister Clemens and Mark Twain, a Biography, p. 341.

Cox, p. 117.

Kaplan, Mark Twain and His World, p. 171.


Wiggins

Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, pp. 30-1.

DeVoto, p. 50. DeVoto's comment on Twain's fate is interesting: "At this cost the fallen angel of our literature, the mysterious stranger who seemed only a sojourner in the cramped spaces of our mortal world, saved himself in the end, and came back from the edge of insanity, and found as much peace as any man may find in his last years, and brought his talent into fruition and made it whole again."29

Ibid.

Twain, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, p. 154.

Bellamy, p. 204.


Rogers, Franklin R. *Mark Twain's Burlesque Patterns*. Dallas: Southern Methodist University, 1960.


