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Late Modern English, The Industrial Revolution, and Mark Twain's *The Private Life of Adam and Eve*

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Late Modern English was a significant linguistic period primarily because of the Industrial Revolution. The era created new words for items and concepts that did not exist previously. Most of the innovations of the Industrial Revolution included the development of new supplies, methods, and machinery in various manufacturing industries and various transportation methods (Taniguchi 103).

Ingrid Tieken-Boon Van Ostade states, "The effects of the Industrial Revolution led to new technological developments and consequently to an increase in travel" (10). Mark Twain saw the era as a period of advancement, corruption, and inequality (Durham 70).

Twain is known for his distinctive writing style, which is often categorized by humor and vernacular speech (Buxbaum 233). *The Private Life of Adam and Eve* is a prime example of Twain's notarized writing style.

Twain's contributions to the literary world are reminiscent of the varying linguistic changes within the United States during the late modern English period due to the Industrial Revolution (Durham 73). With satire and a profound comprehension of human nature, Twain skillfully portrays Adam and Eve's contrasting perspectives through vernacular speech reminiscent of the changes in modern English. *The Private Life of Adam and Eve* satirizes the Industrial Revolution's societal changes and moral dilemmas. America's Industrial Revolution caused the workforce to transition from strictly manual labor to increased mass production, and as a byproduct of mass production, economic growth occurred within the United States.Implementing factories throughout America created an influx of job opportunities for Americans nationwide and allowed the workforce to evolve from agriculture to the manufacturing business sectors (Chandler 141-143). Technological advancements improved labor efficiency and productivity for workers and business owners during the period. People from all over the United States moved to cities for work, and the United States became a true competitor in business within the global market.

Nevertheless, not all changes within the United States were positive. Alfred D. Chandler states, "With the coming of the factory, working men became mere tenders of machines" (140). As a focus on mass production ensued, humanity became detached from nature and God. The influx of migration led to rapid urban growth and changes in living conditions, which were often met with harsh living

standards, including overcrowding, unsafe working conditions, and disease (Taniguchi 110). While many embraced the developing United States, others criticized these drastic changes.

Twain lived during a period of rapid expansion and change. What was once a predominantly rural country, transformed into an America dominated by cities and urbanization. Twain's relationship with the evolving world around him was complex and often skeptical (Durham 67). While Twain recognized the potential for good due to technology, he frequently doubted that the Industrial Revolution would profoundly improve human experience, nature, or society. Hunt Hawkins states, "Though deeply felt, Twain's anti-imperialism was, however, gradually undermined by his pessimism" (34). Twain's criticism of the radical time in which he lived was born from a skepticism that the Industrial Revolution could foster the moral progress of the United States of America, especially following the nation's cultural state after the Civil War. Twain's critique of America's new way of life is evident in *The Private Life of Adam and Eve.*

Twain's *The Private Life of Adam and Eve* encompasses a comedic, satirical, and conversational style. The book is written in diary entry format and provides a unique, less formal approach to the lives of Earth's first two humans. Twain uses colloquial language consistent with late modern English in this work. In spite of the characters' dated, biblical background, Twain's unique writing style makes the archaic characters of Adam and Eve relatable and contemporary to readers.

Through Adam and Eve's separate diary entries, Twain showcases the complexities of relationships and the differences in a man's and a woman's experiences with the world around them (Brodwin 54). These differing experiences highlight Twain's concerns about human nature, progress, and societal changes, and these apprehensions are deeply rooted in Twain's criticism of the Industrial Revolution.

Adam's diary entries often reflect dry humor and skepticism. As such, Adam's dialogue portrays him as a foil to Eve's curious demeanor and love for nature (Brodwin 57). Eve's diary entries depict her as an expressive creature with a much more sensitive and thoughtful response to the world around her. An example of the characters' contrasting personalities is when Adam's character states, "Built me a shelter against the rain, but could not have it to myself in peace" (Twain 21).

Twain lightheartedly contrasts the characters' perspectives to highlight gender differences and the complexities these variances cause in romantic relationships. On a deeper level, Twain's depiction of Adam is consistent with his views of America embracing the Industrial Revolution, and his portrayal of Eve aligns with rural America before the changes of the era.

Twain's depiction of Eve contrasts with Adam's practical and removed demeanor. She embraces creativity and personal experience rather than fixed constructions. Eve's playful and artistic nature is evident when Eve's character states, "I already begin to realize that the core and center of my nature is love of the beautiful"

(Twain 113). The embrace of the natural and creative world around her is a metaphor for opposing the automation and compliance associated with industrialization. The Industrial Revolution emphasized efficiency, mass production, and societal transformation, often at the expense of individual creativity and traditional ways of life (Chandler 169). Eve's free-spirited disposition and emphasis on adventure can be interpreted as protesting the newly found values of the industrial era.

Eve's husband, Adam, symbolizes rationality, adjustment, and conformity, aligning with the Industrial Revolution's business values. Twain renders Adam rational, detached, and focused on surviving the strange world around him (Brodwin 60). Adam's approach to life mirrors the scientific and systematic mentality that industrialization encouraged. The Industrial Revolution emphasized efficiency, automation, and order. Mechanization and practicality were highly valued over a connection with the land. Adam's methodical disposition can be analyzed as reflecting these industrial values. An example is Adam's frustration with Eve over her naming items based on their appearance (Twain 32). Adam believes naming should be logical, while Eve believes in spontaneously naming the world around her. However, Twain's satirical tone throughout *The Private Life of Adam and Eve* suggests that Adam's fixed reasoning is not always beneficial, just as industrialization brought both progress and unintended consequences.

While Twain's main characters represent the Industrial Revolution, so does the language in which he writes *The Private Life of Adam and Eve,* reflecting the changing times in which he lived. Stanley Brodwin states, "These works all employ many of the techniques and forms of the Southwestern American humor Twain knew and brought to perfection" (52). The language of Twain's characters is clever yet straightforward while remaining creative. Twain also writes this famous Genesis story with irony and satire. His playful approach makes the book both entertaining and thought-provoking.

Van Ostade argues that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were the eras of prose in American literature. Van Ostade states, "With the rise of new genres of writing, such as the novel, the cookery book, and newspaper, it seems unlikely that the language was not affected as a result" (1). Due to varying writing genres, Americans were writing and reading more than ever (Van Ostade 2). The effects on the language were significant from a grammatical and vernacular standpoint, and people of various education levels immersed themselves in literature and a newly evolved English.

The period's evolution of English and sudden immersion into literature mirrored the changes occurring within the United States. Nancy J. Taniguchi argues, "As the twentieth century arrived, America's Industrial Revolution boomed" (105). This period of technological advancement changed the way people lived and spoke. As industrial advancements made trade and transportation easier, America's

economy and population boomed (Taniguchi 107). People could afford to immerse themselves in literature.

The existence of multiple cultures in the United States allowed new words to be introduced into the English language, furthering the dialect of American English. American English underwent significant changes during the Industrial Revolution, reflecting the rapid growth of industry, urbanization, and technological advancements. The era was a time of linguistic transformation, mirroring the period's dramatic social and economic changes (Van Ostade 12). The rise of mass communication devices, such as newspapers and telegraphs, helped standardize American English and spread common expressions across the country. Given the increasingly fast-paced lifestyles of many, everyday speech was often short and to the point.

Buxbaum argues that Twain's unique writing style is characterized by his use of various American dialects, including Missouri and the Southwestern dialects (233). These different dialects add a definite sense of realism to Twain's narration and provide insight into the lives of everyday Americans. Katherine Buxbaum states, "A growing appreciation of the power of the vernacular with its wealth of clear-cut, pointed phrases makes us more tolerant of folk language for literary effectiveness" (234). Twain's employment of spoken English as a literary device is highly evident in *The Private Life of Adam and Eve* through his writing style

and diary format. Twain's utilization of short sentences mirrored the communication devices around him.

For example, telegraph communication was concise and heavily used as a means of messaging during the Industrial Revolution. While Twain employs a diary format for this work, his writing also resembles telegraph messaging, especially when writing from Adam's point of view. Short and often incomplete sentences are used throughout *The Private Life of Adam and Eve.* For example, from Adam's perspective, Twain writes, "Pulled through" (15). Twain also writes, "Told her that," when speaking from Adam's perspective (29). These short and incomplete sentences reveal intimate details of Adam's struggle to live with Eve, and the words reflect a period in American history of haste.

However, when depicting Eve, who symbolizes America before the Industrial Revolution, Twain utilizes longer sentence structures and vivid detail. For example, from Eve's viewpoint, Twain writes, "I will be very watchful now, and if any day-before-yesterdays happen I will make a note of it" (107). In this example, Twain employs a compound sentence and a creative use of a hyphenated noun. This quote by Eve also describes her detail-oriented nature.

As people moved to urban areas to focus on work, their relationship with God faded into the background. Taniguchi states, "Their daily lives changed as metals, smelted with coke from coal, were shaped into marvelous new inventions such as sewing machines, electric irons, and the delicate filaments inside light bulbs"

(105). As life changed, convenience replaced God. Tradition was not embraced, and advancement became a form of worship. The Industrial Revolution led to a declining religious commitment in many areas, and churches lost their central role in daily life. Business affairs took precedence over spiritual affairs. While some churches adapted or evolved by creating new denominations or emphasizing social justice in sermons, religion competed with technology (Taniguchi 116).

Durham argues that Twain's opinion on Christianity is fundamental to the criticism present in his writings. J. M. Durham states, “Sketches of his life reveal that religion was a constant, although usually passive, factor in his environment” (60). Throughout his life, Twain remained profoundly interested in the relationship between humanity and religion within society (Durham 60). This relationship is heavily present in *The Private Life of Adam and Eve*, where Twain ironically depicts the love story of Genesis’ main characters.

Brodwin argues that Twain's relationship with God was complicated, as is evident in his portrayal of Adam and Eve. Brodwin claims that Twain was obsessed with the Genesis story of humanity’s downfall (50). Brodwin writes, “Theologically considered, Twain's relationship to the Bible as a whole was one of love and hate” (51). As seen in his depiction of Adam, themes of rejection, attraction, and good and evil mirror Twain’s conflicting views of Christianity.

Twain’s views on Christianity are complex and filled with pros and cons, as are his views on the Industrial Revolution. Hawkins states, “Twain’s three most

damaging ideas are that life is an amoral struggle for survival, that man's actions are wholly determined by heredity and environment, and that human nature needs an authority figure to obey" (34). The movement towards capitalism as a new God reinforced Twain's ambivalent stance towards America's changing values. Instead of following Christ, America began following the demands of capitalism.

Perhaps the most profound quote from *The Private Life of Adam and Eve* is when Eve's character states, "I feel like an experiment, I feel exactly like an experiment, it would be impossible for a person to feel more like an experiment than I do" (Twain 109). America underwent drastic changes in a short period, and before the nation could fully recover from the Civil War, the need to aggressively compete with the rest of the world unfolded. The Industrial Revolution was an age of pushing boundaries, testing, and discovering. While advancements made life easier for most, hasty expansion deterred many Americans from rural traditions, connection to the land, and an intimate relationship with God. This skepticism and hesitancy to embrace the changes brought forth by the Industrial Revolution are reminiscent of the characters in *The Private Life of Adam and Eve,* and such a creative work could have only been conceived during the late modern English period.

Twain's creative depiction of the evolution of modern English during the Industrial Revolution leads humanity to ask themselves if they are currently living within a new technological revolution. If so, humanity must acknowledge how English has

evolved from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Since Twain's time, humanity has become more sophisticated regarding technology, and American English has continued to evolve and change alongside technological advancement. The English language continues to transform and represent how humans live their everyday lives.

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