

CONCLUSION

Model Children and Masculine Urchins:

Four Distinctive Juvenile Images

“AIN’T it gay?” said Joe.

“It’s NUTS!” said Tom. “What would the boys say if they could see us?”

“Say? Well, they’d just die to be here—hey, Hucky!”

“I reckon so,” said Huckleberry; “anyways, I’m suited. I don’t want nothing better’n this. I don’t ever get enough to eat, gen’ally—and here they can’t come and pick at a feller and bullyrag him so.”

—Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

Pretty soon I heard a twig snap down in the dark amongst the trees—something was a stirring. I set still and listened. Directly I could just barely hear a “me-yow! me-yow!” down there. That was good! Says I, “me-yow! me-yow!” as soft as I could, and then I put out the light and scrambled out of the window on to the shed. Then I slipped down to the ground and crawled in among the trees, and, sure enough, there was Tom Sawyer waiting for me.

—Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

As the epigraphs illustrate, Mark Twain shows his readers a carefree picture of childhood in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, through which he not only romanticizes the childhood in St. Petersburg but also creates many enduring American fantasies about the frolics of the children, including their happy life and leisure time. Children who dwell in this nineteenth-century Disneyland are able to engage in a variety of recreational activities. They are free to play a harmless prank on the passers-by through disguising themselves as a throng of armed gangsters; they can display their physical strength and military prowess through playing the games of being Robin Hood or an army’s Commander in Chief; they are able to send “a me-yow” (*Huck Finn* 16) signal to their comrades when they want to sneak out at night, playing thrilling adventures in the bucolic

surroundings of the town. Despite the fact that the children's world portrayed by Mark Twain is indeed a wonderful place full of pleasure, excitement, and fun, this "Delectable Land" (*Tom Sawyer* 18) does not always ensure an unalloyed happiness and freedom because this children's society, which is governed by the two educative mechanisms, imposes upon its two distinctive kinds of children various constraints and obligations that might cloud their happiness and determine their character traits.

As the second chapter illustrates, for instance, Mark Twain's two model children dominated by a set of effeminate codes of conduct such as docility and gentility, benevolence and empathy are more susceptible to the disciplinary practices, including the control mechanisms and the discourse on model children. Their submission to this educative mechanism, in addition to personal preferences, is ascribed to their desire for honor, rewards, privilege, recognition, and fame. Being unable to resist the temptation of the reward system which develops from the control mechanism, Sid makes a tremendous effort to behave in a socially acceptable manner in the hope of gaining parental rewards and monopolizing adults' love. Apparently, he does meet the standard of a model child and come up to the images of obedience and complaisance, but behind the mask of his docility, Mark Twain reminds his readers that this model boy is in fact a shameless and malicious hypocrite who bends his energy to ostracizing and mortifying his peers through spying on and informing against them. His hypocrisy, moreover, is strikingly highlighted when he is compared with Huck Finn, whose moral principles of behavior are less affected by the control mechanism. Although Huck is usually disparaged by his townspeople who denigrate him as an uncivilized ragamuffin, his noble deeds, including his secret help to Jim and his altruistic love to the three Wilks sisters, are ironically what the model boy would not do. Through lifting Sid's mask and highlighting his pretense of virtue, this thesis discovers that Mark Twain not only questions the validity of the codes of conduct stipulated by the control mechanism but also

creates the first complex juvenile image, an image which is a mixture of superficial pliability and hidden hypocrisy. Furthermore, this thesis finds that the paradox embodied in this juvenile image shares similarities with the modes of behavior in the adult world where most of the adults, Christians in particular, might endeavor to show their civilities through strictly adhering to the social laws and religious doctrines, but, ironically, they also reveal their hypocrisy when they acquiesce to the slavery institute. In short, since Sid follows the pattern of being a socially acceptable man, this model child might get to the top of his social pyramid and become one of the social elites such as a judge or a lawyer after he grows up; however, during his journey of socialization, he might also lose his innocence, purity, kindness, and humanity, all of which are the basic elements of human nature.

Like Sid, Jacob Blivens is acclaimed as a model child, who submits to the manipulation of the disciplinary practices and shows great faith in the discourse on model children embedded in his Sunday-school books. In spite of the fact that this Sunday-school-book enthusiast, who is not as mean or as malevolent as Sid, is depicted as a complaisant and kind-hearted boy whose behavior is consistent with that of the role models in Sunday-school books, Mark Twain reminds his readers that behind the mask of Jacob's obedience, this good honest upright man is perverted by his vanity, pride, and credulity. In order to be catapulted into becoming one of the conspicuous model children in a Sunday-school book, not only does Jacob emulate the success of the role models but he perseveres in carrying out what he reads into practice no matter how frustrating the results are. Blindly following the instructions of his Sunday-school books, Jacob is eager to show people his charity, compassion, and kindness. Despite his benevolence, he is always upbraided for the things he does not do and is being frustrated by the harsh reality in which he not only suffers a series of setbacks and undeserved criticism but also brings his own death for lack of sagacity and carefulness. His imprudence and gullibility, furthermore, is highlighted if he is compared with Huck Finn,

whose goodwill and charity do not hinge upon any social discourse's instructions. Unlike Jacob, who always succors the needy without taking his security into consideration, Huck is always willing to help people in trouble, but he would contemplate the whole matter and make a careful plan before he takes any action. Through revealing how the discourse on model children destroys a moral boy and making a comparison between Jacob and Huck, this thesis discovers that Mark Twain is skeptical about the notion of so-called model children and its authoritative creeds and practices, and that Mark Twain creates the second juvenile image, an image which is a mixture of charity and vanity. Although Mark Twain challenges the discourse on model children through deriding Jacob as a credulous imbecile, he neither denies the core beliefs of this discourse nor provokes children to abjure the moral values embedded in this disciplinary practice; instead, he reminds his readers that showing kindness and sympathy to people, as illustrated in the cases of Huck, is one of the human beings' unique qualities which everyone is expected to possess, but they should remember the importance of self-protection when they give succor to anyone in dire need.

Unlike the two model children that obey the disciplinary practices, Mark Twain's two masculine urchins, as illustrated in the third chapter, are more susceptible to the masculine codes of conduct prescribed by the dominant boys' culture. Their submission to this educative mechanism is ascribed to two particular causes. One is their difficulty in adapting themselves to the model children's effeminate images that are usually in direct conflict with their gender awareness; the other is their psychological need for an appropriate masculine role model, a model which is usually absent from their matriarchal society. Although the masculine urchins find it hard to accept the effeminate images and cultures of model children, they might embrace the masculine images and cultures which not only relieve their anxiety about their gender identity but also offer them a lot of pleasure. In order to find an appropriate masculine role model, for instance, Tom and Huck might either read or listen to the stories about pirates,

outcasts, desperadoes, prisoners, and robbers, through which they are able to enjoy great pleasure and immerse themselves in a masculine ambience. Deeply affected by the masculine boys' culture, Tom and Huck are aware of displaying their manliness such as courage, strength, prowess, and stoicism in every aspect of their daily life such as their behavior, minds, and games.

Although they meet the criteria for being masculine boys, it is their approval of the masculine culture that brings about their disobedience to the multiple authorities and the tension between parents and children. Mark Twain reminds his readers that children, boys in particular, are confronted with a contradictory situation, in which they are required to obey the effeminate codes of conduct embodied in the disciplinary practices and the masculine rules of conduct compelled by the world of boys. Being embroiled in the conflict between the requirement for obedience to the rules of decorum and the devotion to the masculine boys' culture, the two manly boys, who consider masculinity as being much more important than docility, choose to obey the masculine codes of conduct. Since the masculine rules of conduct are in direct conflict with the rules of decorum, the two wild boys' support for the masculine culture leads to their disobedience to the requirements imposed by the multiple authorities. Despite the fact that both Tom and Huck are indeed two masculine boys who come up to the images of bravery, rebellion, and independence, Mark Twain reminds his readers that there are subtle differences in the ways the two boys disobey their authorities. Being affected by the masculine culture which emphasizes the importance of defiance, Tom takes delight in rebelling against his aunt, teacher, and preacher and derives his enormous happiness from others' misfortune. Through highlighting his submission to the masculine boys' culture and his ways of disobedience, this thesis discovers that Mark Twain not only informs his readers of the reasons why Tom challenges the multiple authorities but also create the third juvenile image, an image which is a mixture of masculinity and waywardness. Unlike this

self-centered and wayward boy, Huck, whose gender identity is determined by the dominant boys' culture, also shows his noncompliance with the authorities, but he always takes other people's feelings into consideration, struggling to convince him of the righteousness of his defiance; hence, the last juvenile image created by Mark Twain is a compound of manliness and thoughtfulness. Despite the fact that both Tom and Huck are manipulated by the boys' masculine culture, this thesis discovers that Huck Finn is the only boy that is more capable of dealing with and carrying out the two contrasting codes of conduct without compromising himself too much.

Under the constraints of the multiple authorities—family and school, church and society, Mark Twain uses the two distinctive types of children to create four different juvenile images. A docile and obedient image is embodied in Mark Twain's two model children, but behind the mask of their obedience, this thesis also discovers that they are either hypocritical or gullible, and that readers should be careful of not being deceived by the model children's appearances. In contrast to the model children's obedient image, a masculine and disobedient image is represented by Mark Twain's masculine urchins, but beneath the veneer of their disobedience, this thesis discovers that Tom is a wayward and selfish boy while Huck is a thoughtful and kindhearted boy, who is always ready to help people in need. Through illustrating these four distinctive juvenile images, Mark Twain succeeds in evoking strong memories of his readers' childhood and achieves his goal of composing his two famous juvenile novels, the goal which is to "pleasantly remind adults of what they once were themselves, and of how they felt and thought and talked, and what queer enterprises they sometimes engaged in" (*Tom Sawyer* 3).