MARK TWAIN'S SHORT FICTION:

A STUDY OF HUMOR

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of English

Emporia Kansas State College

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

---

by

Patricia Hrynewich

July 1976

Approved for the Major Department

Approved for the Graduate Council

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

I. MARK TWAIN'S COMIC FOCUS 1

II. MARK TWAIN'S TREATMENT OF COMIC FORM 33

III. MARK TWAIN'S COMIC STYLISTIC DEVICES 57

BIBLIOGRAPHY. 84

PREFACE

The art of Mark Twain's humor has been commented upon and analyzed by numerous critics. Most of this attention, however, has been directed at a few of his novels and more famous short stories. His short fictive works as a body have not received much scrutiny as illustrations of his literary skill. Often they are summarily dismissed as his travel-literature, his journalistic pieces or just his early works, as if the implication were to set these aside as a pasttime and practice for his greater works. On the contrary, Mark Twain's short fiction seems to offer an interesting and comprehensive study of his skill in producing humor. An analysis of his comic force brings out the humorous techniques he employs, and these necessarily form the basis of the artistry he uses in any humorous work.

Mark Twain is a great story-teller and he has created a multitude of memorable anecdotes, vivid portraits of character in an exaggerated but faithful reporting of human behavior, and comic criticism of American life. He has offered these gifts wrapped in a mantle of humor which is designed to make us laugh thoughtfully while reading and recognizing the truths they contain. The mantle of humor is

the device he uses to evoke our interest in the truths and it is a necessary part of his purpose. In his Autobiography, he insists that humor by itself is "only a fragrance, a decoration" and that it would only momentarily entertain the reader. In order for humor to last it "must not professedly teach and it must not professedly preach, but it must do both if it would live forever" (298). Humor is his style, his method of approach to his readers, and it cannot be wholly separated from his critical intent. It is the vehicle by which the truths are pointed out and it is also as much the ultimate result of his pieces as the satire.

With both his satiric purpose and his humorous techniques in mind, then, I have set out to analyze his short fiction. It seemed advisable to first consider his satiric focus, the subject matter he chose to burlesque in order to criticize man and his institutions. The objects of his satire are vast in scope for Twain was not afraid to probe any of the respected social, moral or political institutions of American life. Secondly, the manner in which he brings out the satire in a humorous way is analyzed. He uses several distinctive forms in his stories. From the Southwest humorists, he adopted the frame technique since it best simulated oral story-telling and the tall tale technique since its exaggeration and incongruity are important components of a humorous tale.

Twain also uses several narrative positions as a form. Lastly, Twain employs many stylistic devices to heighten the humor, devices like the anticlimax, aphorism, pun, understatement, euphemism, gorgeous word-painting, inappropriate technical terms, and a mass of imaginative word-play inventions. Through these three areas Twain develops a structural unity in blending content and form and creates a humorous short fiction which is both enjoyable and lasting.

I gratefully acknowledge appreciation in this study to my thesis director, Dr. Gary W. Bleeker, for his guidance and many helpful suggestions, and I also wish to thank Dr. Charles E. Walton, my second reader. Finally, I thank Mike, Debbie, Theresa, and Michelle for their encouragement.

Topeka, Kansas P. H.

July, 1976

CHAPTER I

MARK TWAIN'S COMIC FOCUS

One of the most important ingredients for Mark Twain's success as a humorist is his comic pertinence. This relevancy is due largely to the subject matter Twain chooses to satirize, for regardless of what avenue the humorist takes, the basis of his humor is, in sum, humanity. Some critics believe that Twain's criticism of man is serious and bitter in spite of the humorous devices used to disguise the truth. Robert Wiggins is one of the authors who looks upon Twain in this way. In his book, Mark Twain: Jackleg Novelist, Wiggins states:

> It is true that Twain was conscious to a high degree of the tricks and devices of a certain type of humor, but he gave little thought to humor as anything more than the sugar coating of a bitter pill of truth. He seems generally to have regarded humor as the handmaid of satire rather than as a legitimate end in itself.[1]

If Twain's satire is the product of a disillusioned man, as Mr. Wiggins and various other critics seem to believe, it is, in part, because the humorist deals in the realities of life. Reality, even in humor, is necessary,

[1] Robert Wiggins, Mark Twain: Jackleg Novelist, p. 23.

of course, in order to touch the reader, and Twain reaches his audience by the verisimilitude he creates whenever he depicts the many foibles of man, his dreams and fears. The expedients used are as wide and varied as man's nature and instinct in every phase of life. Some of the qualities he only touches on, and these cannot easily be categorized as a body of subject matter, perhaps, but there are certain patterns of content he unquestionably develops in his humorous sketches.

The most notable vehicle for a comic and satiric treatment of man is character, and Twain is an artist in his manifestation of native portraiture. He began his career, for instance, by his comic portrayal of the vernacular character drawn from the tall tale tradition. This figure is usually a simple, uneducated native of the West who is chiefly recognizable by his colloquial speech and his propensity for appearing to be "taken in" in the revelation of a humorous situation. A second area of content does not underscore character traits as much as it deals with man's involvement in certain institutions of life. In this collection, Twain lampoons the social, political, and religious institutions which, although created by man, guide him in his misconceptions of truth. Lastly, Twain's critical intent is aimed at the conventions of the literary works. He particularly levels arrows at the idealistic

portrayals of the Indian race, moralistic guidelines, journalistic writing, and even the irrationality of the language of a people.

It was in native portraiture that Twain first received notice as a humorous artist. It is evident that much of his success was due to a natural ability, but, by his own admission, he spent a lifetime studying people. He had ample opportunities to observe a variety of types in his experiences throughout the United States and particularly in the Southwest. Even from his early years, he was exposed to the colorful life around Hannibal, Missouri, and the Mississippi River. Constance Rourke mentions Twain's indebtedness in her book, American Humor:

> Born in the precise era when the American comic sense was coming to its first full expression, in 1835, Mark Twain had grown up in the small town on the Mississippi, in a region where the Crockett myth had taken shape and the tall tale had grown in stature. As a young printer he must have read newspapers of St. Louis and New Orleans that overflowed with the familiar comic narrative; he must have caught the full impact of that spirit of burlesque flourishing so broadly up and down the Great Valley. He could remember--as his tales of the Mississippi show--a crowd of wayward figures given to comedy, troupers, minstrels, itinerant preachers, wandering adventurers from the other side of the world; the variegated lot of migrants who could be seen anywhere in that period moving along the river or toward the plains.[2]

Besides the background of his youth, Rourke also

[2] Constance M. Rourke, American Humor, p. 169.

mentions another resource which was invaluable to Twain's portraits of the human race--the comic tradition. This tradition had already suffered its growing pains and was flourishing when it served to train the young author in the ways of humor. In the growth of American humor, however, Walter Blair notes in his book, Native American Humor, two developments were necessary at the beginning of the tradition in order to develop humorous writing: " . . . the development of perception of the comic possibilities of the American scene and the American character, and the development of a fictional technique which would reveal them."[3] These developments did materialize through experimentation in almanacs, jest books, dramas, newspapers, and travel books, and types of native characters emerged as one of the principal vehicles for American humor. Blair singles out 1830 as a year which merits special attention because " . . . that year marked the birth date of Jack Downing, the leader of a century-long parade of similar comic native figures."[4] From Downing's birth, then, other special comic characters followed, characters like Sam Slick, Simon Suggs, and Sut Lovingood who provided Mark Twain with material for his own development of vernacular figures.

[3] Walter Blair, Native American Humor, p. 16.

[4] Blair, p. 39.

One of the principal characteristics of the vernacular character is his style of speech. In keeping with the reality which must exist in humor, it is important that the character be authentically reproduced in his speech rhythms and mannerisms. The matter of accurate vernacular speech was a serious one for Twain, and it was one he spent a great deal of time perfecting. However, Gladys Bellamy in _Mark Twain as a Literary Artist_, feels that Twain had a natural gift for reproducing colloquialisms since he " . . . possessed an ear sensitively tuned to the rhythms and idioms of speech, an alert eye, and a consuming interest in people."[5] This facility is exemplified in his most famous sketch, "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County;" its memorable story-teller, Simon Wheeler, embodies the best of the qualities of vernacular speech and mannerisms. The deadpan Simon is introduced at the beginning of the sketch by the narrator and his tactics are described:

> Simon Wheeler backed me into a corner and blockaded me there with his chair, and then sat down and reeled off the monotonous narrative which follows this paragraph. He never smiled, he never frowned, he never changed his voice from the gentle-flowing key to which he tuned his initial sentence, he never betrayed the slightest suspicion of enthusiasm; but all through the interminable

[5] Gladys Carmen Bellamy, _Mark Twain as a Literary Artist_, p. 141.

> narrative there ran a vein of impressive earnestness and sincerity, which showed me plainly that, so far from his imagining that there was anything ridiculous or funny about his story, he regarded it as a really important matter, and admired its two heroes as men of transcendent genius in finesse. I let him go on in his own way, and never interrupted him once.[6]

The gentle and winning Simon then launches into his endless digressions about Jim Smiley's "fifteen-minute nag" who used to win races in spite of her obvious handicaps of ill health and general inabilities, his bulldog named Andrew Jackson who could whip any other dog by latching on to its opponent's leg " . . . and freeze to it . . ." until he gave up, " . . . even if it was a year," and his frog named Daniel Webster who he educated to jump " . . . quicker'n you could wink" (3-4). In this entire monologue Simon exhibits the subtle vernacular, but a good example can be illustrated in the frog anecdote:

> "Well, thish-yer Smiley had rat-terriers, and chicken cocks, and tomcats and all them kind of things, till you couldn't rest, and you couldn't fetch nothing for him to bet on but he'd match you. He ketched a frog one day, and took him home, and said he cal'lated to educate him; and so he never done nothing for three months but set in his back yard and learn that frog to jump. And you bet you he did learn him, too. He'd give him a little

[6] Mark Twain, "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," in The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain, pp. 1-2. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

> punch behind, and the next minute you'd see that frog whirling in the air like a doughnut--see him turn one summerset, or maybe a couple, if he got a good start, and come down flat-footed and all right, like a cat. He got him up so in the matter of ketching flies, and kep' him in practice so constant, that he'd nail a fly every time as fur as he could see him. Smiley said all a frog wanted was education, and he could do 'most anything--and I believe him. Why, I've seen him set Dan'l Webster down here on this floor--Dan'l Webster was the name of the frog--and sing out, 'Flies, Dan'l, flies!' and quicker'n you could wink he'd spring straight up and snake a fly off'n the counter there, and flop down on the floor ag'in as solid as a gob of mud, and fall to scratching the side of his head with his hind foot as indifferent as if he hadn't no idea he'd been doin' any more'n any frog might do. You never see a frog so modest and straightfor'ard as he was, for all he was so gifted!" (3-4)

The speech reveals a number of colloquialisms, backwoods' modifications of pronunciation, grammar and images. Linguistic corruptions of pronunciation like "fetch," "ketched," and "cal'lated," of grammar like "them kind" and "never done nothing," and of images distinctly indigenous like "snake a fly," all mark Simon immediately as a vernacular character. These colloquialisms are authentic and natural for a frontiersman in a "dilapidated tavern in the decayed mining camp." Too, the style is heightened by a few native idiomatic phrases. For instance, the frog would whirl "in the air like a doughnut," and he would "flop down on the floor ag'in as solid as a gob of mud."

Daniel is not only educated but is described as "modest and straightfor'ard," and at one point, he "give a heave, and hysted up his shoulders--so--like a Frenchman" (5), both of which humanize the bullfrog, and the latter phrase comically slams the French in the process.

Simon's colorful vernacular and his complete self-absorption certainly define his character, but there is another element which Twain uses to supplement the humor of his native figures. The character is set in a situation which involves being "taken in." Often, the backwoodsman is positioned in an alien world and, thus, manifests his ignorance. Col. Jack in "Nevada Nabob," evidences this treatment of character by traveling to the big city with his newly acquired wealth, and believing that he hires a fashionable carriage, he actually only boards an omnibus. In this type of sketch, it is the vernacular figure who is the object of ridicule, but Mark Twain does not always handle his jests in this way. Just as often, he turns the tables, and the backwoodsman becomes the instrument by which the joke falls on the more sophisticated figure. Again, the "Jumping Frog" sketch is a prime example, for although Jim Smiley is obviously the recipient of the ruse about the frog, there is another victim who emerges by the end of the anecdote.

The reader naturally assumes that Simon Wheeler is

the object of ridicule because of his manner and his reaction to an inquiry about the Reverend Leonidas W. Smiley. In reality, the real victim of guile is the reserved and intelligent narrator. Kenneth Lynn analyzes this reverse result in his book, Mark Twain and Southwestern Humor:

> The story upsets all our calculations--and the narrator's as well. "Mark Twain," as things turn out, is not as clever as he thinks he is. Assuming himself to be more sophisticated than the man he meets, the encounter teaches just the reverse--it is he, not Simon, who is simple. The innocence of Simon Wheeler's expression is in fact a mask, cunningly assumed to deceive the outsider by seeming to fulfill all his pre-conceived notions of Western simple-mindedness. Simon Wheeler's little joke, of course, is simply a California variation on the ancient con game of the trans-Allegheny frontiersman, but in literary terms of "Jumping Frog," it is the vernacular, not the polite style, which "teaches the lesson." The Southwestern tradition, in other words, has been stood on its head.[7]

The Southwestern tradition is "stood on its head" in several similar sketches. In "The Story of the Old Ram," the urbane narrator is led to believe that old Jim Blaine can tell a stirring story of his grandfather's old ram when he is "satisfactorily drunk," a state for which the narrator waits with increasing anxiety. When the event finally occurs, the frame narrator discovers he has been "sold," for, similar to Simon Wheeler, Jim Blaine trails

[7] Kenneth S. Lynn, Mark Twain and Southwestern Humor, p. 146.

off into endless digressions and never produces the famous story of the ram. In a kindred spirit of jest, "Nicodemus Dodge" depicts a "countrified cub" who is the object of practical jokes by his urban companions until they realize that his image belies his shrewdness. Nicodemus swiftly and effectively retaliates in kind for each of their attempts to take advantage of him, and it is Nicodemus who has the last laugh, even to the point of profiting monetarily.

Although Twain's vernacular characters strike different poses and are, perhaps, accountable for his initial rise to fame, he does not always underscore the native figure as subject matter for his satire. It is evident, of course, that he consistently uses the follies of man through characters, but he turns the emphasis, many times, to man's responsibilities and actions in certain American institutions that govern his private and public life. Characters in the social atmosphere provide one source for this group of subject matter, and there are existing sketches that contain a similar theme to the one mentioned in which a vernacular character is "taken in." In this series, however, the character participating in the daily-living situation is usually a more educated and worldly gentleman while still being caught up to some degree in a type of swindle, because of inexperience on his part. One example of this type of anecdote is "Political Economy," a light

satire ironically unfolding the story of an intelligent but preoccupied writer who consents to the installation of many lightning rods on his house in order to be rid of the wandering salesman. The completion of the project by the lightning-rod man (obviously a con-man), results in chaos and, therefore, interruption, a condition the economist-writer was trying to avoid in the first place. Hordes of townspeople flock to view the unusual spectacle, which culminates with a storm:

> We are all worn out. For four-and-twenty hours our bristling premises were the talk and wonder of the town. The theaters languished, for their happiest scenic inventions were tame and commonplace compared with my lightning-rods. Our street was blocked night and day with spectators, and among them were many who came from the country to see. It was a blessed relief on the second day when a thunder-storm came up and the lightning began to "go for" my house, as the historian Josephus quaintly phrases it. It cleared the galleries, so to speak. In five minutes there was not a spectator within a half a mile of my place; but all the high houses about that distance away were full, windows, roof, and all. And well they might be, for all the falling stars and Fourth-of-July fireworks of a generation, put together and rained down simultaneously out of heaven in one brilliant shower upon one helpless roof, would not have any advantage of the pyrotechnic display that was making my house so magnificently conspicuous in the general gloom of the storm. By actual count, the lightning struck at my establishment seven hundred and sixty-four times in forty minutes, but tripped on one of those faithful rods every time, and slid down the spiral-twist

> and shot into the earth before it probably had time to be surprised at the way the thing was done.[8]

This humorous relation of a gentleman being "sold" is only one of several such anecdotes of Twain's. Inspired by a personal experience of his own, Twain wrote a sketch of a character who was enjoined to have an expensive burglar alarm system hooked up for the protection of his home and family. This sketch, "The McWilliamses and the Burglar Alarm," relates the many trials connected with such a complicated system and ends with the note that "those things are made solely in the interest of the burglars."[9]

Another sketch, "A Genuine Mexican Plug," exemplifies the victim theme but also brings in a different area of the social institution content. The narrator in this anecdote is conned into buying an unmanageable horse upon the persuasion of an unknown man standing by, and his reason for doing so is to appear more elevated in the eyes of others. This next idea, then, concerns man's behavior when he is ill-advisedly guided by the accepted social amenities. It

[8] Mark Twain, "Political Economy," in _The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain_, p. 63. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

[9] Mark Twain, "The McWilliamses and the Burglar Alarm," in _The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain_, p. 198. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

appears frequently in Twain's humorous sketches. Since the humorist is the author of travel books, he takes many opportunities to show how Americans react in a foreign country or how they exhibit their culture and knowledge as a result of the visit.

A type of insufferable traveler is burlesqued in "Back from 'Yurrup'" when a family discusses its recent tour loudly and vivaciously on the train from New York to Boston. The members of the family display their adopted pronunciation with little phrases which are sure to impress, such as "Plague that nahsty steamer," and they casually drop names of people and places or lapse into "barbarous" French. Twain cannot resist commenting at the end of the sketch that "It will take these insects five years, no doubt, to get done turning up their noses at everything American and making damaging comparisons between their own country and "'Yurrup!'"[10]

On the other hand, Twain depicts some travelers a little more compassionately. Although the visitor might be a little anxious to appear experienced in the ways of foreign travel and the world, he is not so offensive, just a little awed by the ancient grandeur and history. It is not only Europe that Twain uses for these little sketches, and it does not always take the form of awe. He wrote a delightful

[10] Mark Twain, "Back from 'Yurrup,'" in The Complete Humorous Sketches and Tales of Mark Twain, p. 105.

sketch showing the difficulties of understanding diverse cultures in "The Esquimau Maiden's Romance." In this anecdote, he reveals the alien culture of the Eskimos in a warm tone, signifying, perhaps, a subtle plea to the reader to recognize that people are products of their background and have, after all, the same desires to impress. Lasca, the Eskimo maiden, is a wealthy girl and is very proud of her father's rich store of fish-hooks. The most humorous contrast between the cultures, though, occurs when she and the narrator are discussing the prejudice New Yorkers seem to have against eating whales:

> "Like our prejudice against soap, here--our tribes had a prejudice against soap at first, you know."
> I glanced at her to see if she was in earnest. Evidently she was. I hesitated, then said, cautiously:
> "But pardon me. They _had_ a prejudice against soap? Had?"--with falling inflection.
> "Yes--but that was only at first; nobody would eat it."
> "Oh--I understand. I didn't get your idea before."
> She resumed:
> "It was just a prejudice. The first time soap came here from the foreigners, nobody liked it; but as soon as it got to be fashionable, everybody liked it, and now everybody has it that can afford it. Are you fond of it?"
> "Yes, indeed! I should die if I couldn't have it--especially here. Do you like it?"
> "I just _adore_ it! Do you like candles?"
> "I regard them as an absolute necessity. Are you fond of them?"
> Her eyes fairly danced, and she exclaimed:

> "Oh! Don't mention it! Candles!--and soap!--"
> "And fish-interiors!--"
> "And train-oil!--"
> "And slush!--"
> "And whale-blubber!--"
> "And carrion! and sour-krout! and beeswax! and tar! and turpentine! and molasses! and--"
> "Don't--oh, don't--I shall expire with ecstasy!--"
> "And then serve it all up in a slush-bucket, and invite the neighbors and sail in!"
> But this vision of an ideal feast was too much for her, and she swooned away, poor thing. I rubbed snow in her face and brought her to, and after a while got her excitement cooled down.[11]

Of course, while the narrator appears to concur with her (with a double meaning implied), he is actually experiencing a repugnance toward her people's staples, and, in sum, her customs, and it is evident in the sketch that she feels the same abhorrence toward his ways. Consequently, the author humorously illustrates the traditional attitudes that dictate the behavior of the social man.

A second institution that Twain lampoons is that of religion, inclusive of Christianity and morality in general. There are, for example, several sketches on the morality of lying, little essays like "On the Decay of the Art of Lying" and "My First Lie," which seem lightly to extoll the enjoyment of fabricating. Other sketches explore the

[11] Mark Twain, "The Esquimau Maiden's Romance," in The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain, pp. 299-300. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

possibility that lying is a Christian virtue necessary at times for a person's well-being. "Was It Heaven? Or Hell?" is this type of story. Presumably, Twain wrote this sketch after a personal experience in which his wife was ill but mollified by knowing her daughter was well, for he mentions the incident in a letter to Rev. Joseph H. Twichell in Charles Neider's The Autobiography of Mark Twain.[12] The plot of the sketch is similar, but it hinges on two unbending aunts who feel they are doomed if they lie to the ill mother about her daughter. When the daughter does become ill, however, they sacrifice themselves by lying until the mother's death and then wait in prayer for their own verdict. An angel appears and the aunts confess:

> "Our sin is great, and we suffer shame; but only perfect and final repentance can make us whole; and we are poor creatures who have learned our human weakness, and we know that if we were in those hard straits again our hearts would fail again, and we should sin as before. The strong could prevail, and so be saved, but we are lost."
>
> They lifted their heads in supplication. The angel was gone. While they marveled and wept he came again; and bending low, he whispered the decree.
>
> Was it Heaven? Or Hell?[13]

[12] Mark Twain, The Autobiography of Mark Twain, ed. Charles Neider, pp. 367-71.

[13] Mark Twain, "Was It Heaven? Or Hell?" in The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain, p. 491. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

Twain clearly enjoys this type of joke-ending, but Christianity is a concept he is seriously concerned with as can be evidenced by the many sketches on the subject. Indeed, the list seems endless; there is scarcely an aspect of the religious concept neglected. These satires include, for instance, those on the conscience-created Hell in "The Facts Concerning the Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut;" on wild-cat reformers and pseudo-religious opportunists in "Traveling With a Reformer" and "The Scriptural Panoramist;" on Biblical stories in "The Diary of Adam and Eve," "About All Kinds of Ships," and "Daniel in the Lion's Den--and Out Again All Right;" and on organized religious sects, including the Mormons, Jews, and Presbyterians. One of his most famous sketches satirizes the Christian's notion of Heaven, exploring the possibility that it is not at all as usually pictured. In "Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven," the Captain, a vernacular character, finds that his arrival at Heaven is unheralded, that wings are of little use, and that his whole concept of what angels do in Heaven is false. An acquaintance, Sam, tries to explain that Heaven is the "very last place to come to _rest_ in;"[14] it is simply not all floating on clouds and instant happiness.

[14] Mark Twain, "Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven," in _The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain_, p. 578. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

There is happiness, but it is more what one makes of it:

> "Oh, hold on; there's plenty of pain here--but it don't kill. There's plenty of suffering here, but it don't last. You see, happiness ain't a thing in itself--it's only a contrast with something that ain't pleasant. That's all it is. There ain't a thing you can mention that is happiness in its own self--it's only so by contrast with the other thing. And so, as soon as the novelty is over and the force of the contrast dulled, it ain't happiness any longer, and you have to get something fresh. Well, there's plenty of pain and suffering in heaven--consequently there's plenty of contrasts, and just no end of happiness."
>
> Says I, "It's the sensiblest heaven I've heard of, yet, Sam, though it's about as different from the one I was brought up on as a live princess is different from her own wax figger." (579)

Stormfield's former misconception of Heaven is a reflection of the teachings of the church and, here, epitomizes Twain's idea of the Christian values and goals people are given to live by. The fact that these may be incorrect or ineffectual is the real target of Twain's critical intent. Twain's satires on religion as an institution so influential in guiding men, then, indicate his belief that drastic changes are essential, for the institution is not answering the needs of man.

The third powerful institution providing Twain with material for satire is the government. He strikes every phase of this subject, ranging from the legislative process to the incompetencies of clerks. The systematic procedure

utilized by the legislature is illustrated in an entertaining if somewhat grotesque piece entitled "Cannabalism in the Cars." The narrative consists of a train stalled in a snowstorm for six days, its passengers without food. On the seventh day, the survivors set the democratic process into motion in order to elect a candidate to serve as food for the rest. The Rev. James Sawyer of Tennessee is the first nominee, but he detects a flaw in the procedure and demurs:

> "Gentlemen--I protest earnestly against these proceedings. They are, in every way, irregular and unbecoming. I must beg to move that they be dropped at once, and that we elect a chairman of the meeting and proper officers to assist him, and then we can go on with the business before us understandingly."[15]

The long process continues, with many moves, counter-moves, and filibustering techniques until the election. Subsequently many such similar elections take place until relief comes. The macabre result of the elections is explained later by the conductor as the delusions of the story-teller.

Another phase of the government that Twain ridicules frequently is the bureaucracy, which renders governmental agencies ineffectual. "The Facts in the Great Beef Contract"

[15] Mark Twain, "Cannabalism in the Cars," in _The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain_, p. 12. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

is one of his more famous accounts of the bungling of agencies because of red tape and, therefore, the lack of communication that exists between the multitude of departments. The narrator is a citizen who has inherited a legitimate contract of debt but is unsuccessful in collecting anything except confusion from the government, because of the many departments he must visit. He emerges from his efforts a broken man and philosophically sums up his situation in the end, saying:

> This is all I know about the great beef contract that has created so much talk in the community. The clerk to whom I bequeathed it died. I know nothing further about the contract, or any one connected with it. I only know that if a man lives long enough he can trace a thing through the Circumlocution Office of Washington and find out, after much labor and trouble and delay, that which he could have found out on the first day if the business of the Circumlocution Office were as ingeniously systematized as it would be if it were a great private mercantile institution.[16]

A similar theme prevails in "The Man Who Put Up at Gatsby's," "Two Little Tales," and "The Case of George Fisher," all of which attack red tape and communication; "The Facts Concerning the Recent Resignation" is basically the same idea, but it is brought about by the narrator's bungling attempts to reform the agencies. A sketch about

[16] Mark Twain, "The Facts in the Great Beef Contract," in _The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain_, p. 45.

the judicial system appears in "The Judge's 'Spirited Woman'," and the jury system in the West is explained by the judge as cut and dried: "Well, the fact is, there warn't any interest in a murder trial then, because the fellow was always brought in 'not guilty,' the jury expecting him to do as much for them some time . . . ."[17] Twain's critical attitude toward the government as an institution of the people is revealed in other sketches when he hits on income taxes, hoaxes of the day, or when he burlesques famous political leaders. Certainly all of the sketches are boldly satiric and reflect a censorious reaction to this institution.

The final category of comic subject matter area is that of Twain's parodies and burlesques of other authors, styles, or literary conventions. A few of the more frequently parodied subjects may be cited to serve as examples of the kinds of targets Twain uses. One of the most noted authors he zooms in on over and over is James Fenimore Cooper. Apparently Cooper's idealistic portrayal of the Indians irritated the humorist, because he often burlesques his fellow author's style. In the sketch, "A Day at Niagara," the narrator elaborately expresses emotion about the "noble Red Man" and, upon meeting a "relic," cannot restrain his

[17] Mark Twain, "The Judge's 'Spirited Woman'," in _The Complete Humorous Sketches and Tales of Mark Twain_, p. 136. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

enthusiasm in addressing him:

> "Is the Wawhoo-Wang-Wang of the Whack-a-Whack happy? Does the great Speckled Thunder sigh for the warpath, or is his heart contented with dreaming of the dusky maiden, the Pride of the Forest? Does the mighty Sachem yearn to drink the blood of his enemies, or is he satisfied to make bead reticules for the pappooses of the paleface? Speak, sublime relic of bygone grandeur--vunerable ruin, speak!"
>
> The relic said:
>
> "An' is it mesilf, Dennis Holligan, that he'd be takin' for a dirty Ijin, ye drawlin', lantern-jawed, spider-legged divil! By the piper that played before Moses, I'll ate ye!"[18]

Twain uses this humorous imitation of Cooper's style whenever he has the opportunity to insert a note about Indians in any of his anecdotes. Indeed, he seems to feel a special antipathy for Indians, a matter which many critics have commented on.

Instead of singling out the Indian, however, Twain ridicules all of the aspects of life painted so idealistically. The popular stories by Ben Franklin and Horatio Alger about good little girls and boys inspired a number of Twain's parodies. In this romantic vein, he wrote "The Story of the Bad Little Boy," "The Story of the Good Little Boy," "Some Learned Fables for Good Old Boys and Girls," "Edward Mills and George Benton: A Tale," and "Advice to Little Girls."

[18] Mark Twain, "A Day at Niagara," in _The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain_, p. 19. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

Of course, contrary to the standard outcome, Twain's good little boys fail to achieve their rewards, and his bad little boys revel in their sins. Gladys Bellamy analyzes Twain's pastiche of this type of literature when she contends:

> "The Story of the Good Little Boy" represents the effect of reading a certain kind of romantic literature--the Sunday school books--as definitely as *Madam Bovary* and *Don Quixote* display the effects of other romantic stories. Its companion piece, "The Story of the Bad Little Boy," anticipates in caricature the Horatio Alger series destined to ennoble boy readers for years to come.[19]

In a more personal analysis of Twain's distaste for this type of story, Kenneth Lynn claims that Twain felt that the stories were, in fact, quite detrimental and exhibited an underlying enmity toward boys, particularly Franklin's maxims. Twain partially blamed his brother Orion's unsuccessful personal and business life on his strict adherence to Poor Richard's philosophy. Orion once managed a print shop named the Ben Franklin Print Shop, but it proved as unsuccessful as his quest for happiness in spite of Franklin's literary assurances that success in life follows good personal habits.[20]

In addition to the more standard stories of guidelines for good little boys, Twain also deals with famous men as examples of virtuous youths. The "Brief Biographical Sketch of George Washington" is such a tale in which he lauds

[19] Bellamy, pp. 133-34.

[20] Lynn, p. 189.

George's "purest principles" and makes a plea to the young: "Let the youth of America take his incomparable character for a model, and try it one jolt, anyhow. Success is possible--let them remember that--success is possible, though there are chances against it."[21] Twain's attitude is further clarified by certain devices that reveal his lack of enthusiasm for writing about good boys. The manner of address deteriorates rapidly in this short, short sketch, beginning with George Washington, to George W., to G. W., and finally, to Wash. He also cuts the biography short with the lame excuse: "I could continue this biography with profit to the rising generation, but I shall have to drop the subject at present, because of other matters which must be attended to" (71).

In a different treatment of the moralistic tale, Twain parodies the fable in "About Magnanimous-Incident Literature." Twain insists that this type of literature has always interested him and that he has benefited exceedingly from its pious examples, but the stories have left a certain void, a desire to know more about the particular incidents. In this sketch, consequently, he writes sequels to several sanctimonious tales and tacks on little morals at the end

[21] Mark Twain, "Brief Biographical Sketch of George Washington," in _The Complete Humorous Sketches and Tales of Mark Twain_, p. 70. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

which express the antithesis of the golden rule. In one such moral, he states: "Whenever a poor wretch asks you for help, and you feel a doubt to what result may flow from your benevolence, give yourself the benefit of the doubt and kill the applicant."[22] Another bit of philosophy is more religious in nature and advises: "Whom God sees fit to starve, let not man presumptuously rescue to his own undoing" (352).

There is a special comic sense in Twain's parodies of the romantic type of literature and that is due, perhaps, to his knowledge of and interest in that particular subject matter. The same burlesque spirit is distilled in another material source for parody, that of journalistic writing of the period. Twain is quite familiar with this area and quite free in his lampoons. He attacks correspondents in "Answers to Correspondents" and "Complaint About Correspondents," obituaries in "General Washington's Negro Body-Servant" and "Post-Mortem Poetry," critics in "An Entertaining Article," and interviewers in "An Encounter with an Interviewer." He does not neglect fashion as a convention of journalistic writing, for in "A Fashion Item" and "After Jenkins" he ridicules the practice of describing elaborately the fashions worn by women at society events. One aspect

[22] Mark Twain, "About Magnanimous-Incident Literature," in _The Complete Humorous Sketches and Tales of Mark Twain_, p. 351. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

of the journalism business is localized and selected for its daring technique of reporting and jargon in "Journalism in Tennessee." The editor of this particular place of business is endowed with a stirring brand of writing which he forces upon a new reporter in place of his softened, more diplomatic standard form. The editor begins his article, for instance, with a "peppery and to the point" condemnation of a neighboring newspaper in this form:

> The inveterate liars of the Semi-Weekly Earthquake are evidently endeavoring to palm off upon a noble and chivalrous people another of their vile and brutal falsehoods with regard to that most glorious conception of the nineteenth century, the Ballyhack railroad.[23]

The reporter quickly learns that this type of writing carries with it certain liabilities, and that dedicating oneself to reporting so openly is contingent upon being able to dodge bullets, block beatings, and survive all manner of personally-directed attacks. Nevertheless, the editor remains firmly attached to this style because "mush and milk journalism" gives him the "fan-tods" (29).

The violent reaction of readers to a strong type of journalistic writing is reminiscent of another of Twain's humorous parodies on the subject. In "How I Edited an

[23] Mark Twain, "Journalism in Tennessee," in The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain, p. 26. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

Agricultural Paper," a substitute editor, who knows nothing about agriculture, enrages the citizens by writing eloquently about turnips growing on trees and planting buckwheat cakes. Although the holiday editor is not physically abused, since the citizens release their violence on each other, he is unpleasantly astounded when the vacationing head returns and accuses him of stupidity. The accused replies:

> "I tell you I have been in the editorial business going on fourteen years, and it is the first time I ever heard of a man's having to know anything in order to edit a newspaper. You turnip! Who writes the dramatic critiques for the second-rate papers? Why, a parcel of promoted shoemakers and apprentice apothecaries, who know just as much about good acting as I do about good farming and no more. Who review the books? People who never wrote one. Who do up the heavy leaders on finance? Parties who have had the largest opportunities for knowing nothing about it. Who criticize the Indian campaigns? Gentlemen who do not know a war-whoop from a wigwam, and who never have had to run a foot-race with a tomahawk, or pluck arrows out of the several members of their families to build the evening camp-fire with. Who write the temperance appeals, and clamor about the flowing bowl? Folks who will never draw another sober breath till they do it in the grave. Who edit the agricultural papers, you--yam? Men, as a general thing, who fail in the poetry line, yellow-colored novel line, sensation-drama line, city-editor line, and finally fall back on agriculture as a temporary reprieve from the poor-house. _You_ try to tell _me_ anything about the newspaper business! Sir, I have been through it from Alpha to Omaha, and I tell you that the less a man knows the bigger the noise

he makes and the higher the salary he commands.[24] This speech summarizes Twain's entire critical intent in parodying the journalists who have no knowledge or experience in their area. This is a mantle enveloping all elements of journalistic writing.

Twain also parodies other types of writing. "Lucretia Smith's Soldier" exposes the sham of sentimentality in the Civil War. Similar spoofs are directed at romanticism in "The Legend of the Capitoline Venus," "A Medieval Romance," and "The Loves of Alonzo Fitz Clarence and Rosannah Ethelton." Poetry comes to the fore in "A Couple of Poems by Twain and Moore" with a rendition of Moore's "Those Evening Bells" changed to an equally rhythmic "Those Annual Bills."

Drama is also a genre that receives Twain's attention in several instances. Gladys Bellamy mentions one, "Ingomar Over the Mountains," in her discussion of his parodies:

> His review of _Ingomar, the Barbarian_, entitled "Ingomar Over the Mountains," is amusing in its mingling of Greek characters and local Indians, but it is also literary analysis; for as DeLancy Ferguson observes, Mark Twain had realized that in spite of Greek costumes and inflated speeches, the play "was no different from Beadle's dime novels, and his parody underscored the resemblances."[25]

[24] Mark Twain, "How I Edited an Agricultural Paper," in _The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain_, pp. 49-50. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

[25] Bellamy, p. 133.

A more widely known parody of drama, perhaps, is "The Killing of Julius Caesar Localized," which, as Franklin Rogers notes in his book, Mark Twain's Burlesque Patterns, "follows Shakespeare's play but uses the form of a newspaper column."[26] The newspaper account in "The Killing of Julius Caesar Localized" is treated as a spoof of local crime reporting in Twain's sketch with a suggestion of the mystery story. There are other, more direct parodies of the standard detective story. The first is "The Stolen White Elephant," an elaborate mystery of inept and inefficient police searching for a sacred Siamese elephant stolen enroute to the Queen of England as a token of appeasement. A later parody, more involved and intricate in the conventions of the mystery tale, is "The Double-Barreled Detective Story," concerning a youth tracking down his long-lost, vicious father. He is aided by an inborn talent, a blood-hound's nose. There is also a brief appearance of Sherlock Holmes, à la Conan Doyle, whose confidence in his ability to solve a crime is farcical because he is proved inferior in his trade to the youth endowed with the more basic tool for the discovery of clues. Both of these long and drawn-out sketches exemplify the fantastical elements. Both, too, lead to mistaken clues and identities until the very end.

[26] Franklin R. Rogers, Mark Twain's Burlesque Patterns, p. 19.

The last literary convention Twain uses extensively is the burlesque of language. Since the language of a particular people is frequently reflected in their literary works, it is logical that Twain's satires of languages be considered as parodies. A few of these sketches simply concern the grammatical structure of a language. For instance, in "The Awful German Language," Twain spells out the irrationalities of the German language, using translations and literature to make his point. He tenders his philosophy on the foreign tongue toward the end of the sketch:

> My philological studies have satisfied me that a gifted person ought to learn English (barring spelling and pronunciation) in thirty hours, French in thirty days, and German in thirty years. It seems manifest, then, that the latter tongue ought to be trimmed down and repaired. If it is to remain as it is, it ought to be gently and reverently set aside among the dead languages, for only the dead have time to learn it.[27]

He wrote several similar pieces on the Italian and Portuguese languages and even analyzed the differences between American and British English on one occasion. His most humorous example, however, concerns the French language and his famous sketch, "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." Twain found a French translation of this anecdote with a

[27] Mark Twain, "The Awful German Language," in _The Complete Humorous Sketches and Tales of Mark Twain_, p. 454.

critique expressing wonder that Americans could find it amusing. This inspired the humorist to translate the sketch back from French to English, in a strict and rather inept translation, of course. The result serves to illustrate how insufficient French is for the vernacular American, and, consequently, constitutes the real humor of the anecdote. The famous ending of the frog incident points out the disparity, for instead of the American vernacular: "Well, I don't see no p'ints about that frog that's any better'n any other frog," the French translation results in: "Eh bien! I no saw not that that frog had nothing of better than each frog."[28] Besides the translation technique as a source of humor in this parody, another consideration may be cited: the "Jumping Frog" story may be a parody of a parody to begin with. In the same piece as the translation from the French, "Private History of the 'Jumping Frog' Story," Twain discovers that the frog tale first appeared as a Greek story thousands of years ago. He cites the Greek story so that the similarity between it and his tale can be evidenced. Since he believed his tale was a true episode occurring in Angel's Camp in '49, he wonders, then, whether it is a "case of history actually repeating itself" or a "case of a good

[28] Mark Twain, "Private History of the 'Jumping Frog' Story," in <u>The Complete Humorous Sketches and Tales of Mark Twain</u>, pp. 627-30. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

story floating down the ages and surviving . . ." (624). He is inclined to believe that history repeated itself in spite of the "deliciously exact" resemblances. If the other explanation is the case, however, the "Jumping Frog" story could be considered the epitome of Twain's parodies.

All of Twain's parodies have not, of course, been mentioned or even categorized. Only the most frequently used subjects have been grouped, leaving unheralded many isolated sketches. The same procedure has been followed for the analysis of the entire body of subject matter Twain uses for his humorous sketches. By attempting to group his material into the satiric treatment of the vernacular character, institutions, and literary works, one can perhaps show the aspects in American life that Twain apparently felt were encompassing enough to satirize. It seems clear that his scope is that of human nature, for man is the pertinent element in all of the phases of life. Thus, Twain focuses his critical intent upon man as the underlying source of all his content.

CHAPTER II

MARK TWAIN'S TREATMENT OF COMIC FORM

The ultimate purpose of Mark Twain's short fictive works is the production of humor. It is evident from considering the multitude of matter that he satirizes that his intent is a comic treatment of human nature in its many facets; thus, he chooses as targets the realities of life. Many authors, however, have attempted to satirize the same subject matter with less success because their efforts do not manifest humor through the manner of revelation. By his own admission, Twain believed strongly that the way a story is told is just as important as the story itself, perhaps more so. Indeed, if he could have related orally each of his stories, instead of writing them down, no doubt he would have felt that they were more effective.

He expresses his feelings on this point in "How to Tell a Story" in which he describes several kinds of stories and how they differ: "The humorous story is American, the comic story is English, the witty story is French. The humorous story depends for its effect upon the _manner_ of the telling; the comic story and the witty story upon

the matter."[29] According to Twain, the manner of telling a story is infinitely more artistic and selective than simply the relating of a witty or comic story that ends with a point. Twain explains the process necessary in order to narrate a humorous anecdote effectively:

> To string incongruities together in a wandering and sometimes purposeless way, and seem innocently unaware that they are absurdities, is the basis of the American art, if my position is correct. Another feature is the slurring of the point. A third is the dropping of a studied remark apparently without knowing it, as if one were thinking aloud. The fourth and last is the pause. (267)

Twain devised this set of rules from a great deal of experience in listening to stories from both good and bad story-tellers. As strongly as he felt about the oral delivery of a story, however, he could not narrate all of his tales, so he endeavored to write his stories in a manner that would simulate oral delivery. Consequently, he became very interested in the form that his stories took.

He concentrates on several conventions of form which he felt would render the anecdotes both humorously and skillfully, and he uses these several procedures in the mass of his work. The most significant is the narrative frame that allows him to create a story within the frame of another

[29] Mark Twain, "How to Tell a Story," in The $30,000 Bequest and Other Stories, p. 263. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

story. This is a unique, although not new, structure that employs two narrators and provides the opportunity for various contrasts, even incongruities, between the initial situation and the story-proper, and between the two narrators. It is more feasible to consider these frame stories according to the types of "narrator pairs" used in order to analyze the humorous elements, because the interplay between the narrators often constitutes the comedy and precipitates the core story. First, there is the initial narrator portrayed as an educated, polished gentleman who basically plays the role of a listener to a more colorful local inhabitant. Usually the vernacular character beguiles the gentleman in some way by the end of the sketch. The second type of frame story utilizes two polished gentlemen who are similar in several respects but, here, too, there is a dupe or an element of the unexpected in the outcome of the story. Both of these types embody many of the same devices and, so, bring out similar comic manifestations.

The second technique of form centers around Twain's use of narrative point of view. Since the narrative position is so significant to Twain in the relation of his tales, he applies similar comic treatment to this form, but the story-tellers differ in number and point of view from the frame structure. A few of the stories employ a single narrator who relates the tale in what can best be described

as a third person dramatic point of view since the author's presence is felt in some way. A larger body of anecdotes uses a first person point of view with a single narrator who adopts several poses and attitudes.

Since the last technique of form is seen in both of the narrative methods mentioned, one finds it difficult to separate it as a form. The elements of the tall tale figured extensively as a tradition before Twain began writing, and it is apparent that he adopted many of its conventions in his anecdotes throughout his career. Because the tall tale originated as an oral story, its ingredients center around that type of delivery, often making use of a frame device and a vernacular character. Its most outstanding quality, however, is that of exaggeration, improbable happenings, or people set in a realistic and natural setting. This component so inspired laughter and pure entertainment, it is to be expected that Twain would adopt the device.

The narrative frame technique was widely used by the Southwest humorists in the middle of the eighteenth century. In a discussion of the techniques used by these humorists, Walter Blair not only covers the tall tale but attributes its success to the narrative frame, the vehicle best calculated to deliver the yarn. Besides being the device that most simulates oral story-telling, he points out that the narrative frame method was especially effective in presenting three

types of incongruity:

> (1) Incongruity between the grammatical, highly rhetorical language of the framework on the one hand and, on the other, the ungrammatical racy dialect of the narrator.
>
> (2) Incongruity between the situation at the time the yarn was told and the situation described in the yarn itself. Far less amusing than the contrast provided by the first type of incongruity, this contrast was nevertheless important for comedy, since it helped to remove the happenings described by the tale-teller from the realm of harassing reality, to render them less disturbing, more amusing. Recounted in the atmosphere of the quiet, peaceful fireside, even the most harrowing episodes of a frontier tale might become comic.
>
> (3) Incongruity between realism--discoverable in the framework wherein the scene and the narrator are realistically portrayed, and fantasy, which enters into the enclosed narrative because the narrator selects details and uses figures of speech, epithets, and verbs which give grotesque coloring.[30]

These incongruities were very important elements in the creation of humor, and the frame method was certainly one of the most effective techniques in the Southwest. It was already a well-proven tradition when Twain began to write, and since he was primarily interested in delivering his tales in an oral tone, he employed this structure in many of his short fictive works more skillfully than his immediate predecessors. In his hands, it attains a structural unity because he not only utilizes it as a springboard for a

[30] Blair, p. 92.

humorous anecdote, but he also artfully sets up a contrast of a humorous-serious set of episodes. Through the technique of one story's unfolding within another, he can also employ two contrasting narrators, a polished gentleman and a vernacular character. Franklin Rogers argues that Twain borrowed these two types of characters from travel-literature burlesques and used them to develop his structure:

> . . . a character axis formed by the companionship of a sophisticated and sentimental gentleman and an unregenerate and insensitive associate. By apportioning the serious and pseudo-serious material to the gentleman and the comic to the unregenerate companion, Twain formed the character-axis into a fictive frame unifying the various serious-comic contrasts into a conflict of personalities and opinions.[31]

The apportioning of the set of stories to the appropriate narrator would not only unify the structure, then, but would provide many possibilities for the narrators' characters to be used as vehicles of the humor.

When considering Twain's use of the narrative frame device, "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" immediately comes to mind. This is the piece that critics consistently designate as the best example of Twain's artistry in the portrayal of conflicting narrators, for the comic effect of this story transpires through the interplay between the two narrators and through the persistent deadpan

[31] Rogers, p. 27.

demeanor of Simon Wheeler. The initial narrator, Twain, sets up the literary frame for Simon's tale-spinning by appearing as a somewhat bored and condescending gentleman ostensibly in search of a Leonidas W. Smiley, a mission requested by a friend. When confronted by the "good-natured, garrulous old Simon Wheeler," he is forced to suffer a monotonous, digressive narrative about a curious Jim Smiley, obviously not the same Mr. Smiley who prompted the inquiry. The literary author does not interrupt the loquacious Wheeler until he has reeled off anecdotes about a "fifteen-minute nag," a bull-pup named Andrew Jackson, and an educated frog by the name of Dan'l Webster. When Simon begins another anecdotal episode about Jim Smiley and his "yaller one-eyed cow that didn't have no tail," the sophisticate truncates the narrative by abruptly exiting. The remaining impression is that Simon could still be recalling more episodes of Jim Smiley in "serene oblivion" to the author's disinterest in the digressions. According to James Cox, in _Mark Twain: The Fate of Humor_, Simon's "obliviousness, his total self-absorption both defines his character and constitutes his humor."[32] The diversity between the two characters is exemplified, then, not only by the contrast of cultural demeanor but also by the contrast between the two attitudes of narration.

[32] James M. Cox, _Mark Twain: The Fate of Humor_, p. 30.

While the Twain narrator obviously reveals a literary or written sound, Simon displays an oral sound. His utilization of dialect, his pauseless digressions, and his deadpan tone aid in the illusion that the story is being told aloud. All of these are important, of course, because these elements are presented realistically. Moreover, another boon to the illusion is that the literary narration provides such a contrast with the dialectic Simon's account, that the initial narrator is all but forgotten. The reader becomes as absorbed in listening to Simon as Simon is self-absorbed in his own story.

While the absorption is in process, an additional element which constitutes much of the story's comic effect is also occurring. This, too, results from the interplay between the two narrators and is an extension of the conflict. There is a certain multiple duping achieved throughout the tale that encompasses the author, Jim Smiley, and, ultimately, the reader. It is most outstanding in Simon's digressive tales, particularly in the anecdote of the frog, Dan'l Webster. James Cox describes the stranger who dupes Jim Smiley as "the first of a long line of mock-innocents to people Mark Twain's world," innocents who reverse the expected outcomes. Smiley, who "lies in wait for gullible souls" becomes the gullible one by the stranger's trick of loading the frog with

buckshot, and this takes in not only Smiley but the reader by the end of the anecdote.[33] Moreover, the author slowly perceives that he is a victim of guile, similar to Smiley, but instead of attributing the act to the deadpan Simon, he suggests that the instigator is his friend who asked him to inquire about Leonidas W. Smiley. Prefacing the description of Simon, Twain writes:

> I have a lurking suspicion that Leonidas W. Smiley is a myth; that my friend never knew such a personage; and that he only conjectured that if I asked old Wheeler about him, it would remind him of his infamous Jim Smiley, and he would go to work and bore me to death with some exasperating reminiscence of him as long and as tedious as it should be useless to me. If that was the design, it succeeded. (1)

It is conceivable, of course, that his friend was indeed the instigator of the trick, but it is equally possible that "old Wheeler" is not unaware of his effect upon the gentleman. Kenneth Lynn, for instance, interprets Simon as not quite as guileless as he would appear when he discusses the effect of the story:

> The story upsets all our calculations--and the narrator's as well. "Mark Twain," as things turn out, is not as clever as he thinks he is. Assuming himself to be more sophisticated than the man he meets, the encounter teaches him just the reverse--it is he, not Simon, who is simple. The innocence of Simon Wheeler's expression is in fact a mask,

[33] Cox, p. 29.

> cunningly assumed to deceive the outsider by seeming to fulfill all his pre-conceived notions of Western simple-mindedness.[34]

Certainly, the frame-narrator's expectations are upset, whether by his friend, by Simon, or by both, and the reader's calculations must necessarily be reversed, too, by the end of the story. This element of surprise, combined with the expertly conceived digressive tale within a literary frame and the delightfully-drawn Simon, leaves the reader with the feeling that he has just heard one of the finest humorous stories in literature.

Twain wrote several other stories of this type, trying to recapture the same qualities that made "The Jumping Frog" such a success. He was unsuccessful, apparently, for his other frame stories did not achieve the same fame, but the piece, "The Story of the Old Ram," perhaps comes closest to imitation in form. It is a unique example of digression by the vernacular story-teller, for, in fact, the ability of the character, Jim Blaine, to shift smoothly from one subject to another is designed to confuse the frame-narrator as well as the reader. For instance, when Jim has interested everyone in the anecdote of "old Miss Wagner" and her antics with a borrowed glass eye and borrowed wooden leg, he slips in a mention of her habit, also, of borrowing a wig:

[34] Lynn, p. 146.

> She was as bald as a jug and so she used to borrow Miss Jacops's wig--Miss Jacops was the coffin-peddler's wife--a ratty old buzzard, he was, that used to go roosting around where people was sick, waiting for 'em; and there that old rip would sit all day, in the shade, on a coffin that he judged would fit the can'idate; and if it was a slow customer and kind of uncertain, he'd fetch his rations and a blanket along and sleep in the coffin nights.[35]

Blaine shifts just as easily from the coffin-peddler to various other characters until he drifts off to sleep. Of course, he never gets to the story of the Old Ram which the author has been waiting for so long. In fact, he had been haunting Blaine, but the "boys" had stalled the anxious gentleman by explaining that Blaine must reach just the perfect degree of inebriation. At the end, the Twain narrator clearly perceives that he has been tricked, for when he realizes Blaine cannot continue, he observes: "The tears were running down the boys's cheeks--they were suffocating with suppressed laughter--and had been from the start, though I had never noticed it. I perceived that I was 'sold'" (81). The same basic elements, then, appear in this story as in "The Jumping Frog," for the core narrator is a vernacular character, humorous in the presentation of his tale, and the initial narrator is an educated but somewhat gullible gentle-

[35] Mark Twain, "The Story of the Old Ram," in The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain, p. 79. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

man. Moreover, a ruse occurs to the gentleman, brought about through the technique of the frame.

Mark Twain wrote several frame stories lacking the ingredient of being "sold." These stories rely more heavily upon the vernacular story-teller for their effectiveness. There is still the element of contrast between the literary and vernacular narrator, but the contrast is not as amplified as when the literary narrator is more utilized as part of the action by being "sold." "What Stumped the Bluejays" is one of this type and employs a rustic story-teller, Jim Baker, a "middle-aged, simple-hearted miner." After an introduction by the literary author, Baker expounds on the human-like qualities of animals, particularly on bluejays. In his anecdote, he describes a fool-headed jay who diligently tries to fill up a hole with acorns, only to discover that the hole was a knot-hole in the roof of a house. According to Baker, the jay and his friends have a good laugh about that: "Well, sir, they roosted around here on the housetop and trees for an hour, and guffawed over that thing like human beings. It ain't any use to tell me a blue jay hasn't got a sense of humor, because I know better."[36] In his yarn, Baker speaks with the authority of experience so that the author is reasonably convinced Baker can understand the

[36] Mark Twain, "What Stumped the Bluejays," in _The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain_, p. 162. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

conversations of animals.

In a similar sketch another humorous core narrator is Dick Baker, "forty-six, gray as a rat, earnest, thoughtful, slenderly educated, slouchily dressed, and clay-soiled," who lauds the sagacious qualities of a former pet in "Tom Quartz."[37] He, too, is introduced by the literary narrator and then is left to reminisce about the human, even "supernatural" qualities of a cat he once owned. The cat, Tom, knew more about mining than any man but developed a "prejudice" against a new technique developed for mining quartz. This technique, dynamiting, provided Tom with the unpleasant experience of being blown high in the air and after that he exhibited an anxious behavior whenever Baker was engaged in that process. When the author inquires if Baker was ever able to cure Tom, the simple rustic replies: "Cure him! No! When Tom Quartz was sot once, he was always sot--and you might 'a' blowed him up as much as three million times 'n' you'd never 'a' broken him of his cussed prejudice agin quartz-mining" (84). Dick Baker's manner of relating his tale is as warm and earnest as Jim Baker's, and these characteristics as well as the seemingly simple meins of such figures are familiar to the readers of Twain's short fiction. In the frame stories, particularly, the vernacular

[37] Mark Twain, "Tom Quartz," in _The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain_, p. 81. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

character played a crucial role and constituted much of the humor Twain created.

As much success as Twain achieved with his use of the vernacular character, he did write many frame stories in which the two narrators were similarly refined and educated. In this type of story, Twain does not rely so much on the manner of telling the story through the vernacular, of course, but he usually endows the core narrator with some characteristic quality that adds to the anecdote--a somber mein, an unqualified innocence, or a totally dejected spirit. Too, the best stories of this type remain the ones with the added element of the initial narrator's propensity for being "taken in."

"Cannabalism in the Cars" is a good example of the style Twain uses in this type of story, calculated to keep the interest of the reader with its grotesque but engrossing story and its surprise explanation at the end. The surprise is set up at the beginning with the narrator's description of his new acquaintance as a "mild, benevolent-looking gentleman of about forty-five, or maybe fifty" and one who could converse intelligently on various subjects, particularly Washington affairs and people. His spirit alternates from animation to gloom, however, when he unfolds a horrifying tale of being stranded in a snowstorm and the resulting legislative process used to determine which survivor would be

elected to be consumed in order to keep the others alive. Naturally, the author is stunned by the tale and even fails to catch the political satire. The acquaintance is so earnest and sincere in his manner that his verisimilitude can scarcely be doubted. The author is so convinced by the man that when he finishes his tale and rises to leave the train, his closing remarks leave the author bewildered and very uncomfortable. The author-narrator expresses his relief that the incident is over:

> He was gone. I never felt so stunned, so distressed, so bewildered in my life. But in my soul I was glad he was gone. With all his gentleness of manner and his soft voice, I shuddered whenever he turned his hungry eye upon me; and when I heard that I had achieved his perilous affection, and I stood almost with the late Harris in his esteem, my heart fairly stood still! (15-16)

This initial narrator is more involved in the story than some, a device that amplifies the conflict between the two narrators more. Thus, when the conductor explains that the gentleman was indeed a victim of a snowstorm stranding, but that he never had the advantages of such food, the Twain narrator momentarily only feels relief. The reader, however, can supply the added feeling of foolishness by being taken in by a casual acquaintance, no matter how intelligent and earnest that story-teller might be.

Twain uses this same format of bewilderment and

distress of being momentarily too credulous in several other stories, including "A Burning Brand" and "Luck." Some of Twain's fictive works, on the other hand, do not use the feature of duping but even in these the author maintains a certain naiveté in his attitude toward the other story-teller. Thus, the reader must also share the attitude and experience a wonder at the tales. Sometimes, the core narrator is taken advantage of as in the stories of "The McWilliamses and the Burglar Alarm" and the "Experience of the McWilliamses with Membranous Croup." Here, the credulity belongs to Mr. McWilliams and the author employs the role of a listener. In the tales, Mr. McWilliams reveals himself as a simple and easy-going gentleman who trusts the illogical advice of his wife and lives to rue the day. At other times, the principal story-teller has been vastly mistreated by a chance incident of Fate and has never recovered. Such is the case in "The Canvasser's Tale," whose "sad-eyed canvasser" has lost his love and has had to resort to scouring the world to sell the multitude of "echoes" which he inherited from a mania-ridden uncle. Irony is again the keynote in "A Dying Man's Confession" and "Is He Living or Is He Dead?," for in the first story the core narrator stabs the wrong man in revenge, and the author finds the resulting fortune flooded by the Mississippi River when he attempts to carry out the "Dying Man's" last wish. In the second story, an artist has to feign

death in order to achieve success.

There are other examples of the wide variety of frame stories that Twain wrote utilizing two narrators of similar demeanor, but the significant elements of the frame technique have been illustrated. These elements are not restricted specifically to the dual-narrator form, either, for the second area of form to be considered contains some of the same features. This group of stories employs a single narrator who tells a single story, and so, it is a change in structure.

Twain manifests two points of view in his single narrator stories, the first person and third person positions. The third person point of view is best described as a dramatic persona rather than omniscient since the author's presence is felt in some stories and the author's intrusion is noted in others. "A Double-Barreled Detective Story" illustrates the third person point of view in which the author's presence is felt because the opening paragraph subtly suggests that this is a fabricated tale told by Mark Twain. Instead of opening with an omniscient attitude, he more subjectively sets the stage:

> The first scene is in the country, in Virginia; the time, 1880. There has been a wedding, between a handsome young man of slender means and a rich young girl--a case of love at first sight and a

> precipitate marriage; a marriage bitterly opposed by the girl's widowed father.[38]

No attempt is made to disguise the author of this fanciful sketch which, coupled with the tongue-in-cheek tone, tends to reveal a definite dramatic presence. Another story that reads as a third person narrative is similar in its opening. "The Death Disk" begins with the line: "This was in Oliver Cromwell's time,"[39] suggestive in itself, but it is also accompanied by Twain's footnote crediting the idea of the incident to _Carlyle's Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell_. This is one of Twain's frequent devices in his third person narratives.

In addition to the pieces that reveal Twain's presence in the opening paragraphs, there are some instances in which Twain obviously intrudes by inserting a personal note into the story. For example, the tone is subjective and ironic throughout the relation of "The Story of the Bad Little Boy," and he interjects his own comment in the middle of the story proper when he says: "How this Jim ever escaped is a mystery

[38] Mark Twain, "A Double-Barreled Detective Story," in _The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain_, p. 426. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

[39] Mark Twain, "The Death Disk," in _The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain_, p. 393.

to me."[40] Closing intrusions, such as little moralizing notes, also appear in some of the stories. In "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg," he concludes with the observation that it is ". . . an honest town once more, and the man will have to rise early that catches it napping again."[41]

In one way or another, Mark Twain's short fictive works reveal a subjective third person attitude, and he is obviously pointed out as the basic narrator. Similarly, in his first person point of view stories, the narrator is plainly meant to be Twain or another of Clemens' masks. He adopts various roles as a narrator, but the most widely used figure he presents is again that of the educated but naive gentleman. At times, he is a journalist who is the recipient of some rather unpleasant physical abuse, as in "Journalism in Tennessee," or one who suffers "gross misunderstanding" in his attempt at a new innovative type of editorship in "How I Edited an Agricultural Paper." At other times, he is a guileless but eager-to-communicate tourist, as in "Day at Niagara," or a simple, benevolent friend, as in "The Invalid's Story."

[40] Mark Twain, "The Story of the Bad Little Boy," in _The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain_, p. 8. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

[41] Mark Twain, "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg," in _The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain_, p. 393. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

In all of these works, he means well, of course, but emerges as a broken man. In fact, no matter what role he plays in these first person narrative stories, he rarely comes out on top, a theme reminiscent of the narrators in the frame stories. In both forms of narrative methods, this is part of what constitutes the humor of the anecdote. To emerge as either physically or psychologically unscathed from a story would be to eliminate Twain's humorous handling of characters, for some "nub," joke, or dupe has to befall people in his comic style, and it must be exaggerated to provide its fullest comic force.

The element of exaggeration brings out the last method of Twain's form to be considered. It is an important component of the tall tale tradition which developed from the humorists of the Southwest and was used as widely by them as the frame narrative. It is difficult to separate completely Twain's use of the tall tale form from his other two methods of narrative form, but it is a technique in itself with certain distinct qualities. The tall tale has as its crux wildly impossible happenings usually attributed to some extraordinary qualities of a character. The key to the tall tale, however, lies in the manner of its telling for it is presented in a literary and realistic way. By establishing a realistic situation through abundant description and authentic details, the story leads up to and contrasts vividly with the fanciful

episode.

Mark Twain artfully uses this technique in many of his stories. It can be seen in his framework structures, such as "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." His literary narrative sets up the simple and commonplace scene and continues with the exaggerated fantasies of Simon Wheeler. The simple narrative of Jim Baker, moreover, in "What Stumped the Bluejays" is an earnest and straightforward account that manifests authenticity until the delightfully extravagant description of the bluejays and their conversations strike the reader as an incongruity.

The tall tale treatment does not only appear with the vernacular character. Twain sets up a realistic situation in "A Day at Niagara" before he injects the fantastical. He explains the resort of Niagara Falls, the weather, and the tours before he mentions the attempted communication with the "noble Red Men" residing there. Then, he is handled unmercifully by the Indians:

> I simply saw a sudden flash in the air of clubs, brick-bats, fists, bread-baskets and moccasins--a single flash, and they all appeared to hit me at once, and no two of them in the same place. In the next instant the entire tribe was upon me. They tore half the clothes off me; they broke my arms and legs; they gave me a thump that dented the top of my head till it would hold coffee like a saucer; and to crown their disgraceful proceedings and add insult to injury, they threw me over the Niagara Falls, and I got wet. (21)

The narrator must have some of the special qualities of character that the tall tale requires because, after he survives this beating, he survives the whirlpool and ends with only sixteen of his wounds fatal, which are really the only ones that bother him.

A particularly entertaining yarn is spun in "When the Buffalo Climbed a Tree." Notwithstanding the reluctance on the part of the author to believe the story-teller, Bemis renders an account of a wild adventure with a bull. As a passenger on the same stage as the author, he participates with the others in a buffalo hunt when the stage breaks down. The result is unfortunate for Bemis when a buffalo bull first frightens his horse and then chases both of them. After being laughed at, Bemis decides in a natural, if somewhat agitated manner, to describe what ensued. He was ultimately thrown and took refuge in a tree, feeling safe until the bull decided to climb the tree in pursuit. The author questions Bemis about this phenomenon:

> "What, the bull?"
> "Of course--who else?"
> "But a bull can't climb a tree."
> "He can't, can't he? Since you know so much about it, did you ever see a bull try?"
> "No! I never dreamt of such a thing."
> "Well, then, what is the use of your talking

> that way, then? Because you never saw a thing done, is that any reason why it can't be done?"[42]

This eccentric logic seems to fit right into the tall tale tradition of exaggeration. The entire relation vividly reveals the imagination of the yarn-spinner and satisfies the reader's desire for extravagant improbabilities. James Cox remarks on Bemis' tale and the listener's reaction to it in his analysis:

> The point is that Bemis is not telling the story to deceive but to entertain his listeners. Moreover, they do not question him in order to catch him in a lie but to encourage him to elaborate more daring departures from probability. He is not telling the tale to take revenge for the laughter at his expense but to keep from taking it; at the end of his account he has nothing but the absence of evidence to prove his truth.[43]

The end of the account is presented in the same vein as the author's inquiry about the bull. When asked for proof of the whole incident, he again uses lack of proof to try to convince his listeners. Since he did not bring back his lariat or his horse, and the bull was never seen again, Bemis feels he has supplied sufficient evidence. Altogether it is a delightful story utilizing the elements of the tall tale, and it reveals the humor Twain could create with this traditional

[42] Mark Twain, "When the Buffalo Climbed a Tree," in _The Complete Humorous Sketches and Tales of Mark Twain_, p. 243.

[43] Cox, p. 102.

form. Also in evidence, however, are some of the conventions of the other two forms which Twain uses.

Twain's blending of the conventions of several of his forms adds to his creation of humor. His comedy is developed more fully and artfully by this harmony because, through the various types of narrators and characters, he brings out incongruity and exaggeration, vital comic elements. With the forms of the frame structure, the single narrative position, and the tall tale tradition, then, he makes use of the best method of telling a story and employs artistically the most effective narrative attitudes and humorous devices.

CHAPTER III

MARK TWAIN'S COMIC STYLISTIC DEVICES

Mark Twain's comic force seems to be a complicated intermingling of various elements. He is a humorist by virtue of his perception of the inconsistencies and injustices of life and by his ability to satirize these matters in a humorous light. It is also certain he is a craftsman by virtue of his skill in developing narrative forms as effective vehicles to bring out these objects of satire, but the essence of Twain's humor is more extensive than his mastery of these techniques. He is also a technician who intensifies the existing humor in his anecdotes and, thus, provokes more laughter by adding another ingredient to his comic style--the use of stylistic devices. These devices are techniques within themselves, but Twain's treatment is to blend these tricks into the stories, thus creating a unified whole.

The comic effect of the unity achieved varies with each story. Gladys Bellamy recognizes a number of types of humor in Twain's stories and mentions several stylistic devices he employs which aid in the result:

> He used a satiric humor that laughs at men for being so ridiculously what they are; an ironic humor

> that laughs at them for not being what they should be; a grisly humor that derides the dignity of life; a macabre humor that mocks at the seriousness of death; a fantastic humor, seemingly too light in touch to be sinister, which yet degrades the lofty or raises the low to unmerited pretensions. As a master of every device of the professional humorist, he employed homespun aphorisms, anticlimax, comic implication, irreverence, solemn protestations of truthfulness, and, very rarely, cacography.[44]

Although the tone, here, seems to imply a negative or even a bitter treatment of material, the key word to remember must be "humor." The stylistic devices Bellamy mentions, plus others employed by Twain and left unmentioned, are basically comic devices. Several more intricate stylistic devices such as the burlesque and the parody, discussed under Twain's subject matter category, may indicate negative tones, but most of the isolated devices only add light humor.

Twain uses almost every trick known to the trade, seemingly adapting one to his purpose whenever he can. Since humor rests largely on exaggeration, incongruity, and a reversal of the expected, most of the techniques he relies on exhibit one or more of these elements. Anticlimax, one of the well-proven tools, is a favorite of Twain's in reversing the expected, while incongruity stands out in his often corrupt manifestations of aphorisms, maxims, proverbs, and even lit-

[44] Bellamy, p. 127.

erary clichés. His other word play devices are the pun and gorgeous word-painting, most effective when teamed with the device of personification. He displays numerous examples of the inappropriate use of technical terms and foreign expressions that usually contrast with the context or the speaker of the anecdote. Incongruity and exaggeration come to the fore in his Biblical references, euphemisms, and understatements. Lastly, he couples figures of speech to create humorous invectives and apostrophes, often alliterative and rhythmic, or to create startling analogies and images. This class of devices involves an imaginative process whereby Twain gives full vent to his experimentation of humorous word-play and, thus, it is difficult to classify as anything other than his creative phraseology.

Mark Twain's use of anticlimax, usually the anti-climactic statement, stems from the influence of the humorists of the Southwest, as do so many of his stylistic devices. It was a comic technique to lead the reader or listener to expect some momentous or serious pronouncement and, instead, to confront him with the mundane, trivial, or even ludicrous. This method is delightfully executed in "The Story of the Bad Little Boy," a burlesque of the whole tradition of moralistic literature about bad boys and the consequences of their despicable deeds. Instead of the usual outcome, this little boy emerges on top and to exemplify the reversal, Twain ends

with the anticlimactic statement:

> And he grew up and married and raised a large family, and brained them all with an ax one night, and got wealthy by all manner of cheating and rascality; and now he is the infernalest wickedest scoundrel in his native village, and is universally respected, and belongs to the legislature. (8-9)

This example contains some of the grisly humor Bellamy mentions, and it also exhibits one of Twain's favorite targets--the legislature--as the crucial element of the reverse phrase.

A kindred pattern can be found in "Cannabalism in the Cars," for it, too, provokes a grisly humor and makes reference to the legislature. It unfolds a horrifying series of legislative maneuvers for the election of candidates to serve as food for the survivors of a snowstorm stranding. The kernel narrator of the story matter-of-factly tells the story and renders his opinion of one of the elected, a fine man who was "handsome, educated, refined, spoke several languages fluently--a perfect gentleman--he was a perfect gentleman, and singularly juicy" (15). The anticlimactic statement is best disclosed by a sincere and dry tone, of course, as the narrator manifests. In this way, not only does the key phrase produce a reverse of the heavy build-up, but the attitude of the speaker misleads the unwary listener.

These characteristics are again shown as the narrator in "Buck Fanshaw's Funeral" prosaically guides the reader

to his surprise by the revelation of Buck's inquest:

> On the inquest it was shown that Buck Fanshaw, in the delirium of a wasting typhoid fever, had taken arsenic, shot himself through the body, cut his throat, and jumped out of a four-story window and broken his neck--and after due deliberation, the jury, sad and tearful, but with intelligence unblinded by its sorrow, brought in a verdict of death "by the visitation of God."[45]

It is evident by this example and by the two others mentioned that one of Twain's most effective vehicles for his humorous satires must be the surprise and incongruity exemplified by the anticlimax. Through this device he can incorporate exaggeration also and emphasize his point.

Another device that upsets the existing order of conditions is the aphorism or maxim. These pointed statements are often mock moralistic in tone and underscore an irony stemming from the action preceeding them. Moreover, as Twain uses them, they are frequently paradoxical because he wishes to point out an element of truth as he sees it by seeming to point out the opposite. In "About Magnanimous-Incident Literature," Twain offers sequels to several standard didactic and sentimental plots. Through these supplements he shows the ensuing problems that might befall do-gooders if they follow the precepts the stories advocate. He concludes

[45] Mark Twain, "Buck Fanshaw's Funeral," in _The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain_, p. 71. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

the sequels with notes which warn that "Whenever a poor wretch asks you for help, and you feel a doubt as to what result may flow from your benevolence, give yourself the benefit of the doubt and kill the applicant" (351), or "Whom God sees fit to starve, let not man presumptuously rescue to his own undoing" (352).

Twain presents another moral by his use of the cat in "A Fable." This tale explores what each individual might find in a mirror: "You can find in a text whatever you bring, if you will stand between it and the mirror of your imagination. You may not see your ears, but they will be there."[46] He follows the axiom a little more faithfully here and relies upon the contradictory action to provide the irony of the statement. Other adages find their way in "Edward Mills and George Benton: A Tale" when Twain reveals a tale of two adopted boys, one good and one bad, who are raised with proverbs such as "Be pure, honest, sober, industrious, and considerate of others, and success in life is assured," or the variation of ". . . and you will never lack friends."[47] The good little boy follows this teaching but is both unsuccessful and devoid of friends, of course, while the bad

[46] Mark Twain, "A Fable," in The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain, p. 602.

[47] Mark Twain, "Edward Mills and George Benton: A Tale," in The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain, p. 143.

boy collects everything.

Other such well-known proverbs appear in "The Diary of Adam and Eve"[48] when Adam and Eve attempt to express their growing knowledge with axioms like ". . . eternal vigilance is the price of supremacy" (282), "The scratched Experiment shuns the thorn" (284), and "The burnt Experiment shuns the fire" (289). Notwithstanding the relevance of each statement to the situation at hand, it is incongruous for a well-known proverb to occur to Adam or Eve at the point of a new discovery, and it is also a disparity for such language to emanate from such a primitive of the human species. The relevance juxtaposed with the incongruity of the action or the speaker is what constitutes much of the humor of the aphorism or maxim in the anecdote.

A similar well-worn stylistic device is the literary cliché which Twain employs at times to aid his humorous description. James Cox notes Twain's use of this device in his analysis of the style of Yankee Slang:

> . . . the Yankee's style is pervaded with literary clichés. There is the "fair slip of a girl," the "golden hair," the "flame-red poppies," the "mind at rest." Then there are the elaborately stylized locutions--"Up went her hands," "her eyes stared wide and timorously," "she was a picture of astonished

[48] Mark Twain, "The Diary of Adam and Eve," in <u>The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain</u>. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

curiosity," and "there she stood gazing."[49]
Twain's stories are generously sprinkled with clichés such as Cox mentions and they can be evidenced in almost any story in which description plays a large part. For example, "The Judge's 'Spirited Woman'" contains clichés like "lazy summer day," "loved her husband with all her might," "her heart set on," "before my own eyes," and "turned on . . . like a wildcat" (136). Essentially, the cliché utilizes exaggeration for its effectiveness in creating images, and it also adds a certain rhythm to the description. The humor is underscored partly from these elements and partly from the fact that the cliché has been so often used that its freshness has long since worn off. In the hands of a vernacular narrator, then, the cliché is not only a part of his comic style but a fitting part. In the hands of another type of narrator, it is obviously part of a burlesque treatment through contrast.

A less evident, but equally potent, stylistic device found in Twain's short works is the pun or play on words. The macabre humor that Twain elicits at times provides the source of a comic pun in "A Curious Dream," when the narrator converses with a skeleton on the move to a more suitable grave. At one point the narrator rejects writing about the exodus of the skeletons ". . . without seeming to trifle with a

[49] Cox, p. 215.

grave subject."[50] The serpent is the one who tenders the pun in "The Diary of Adam and Eve," when he assures Eve that the forbidden fruit is not apples but chestnuts, the latter being "a figurative term meaning an aged and moldy joke" also (278).

Some of Twain's puns are coupled with the device of personification for their effectiveness. "A Dog's Tale" and "A Horse's Tale" both utilize dogs endowed with human qualities who sincerely but naively mention "dogmatic gathering"[51] and "dogmatics"[52] in their desires to appear educated among their peers. The personification is itself a humorous device, of course, for through this vehicle Twain can satirize humans by illustrating their follies through animals. The animals can laugh, talk, and dream; they are given emotions, intelligence, and personalities; and in the same way, they evoke scorn, admiration, pity, and laughter. Above all, they are given the ability to use any of the stylistic devices Twain employs with his other characters.

The laughter they evoke in "A Dog's Tale" and "A

[50] Mark Twain, "A Curious Dream," in _The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain_, p. 39. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

[51] Mark Twain, "A Dog's Tale," in _The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain_, p. 491. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

[52] Mark Twain, "A Horse's Tale," in _The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain_, p. 544. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

Horse's Tale" chiefly derives from an inappropriate use of elaborate figures of speech and gorgeous word-painting. For the purpose of impressing others, the little dog's mother in the first story resorts to many erudite words. Her favorite is "Synonymous," and whenever she is asked the meaning of a word, because of her supposed knowledge, she uses the word "Synonymous" to explain. "It's synonymous with supererogation" (492) is an example of her reply. Her daughter develops this pattern and explains her own heroism as "agriculture," and "agriculture" as "synonymous with intramural incandescence" (497). Buffalo Bill's horse in "A Horse's Tale" is "very proud and acrimonious--or maybe it is ceremonious" (526), his mother's ancestors look "small and pretty antiphonal, not to say oblique" (527) at one point, and a new word to him has "a learned and cerebrospinal encandescent sound" (539). Even Dorcas, the maid and not an animal, uses an inappropriate term when she discloses how Miss Cathy beat a little boy until "he wasn't anything but an allegory" (536).

At times, this stilted style branches into what can best be described as an inappropriate use of technical terms and foreign expressions. Franklin Rogers contends that this technique appeared rather juvenile in Twain's first experiments with it, but as his art progressed, he became quite skillful.[53]

[53] Rogers, p. 23.

He cites an excerpt from the Sandwich Islands' letters using seafaring terms as one of Twain's novice attempts:

> "Let go the main-hatch. Belay! Haul away on your tops'l jet! Belay! Clew up your top-gallants'l spanker-boom halliards! Belay! Port your gaff-tops'l skyscrapers! Belay! Lively, you lubbers! Take a reef in the lee scuppers! Belay! Mr. Baxter, it's coming on to blow at about four bells in the hog-watch; have everything taut and trim for it. Belay!"[54]

This amassing of technical terms can be seen in some of his later works, too, although they do appear more skillfully designed and less tiring. They are still exaggerated and contain an element of incongruity within the situation, none-theless, for the basic purpose behind the speaker's succession of imposing words is to impress others, to the delight of the reader. In "Some Learned Fables for Good Old Boys and Girls," Professor Snail impressively offers in a multitude of erudite words his opinion of a wall obstructing travel: "The fact that it is not diaphanous convinces me that it is a dense vapor formed by the calorification of ascending moisture dephlogisticated by refraction."[55] The lightning rod salesman in "Political Economy" tries to influence the author with his vocabulary when he says: "If the recalcitrant and dephlogistic messenger of heaven . . ." (61), and the narrator in "A

[54] Rogers, p. 23.

[55] Mark Twain, "Some Learned Fables for Good Old Boys and Girls," in <u>The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain</u>, p. 106.

Curious Dream" describes the skeleton as wearily wiping "his os frontis with his major maxillary" (33).

Foreign expressions are humorously inappropriate in "Political Economy" when the lightning rod salesman suggests the installation of rods to the author's chimney because it would "add to the generous coup d'oeil a soothing uniformity of achievement which would allay the excitement naturally consequent upon the coup d'état" (61). In "'After' Jenkins," Twain takes in hand a "grand affair of a ball" to describe the ladies' attire with a mixture of mock elegance and a few inappropriately used French words. He describes one guest as "attired in an elegant pâté de foie gras" while another "was tastefully dressed in a tout ensemble."[56]

An even more comic contrast occurs in "The Esquimau Maiden's Romance," possibly because of its quieter tone and its vivid description. It is not for the purpose of impressing others that the author describes the girl but for the sheer hilarious incongruity of the situation:

> She had been absently scraping blubber-grease from her cheeks with a small bone-knife and transferring it to her fur sleeve, while she watched the Aurora Borealis swing its flaming streamers out of the sky and wash the lonely snow-plain and the templed ice-bergs with the rich hues of the prism. (295)

[56] Mark Twain, "'After' Jenkins," in The Complete Humorous Sketches and Tales of Mark Twain, p. 48. Subsequent references to this edition are given in parenthesis within the text.

This delightfully drawn passage indicates Twain's later skill in achieving a comic contrast through the device of inappropriate terms, for Rogers chooses a similar passage as Twain's masterpiece in the device. In "A Double-Barreled Detective Story," this controversial paragraph exemplifies his growth:[57]

> It was a crisp and spicy morning in early October. The lilacs and laburnums, lit with the glory-fires of autumn, hung burning and flashing in the upper air, a fairy bridge provided by kind Nature for the wingless wild things that have their homes in the tree-tops and would visit together; the larch and the pomegranate flung their purple and yellow flames in brilliant broad splashes along the slanting sweep of the woodland; the sensuous fragrance of innumerable deciduous flowers rose upon the swooning atmosphere; far in the empty sky a solitary esophagus slept upon motionless wing; everywhere brooded stillness, serenity, and the peace of God. (439)

The word "esophagus" is singled out as the object of a controversy, which Twain mentions in the middle of the story, since no one seems to be able to fit it into the context of the passage. The artistry lies in the vivid accumulation of descriptive phrases which sets a mood and produces a rhythm and then destroys the mood and rhythm by inserting "esophagus." The upset is not immediately apparent, however, for the reader has been led so slowly and skillfully in one direction that he is simply left with a feeling of discomfort until he

[57] Rogers, p. 24.

perceives the joke. Then, he may remember that lilacs and laburnums do not bloom in autumn, and he may question a "swooning atmosphere," subtle clues which lead to the discordant "esophagus."

Within the context of Twain's allusion to certain terms and expressions, his references to the Bible and its mode of expression must be considered subtle, also. When he utilizes the Bible by imitating its style or phraseology, he usually does so subtly, by slipping in the reference. The appearance of a Biblical sounding phrase contrasts with the situation again, of course, and produces an irreverent humor as Bellamy mentions. She also contends that Twain's use of this device appeared chiefly in his early literature:

> Another element of his early style is his use of Biblical language and cadence. He drops into it with an ease which seems to take the reader's knowledge of the Bible absolutely for granted. In "The Great Beef Contract" a searching clerk finally found the long-lost record--"The rock upon which so many of my ancestors had split." Sometimes there is merely a faint Biblical flavor, a reminiscence, as when the irreverent Tumble Bug "was driven away with stripes" by the other inmates of the forest. An early example of his concrete expression of an abstract idea occurs in "Daniel in the Lion's Den," in which he commends the eleventh-hour sagacity of Barabbas in "selling out of a worked-out mine of iniquity and investing in righteousness."[58]

The use of Biblical reference is not wholly designated to his

[58] Bellamy, p. 130.

early works, however, for it can be seen scattered throughout his stories whenever Twain wishes to burlesque the sentimental and didactic literature he abhored or when he attempts to point out some disharmony. He uses it liberally, for instance, in his later work, "Was It Heaven? Or Hell?" Although this is not a particularly humorous piece, he does achieve an irreverent humor by his use of terms as "The Only Christian" (477) when referring to the doctor, and "that kindly friend who brings healing and peace to all" (488) in reference to God. Eve, in "The Diary of Adam and Eve" mistakes her reflection in the water for a friend, and when the "friend" disappears, she laments that "she is my comfort and my refuge" (287). This entire story is full of irreverent Biblical references mouthed by Adam and Eve, the inhabitants of the Garden of Eden and is reminiscent of the inhabitants in "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg." The people in Hadleyburg let no temptation occur in their town so they may remain pure and holy, and their language is full of Biblical references also. Upon seeing the gold left at her house, Mrs. Richards remarks on how strange it is and "what a fortune for that kind man who set his bread afloat upon the waters" (354). Later, the town is corrupted, and it changes both its name, "upon prayer and petition," and its official seal. The town's name is withheld but the seal is revealed--"Lead Us Into Temptation" (393).

A frequent stylistic device that inspires more laughter, perhaps, than his Biblical references is Twain's euphemistic phraseology. It has long been a convention of writers to substitute indirect figures of speech in order to gloss over or hide the more unpleasant aspects of life and language. This is singularly apparent in Twain's piece, "Buck Fanshaw's Funeral," because he contrasts its use with a blunt, slang-speaking Virginian who is trying to arrange for Buck's funeral. The difficulty stems from the inability of the two characters, Scotty and the Parson, to understand each other since one is endowed with only slang and the other with a euphemistic style. The Parson tries to translate Scotty's language into the proper phrasing whenever possible. Instead of a parson, the clergyman calls himself "the shepherd in charge of the flock whose fold is next door" (72), and the deceased has not died but "had departed to that mysterious country from whose bourne no traveler returns" (73). He will "assist at the obsequies" (74) but he must know beforehand if the deceased had "ever been connected with any organization sequestered from secular concerns and devoted to self-sacrifice in the interests of morality" (75). The hilarity in the story derives from the exquisite contrast created by the element of exaggeration of the characters as well as their mode of speech.

Twain also employs this device in burlesquing modes

of writing. His "A Burlesque Biography" is one long narrative of euphemism in setting down the deeds and histories of his ancestors. With tongue-in-cheek, he describes one of his ancestors, John Morgan Twain:

> Yet this ancestor had good and noble instincts, and it is with pride that we call to mind the fact that he was the first white person who ever interested himself in the work of elevating and civilizing our Indians. He built a commodious jail and put up a gallows, and to his dying day he claimed with satisfaction that he had had a more restraining and elevating influence on the Indians than any other reformer that ever labored among them. At this point the chronicle becomes less frank and chatty, and closes abruptly by saying that the old voyager went to see his gallows perform on the first white man ever hanged in America, and while there received injuries which terminated in his death.[59]

Each ancestor is treated in this fashion, lampooning not only the popularity of biographies but their style of language also.

Another area of composition which receives Twain's satiric treatment is journalistic writing. An enjoyable burlesque of journalistic reporting of "grand affairs" appears in "'After' Jenkins" when Twain employs a euphemistic style coupled with ellipses to illustrate his description. One attendent at the ball "was superbly arrayed in white kid gloves" (48), and her "modest and engaging manner accorded well with the unpretending simplicity of her costume and

[59] Mark Twain, "A Burlesque Biography," in The Complete Humorous Sketches and Tales of Mark Twain, p. 180.

caused her to be regarded with absorbing interest by every one" (48). Another was attired in "a simple white lace collar" (48), and the "fine contrast between the sparkling vivacity of her natural optic, and the steadfast attentiveness of her placid glass eye, was the subject of general and enthusiastic remark" (48).

Euphemistic verbosity of journalistic writing is also burlesqued in "An Ancient Playbill" when Twain pretends to find and to translate a critique of one of the "opening performances" at the Coliseum. He notes beforehand that the style and phraseology has changed little through the ages. At one point, the "star" is described in action:

> When his ax was describing fiery circles above the heads of the bewildered barbarians, in exact time with his springing body and his prancing legs, the audience gave way to uncontrollable bursts of laughter; but when the back of his weapon broke the skull of one and almost in the same instant its edge clove the other's body in twain, the howl of enthusiastic applause that shook the building was the acknowledgment of a critical assemblage that he was a master of the noblest department of his profession.[60]

A touch of grotesque humor is exhibited here and the verbosity does not obviate it but rather it emphasizes it through the euphemistic tone. The device is designed to emphasize, of course, by seeming to circumvent the idea and, thus, produce an insincere or even pompous attitude.

[60] Mark Twain, "An Ancient Playbill," in _The Complete Humorous Sketches and Tales of Mark Twain_, p. 101.

The understatement, litote, or meiosis is another stylistic device that evokes humor. The pose may be somewhat pompous or insincere, but more often it illustrates a mild naiveté because of the reverse exaggeration it displays. Principally, the device is used in a situation much more highly charged than the statement would indicate. Comic hyperbole is applied to the action, and, therefore, the recipient's reaction is magnified. "Journalism in Tennessee" exemplifies such a situation, for the author receives violent abuse accidentally through the editorials written by the chief editor of a southern newspaper. In spite of the opportunity to learn a more vigorous type of writing, and after being shot, battered, cow-hided, scalped and thrown out the window, he decides to resign, explaining to the editor that "to speak the plain truth, that sort of energy of expression has its inconveniences, and a man is liable to interruption" (31). The effect is a grisly humor, but humor nevertheless.

The same feeling flows from "A Curious Dream." Here, the author witnesses a skeleton attempting to smile in the midst of their conversation, and the resulting "ghastly expression" forces the author to urge the skeleton to "confine himself to speech thenceforth, because his facial expression was uncertain" (36). A kindred effect prevails in "A Curious Experience" when the major reminisces about an experience when he was stationed at a fort near New London, Connecticut.

Since there were numerous rumors that the fort would be blown up, he felt apprehension and says that "All this had a tendency to keep us awake, and knock the traditional dullness out of garrison life."[61] Unquestionably, these understatements and all those that Twain employs can only be fully appreciated by a reading of the entire build-up of action. A perception of the exaggeration and incongruity created is necessary in order to receive the full impact of the speaker's dry tone. Consequently, the juxtaposition of the situation and the speaker's reaction will be truly effective.

The last stylistic device which Twain uses is difficult to classify. It involves an imaginative process whereby he creates various humorous effects through word-play. At times, the result may be a device such as the invective or analogy, but at other times, the consequence may be simply a humorous turn of phrase. It seems best, then, to treat these creations as a category since the effect springs from his imaginative arrangement of words. Gladys Bellamy attributes to Twain a special facility for juxtaposing figures of speech to create vivid epithets, humorous invectives, and exaggerated description with her analysis of his efforts:

> As late as 1901 he used a succession of adjectives to describe a woman as "only an innocent, well-meaning, driveling vacancy." Usually, however, he

[61] Mark Twain, "A Curious Experiment," in _The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain_, p. 163.

was selective, coupling a single powerful adjective with a comprehensive noun, sometimes linking them for alliteration, as in "stupefying simplicity," "craven carcass," "disastrous donkey"; or for repetition of sound, as in "frozen effrontery." He anticipated Hollywood in his early fondness for stupendous and colossal; but he used these words mainly in derogation--"stupendous lies" and "colossal ignorance." Sometimes the adjective gives the reader a slight sense of shock because of its unexpected connection with the accompanying noun; the same is true of adverbs, as when he remarked that something was "intolerably interesting" or that one need not expect to become, because of early rising, "insufferably healthier and wealthier and wiser."

Humor rests on a reversal of things from the ordained condition, on startling juxtaposition and on bizarre incongruities. Mark Twain linked adjective and noun in the incongruity which is basic in humor in such combinations as "majestic ignorance," "charming absurdity," "stately blunder," and "imposing insanity." By tying a flattering adjective to an uncomplimentary noun he achieved such striking epithets as "illustrious guttersnipe," "animated outrage," "immortal jackass," and "gentle idiot." The technique of thus bringing together two paradoxical elements in a sudden stroke is an old one, but a special pungency is added when such incongruities become terms of address. Exasperated with the incompetency he encountered in Washington, Mark Twain addressed one dignified official as "illustrious Vagrant" and another as "renowned and honored Imbecile." He employed the same device in such Indian names as "Beneficent Polecat." And the effect he achieved by calling someone a "festive ass" is more strongly humorous for its basic incongruity than the more ordinary term, "driveling ass."[62]

The alliteration and rhythm Twain obtains from the

[62] Bellamy, pp. 119-20.

juxtaposition of some of the figures of speech are also seen in longer phrases in various stories. Franklin Rogers comments on Twain's tendency toward this effect in an analysis of his burlesque technique. Rogers contends that Twain cultivated this device as his literary endeavors progressed, noting that alliterative sentences crop up often in the pieces written between 1864 and 1867. It appears in "Aurelia's Unfortunate Young Man" with the sentence: "He was hurrying home with happiness in his heart when he lost his hair forever." Rogers adds that this sentence, particularly the last phrase, reveals a "marked rhythm."[63] Similarly, the sentence, "He takes a living delight in this labor of love" in "The Killing of Julius Caesar 'Localized'" displays both alliteration and rhythm. About these elements, Rogers states:

> The phrase "living delight" is meaningless, if examined logically; the only possible explanation for it in the prose of a man normally remarkable for his clarity is the conscious desire to gain additional alliteration and a more marked rhythm with the insertion of the word "living."[64]

Other critics besides Bellamy and Rogers have noted Twain's use of figures of speech. Cox observes when he discusses Yankee Slang in Twain's fictive works that the adjective and noun are linked to produce "a certain flamboyance of

[63] Rogers, pp. 22-23.

[64] Rogers, p. 23.

description." He explains the role played by exaggeration in some of the author's figures of speech:

> First of all, there is a certain exaggeration of metaphor and figure, as illustrated by the "cataract of golden hair streaming down over her shoulders," and "hoop of flame-red poppies." This exaggeration is also present in other areas of the style. It is evident when the Yankee speaks of "astonished curiosity" and "stupefied fascination." The method here is to call into service an adjective which overlaps the meaning of the noun in an effort to intensify the description.[65]

Other exaggerated metaphors and similes are manifest in Twain's stories. He gives vivid impressions with his descriptions of Nevada as a "singed cat" in "Information for the Million,"[66] and of his unmanageable horse returning to town after successfully losing its rider as "shedding foam-flakes like the spume-spray that drives before a typhoon" in "A Genuine Mexican Plug."[67] Moreover, after a bout of smallpox, Aurelia Maria's fiance is "pitted like a waffle-mold" in "Aurelia's Unfortunate Young Man."[68] Certainly Twain ranges far and wide for sources for his metaphors and similes, and vivid ones

[65] Cox, p. 215.

[66] Mark Twain, "Information for the Million," in _The Complete Humorous Sketches and Tales of Mark Twain_, p. 32.

[67] Mark Twain, "A Genuine Mexican Plug," in _The Complete Humorous Sketches and Tales of Mark Twain_, p. 211.

[68] Mark Twain, "Aurelia's Unfortunate Young Man," in _The Complete Humorous Sketches and Tales of Mark Twain_, p. 29.

are produced through his imagination.

James Cox cites "The Jumping Frog" as one of the best examples of Twain's skill in similes and metaphors. He centers on Twain's humanization of the dog as intensifying the description and states that "his comparison of the dog with a steamboat, and his description of the dog 'freezing' to his victim--reveal an easy appropriation of diverse experiences."[69]

Gladys Bellamy explores the same story, particularly the bull-pup and the frog, as proof of Twain's skill in being able to illustrate abstract ideas in concrete terms in order to produce startling images:

> In his Western days, as later, his favorite figures were drawn from elemental sources, chiefly from fire and light and from the world's waters--seas, rivers, oceans, and the boats and ships that ride upon them, the latter class probably deriving from his steamboating days. In the Jumping Frog story the "little small bull-pup" seemed of no account at first glance: "But as soon as money was up on him he was a different dog; his under jaw's begin to stick out like the fo'castle of a steamboat, and his teeth would uncover and shine like the furnaces." And at the crucial moment, the shot-filled frog "couldn't no more stir than if he was anchored out." His figurative use of seasons and storms, moonlight and sea, cloud and wind, lava and ice, water and fire, is in keeping with the primitive quality of his imagination.[70]

[69] Cox, p. 32.

[70] Bellamy, p. 130.

This story, of course, is a perfect one to use as an example of vivid similes for it abounds with them. The frog whirls "in the air like a doughnut" (4) but is "planted as solid as a church" (5). When he does attempt to jump, he "hysted up his shoulders--so--like a Frenchman" (5). It is evident by this story that in the hands of a vernacular narrator, the images, although still exaggerated, are simpler. The sources, if not the elemental ones Bellamy mentions, are at least concrete.

With all the numerous examples of stylistic devices that can be associated with Twain's style, a few tricks appear which defy classification. At times, for instance, he reveals an inappropriate vagueness as: "This day many years ago precisely, George Washington was born" (69). This opening statement in the "Brief Biographical Sketch of George Washington" is simply a comic turn of phrase. In "How I Edited an Agricultural Paper," he uses a nonsensical phrase when he claims to have been in the newspaper business from "Alpha to Omaha" (50). In any case, humor is elicited from these phrases just as it is evoked from any of the more stylized devices he uses. Mark Twain will use any technique he can imagine to produce the exaggeration and incongruity that is the essence of his humor.

In spite of Twain's reliance upon exaggeration to produce his humor, he is not so fantastical as to obliterate

all reality from his stories. Frank R. Stockton in his critical essay, "Mark Twain and His Recent Works," contends that he is careful about creating reality in his works:

> Mark Twain is a high jumper but he always jumps from the solid rock of fact and is not afraid of breaking his neck by falling back upon it. His funniest things are so funny because they are possible. An impossibility is a mill-stone about the neck of a joke. To load a frog with shot so that it cannot engage in a leaping-match is funny; but if one were to write of a whale inflated with balloon-gas so that it might shoot out of the water and skim through the air like a flying-fish, it would not be funny, it would be merely fantastic. In his humorous creations Mark Twain seldom plays upon words, he plays upon ideas; and as a pun would have no value were the words played upon treated without reference to their legitimate use, so he never forgets what a character is in the habit of doing when he makes him do something out of the common, and in his comical situations he uses the antithesis as if he were making a pun or an epigram.[71]

This is perhaps the key to Twain's artistry as a humorist. He knew and used every trick of the trade in the handling of his material--aphorisms, clichés, puns, gorgeous word-painting, technical terms and foreign expressions, euphemisms, understatements, anticlimactic statements, and imaginatively arranged figures of speech--but he did not rely on only these stylistic devices to develop his humor. Rather, he blended

[71] Frank R. Stockton, "Mark Twain and His Recent Works," in _Mark Twain: Selected Criticism_, pp. 41-42.

them with his other structural techniques. He created various types of humor, as Bellamy has enumerated, but always through the interweaving of his subject matter, narrative forms, and stylistic devices. When these harmonize, the comic effect is unique. Thus, he is not afraid to be a "high jumper" because he maintains a flavor of reality, even in the peak of his imagination.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bellamy, Gladys Carmen. _Mark Twain as a Literary Artist._ Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950.

Bier, Jesse. _The Rise and Fall of American Humor._ New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968.

Blair, Walter. _Native American Humor._ San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Company, 1960.

The Comic Imagination in American Literature. Ed. Louis D. Rubin, Jr. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1973.

Cox, James M. _Mark Twain: The Fate of Humor._ Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966.

Krause, Sydney J. _Mark Twain as a Critic._ Baltimore, Maryland: Johns' Hopkins Press, 1967.

Lynn, Kenneth S. _Mark Twain and Southwestern Humor._ Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1959.

Neider, Charles. _The Autobiography of Mark Twain._ New York: Washington Square Press, 1961.

Rogers, Franklin R. _Mark Twain's Burlesque Patterns._ Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1960.

Rourke, Constance M. _American Humor._ Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Incorporated, 1931.

Smith, Henry Nash. _Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer._ Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1962.

Stockton, Frank R. "Mark Twain and His Recent Works" in _Mark Twain: Selected Criticism._ Ed. Arthur L. Scott. Dallas: Southern University Press, 1955.

Twain, Mark. _The Complete Humorous Sketches and Tales of Mark Twain._ Ed. Charles Neider. Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Incorporated, 1961.

____________. _The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain._ Ed. Charles Neider. New York: Bantam Books, Incorporated, 1971.

____________. _The $30,000 Bequest and Other Stories._ New York: P. F. Collier and Son Company, 1917.

Wiggins, Robert A. _Mark Twain: Jackleg Novelist._ Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1964.