

INTRODUCTION

Two Educative Mechanisms:

Children's Responses to Authority in Mark Twain's Works

Mr. Dobbins' lashings were very vigorous ones, too; for although he carried, under his wig, a perfectly bald and shiny head, he had only reached middle age, and there was no sign of feebleness in his muscle. As the great day approached, all the tyranny that was in him came to the surface; he seemed to take a vindictive pleasure in punishing the least shortcomings. The consequence was, that the smaller boys spent their days in terror and suffering and their nights in plotting revenge.

—Mark Twain, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*

Then Miss Watson she took me in the closet and prayed, but nothing come of it. She told me to pray every day, and whatever I asked for I would get it. But it warn't so. I tried it. Once I got a fish-line, but no hooks. It warn't any good to me without hooks. I tried for the hooks three or four times, but somehow I couldn't make it work. By and by, one day, I asked Miss Watson to try for me, but she said I was a fool. She never told me why, and I couldn't make it out no way.

—Mark Twain, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Through investigating the impact of the two educative mechanisms deriving from the multiple authorities' manipulative measures upon Mark Twain's two distinctive types of children that are portrayed in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876), *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884-85), and "The Story of the Good Little Boy Who Did Not Prosper" (1870), this thesis will not only aim to examine how these two kinds of children respond to the constraints of the family, church, school, and society but also attempt to reveal how the two educative mechanisms, which dominate the children's society, fashion four different kinds of juvenile images. The first type of the educative mechanism that is usually used as a means of disciplining or civilizing children is a set of disciplinary practices, including control mechanisms and a discourse on model children. These two disciplinary practices, which

develop from the manipulative strategies used by the multiple authorities, are employed to shape a child into a civilized and well-mannered man. The core values of these disciplinary practices, which are fully advocated by St. Petersburg's matriarchy, embody the effeminate codes of conduct such as docility and cleanliness, compassion and piety, benevolence and gentility. Children who are under the sway of the disciplinary practices are expected to internalize all of these effeminate codes of conduct as an integral part of their life. In contrast to the first educative mechanism that includes a plethora of feminine rules, the second type of the educative mechanism that instills into a teenage boy a set of masculine codes of conduct is the dominant boys' culture, which permeates the children's society. This dominant boys' culture, which develops from the requests of the multiple authorities, is used to shape teenage boys into masculine men. The basic tenets of the boys' culture, which are in direct conflict with those of the disciplinary practices, include bravery and strength, stoicism and independence, silence and defiance. Children who are under the manipulation of the boys' culture are expected to display their manliness in every aspect of their daily life.

Despite the fact that Mark Twain's two distinctive types of children are enmeshed in the two contrasting educative mechanisms, they would show their submission to either one of them, from which they guarantee that they are able to enjoy considerable advantages. The first type of children that complies with the regulations prescribed by the disciplinary practices is Mark Twain's model children, including Sid and Jacob. Although they come up to adults' expectations of being model children, their different ways of obedience to the multiple authorities reveal two distinctive juvenile images. Sid is a mean spy and malicious informer whose behavior usually clashes with the fundamental beliefs of a model child, while Jacob is a conceited and gullible boy, who eventually brings his own ruin. The second type of children that follows the rules of masculinity exemplified in the dominant boys' culture is Mark Twain's masculine urchins, including Tom and Huck. In spite of the fact that they meet the

social expectations of being a masculine teenager, their different ways of compliance with the gender ideology show two distinctive juvenile images. Tom is a wayward and self-centered boy, who seldom shows his empathy for other people, while Huck is a disobedient but considerate boy, who always takes other people's feelings into consideration.

In order to probe deeper into the impact of the constraints of multiple authorities upon Mark Twain's children, the first chapter of this thesis will attempt to show a whole picture of the different forms of authority described in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* in the hope of classifying the various ways of adults' manipulation into two educative mechanisms. It will start from the comparison between Mark Twain's childhood and the childhood he describes in his novels. Then, this chapter will investigate how the four authorities—family and church, school and society—manipulate or repress Mark Twain's children, in order to examine how the authorities wield and assert their power. By dint of examining how Mark Twain's children are constrained or repressed by multiple authorities and analyzing the influence of the repression on them, this chapter will try to reveal two educative mechanisms and two distinctive codes of conduct, in order to investigate how Mark Twain creates different kinds of juvenile images. The first type of the educative mechanism that embodies a set of effeminate codes of conduct is represented by the disciplinary practices, whereas the second type that includes a set of masculine rules of conduct is epitomized in the masculine culture of Mark Twain's teenage boys. Confronted with a world full of various kinds of repression, Mark Twain's two distinctive children—model children and masculine urchins—would either obey or challenge the two different sets of educative mechanisms constructed by the four authorities. Internalizing the core values of the disciplinary practices and following the paradigm of what a model child should do, model children such as Sid and Jacob would always meekly do the adults' bidding no matter how ridiculous it is. Unlike the model children that choose to obey the regulations prescribed by the disciplinary practice,

masculine urchins strictly adhere to the codes of boys that tell them how to behave in a masculine way. For Tom, Joe, and Huck, the disciplinary practices, though constantly imposed upon these wild children, are utterly repugnant to them because the rules of decorum buttressed by St. Petersburg's patriarchy conflict with the codes of behavior governing the boys' world. Affected by the ideas of what a manly and independent boy is, these children follow the codes of boys, boldly challenging the authorities of their family, school, and church.

The second chapter will focus on Mark Twain's two distinctive types of model children, including Sid and Jacob, both of whom show their submission to the constraints of the disciplinary practices, through the analysis of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and "The Story of the Good Little Boy Who Did Not Prosper." Through examining the impact of the two distinctive disciplinary practices upon the model children, this chapter will attempt to show how Mark Twain undermines the disciplinary systems in the hope of lifting the masks worn by those "model" boys and demystifying the notion of model children. It will start from the analysis of the disciplinary practices, specifically concentrating upon the ways how and the reasons why the four authorities constitute these practices. Through examining moral values of the adult world and Sunday school books, it will not only attempt to investigate how adult imagination, language, and writing create a control mechanisms and a discourse on a model child but also explain why the authorities use these disciplinary practices to manipulate the model children. Using this discourse as a framework for the analysis of the model children, this chapter will endeavor to explicate the causes of their obedience to authority in the hope of stripping off the masks worn by these moral boys. Through examining their ulterior motives for accepting the constraints of different forms of authority, this chapter ultimately aims to reveal the significances and consequences of their choice.

The third chapter will center on Mark Twain's masculine urchins, including Tom and

Huck, both of whom show their obedience to the dominant boys' culture, in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Through investigating the masculine culture exemplified in the world of Mark Twain's wild boys, this chapter will attempt to reveal how the fictional society, St. Petersburg, shapes its adolescent boys into masculine men in the hope of explicating the possible causes of their disobedience and stripping off the "masculine" armor worn by those masculine urchins. It will start from the examination of the discourse on the codes of boys, particularly concentrating upon the ways how and the reasons why the four authorities construct this discourse. Through studying children's games, storybooks, circuses, and social expectations of boys, it will not only examine how language, writing, and the culture of the boys' world create masculine images for boys but also investigate how Tom and Huck are affected or even dominated by these spoken and written discourses on boyhood masculinity. Using this discourse as a framework for Mark Twain's wild children, this chapter will argue that their internalization of the codes of boys may bring about their disobedience to the four authorities. Nevertheless, there is a subtle difference in the ways Tom and Huck challenge the authorities. For instance, Tom takes a malicious pleasure in rebelling against his aunt, teacher, and preacher and derives his enormous happiness from others' misfortune. In contrast to this self-centered and selfish boy, Huck also shows his non-compliance with the authorities, but he always takes other people's feelings into consideration, struggling to convince himself of the righteousness of his recalcitrance. Through the comparison of the two non-compliant boys, the ultimate aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that although Huck Finn is usually stigmatized by his society which denigrates him as a social pariah, he is in fact a naturally good child who is more capable of subverting the influence of civilized beliefs and practices.