The Demonology of Mark Twain: Reading *The Mysterious Stranger Manuscripts*

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I let the madam into the secret day before yesterday and locked the doors and read to her the opening chapters. She said: "It is perfectly horrible – and perfectly beautiful!"
(*The Selected Letters of Mark Twain*, Neider 256)

When Forty-four, a shadowy satanic presence in Mark Twain's *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger*, tells August, the novella's protagonist, it is time for him to depart, the boy is greatly saddened, since his friend will never return. Then, Forty-four fills August with disillusioning thoughts about the nature of reality:

> *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!* (Twain 414)

So ends one of the most debated of Twain's works, now referred to as *The Mysterious Stranger Manuscripts*. Comprised of three short stories—*The Chronicle of Young Satan*, *Schoolhouse Hill*, and *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger*—these manuscripts present a very different Twain than the Twain works with which most are familiar, including his American river epic, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. While most of Twain's major works have garnered much critical attention, *The Mysterious Stranger Manuscripts* are just now being examined, especially in light of the spurious edition of *The Mysterious Stranger* Albert Bigelow Paine and Frederick A. Duneka published in 1916. Most scholars now assume this edition, in which all three manuscripts were heavily edited, revised, and combined, is an editorial fraud, a weak scholarly effort that now needs to be interrogated. In looking at each of these manuscripts independently and then in collaboration with one another, the societal concerns Twain comments upon in this dark, absurd tale becomes clear. The most notable target of Twain's satire is Christianity and what Twain saw as its imprisoning dogma. By reading the three manuscripts with the "mysterious stranger"—sometimes Satan, other times the nephew of Satan, and still other times simply as "No. 44" or "Forty-four"—in mind, the reader can clearly see how Twain satirizes organized

religion and represents human nature.

It has been ninety-two years since Mark Twain's last work, *The Mysterious Stranger, A Romance* was published posthumously; and ever since then, there has been much talk and speculation by critics as to the novella's meaning, the author's intent, and what the book could possibly yield to the literary world. Even more remarkable than the text itself, was the discovery that the book was actually a butchery of three unfinished and unpublished stories, put together by Twain's editors, Paine and Duneka. Since the novella's first published date of 1916, many critics have examined Twain's work and much importance lies in considering the very early sources to the more recent because readers are then able to see how the initial reception and critical conversations have changed. Views and interpretations of *The Mysterious Stranger* have been revised according to whether critics knew of Twain's editors' fraudulent piecing together of his work. The unusual circumstances behind the publication of *The Mysterious Stranger* are partly what made this work so intriguing for critics because, at first, this novella was seen as Twain's pessimistic view of life.

It is important to note how *The Mysterious Stranger* was received in the form as given by Paine and Duneka since this version is still believed to be Twain's final work. One of the first looks given to the novella was in an unsigned *New York Times Review* from October of the published year where the reviewer focused mainly on the perception of Twain's book as a message of doom and gloom against the human race. The writer states:

> For here we have a last word from him we have always called the greatest American humorist, a word that comes to us after the grave has closed over the speaker, a final and conclusive word. It is difficult to imagine a message carrying a grimmer credo of despair, disillusion, and contempt for human existence. It blows upon the spirit like a cold wind over a dark and desolate land, a land where there is never a light, near or far, promising shelter, home, and love. In such a land, shivering in such a wind, what better

> is there than to lie down and die? (*New York Times* 453)

This reviewer's focal point is based mainly on his idea that Twain's book is a refusal to look at the world's possible testimony of good and that only the evil exhibited by the few is being examined. The dark depths of *The Mysterious Stranger* were very unlike Twain's previous writings in that he did not censor his harsh beliefs about humanity. In 1976, Paul Delaney explored this thought and gave possible reasons for Twain's pessimistic outlook in his article: "The Dissolving Self: The Narrators of Mark Twain's Mysterious Stranger Fragments." Delaney, instead of only looking at the whole of Twain's story, distinguishes the differences in Twain's narrative voices in the three manuscript versions of *The Mysterious Stranger: The Chronicle of Young Satan, Schoolhouse Hill*, and *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger*. He notes that Twain once confided to a friend that what he wanted was:

> a chance to write a book without reserves..which should take account of no one's feelings,...prejudices, opinions, beliefs, hopes, illusions, delusions; a book which should say [his] say, right out of [his] heart. (Delaney 51)

These manuscripts were his chance to do so, but each was a little disjointed. Delaney admits that out of the three manuscripts, *Chronicle* and *No. 44* are the most substantive since *Schoolhouse Hill* proposed the difficulty of "Twain's attempt to use an omniscient point of view [which] perhaps contributed to his premature abandonment of a manuscript he had barely started" (Delaney 52) since the characters of Huck and Tom were never really a part of the story and 44 merely is presented as an incredibly brilliant schoolboy. In *The Chronicle*, the reader is introduced to the narrator of Theodor and the most revealing revelation about him is his "lack of independence from the opinion of his townspeople" (Delaney 53) in that he joins them in the stoning of a poor, helpless woman. Twain's Theodor recognizes the dreadful violence that the mob creates but he lacks the courage to condemn them. Through this character, it is easy to see how his fears for self-reputation outweigh his participation in societal evil.

Also according to Delaney, in *No. 44*, August mirrors Theodor; both hesitate to lose their

reputation if they befriend 44 or Satan. If either attaches himself to this persecuted boy, he risks his own head because the other printers will see to it that they create a miserable environment for the both of them. August also reveals a lack of independence through his trying to proselytize to 44. He readily identifies with the official religion of the area and is horrified as those around him worship a magician but yet, like Theodor, he kneels out of fear of societal repercussion. Delaney examines the narrators further and sums up these two boys nicely by saying:

> Theodor and August are both "natural boys," and possess the advantages and defects of that age, but they are inextricably caught up in the religious beliefs, values, and social pressures of their eighteenth-century and fifteenth-century communities. (Delaney 54)

While the anonymous *New York Times Review*'s piece of criticism does not delve deeper into the meaning of the work to see *why* Twain sees God as a being who creates both good and bad children and never ceases to make them miserable, it is important to note that this person's criticism may be based on the hurt that the world was reeling from in the wars that were taking place during its publication. Thus through a personal bias it is understandable that the review goes on to say that "we would find it difficult to deny that the human race is capable of vast mistakes and terrible tragedies. But to admit that this is all...is to judge falsely, and that is what Mr. Clemens does in this book" (*New York Times* 453). However, it is also not fair that Twain's work be judged so harshly, yet it probably would not surprise the author since he was so harsh in examining the human race as a whole. Yet, it could also be suggested that Twain was not pessimistic at all but was merely using his characters to make observations about the nature of people such as George Soule declares in his review the following November.

In his review, *Mark Twain Protests*, Soule begged to differ from the initial critique of a pessimistic world that ends in nothingness. Soule saw *The Mysterious Stranger* as a "fairy tale dipped in irony" (Soule 8) since the narrative begins like a fairy story in that the first line of the story

associates the town of Eseldorf with a paradise. It is when the character of Satan appears and is cruel to the living creatures he created out of the mud of the earth by smearing them into the ground, that irony appears. Soule explains that this cruelty does matter to the boys that Satan interacts with and even though they reproach him for his actions, so we should not put this reproach on Twain as readers. While Twain does write of Satan telling the boys that everything is a dream and this idea may seem like pessimism, Soule argues that instead, it:

> may be satire from the courageous heart of a lover of mankind. If we hate cruelty, we must not blame it on a perfect God, but at least do as little of it ourselves as we may. Supernatural powers would not help us if we had them. And above all, let us not imagine a God, and then claim his solemn sanction for our cruelties. (Soule 8)

These examples of criticism were written shortly after the publishing of Twain's novella and reveal that the critics were concerned over the ideas of Twain's supposed negative world view and blasphemous philosophy of Godlessness and nothingness.

The main characters, title, setting, plot, and other ideas of the story were not discussed or thought of as important until the 1960s when Coleman O. Parsons studied the background of *The Mysterious Stranger*. As for critical conversations, they were mostly at a standstill until the breakthrough book *Mark Twain and Little Satan* by John S. Tuckey made its appearance in 1963. For over forty years little to no criticism had been written for *The Mysterious Stranger* and then Tuckey demonstrated how the book had been written by Twain but that Paine and Duneka had edited it into a version that Twain had probably not intended. The story was not complete in the way that it was presented to the public because Twain had never actually decided on an authoritative version. Tuckey explained in his book that Bernard DeVoto, Twain's biographer, hoped to one day tell how Mark Twain's writing of *The Mysterious Stranger* came to be, yet he did not live to write such a book; thus "the times and circumstances of its composition have nevertheless remained largely unknown" (Tuckey

9). For the first time then, Tuckey presented the three manuscripts Twain had been working on until his death in 1910, as he states:

> These are, as named and catalogued by DeVoto, the "Hannibal" manuscript of about 15,300 words; the "Eseldorf" of 55,000 words; and the "Print Shop" of 65,000 words...in particular, it has remained doubtful whether the posthumously published tale represents the initial, the intermediate, or the latest version. (Tuckey 9)

So while the first few reviews of *The Mysterious Stranger* should not be dismissed, they also should not be the only way to view Twain's book because those were written with the impression that this version of the novella was Twain's final text. What Tuckey hoped to do was open up new discussions of Twain's narratives since there was new literary terrain to be covered because there were no certainties about what Twain was trying to accomplish through these manuscripts.

Another unique aspect that Tuckey includes in his examination of *The Mysterious Stranger* is of an 1897 trip to Weggis, Lake Lucerne, Switzerland, which may have influenced Twain's writing of the text. Dr. Karl Lueger who was mayor of Vienna at the time, spoke at a session of the City Council and attracted Twain's interest as he spoke on behalf of the Anti-Semitic Christian Social Party (Tuckey 17). It has been recorded that Twain "asked ironically if the counsillors were not permitted to speak as well" (Tuckey 9) since only the Mayor spoke during the entirety of the proceedings. Twain could have been angered by Lueger's malicious, over-pious words and created *The Mysterious Stranger's* Father Adolf after his political persona (originally, Father Adolf had been named Marie Lueger in Twain's original manuscript) until Paine and Duneka changed the priest's character into an unnamed astrologer who had similar qualities (Tuckey 21) . It is little wonder why scholars today are confused as to Twain's original thoughts because those who were alive during Twain's time have now passed on themselves; and the text that was published in his name was tampered with as a way to avoid possible political scandal. Tuckey also cites this example to display potential events and people who may have influenced

Twain's writing. Twain obviously did not agree with what was discussed at the meeting in Vienna or at least in how it was conducted so those events could have shaped his personal thoughts and then later, those ideas were shifted into *The Mysterious Stranger.*

Ideas about Twain's personal beliefs were modified during the 1970s, as critics began looking at the character of Satan as an integral part of Twain's *The Mysterious Stranger*. Ronald J. Gervais in an essay entitled, "The Mysterious Stranger: The Fall as Salvation", analyzes the ironic relationship between an angelic Satan and the fallen children who tempt him with the "Moral Sense." Gervais discusses the duality of Twain's devil in that he also acts and thinks like a God-figure. He creates fire, ice, and then squirrels and dogs, eventually leading up to making little men and women in a miniaturized world of clay which he destroys soon after making. Ultimately, by creating this spectacle, Gervais says that Satan is also acting like a devil; "for it is an educational exhibit, and the devil's function is to bring knowledge to man" (Gervais 25). With the three young boys at Satan's side, he knows that he can:

> provide [a] detached viewpoint from which the boys can begin to endure and ultimately transcend...suffering. From this beginning, suffering is reduced to the vanishing point, then passes over into a sense of dream and release from this life. (Gervais 25)

The children then question the "Moral Sense" because they have been presented with this god/demonic character that chooses to do wrong even though he says he is unable to tell the difference between good and evil. This tale, according to Gervais, serves to "suggest that if we gained so much that was valuable at the first fall, why not try again" (Gervais 28). Satan's "gift" to the three young boys enthralled with him, is to present them with knowledge since they "cannot be happy with the partial knowledge which [they] gained when [they] lost [their] innocence...and since that lost innocence is irrecoverable, a continual fall into more and more knowledge is the only salvation" (Gervais 28). Children in the village of Eseldorf (or Ass-ville) were never allowed to have information that lay outside the borders of their

small community, but instead, were only to learn from the teachings of the priests. Satan, with his dichotomy, has utterly obliterated what these boys thought was true and right and in his mind, he has saved them by destroying their innocence and introducing the pain that knowledge often gives. Satan, as well as intruding into small town naivety, also could serve as Twain's own ambivalent voice about the actions of humanity. Satan creates and destroys and so does Twain in that he has generated a story unlike anything readers have come across before; he attacks and tries to demolish common beliefs often held by common people. The duality in Satan's nature very much could resemble Twain's struggle in trying to reach out to the ordinary populace; but then the question arises in how to do so without slaughtering belief and creating more upheaval in taking away trust.

While Gervais saw a similarity between Satan and Twain's natures, Bruce Michelson asserts that themes of play and playfulness are essential to the construction of *The Mysterious Stranger* and are often overlooked because of structural problems. In Michelson's 1980 article *Deus Ludens: The Shaping of Mark Twain's Mysterious Stranger*, he affirms that Twain's later life was not a happy one and his motives are commonly misunderstood. While each of the three stories had its problems, he does believe they all "achieve a marvelous accommodation among style, storytelling, and an all-but intractable theme" (Michelson 45). Michelson acknowledges that Twain often ran into both structural and stylistic trouble when dealing with paradoxical truths. These mostly had to do with the subject of God and the only ways in which he could sensibly vilify Him was by "the finite conception of God that man develops out of his own stupidity" (Michelson 45) and "the most admirable qualities of his storytelling and his prose, his economy, his grace, his playfulness, drift out of his reach, and his late writings all too frequently deteriorate into mechanical fables or mere rant" (Michelson 45). The playfulness that Michelson sees exists in the form of Philip Traum (the mysterious stranger's alias in *The Chronicle*) as he exhibits qualities of a playful, child-like God. He creates a world for Theodor and his friends that is not real, thus the play comes into the picture, but which all can enjoy, or as

Michelson puts it: [he] create[s] a special bond among the players as enthralled participants in a shared illusion" (Michelson 46). Philip, or Satan - as Theodor knows him, perceives the "Moral Sense" as a joke and does not debate over whether he or man is correct: Satan speaks for the universe and Theodor for man. Much like a child has creative intelligence, the irony of the entire story is that Satan is Theodor's creation, his dream.

While Michelson's article appreciates Twain's imagination and play, Terence J. Matheson explores the darker yet comical side of Twain in his article, *The Devil and Philip Traum: Twain's Satiric Purposes in The Mysterious Stranger.* He addresses Twain's satirical treatment of pessimism, ignorance, and human nature in *The Mysterious Stranger.* One aspect of Twain's pessimism is shown by Matheson in the form of his miserable last years which were full of suffering, so "his views and those of the totally pessimistic, bitter and cynical Philip Traum must be virtually identical" (Matheson 6). Ignorance shows itself through the character of Ursula in that she represents one of the many gullible people in Eseldorf. Satan makes easy prey of her in giving her a lucky cat that gives endless amounts of money, but never tells her that he has bewitched the feline himself. Having fallen on hard times, Ursula is delighted and Theodor never finds fault with Satan's lie, nor "does it shake the gullible Theodor's belief that all Satan has told *him* is nevertheless true" (Matheson 8). Human nature, signified by Theodor's unwavering belief, comes in the form of Satan explaining to Theodor that the future cannot be altered, yet he changes it in several cases. Humor and philosophical discussion combine as Theodor realizes that "man [is] a prisoner for life" (Matheson 9) even though Satan has made his arguments null and void by interfering in others' lives. Theodor willingly believes what he is told and never questions it even though Satan has ironically proved himself false. So when Satan begins explaining his view of the "Moral Sense" to Theodor, he shows him torturers and workhouse proprietors who "lack the ability to make meaningful distinctions between right and wrong" (Matheson 9). These glimpses actually have nothing to do with moral sensitivity but a moral *insensitivity*

(Matheson 9). Twain's ideas of playing satirically with the folly of humans aids readers in discerning truth from fiction, much like the characters in the story were unable to do. Philip's remarks are shown explicitly in his actions, which do not shine favorably on human action since he appears to be human even though he claims he is not.

With these reviews it is clear that what remains important about *The Mysterious Stranger Manuscripts* is that they keep creating controversy even into the new millennium. The debate still remains as to what message Twain was trying to get across to his readers and of which of the three manuscripts he would want to represent his views. Interestingly enough, no matter which one of the stories is looked at, two resonating themes undeniably make themselves known: the hand-in-hand difficulties of Christianity and human nature. About ten years before his death, Twain had been wanting to write for himself and stop writing for print. In 1899, he sent a letter to his friend William Dean Howells:

> It is under way now and it *is* a luxury! An intellectual drunk. Twice I didn't start it right, and got pretty far both times before I found it out. But I am sure it is started right this time. It is in tale form. I believe I can make it tell what I think of Man, and how he is constructed, and what a shabby poor ridiculous thing he is, and how mistaken he is in his estimate of his character and powers and qualities and his place among the animals. (Neider 256)

It was no matter that Twain was not exactly sure of what story he wanted to compose, the compelling aspect of his journey into *The Mysterious Stranger* was that he knew what aspects he wanted to expound upon.

Twain began each of his manuscripts by introducing a young male character that, in all the mystery shrouding him, shares powerful insights into modern religion, morality, and social justice. Calling himself Satan, in all but *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger Manuscripts* serve as Twain's

sounding board against the injustices that he thought threatened mankind. The narrator, usually a young man of impressionable age, recalls his encounters with a visitor who at times is unwelcome in the small village due to great upset but who intrigues the people regardless. In *The Chronicle of Young Satan*, the narrator, Theodor Fischer, plainly states the rigorous religious beliefs of this rural community:

> Eseldorf was a paradise for us boys. We were not overmuch pestered with schooling. Mainly we were trained to be good Catholics; to revere the Virgin, the Church and the saints above everything; to hold the Monarch in awful reverence, speak of him with bated breath, uncover before his picture, regard him as the gracious provider of our daily bread and of all our earthly blessings, and ourselves as being sent into the world with the one only mission to labor for him, bleed for him, die for him, when necessary. Beyond these matters we were not required to know much; and in fact, not allowed to. The priests said that knowledge was not good for the common people, and could make them discontented with the lot which God had appointed for them, and God would not endure discontentment with His plans. This was true, for the priests got it of the Bishop. (Twain 36)

Thus, Twain makes the church the center of everyday life and little outside knowledge was allowed. Trained from birth to believe in a creator, or mainly, to believe in the power of the Church itself, none of his characters question its authority and happily lived out their lives in ignorance. It could be supposed that Twain knew human kind found it very easy to believe in God and fear His church since he had both seen and lived the experience. This could also possibly be one of the reasons that instead of letting a godly character speak, a different voice is heard that has not been allowed to speak through the ages—that of Satan. Caroline Thomas Harnsberger notes that Twain once wrote:

> I have no special regard for Satan; but I can at least claim that I have no prejudice against him. It may even be that I lean a little his way, on account of his not having a fair show. All religions

> issue bibles against him, and say the most injurious things about him, but we never hear *his* side. We have none but the evidence for the prosecution, and yet we have rendered the verdict...We may not pay him reverence, for that would be indiscreet, but we can at least respect his talents. (Harnsberger 8)

Ever the rebel, Twain took his beliefs and created his multifaceted angel named Satan, and put him in the town of Eseldorf (mockingly translated as Ass-ville) so that he could make the people question their religious loyalties. Satan meets Theodor Fischer and his friends, Nikolaus Baumann and Seppi Wohlmeyer, and urges them to trust him with his bewildering displays creating gifts out of thin air. Fire, fruit, and promises of more were only the beginnings of his displays of power as he begins to create living beings out of the dirt of the earth. Naturally, the three boys look on in wonder as each man and woman is made and then set to a specific task to manage a small castle. Satan looks on as well and comments on the progress, such as when a tiny woman almost backs her way off a ledge, "she is an idiot to step backward like that and not notice what she is about" (Twain 47). This statement reveals how these simple beings are in control of their own lives and what their very own creator thinks of them. Satan ridicules his tiny people for their lack of observation, even though he saves the woman for the time being. Later, his real impressions of them are revealed:

> Satan reached out his hand and crushed the life out of them with his fingers, threw them away, wiped the red from his fingers on his handkerchief and went on talking where he had left off... (Twain 49)

Apparently squabbling was the last thing Satan wanted to hear that day, so when his tiny people began to fight amongst themselves, squashing them was the best way to handle the situation. Obviously this greatly upset Theodor and his friends because for the first time in their young lives, these boys have had an experience that the church is not able to dictate. After all, they are only following their natures to believe in the wisdom of their elders but since Satan represents some of God's attributes with his

creating and destroying, Satan has opened their young eyes. Ironically, Satan had said he and others like him "[could not] do wrong, neither have we any disposition to do it, for we do not know what it is" (Twain 49), yet kills while young boys watch. This scene says worlds more about God that it does about Satan. Usually, within Christian New Testament Doctrine, the thought that God would provide and care for his children is universal. It is here Twain pulls his greatest literary trick and makes all that his readers have ever known, unfamiliar. Instead of Satan being portrayed as the typical evildoer who causes Christians to stumble in their walk with God, he is a giver of gifts, the bringer of life, and also the cause of destruction. Is this not who God is and what God does? For the first time, instead of seeing God as a perfect being, faults have been introduced into the doctrine and Twain wants to reveal the Biblical God as he sees him: "as vindictive, unjust, ungenerous, pitiless, vengeful, cruel, and a punisher of the innocent" (Ensor 76). Satan encapsulates all of these qualities.

Satan, according to Twain's text, represents a God-like being and since the normal attributes of the Creator are wiped away in this unusual representation of Satan, we are then presented with a view of God as a cruel being who really has nothing invested in the human race. Traditional Christianity puts emphasis on how each person that God has created is special. Twain's text, however, challenges human nature's desire to believe this vanity by using Satan's uncaring attitude to suggest "'It's not about you'" as asserted in Tom's Quirk's book *Mark Twain and Human Nature* (Quirk 262). Tearing apart deeply held religious convictions, Twain takes away the boys' spiritual foundation to leave them with nothing except questions and doubt. Another rupture in mankind's thoughts about God is also made when Satan explains he does not have the Moral Sense (Twain 55). Upon asking Father Peter, the boys learn that it is "the faculty which enables us to distinguish good from evil" (Twain 60). With this fact combined with further examination of the scene with the little people, we can now begin questioning the qualities of God. If Satan does not know the difference between right and wrong and kills, he is more innocent than a God who must know the difference and still lashes his followers. With the stereotypical view of

God out of the way, Twain's text exposes their true natures: that of lowly, degenerate beings who are worthless. If the creator is flawed, surely so is his creation.

Schoolhouse Hill's setting is much like Twain's previous writings in that it resembles the world of Tom Sawyer. In *Schoolhouse Hill*, instead of the name of Satan, the mysterious young lad goes by the name of Forty-four and astonishes the school he has only arrived at by learning English in a matter of minutes. In each of the three manuscripts, Twain expresses his long-standing plight of Francophobia (Kahn 48) by having French be Forty-four's native tongue. In the previous novella, Satan had said his uncle (whom he was named after) lived in the tropics, which was mostly inhabited by the French. It is no different here as the only language Forty-four can speak is French. Amazingly, within a span of twenty minutes, he had gone through and read the teacher's entire English-French dictionary and could recite:

> in a rushing stream, the words, the definitions, the accompanying illustrative phrases and sentences, the signs indicating the parts of speech-everything; he skipped nothing, he put in all the details, and he even got the pronunciations substantially right, since it was a pronouncing-dictionary. (Twain 181)

Of course this enamours the class and in their fascination, allows them to be exposed to outside knowledge. In *The Chronicle*, any kind of education was a bad thing since it could expose the high priests of the church as manipulative and fraudulent. Here it is received with as much a warm welcome, as is this newcomer with a bizarre numeric name.

Amazing as this spectacle may be, Forty-four had yet to unleash his most powerful information and that came when he was assumed to be from the state of Missouri (Twain 209). Forty-four revealed to Hotchkiss that he was very much a foreigner and was raised "partly in heaven, partly in hell" (Twain 209). Naturally, this stupefied the boy's host but nothing compared to when he admitted that his father was Satan himself (Twain 212). Thi led the two into conversation about Forty-four's five million year

history and how his father came to be after his eating of the fruit that damned mankind.

As traditionally preached from the pulpit, Satan causes man and woman to sin by eating of the Tree of Knowledge. However, in this tale, little does the typical congregation know that Adam and Eve were not the only sufferers in partaking of the evil fruit. According to Forty-four, when they ate, human beings learned of good and evil but Satan already had that knowledge (Twain 215). Said Forty-four:

> His error was in supposing that a knowledge of the difference between good and evil was *all* that the fruit could confer…The fruit's office was not confined to conferring the mere knowledge of good and evil, it conferred also the passionate and eager and hungry *disposition to* DO *evil.* (Twain 216)

Twain asks, what if Satan was not as guilty as all of Christendom claims and what of the One who put that deadly tree in the middle of a vast and beautiful garden? Every other plant was free of sin and could be enjoyed but not this *one* piece of shrubbery. Why did God tempt those who had every pleasure known them? Was it to lure them into a false sense of security to sin and what was the purpose of this? If Satan is the purist angel and God's favorite, why would He deny him this one happiness and then unleash a world of hurt upon him? Forty-four has replaced one very wrong notion, in Twain's mind, of who and what Satan is with an even more horrifying vision that the God Christians serve might be a hoax. Perhaps God, Himself, according to this text, is not the sham but instead, the idea of God being just and unable to see and create sin is what Twain attacks. Forty-four feels human beings have been very misled and it his mission to correct these wrongs. He decides to study the race in order to lift the burden of sin from mankind's shoulders. He asks Hotchkiss for his assistance in the matter. The weight of sin, which Christians might have understood to have been taken care of in the form of Jesus Christ, falls on the shoulders of a sixteen-year-old boy: the son of Satan. Satan's unselfish actions could even indicate that God "[knew] the value of everything and the price of nothing" (Quirk 96) because God knew what it took to make Adam and Eve but the price Christ paid would not suffice for saving them.

Human nature's belief in an all-knowing God has been crushed. Instead, Twain suggests that Satan, who appears to be a teenager, would do a better job than an infinite God. After all, Satan did not send his son to redeem the world for his mistake; Forty-four came, himself, to redeem the world of *God's* mistake, ironically, probably stemming from Twain's inability to "forgive Christ for invent[ing] hell" (Ensor 77)—very controversial notions in any time period. The boy heads out on his mission and leaves behind a demon, normally thought of as a terrible being that is sent to do the biddings of the wicked, to aid Hotchkiss in any way, shape, or form. Once again unveiling another perspective on the goodness of Satan and the vileness of God, Hotchkiss is left perplexed by the possibility that all he ever believed could be wrong. The feelings of inexplicable shock and pessimism Twain imparts with this manuscript are likely due to "the deaths of family members and friends, illness and pain, public humiliation and financial despair" (Quirk 238) and are probably the same he had to bear as he struggled to make meaning out of a world gone topsy-turvy in his later years.

Twain's last manuscript, entitled *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger*, starts out very much the same as *The Chronicle*, but the plot quickly changes. Once again, a strange visitor calls, but he does not appear at the castle doorstep to cause trouble; instead, he merely wants room and board. For the first time, Twain's character asks human beings for help. Number 44 (New Series 864,962) inquires about food and shelter for each day's hard labor. The printing apprentice central to the story, August Feldner, watches all of this in absolute misery as he wishes to help the young lad but does not want the brunt of the other printers' cruelty laid upon him. Everyone assumes the intruder is a Jail-Bird because of the serial numbers on the end of his name and it is only Master Printer Stein who comes to his aid and allows him to stay. Eventually, the magician, who serves the master's wife in hunting up ancient treasure in the castle, is suspected for giving 44 his amazing strength. It was not uncommon to see him straining with a heavy load of logs, dumping them into a locker, only to go back for more time and time again. August serves as Twain's commentary on the magician's hubris when, instead of 44 being

praised for a job well done, he is ridiculed, mocked, and scorned while the magician, who played no part in 44's capabilities, took all the credit for them due to human nature's native selfishness (Quirk 197). August notes:

> Life was become very interesting. Every few days there was a fresh novelty, some strange new thing done by the boy, something to wonder at; and so the magician's reputation was augmenting all the time. To be envied is the secret longing of pretty much all human beings-let us say *all*; to be envied makes them happy. The magician was happy, for never was a man so envied; he lived in the clouds. (Twain 246)

No one aided this poor fellow even though August had the secret desire to know 44 and the stranger must have picked up on it. He revealed to August that he could understand his thoughts and this was very helpful when the master gave 44 a promotion to apprentice printer. Resentment flourished as 44 did his job perfectly without anyone *saying* a word to him or giving him hints since all the men who worked in the shop want to be rid of him. By the time Doangivadam (who was sent for as a solution to the printers' not working) arrived, the hatred of this boy was burning hot. Envy was now hatred and instead of turning it towards 44, it now was focused on Master Stein. Katzenyammer, Moses, and the rest of the printers' continual refusal to do a job for a very important university showed their absolute indifference to whether their master was ruined or not. Unbeknown to anyone but August, 44 solved the problem with invisible beings who could do the job in no time. Later, it turned out that these invisible beings were each mans' Duplicate, and they caused more trouble than was necessary. This was perhaps one way that Twain explains man's defiant and uncooperative behavior. 44 explains to August that each person was made up of a Workaday-Self, a Dream-Self, and a Soul that was eternal (Twain 315). Those Duplicates were the Dream-Selves in the flesh and when the Workaday-Self was asleep, the Dream-Self was allowed to roam free. According to 44, Man, in himself, was a very boring creature since he worries all day long about trifling measures and the Dream-Self is allowed to roam

through time, space, and even the planets themselves. The selves usually never met (until this odd circumstance) which was the reason behind why mankind was so miserable; the imagination was unable to roam free. Thus, he treated others in accord to how wretched he felt. Twain's belief in the misery of man was prevalent during the last stages of his life since "he had ceased to believe in independence of thought and individuality of personality" (Quirk 146). Creativity had long been dead to these men since the only thing they knew and understood was routine. Using 44 as his medium, Twain expresses the need for imagination because only then would men be free of the monotonous.

Similarly, 44 despairs in front of August that the human mind is so minute. How would he ever be able to explain these details when August was unable to comprehend what 44 says, especially when the boy argues against it? Since August reminds him that he was created in the image of God (Twain 331), 44 believes that the boy needs to open his mind so that he can explain that not all things have a beginning. He tells August:

> Your race cannot even conceive of something being made out of nothing—I am aware of it, your learned men and philosophers are always confessing it. They say there had to be *something* to start with--meaning a solid, a substance--to build the world out of. Man, it is perfectly simple—it was built out of *thought*. Can't you comprehend that? (Twain 332)

This is Twain's final and ultimate rejection of God and all religious facets associated with Him. Twain suggests that man is not a spiritual being at all but a logical one who creates his own reality. Abstract thoughts of Heaven, creation, and holiness dissolve for August as Twain eliminates all possibility of a meaning to existence. As Twain once wrote to his wife, "How insignificant we are, with our pigmy little world!" (Baetzhold & McCullough xv). 44 exemplifies this thought.

What August had been living is a dream:

> You perceive, *now*, that these things are all impossible, except in a dream. You perceive

> that they are pure and puerile insanities, the silly creations of an imagination that is not conscious of its freaks-in a word, that they are a dream, and you the maker of it. (Twain 405)

Twain, as if with a sigh, finally comes to a terminal point, one that some have considered to be solipsistic. But, even though this realization posits there is no world outside of the self, it simultaneously affirms autonomy, free will, and the power of the imagination.

Mark Twain was and still is one of America's greatest satirists. While these stories may be from a very intelligent and humorous source, they were left unfinished for a reason besides the fact that Twain died before he could finish them. He began a tale, which would encompass those things he saw wrong in the world, stopped, started over, and began again. Twain did this three times. In each, something new is expressed and something new is gained, be it a new view of Christianity, a real sense of humanity, or an urge towards the imaginary. Twain urged preconceived notions to be challenged and not to rely on what was taught from childhood. Asking these questions is the beginning of a search for truth. Mark Twain desperately sought for those truths of humanity and self throughout his lifetime. While it may have seemed that Twain only saw religion as "the very invention of Hell itself" (Bush. Jr. 1), he did also call it "the most precious and ennobling boon ever vouchsafed to the world" (Bush Jr. 1). No matter whether his final pages are deemed his most alarming or disturbing, it could be proposed that Twain's creativity, thought-processes, and overall excitement of an idea is what delivers more of a rewarding experience to the reader than what end product fashioned itself in the end.

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