

Exposing Romantic Folly:
Comic Performance in Mark Twain's Foreign Travel Writing

Presented to the Faculty
Liberty University
Department of Communication Studies

In
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts
in
Communication

By
Andrew C. Jones
November 16, 2009

Liberty University
School of Communication
Master of Arts in Communication Studies

Michael P. Graves Ph.D., Chair

Darlene R. Graves Ed.D., Reader

Mark R. Harris Ph.D., Reader

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my thesis chair, Michael Graves, for answering all of my questions about rhetoric with kindness and aplomb. Secondly, I owe a great debt of gratitude to the readers on my committee who took time out of a busy semester to ensure that the final product was as good as I could make it. Finally, I would like to thank my wife, Charity, whose kindness and support made the thesis process less frustrating and more fulfilling.

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Chapter 1

Travel Literature, Twain, and Comic Performance: An Introduction to the Study, Review of Literature, and Methodological Reflection

My first experience in Rome during the summer of 2006 was a frantic attempt to reclaim a large black duffel bag containing all of my worldly possessions, or at least all of those that had made the trans-Atlantic journey with me. I made the trip in order to study Rome under the guidance of Thomas Benson and his colleagues from The Pennsylvania State University. During the course of my studies, I wrote daily journals attempting to capture the substance of the eternal city with my finite pen. This impossible task led me to consider the writings of prior pilgrims with more respect. I began to ponder the meaning behind descriptions of places, cultures, and people. Some of the descriptions attempted to capture every nuance in detail, such as Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*. However, these descriptions were too sterile for my taste. Siding with the Renaissance painter Caravaggio, I preferred scenes of life captured with the aid of real models. I preferred my saints with a bit of dirt on their feet. I found a compatriot in a different American author, Samuel Clemens, better known by his pen name of Mark Twain. My initial exposure to Twain's travel writings ignited in me a desire to understand why Twain's descriptions are funny yet describe in more vivid detail the scenes Hawthorne was only able to convey to me in a two dimensional, representative form.

The key to understanding Twain's travel writing is in the introduction of his first book, *The Innocents Abroad*. Here Twain promises to strip foreign lands of romantic illusion. He promises to describe things exactly as we would perceive them if we were to tramp with him across the world. I argue that in order to accomplish this goal Twain uses his skills as a master orator to not only relate his travels to his audience, but to perform them. As we laugh at Twain's antics, we begin to see foreign lands as both actors in Twain's drama, and as observers of that

drama. This dual perception, what Kenneth Burke refers to as the comic frame, allows us to see flaws in the simplistic depictions of foreign lands found in romantic tales. By using performance, Twain makes the implication that romantic notions of foreign lands are simplistic and easier for his audience to accept. I argue that Twain shows us flaws in our romantic notions of foreign lands by describing things exactly as they are not described in romantic tales, placing Twain's writings in the comic frame. Moreover, Twain does this in a way that makes the social implications of this new perspective easier to accept because they are presented through a form of performance. Thus, Twain's writing uses comic performance to highlight the superiority of realism, while exposing romanticism as folly.

This study proposes the exposition of romanticism as folly through comic performance in Twain's descriptions as a thematic link that connects Mark Twain's three accounts of foreign travel, *The Innocents Abroad*, *A Tramp Abroad*, and *Following the Equator*. This chapter will situate Twain's writing within the genre of travel literature, further define the phrase comic performance according to Kenneth Burke and Richard Bauman, and conclude with a suggestion of how Twain's descriptions not only bind his work together, but also provide insight into the rhetorical tool of comic performance.

Broadly defined, travel literature is a piece of writing in the form of a letter, journal, or narrative that contains an account of a foreign place. The content of travel literature varies in depth from the detailed descriptions of a guidebook to the lax suggestion of setting in an informal account. The form also varies from the letter, to the journal, to the narrative with subtle differentiations amongst writers. Percy Adams, author of *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel*, eschews generic definitions of travel writing as hazardous. Instead, Adams suggests that the genre includes any account of travel, regardless of form or content, so long as a first

hand travel account inspires the writing.¹ This type of writing generally includes at least one of three types of descriptions: descriptions of places, of cultures, or of people.

Twain, though, does not simply describe Italian lakes, German folklore, and Australian Aborigine. Rather, Twain attempts to show his reader an Italian lake as it exists—as the reader would see that lake if the reader took a sea voyage to Italy, tramped up the Alps, and stood on the very edge of lake Como. Where another travel writer might show the reader a lake full of glory, glowing in the excellent light of a setting summer sun, Twain shows the reader a lake smaller in circumference than Lake Tahoe that is not quite as blue as one might expect and dotted with more raggedy water-going vessels than one could possibly find in the backwaters of Louisiana. In order to accomplish this degree of verisimilitude in his description, Twain uses comic performance.

John Bassett's article is the only study that considers Twain's use of comic performance. The article compares Twain's second travel narrative, *Roughing It*, with his platform performances, claiming that Twain was able to translate some of his oratorical skill on the boards to literary skill on the page. Bassett's argument concludes that Twain's comic performances lend authority to his work, allowing Twain's writings to compete with more established American and British writers. The lack of additional studies considering Twain's comic performance exposes a deficiency in the body of criticism on Twain's writings. Furthermore, Bassett's study, as will be discussed further below, fails to define the central theme of the study—comic performance. This proposed study will meet both of these deficiencies by first redefining the phrase, and second contributing to the body of criticism on Twain's foreign travel literature.

Comic performance comes from literary studies; however, the phrase, in that discipline, is considered an axiomatic truth—it is assumed that the terms “comic” and “performance” are so

1. Adams, *Travel Writing*, ix.

easily understood that no definition is needed. However, because the terms “comic” and “performance” have become key terms for this study, they will be defined here. The term “comic” is best defined in Twain’s writing as “incongruity.” A term borrowed from Kenneth Burke, incongruity is the perception that something does not comport with one’s predilections. The example Burke gives is the use of augmentative adjectives to describe a customarily diminutive noun, such as saying, “monstrous lambkin” where the augmentative adjective “monstrous” is incongruous given the diminutive suffix “kin” and the societal conception of “lamb” as meek and mild.² While this sort of incongruity is fairly obvious, some incongruities are so common, so fused within a society that few perceive the incongruity. An impotent incongruity is powerless to effect a change in one’s perception; it is not until one perceives the incongruity that the incongruity can change one’s perception. One means of highlighting an incongruity that has become latent is through the performance of that incongruity.

The definition of performance this study uses comes from Richard Bauman’s book *Verbal Art as Performance*, which argues for performance as a mode of speaking. Bauman further clarifies this definition of performance, adding that a performance is a mode of speaking which displays competence, enhances an experience, and is subject to evaluation. A performance is also *keyed*—it is indicated through culturally specific means that what follows is a performance. Furthermore, genre, setting, institution, event, and roles pattern a performance. They provide a set of societal expectations for a particular performance. Finally, performances are emergent—they exhibit conformity within cultural patterns while creatively deviating from previous performances. The culmination of Bauman’s framework is the suggestion that a performance may become equipment for living—the performer may gain potential for transformation of the social structure by means of a competent, enhancing, evaluated

2. Burke, *Permanence and Change*, 90.

performance. Therefore, if the comic is that which is incongruous, and performance is a competent, enhancing, evaluated display, then comic performance refers to a competent, enhancing, evaluated display of incongruity.

The one thing Twain detested above all else in the writings of his contemporaries was their incongruous romanticizing of their subjects. Twain's critical essay, "Fennimore Cooper's Literary Offences,"³ and Twain's biting—but unpublished—critique of his erstwhile friend, Bret Harte,⁴ are both examples of Twain's reviling of contemporary romantic revisions of the West. Twain was offended by the sterile and blatantly false depiction of a world where "even the eternal laws of Nature have to vacate when Cooper wants to put up a delicate job of woodcraft on the reader."⁵ Perhaps Twain's anger was a result of his respect for facts after years spent as a reporter, or perhaps it was a result of Twain's anger over the summary castration of the Wild West. Whatever the reason for his vitriol, Twain detested romantic re-visioning of places, of cultures, and of people. Therefore, when Twain was allowed passage aboard the pleasure ship *The Quaker City* in return for his letters and reports on whatever about the trip took his fancy, he promised to report about foreign lands exactly as they were, exactly as the reader would see those lands if the reader took a sea voyage, climbed the very Alps, and stood on the shores of Lake Como.

The Innocents Abroad, *A Tramp Abroad*, and *Following the Equator* were chosen because they span the breadth of Twain's travel writings and comprise the entirety of Twain's foreign travels.⁶ *The Innocents Abroad* was Twain's first full-length book. Prior to this Twain

3. Twain, *Complete Humorous Sketches and Tales*, 631-642.

4. For more information on Twain's criticism of Harte, see Krause, *Mark Twain as Critic*, 190-224.

5. Twain, *Complete Humorous Sketches and Tales*, 635.

6. While Clemens' use of an alter ego to write his books is fascinating, it extends beyond the scope of this inquiry into the comic performance of travel literature in the works chosen. That Mark Twain is the pen name of Samuel Clemens is a well known fact to modern scholars; however contemporary audiences were not as aware of the author behind the pen name. The books were originally promoted as works by Mark Twain, reading tours were billeted under the name of Mark Twain, and incidents like the Fellowcraft Club Dinner in New York on November 15, 1889, in which it was announced that someone named Samuel Langhorne would be speaking instead of Mark Twain, and

had only published articles and collections of stories. Furthermore, *The Innocents Abroad* was Twain's best selling work within his lifetime, and established Twain as a literary figure.⁷ *A Tramp Abroad* falls toward the middle of Twain's writing career and was originally conceived as a sequel to *The Innocents Abroad*.⁸ *Following the Equator* is Twain's last work of travel literature and is significantly different from Twain's previous works in this genre because it is written more from the point of view of Samuel Clemens, husband, father, lecturer, than from the perspective of Mark Twain, bachelor and scoundrel.⁹ These three works comprise the whole of Twain's foreign travel writing, and span almost thirty years. Each of these works focuses on a different aspect of foreign travel: *The Innocents Abroad* focuses on places, *A Tramp Abroad* focuses on culture, and *Following the Equator* focuses on people.

While these three works have been studied before, no link between the works has been proposed. Most critics dismiss *A Tramp Abroad* and *Following the Equator* as lesser works unworthy of much critical attention. This study will seek to follow Twain's incongruous descriptions through all three works by analyzing a representative passage from each work to better understand how Twain's realistic description of foreign places, cultures, and peoples highlights the superiority of realism and the folly of romanticism, thus addressing a deficiency not only in the criticism of these works, but of Twain studies as a whole. From *The Innocents Abroad*, the passages describing Lake Como and The Sea of Galilee have been selected because Twain's descriptions in these instances do not merely compare two bodies of water, but they are carried out in an aesthetically pleasing fashion. The fashion in which Twain's descriptions are carried out, then, become more important than the descriptions themselves. It is Twain's Burkean

the audience booed and hissed until Twain took the stage and admitted to being Langhorne, illustrate that contemporary audiences were unaware that Mark Twain was the pen name of Samuel Clemens. Therefore, consideration of the Clemens/Twain dichotomy in the comic performance of these three works is best relegated to future research.

7. Rasmussen, *Mark Twain A-Z*, 235-245.

8. *Ibid.*, 476-489.

9. *Ibid.*, 145-154.

misnaming of Lake Como and the Sea of Galilee which become significant, and the result of this misnaming is clear depiction of foreign lands sans romantic illusion. From *A Tramp Abroad* the study will look at Twain's descriptions of a Wagnerian Opera and an ancient legend of the Rhine. In these descriptions Twain does not reference a specific romantic re-visioning of German culture, but he does incongruously describe romantic elements of German folklore through a jaded and realistic lens. From *Following the Equator* the study will analyze Twain's descriptions of the Australian Aborigine and the Boer. In these passages Twain describes the people of Australia and South Africa using secondary and tertiary sources. In analyzing these passages through comic performance Twain's descriptions will be shown to undercut the original source material and expose romantic re-visioning on the part of the original authors. Furthermore, the redefinition of comic performance will strengthen its usefulness as an analytical tool within rhetorical studies.

Presenting the land as it truly is, Twain exposes the follies of romanticism while highlighting the superiority of realism. In *The Innocents Abroad*, *A Tramp Abroad*, and *Following the Equator*, Twain exposes romantic illusion as folly, suggesting that if one wishes to visit a land of fancy and imagination, it were best that one stay at home and read Cooper or Harte, but if one wants to truly see a foreign land—as though one were actually there—then one should read Twain. Where Hawthorne provided me with an intricate Byzantine mosaic of Rome, its sites, culture, and people, Twain provided me a breathtaking Caravaggio masterpiece of Rome, resplendent with light, depth, and a shade of dirt.

Limitations of the Study

The problem of verisimilitude, the appearance of being true or real, within the genre of travel literature is too large a task for so small a project as the proposed study; therefore the study will focus on Mark Twain's travel writings as the central phenomenon, taking six key passages

from three of Twain's five travel writings as artifacts, specifically Twain's accounts of his foreign travels: *The Innocents Abroad*, *A Tramp Abroad*, and *Following the Equator*, thus leaving out Twain's domestic travels contained in *Roughing It* and *Life on the Mississippi*.

A Review of the Literature about Travel Literature and Mark Twain

The following literature review will serve to briefly describe the history and elements essential to the genre of travel literature as identified in Percy Adams's canonical text, *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel*. Then, reviewing critiques of literature suggested by Adams's historical survey, this review will propose a definition of the genre. Following the definition of travel literature, this study will explore the literature on Twain's travel writing.

Percy Adams' history of travel literature. Percy Adams' book *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* is the definitive history of travel literature to 1800. However, Adams chooses not to define the genre of travel literature, claiming that such a definition might both subvert established literary work and alienate his audience. Though Adams does not explicitly define the genre, one is able to cobble together an idea of what travel literature is not from Adams' preface, and some idea of what travel literature contains from Adams' examination of travel literature before 1800.

In defining that which travel literature is not, Adams writes that it "is not just a first-person journal kept by a traveler. Nor is it simply a photograph in words of what a traveler observes."¹⁰ In later chapters, for example, Adams counts amongst the genre such works as *Sir John Mandeville* and "*Le sieur de Combes*," both of which are stories fabricated out of tales, legends, and recourse to a good library. Thus, travel literature need not be based on an individual's real travels at all. If travel literature is neither a mere first-person account of a travel,

10. Adams, *Travel*, ix.

nor a picaresque, nor even based upon an actual journey, then what are the defining elements of the genre?

Adams suggests that travel literature may be classified according to two elements, content and form. Content here refers to a continuum from great depth of information to great breadth of experience—the guidebook to the personal narrative. At one extreme would be an exhaustive list of places and things, such as the Blue Guide with over 500 pages of details on the city of Rome. At the other extreme might be a story about a trip or pilgrimage, such as the *Canterbury Tales*. In addition to the element of content, travel literature may also be classified according to form.

Adams identifies three main forms of travel literature: the letter, the journal, and the simple narrative. The letter might be a personal note, such as a Roman soldier's note home to his mother, or it might be a stylistic device, such as an open letter home to a newspaper or magazine. The journal, the second form travel literature assumes, may be as short as a captain's log book, which notes the date and the weather, or it may be as long as a heavily edited personal memoir, including exhaustive notes about peoples and places. The final form Adams identifies is the simple narrative, which Adams describes in greater detail than the letter or journal. The simple narrative generally "gives dates and names of places, normally leaps and lingers while moving inexorably forward with the journey, and often includes an essay on the nature or advantages of travel."¹¹ That is, the narrative form complements the depth of a guidebook without overwhelming the reader. Having created this schema for classifying travel literature, Adams proceeds to examine the history of the genre.

Adams chronicles the history of travel literature not by chronology or destination but by the types of travelers who wrote the literature. The focus is on travel literature that falls between

11. Adams, *Travel Literature*, 44.

the exhaustive depths of the guidebook and the shallow recollections of an individual. Adams identifies four types of writers: merchants, pilgrims, buccaneers, and, most importantly, those who travel for the sake of travel. From the last category, those who travel for the sake of travel, Adams identifies three sub groups: those who must travel and see everything for themselves, those who travel and become caught up in the adventures of others, and those who have such adventures while traveling that they have no time to write. These three subgroups contain writings that are generally recorded in the form of the simple narrative. Therefore, those who travel for the sake of traveling, like Twain, generally record their travels in the form of a simple narrative, which may contain both detailed information and personal recollections.

Thus, Adams defines travel literature by two dimensions, content and form, which are inextricably linked to the author of the writing. However, this does not explain why Adams rejects the mere personal recollections of a traveler and a snap shot in words as definitions of the genre. It might even appear that the classification scheme given above leads to a definition of travel literature as a traveler's personal recollections and verbal pictures. Though Adams' historical survey of travel literature is helpful in legitimizing travel literature as a genre, the lack of a definition for the genre makes the category impotent.

A definition of travel literature. Unlike Adams, Judith Adler has no reluctance about delimiting the scope of travel literature. She writes, "Travel literature has served as a means of preparation, aid, documentation, and vicarious participation in a more widely conceived practice that first became the object of public discourse in many European countries between the 15th and 18th centuries."¹² However, this delimitation is completely utilitarian; it tells what the genre may be used for without commenting upon the form, style, or subject matter of travel literature. Adler reserves these elements for her discussion of travel, as the point of her article is an expansion of

12. Adler, "Travel as a Performed Art," 1367.

the artistic consideration of travel to include the act of travel itself. Thus Adler defines travel as an act, “undertaken and executed with a primary concern for the meanings discovered, created, and communicated as persons move through geographical space in stylistically specified ways.”¹³ This, Adler argues, is notably different from “geographical movement,” which is “merely incidental to the accomplishment of other goals.”¹⁴ Since she is extending artistic conceptions of travel from literature as the only form of text worthy of aesthetic consideration to the inclusion of travel performance—the act of travel itself—as a text equal to literature. It is appropriate to extend to travel literature the style, form, and subject matter she attributes to travel. Therefore, Adler would define the subject matter for travel literature as “space, time and the design and pace of a traveler’s movement through both.”¹⁵

Janet Giltrow, author of the article “Speaking Out: Travel and Structure in Herman Melville’s Early Narratives,” is particularly concerned with travel literature as a genre because her article deals with reclassifying Herman Melville’s early writings as travel literature within contemporary criticism. In order to critique Melville’s writings as novels, contemporary critics ignore elements that are, according to Giltrow, essential for understanding the work. Among these elements are “the setting out from familiar shores to travel remote coasts, the discovery of an astonishing other-world, and the carrying home of marvelous news.”¹⁶ Giltrow retains Adler’s recognition of stylistic movement through time and space, but adds the elements of discovery and report. The traveler does not merely travel through time and space, but also collects data about the Other place—that which is distinct from oneself. Giltrow argues that this is done for the purpose of mitigating disorientation: “With his dispatches, the traveler maintains his personal, linguistic, and cultural connection with the society whence he came and to which he

13. Adler, “Travel as a Performed Art,” 1368.

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Ibid.*, 1369.

16. Giltrow, “Speaking Out,” 18.

will return.”¹⁷ While maintaining this connection, the traveler also attempts to fully encapsulate the place to which he travels: “The beliefs, costume, diet, shelter, domestic organization, and political structure of the foreign community are exhaustively remarked, and implicitly or explicitly compared to what the writer has known at home.”¹⁸ All of this information must then be presented to the audience waiting at home. Traditional narrative form begins to break down. Fidelity is lost due to the extreme Otherness described, and coherence within the narrative is displaced by an emphasis on comprehensive information. As Giltrow writes: “Ordinary principles of dramatic or psychological coherence which structure novelistic prose are not applicable to a prose genre which originates in the need to communicate entire information of far countries, and in which the rhetorical authority of the writer rests on the accuracy and completeness of this information.”¹⁹ The narrative is not fully lost, but neither is it the central focus of the genre: “In order to accommodate as much data as possible, the linear narrative must support digression, excurses, and even divagation, which often obstruct narrative advance, undercut suspense, and delay outcomes.”²⁰

Where Giltrow focuses on the inclusion of data, the accuracy of that data is the focus of Terry Caesar’s definition in the article “The Other Way around: The Question of Travel in American Travel Writing.” While Caesar agrees that the travel writer attempts to capture as much information about an Other place as possible, he argues that the emphasis is on a sense of place, and not an accurate portrayal of the place. Caesar writes: “There is a desire, for example, not so much to render faithfully as to invent a scene, to ‘heighten the effect’ for sheer aesthetic pleasure.”²¹ Thus, the place described is not described for the benefit of the place. Rather the place is consumed by the traveler, and it is conquered linguistically, in order to give the traveler

17. Giltrow, “Speaking Out,” 19.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid. 19-20.

21. Caesar, “The Other Way around,” 27.

a sense of identity when normal cultural identifiers are absent. That is, the travel writer colonizes the Other place, or as Brigitte Bailey writes in the article “Travel Writing and the Metropolis: James, London, and English Hours,” travel literature “exists to some extent as part of the colonizing project of nineteenth-century European institutions.”²² This, Bailey suggests, is part of the larger trend to “reclaim...areas for middle-class understanding.”²³ Daniel Kilbride in the article “Travel, Ritual, and National Identity: Planters on the European Tour, 1820-1860” supports the argument that conquest is a major part of travel literature in the argument that planters, Southern plantation owners, visited European cities based not on their inherent value but on their status as relics of the notorious tourist Lord Byron. Kilbride writes:

When Palmetto State planter Agustin Taveau visited St. Peter’s, he remarked that “Byron was right when he said ‘you are not struck with its immensity’ for the soul becomes expanded on entering its sublime walls.”...Elizabeth Horner found the island of San Lazzaro of interest only because of “its association with Lord Byron.”²⁴

Susan Noakes, in the article “The Rhetoric of Travel: The French Romantic Myth of Naples,” furthers Kilbride’s argument by claiming that, “In important ways, works of travel literature are constructed like [ancient speeches], so that travel narratives may profitably be examined, not as objective reports of places and peoples, but rather as works of rhetoric about places and peoples, not wholly unlike the compositions of the ancient orators.”²⁵ David Paxman, in the article “‘Adam in a Strange Country’: Locke’s Language Theory and Travel Literature,” concurs with Noakes and Kilbride. Paxman suggests that the argument of Other devouring travel literature is an extension of the philosophies of Levinas and Locke, who believed the absolutely foreign

22. Bailey, “Travel Writing and the Metropolis,” 201.

23. *Ibid.*

24. Kilbride, “Travel, Ritual, and National Identity,” 558-9.

25. Noakes, “The Rhetoric of Travel,” 141. In this context, Noakes most likely uses the term “rhetoric” as defined by Aristotle, the use of every available means of persuasion in a given situation.

could instruct the reader.²⁶ Therefore, the definition of travel literature has expanded from mere movement through Other time and space to be a linguistic conquest of Other time and space.

Thus far, the term “traveler” has sufficed in defining the one who travels, but Jeffery Melton suggests a more narrow understanding in his article “Adventurers and Tourists in Mark Twain’s *A Tramp Abroad*.” Melton acknowledges the commercial enterprise for which travel books were published:

The most widely published travel writers of the nineteenth century strove to establish a rapport with their readers by gaining their trust and promoting an illusion of friendship. If authors could nurture within readers a sense of their being active co-travelers, then they could develop a devoted readership ready to sign on for other journeys by purchasing future travel books.²⁷

This entrepreneurial purpose for writing led travel writers to create personas, alternate travelers who experience adventures alongside the reader, confidants and companions in every scene of Other conquest. Scott Rice, in his article “Smollett’s Seventh Travel Letter and the Design of Formal Verse Satire,” notes that in the familiar travel letter, “the very address and manner of the form, including the fiction that the letter was a genuine private correspondence, created an aura of intimacy and a trust in the author’s veracity, the former in keeping with the participatory nature of travel literature, the latter with its goal of conveying reliable information.”²⁸ However, the invention of a companionable persona is more than a mere marketing ploy; it becomes the crux of the writing itself. As Melton further notes, “Perhaps the most crucial factor in a travel writer’s success was their ability to create appealing narrative personas that moved beyond being objective voices describing varied surroundings to becoming subjective interpreters, confidants,

26. Paxman, ““Adam in a Strange Country,”” 461-3.

27. Melton, “Adventurers and Tourists,” 34.

28. Rice, “Design of Formal Verse Satire,” 439.

and partners.”²⁹ Thus, the definition of travel literature is now the stylized movement of a persona who linguistically conquers Other time and space. However, this definition lacks any acknowledgement of the purpose for such a genre, and that is, who is the audience for this genre?

According to Giltrow, the audiences for travel literature of the nineteenth century are those who stayed home: “The travel narrator wholly informs his sedentary audience on the nature of his remote experience.”³⁰ The sedentary audience is the reader who attempts to experience the Other through the adventures of a travel persona who conquers every aspect of life in the alien place in order to give the reader a complete idea of the writer’s whereabouts during his absence from home.³¹ This sedentary audience is made up of readers who are “drawn to travel books by the possibility of feeling the dangers, excitements, and wonders of touring the world alongside a friend—shared journeys, their early equivalent of virtual reality.”³² Caesar also writes about the audience for travel literature: “Once, we may assume, travels were read in order to engage men’s curiosities, provoke either their fears or their desires for a better life, indulge their nostalgia for a simpler one, or slake their thirst for the exotic.”³³ This is the audience of the 19th century, who, sedentary, read travel literature to vicariously experience the Other through the linguistic conquests of a narrative persona. Kilbride notes that, “Amelia Parker recommended that her family, at home in Charleston, follow her route by reading George Nugent’s *Lands, Classical and Sacred*, John Lloyd Stephen’s book on the Holy Land, and Giovanni Belzoni’s account of Egyptian tomb raiding.”³⁴ These books provide parallel narratives for her family, allowing them to travel from their armchairs at home, telling all of the wonderful things she was daily experiencing, through the engaging narrative of a companion persona.

29. Melton, “Adventurers and Tourists,” 34.

30. Giltrow, “Speaking Out,” 19.

31. Ibid.

32. Ibid.

33. Caesar, “The Other Way Around,” 31.

34. Kilbride, “Travel, Ritual, and National Identity,” 557.

The definition compiled from a review of these studies is that travel literature is the stylized movement of a narrative persona who linguistically conquers Other time and space for the benefit of a sedentary audience. This definition enlivens Adam's history, allowing one to critique guidebooks or recollections be they letters, journals or narratives written by any type of traveler.

Mark Twain's travel literature. Twain's travel literature was written for a subscription audience. These books were not designed for sale in bookstores, but for sale by traveling salesmen who showed samples of the fine binding, exciting prose, and edifying content. This audience expected to enjoy an educational adventure through foreign places, and they expected their adventure to last no less than 600 pages. It is this last expectation that scholars have identified as the root cause for Twain's extensive borrowings from other's travel writings. Twain wished to fill out his pages, so he would quote extensively from previous travelers. However, Hamlin Hill, in the article "Mark Twain: Audience and Artistry," proposes that Twain borrowed not merely to fill pages, but to provide factual information for his readers who, "unmindful of literary frills, wanted fact, not fiction...autobiographies and biographies and travel narratives, legal and medical do-it-yourself books, family Bibles and religious commentary."³⁵ This is not to say that 600 pages came easily to Twain:

By the time he began his third travel book, *A Tramp Abroad*, he had wrestled with the problem of size and length so much that he actually began composing that book not according to a formal narrative arrangement but rather by assembling anecdotal, episodic material which could later be placed upon a narrative thread.³⁶

This style of composition is also characteristic of the travel literature genre; it epitomizes the middle ground between depth of content and readability. However, Hill is not the only critic to

35. Hill, "Audience and Artistry," 28.

36. *Ibid.*, 30

notice Twain's inclusion of factual information. Many scholars have written about Twain's juxtaposition of factual data with fictional humor.

John Gerber, in the article "Mark Twain's Use of the Comic Pose," suggests that the juxtaposition of fact and fiction is a result of Twain's writing from different comic poses, such as the Tenderfoot and the Old-Timer. Gerber states, "When writing as the Tenderfoot he [Twain] is at great pains to see his material as the greenhorn might. The results appear especially in the sharply pictorial detailing, the colorful rendering of river talk, and the combination of wonderment and anxiety—sometimes fear—in the Tenderfoot's attitude toward the river."³⁷ The Old-Timer, a pose named by Gerber but never defined, appears to be the opposite of the Tenderfoot, exhibiting restraint in description and providing a clear vision, which corrects the Tenderfoot's naiveté. Gerber concludes that these comic poses disrupt the narrative flow of Twain's writings, but since Twain is writing travel literature, which is capable of absorbing non-narrative digressions for the inclusion of anecdotal and factual material, Twain's use of comic poses only furthers his linguistic conquest of Other place by describing it in the language of the Tenderfoot and Old-Timer, the one who knows not of what he speaks, and the one who knows more than he will ever tell.

Bruce Michelson, in the article "Mark Twain the Tourist: The Form of *The Innocents Abroad*," provides an alternative to Gerber's reading of Twain's comic poses. Michelson writes:

While most readers agree that *The Innocents Abroad* is organized by some kind of consistent narrative stance, just what the stance is remains a mystery and a cause of argument...*The Innocents* has lasted a century as the most popular travel book ever written by an American, and in the course of that century this particular

37. Gerber, "Comic Pose," 301.

American, this “Mark Twain” who guides us through Europe, has been hailed and damned with a baffling variety of names.³⁸

Michelson suggests that Twain serves as a narrative persona who assumes comic poses within the linguistic conquest of the Other, in order to better relate that Other to a sedentary audience. While Gerber rejects the notion that Twain could be an extended comic pose, Michelson’s placing Twain as a narrative persona allows Twain to assume several poses in order to better convey his experiences abroad. However, Michelson then suggests that Twain abandoned this method of writing, stating,

It is often said that *A Tramp Abroad* fails because its humor is diverted into satire and seriousness; to put it more accurately, the failure comes not because this “Mark Twain” is occasionally inconsistent, but because the humor and satire and sobriety of this narrator are not reconciled by the play impulse....The same point can be made about *Following the Equator*, but little is gained by doing so.³⁹

If Twain successfully employed this method in his first travel writing, why would he completely abandon it for his later works? Michelson does not provide a successful answer to this question.

Forrest Robinson attempts to address the same question as Michelson by deconstructing the binary of factual and fictional within Twain’s writing,⁴⁰ but his study devolves into macabre visions of *Hamlet*, which has Twain desiring “to die, to sleep; to sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there’s the rub; for in that sleep of death what dreams may come when we have shuffled off this mortal coil.” In Robinson’s critique, Twain’s comparison of Lake Como to Lake Tahoe ceases to be comparison, becoming instead a deconstruction of both lakes and the creation of a dream-state lake—a noumenal lake, to borrow the terminology of Plato. Ultimately, Robinson’s response to the juxtaposition of factual content and humorous content does not further discussion of Twain’s

38. Michelson, “Mark Twain the Tourist,” 385.

39. Ibid. 396.

40. Robinson “Patterns of Consciousness,” 62-63.

travel writing, but as one of the few articles dealing with Twain's travel writings it is included here. Other scholars also address this juxtaposition and deal more honestly with the material.

Jeffery Duncan, in the article "The Empirical and the Ideal in Mark Twain," suggests that Twain juxtaposes realism with humor, or empiricism with idealism. Duncan writes: "The realist implicitly regards words as the means, life as the end: the humorist implicitly regards life as the means—as so much material—and words, concepts, as the end. The important point is that realism is predicated on commonsense empiricism, whereas humor is based on philosophical idealism."⁴¹ Duncan claims that Twain's writing is an attempt to reconcile the paradox of being and nothingness. Unable to accomplish a reconciliation, Duncan argues, Twain rejects empiricism—realism—and embraces idealism in the form of humor. Duncan concludes that Twain's humor is a form of nihilism, an "ideal of pure nothingness."⁴² While I agree that Twain struggles with the juxtaposition of realism with idealism, I would not go so far as to agree with Duncan's conclusion that Twain's writing "denies any significance to shape, form, story, art."⁴³

Robert Sattelmeyer, in the article "The Awful German Language, or How the Blue Jay Yarn Got to Heidelberg," also proposes juxtaposition, not between being and nothingness, but between life and words. Sattelmeyer writes that Twain's choice of Germany for his second travel book was influenced by the German languages because, "There were the inherent comic possibilities of the German language itself, which, like many comic situations, was based on applying a bizarre twist to the familiar."⁴⁴ The bizarre twist is the High German language, and the familiar is American English, a derivative of low German. Ultimately, Sattelmeyer concludes, Twain's comic performance draws attention to the fissures of nineteenth century life through his linguistic conquest of cultural incongruity. By subsuming the German Other within

41. Duncan, "The Empirical and the Ideal," 201.

42. *Ibid.*, 211.

43. *Ibid.*

44. Sattelmeyer, "The Awful German Influence," 263.

his travel writing, Twain resolves the incongruity of High German described by a low German derivation—English—by means of comic performance in the book *A Tramp Abroad*.

These fissures are further explored by John Rowe in his article, “Mark Twain’s Critique of Globalization (Old and New) in *Following the Equator, a Journey Around the World* (1897).” Rowe writes, “Indeed, Twain’s use of his travel diaries in *Following the Equator*, as well as other travel narratives, reinforces this impression of studied informality, deliberate spontaneity, even stubborn inconsistency and contradiction.”⁴⁵ This informality is then developed towards a particular point, a social movement. Rowe concludes that “there is a ‘wandering’ method in Twain’s travel writings, especially notable in *Following the Equator*, whose purpose is ultimately to effect psychological changes in deep-seated social prejudices [which] Twain does not believe can be changed by merely rational means.”⁴⁶

Methodological reflection on Comic Performance

Twain’s three books of foreign travel, *The Innocents Abroad*, *A Tramp Abroad*, and *Following the Equator*, fall within the genre of travel writing. They are stylized movements—narrative—of a narrative persona—Mark Twain—who linguistically conquers—through American English—Other time and space for the benefit of a sedentary audience—the subscription book reader. Twain reports his travels in the form of a simple narrative, and juxtaposes depth of content with readability—he juxtaposes the exhaustive factual information of a guidebook with the engaging personal recollection of a story. The following methodology will show how Twain constructs this juxtaposition as a comic performance, highlighting fissures in romantically constructed reality and proposing the superiority of realistic prose.

Comic Performance is a term abused in scholarly writing. The following expansion and reflection on methodology examines first a brief history of the phrase “comic performance” as it

45. Rowe, “Mark Twain’s Critique of Globalization,” 110.

46. *Ibid.*, 111.

appears in scholarly research, briefly reviewing four key articles and how the authors used the phrase. Second, the methodology examines the phrase according to its constituent frames, the comic frame from Kenneth Burke's writing, and Richard Bauman's framework for performance. The methodology reflection concludes with a description of how comic performance will be used in the proposed study of Mark Twain's travel literature.

Alexandra Jaffe, in the article "Comic Performance and the Articulation of Hybrid Identity," claims that the articulation of hybrid identity, which the authors define simply as multiple cultural or linguistic identities, may be accomplished through comic performance.⁴⁷ Elsie Williams, in the essay "Moms Mabley and the Afro-American Comic Performance," claims that comic performance allows a performer to bond with an audience while at the same time providing protection of the performer's identity.⁴⁸ Harriet Hustis, in the article "Masculinity As/In Comic Performance in *As I Lay Dying* and *The Sound and the Fury*," claims that comic performance allows Faulkner to construct masculine identity in his novels, thus promulgating male hegemonic practices while at the same moment attacking these same practices.⁴⁹ John Bassett in the article "*Roughing It*: Authority through Comic Performance," claims that Mark Twain is able to establish his authority as an author through comic performance in his early non-fiction writing.⁵⁰

Themes that run through the above mentioned articles are identity, bonding, and authority. Jaffe examines hybrid identity amongst comedians and radio professionals in Corsica who overcome the stigma of bilingual identity in that country "by evoking an 'expert' bilingual audience."⁵¹ Williams examines Moms Mabley, stating: "her jokes, her songs, and her dance coalesced into a ritual of communication that went to the roots of the Afro-American cultural

47. Jaffe, "Articulation of Hybrid Identity," 57.

48. Williams, "Afro-American Comic Performance," 164.

49. Hustis, "Masculinity As/In Comic Performance," 122.

50. Bassett, "Authority through Comic Performance," 234.

51. Jaffe, "Comic Performance," 39.

experience.”⁵² Concerning male hegemony Hustis writes, “In [the Sheriff’s] refusal to acquiesce to Jason’s vision of manhood, the sheriff, as symbol of masculine law and order, represents a radical disruption of the male comic bond and an alternative masculinity with which the reader can align him—or, at last—herself.”⁵³ Finally, Bassett considers how Twain establishes authority in an entrepreneurial model of authorial success by adapting his platform speaking talents to his writings in the genre of travel literature. Bassett claims that Twain “was developing a mode that could thrive on internal contradictions and undermine signification itself, that through the lecture platform or the printed book could establish authority in the performance itself and literary value in the experience of reading a text not in the meaning extracted from the text.”⁵⁴

Having looked at these four studies, it is apparent that the phrase “comic performance” has currency in analyzing communication, regardless of the type of text analyzed. However, the methodological power of this phrase is lessened in the above mentioned studies because no attention is given to the two frameworks that undergird comic performance. That is, prior studies have used the phrase “comic performance” to describe a variety of instances in which an audience reacts to a performer with some level of amusement, but none of those studies supply a thorough definition of comic performance. To address this methodological lapse, this study will clarify the definition of comic performance using the definitions of two rhetorical theorists, Kenneth Burke and Richard Bauman. First, this study will situate itself within Kenneth Burke’s comic frame so as to analyze Mark Twain’s use of perspective by incongruity. Thus, the definition of “comic” in the phrase “comic performance” will be defined using Burke’s *Attitudes towards History*, and *Permanence and Change*. Second, this study will use Richard Bauman’s framework for performance, from the book *Verbal Art as Performance*, to define “performance” in the phrase “comic performance.” The following paragraphs will seek to further clarify first

52. Williams, “Mom’s Mabley,” 172.

53. Hustis, “Masculinity As/In Comic Performance,” 122.

54. Bassett, “Authority through Comic Performance,” 234.

Burke's definition of the comic frame and perspective by incongruity, and second Bauman's framework for performance.

Kenneth Burke's comic frame. Burke developed his notions of the comic frame in reverse order, beginning with a critical method of exploring the comic frame in the book *Permanence and Change*, and then explicating the elements of the frame in the later book *Attitudes towards History*. The critical method identified in *Permanence and Change* is what Burke calls perspective by incongruity, a term Burke developed to relate Nietzsche's cult of perspectives to Nietzsche's dart-like style of attacking several ideas in quick succession.⁵⁵ Burke claims that, "Nietzsche establishes his perspectives by a constant juxtaposing of incongruous words, attaching to some name a qualifying epithet which had heretofore gone with a different order of names."⁵⁶ Thus, Nietzsche exemplifies the procedure of perspective by incongruity, but the systematic underpinnings of the procedure Burke identifies with the French philosopher Henri Bergson.⁵⁷

Bergson, Burke proposes, sees life as a series of temporal abnormalities without connection to each other. Every moment, and the events of that moment, exist within a self-contained framework without reference to a unifying *monas monadum*—a master principle connecting singular metaphysical entities. Thus, conceptions of the universe that apply understanding from one moment to another belie the very fabric of space and time. When, for example, a physicist describes the path of a planet around a star as a synthesis of tangential and centripetal forces, the physicist's language does not describe the reality of the planet's motion. The planet's movement is not an expression of the interplay of tangential and centripetal forces.

55. Burke, *Permanence and Change*, 88.

56. *Ibid.*, 90.

57. *Ibid.*, 92.

The planet merely moves: “the actual motion *is* the synthesis, and it is never anything else.”⁵⁸

Burke then resolves the system of incongruity through ideas found in Bergson’s writing:

Bergson proposes that we deliberately cultivate the use of contradictory concepts. These will not give us the whole of reality, he says, but at least they will give us something more indicative than is obtainable by the assumptions that our conceptualizations of events in nature are real, and to be taken as fundamental enough for brilliant men to set about scrupulously treating these necessary inadequacies of thought and expression as though they reflected corresponding realities in nature.⁵⁹

Therefore, if one treats the world as a series of events which cannot be reduced to a synthetic formula—thesis, antithesis, synthesis—then one will begin to see the world as at all times unified. The planet does not fight between thesis and antithesis, but moves merrily along the only available route, the unified path.

In order to assist one in thinking of a planet moving along a unified path, Burke suggests exorcism by misnomer. “The notion of perspective by incongruity” Burke writes, “would suggest that one casts out devils by *misnaming* them.”⁶⁰ The example Burke gives is that of a child frightened by an object in the corner of a dark room. When an adult approaches the object of the child’s fear and reveals it to be a mere coat rack, then the child’s fear is abated not by the adult’s naming of the fear—“you are afraid because there is a monster in the corner”—but by the adults misnaming of the fear—“you are afraid because there is a coat rack in the corner.” This misnaming leads from Burke’s system of perspective by incongruity described in *Permanence and Change* to Burke’s conception of the comic frame in *Attitudes towards History*.

58. Burke, *Permanence and Change*, 93.

59. *Ibid.*, 94.

60. *Ibid.*, 133.

Burke proposes several poetic attitudes which an individual might adopt when examining history including the epic, the tragic, and the comic. Whereas in the tragic frame people are vicious monsters intent on crime, in the comic frame people are seen as mistaken fools caught in their own stupidity. When one views history through a comic frame, one perceives history as a spectator at a play who sees the action of the stage:

The audience, from its vantage point, sees the operation of errors that the characters of the play cannot see; thus seeing from two angles at once, it is chastened by dramatic irony; it is admonished to remember that when intelligence means *wisdom* (in contrast with the modern tendency to look upon intelligence as merely a *coefficient of power* for heightening our ability to get things, be they good things or bad), it requires fear, resignation, the sense of limits, as an important ingredient.⁶¹

Thus, comedy requires the maximum of what Burke refers to as forensic complexity—the ability to use the tools of the market place, which Burke defines as “scientific-causal relationships evolved by complex and sophisticated commerce.”⁶²

Through the comic frame one is able to see things as both participant and spectator, but in order for one to use this ability one must be able to reason beyond the level of childish theses—statements of mere fact such as one might hear in a kindergarten class where argument and rebuttal consist of “did so,” “did not.” In order to use the ability granted by the comic frame one must be able to reason syllogistically, using the tools of the market place. Burke writes: “The comic frame, in making a man the student of himself, makes it possible for him to ‘transcend’ occasions when he has been tricked or cheated, since he can readily put such discouragements in

61. Burke, *Attitudes Toward History*, 41-2.

62. *Ibid.*, 254.

his ‘assets’ column, under the head of ‘experience.’”⁶³ What Burke is saying is that a man viewing life from the comic frame is able to fully engage in a description which falsifies an object, and simultaneously identify the falsified elements of the description in order to better understand the full dimension of the object. Thus, Twain’s descriptions, when placed in the comic frame, allow a critic to fully suspend disbelief while at the same time critically engaging the descriptions through a form of folk-criticism which consists of the “metaphorical migration of a term from some restricted field of action into the naming of acts in other fields.”⁶⁴ “In sum,” writes Burke, “the comic frame should enable people *to be observers of themselves, while acting.*”⁶⁵ If the critic participates in Twain’s descriptions of foreign places, cultures and people through the eyes of a jaded, backwoods character then the critic sees that the descriptions and the things described are incongruous with romantic re-visionings of the places, cultures, and people. The critic can then observe that Twain’s performance highlights the superiority of his realistic style of description for conveying a holistic view of the places, cultures, and peoples described.

To summarize, the comic frame is an attitude towards history which considers man as a fool caught in his mistake. When viewing history through this attitude, one is able to see history both as a participant and as a spectator. The ability to see history as both a participant and a spectator requires one to understand scientific-causal relationships. The tool for exposing these relationships is perspective by incongruity, which is a “method for gauging situations by verbal ‘atom cracking’ ...a word belongs by custom to a certain category—and by rational planning you wrench it loose and metaphorically apply it to a different category.”⁶⁶ In order to better understand the use of the comic frame and perspective by incongruity, the following paragraphs

63. Burke, *Attitudes Toward History*, 171.

64. *Ibid.*, 173.

65. *Ibid.*, 171.

66. *Ibid.*, 308. The phrase, *rational planning* in this quotation means that the metaphorical application of word from a certain category to a different category is intentional and not the result of a mere misstatement.

will consider how and why the proposed study diverges from previous uses of the frame and tool.

The proposed study examines Mark Twain's travel literature from the comic frame. This is a departure from the methodological approach used by Cheree Carlson, one of the first critics to use Burke's theory of the comic frame, whose 1986 study examines Gandhi's form of non-violent resistance as a movement arising from a comic frame, and Carlson's 1988 study, which considers how women humorists of the 1800's slipped from the comic frame to the satirical frame.⁶⁷ Where Carlson considered the subjects of the studies as participants in comic movements, this study will itself arise from the comic frame. By approaching criticism from a comic frame this study will engage Twain's writings as participant in and observer of perspective by incongruity. While it is possible to examine perspective by incongruity without casting the study itself in the comic frame, such as Gary Selby does in the article "Mocking the Sacred: Fredrick Douglass's 'Slaveholder's Sermon' and the Antebellum Debate over Religion and Slavery," it is not easy to do so without the firsthand accounts of participant observers Selby was able to collect.⁶⁸ Because such firsthand accounts are unavailable, this author hopes that casting the study in the comic frame will allow for a study of Twain's use of incongruity just as Denise Bostdorff is able to examine the way political cartoons use perspective by incongruity in her article "Making Light of James Watt: A Burkean Approach to the Form and Attitude of Political Cartoons," and as Bonnie Dow in her article "AIDS, Perspective by Incongruity, and Gay Identity in Larry Kramer's '1,112 and Counting'" is able to examine perspective by incongruity in Larry Kramer's 1983 essay.⁶⁹ In all three of these studies the texts are approached as though the study is both participant in the shift of perspective and observer of the planned incongruity

67. Carlson, "Gandhi and the Comic Frame," 446-7; Carlson, "Limitations of the Comic Frame," 310. The comic and the satirical frames are related. However, Carlson argues that the comic frame accepts a flawed social order and attempts to correct it, while the satirical frame rejects a flawed social order and attempts to establish a new one.

68. Selby, "Mocking the Sacred," 327.

69. Bostdorff, "Making Light of James Watt," 44; Dow, "AIDS, Perspective by Incongruity, and Gay Identity," 226.

thereby eliminating a need for firsthand responses to the original text, as the critic was able to analyze the internal incongruities of the text in order to understand how the author intended to shift audience perspective.

Richard Bauman's framework for performance. Having discussed the uses of the comic frame and perspective by incongruity, I now turn to the other half of my reflection and expansion of methodology. Performance builds on perspective by incongruity and the comic frame yielding a new means of understanding the persuasive ability of the comic. The addition of performance to an examination of the comic frame in studying Twain's work is particularly apt given Twain's mastery of the platform lecture circuit, where Twain was no mere orator, but a complex and ironic performer.⁷⁰ To understand Twain's use of performance in his writing I now turn to Richard Bauman, whose groundbreaking work on performance led to a comprehension of its usefulness as a tool for social transformation.⁷¹

According to Richard Bauman in his book, *Verbal Art as Performance*, performance is a mode of speaking which incorporates both the action and the event. "Performance, as we conceive of it and as our examples have been selected to illustrate, is a unifying thread tying together the marked, segregated esthetic genres and other spheres of verbal behavior into a general unified conception of verbal art as a way of speaking."⁷² In reading Twain's texts one recognizes performative elements, which, when analyzed using Bauman's framework for performance, reveal a binding of the audience to the author. Ideally, this binding, a result of what Bauman identifies as the emergent quality of performance, culminates in the audience perceiving the incongruity of their presently held beliefs. However, this bonding is the result of a

70. For a critique of Twain as a famous and innovative platform artist, see Vallin, "Mark Twain, Platform Artist," 322-333.

71. Bauman, "American Folklore Studies and Social Transformation," 177.

72. Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance*, 5.

performance, and it would appear that Twain's writing is not a performance in the traditional sense.

To address Twain's writing as performance, the proposed study adopts Bauman's definition of performance from the book *Story, Performance, and Event*. Bauman writes, "I understand performance as a mode of communication, a way of speaking, the essence of which resides in the assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative skill, highlighting the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content."⁷³ This shift from a mode of speaking to a mode of communication in Bauman's definitions of performance opens the possibility of considering a transcribed story as a performance. Thus, Twain's account of his foreign travels will be considered as performance, and be analyzed according to Bauman's framework for performance in this study.

Bauman's framework consists of five elements: keying, cultural specificity, patterning, emergence, and implications for social structure. First, performances are keyed by phenomena such as special codes, paralinguistic features, formulae, appeal to tradition and disclaimers of performance. An example in the English language might be the disclaimer, "stop me if you've heard this one," as used to introduce the performance of a joke. Second, these frames are culturally specific. An example Bauman gives is of rhyming, which can be advertent and "used to key performance, or it may simply be a formal feature of the language."⁷⁴ Third, performances are patterned by genre, setting, institution, events and roles. This is perhaps easiest to see in a musical context where generic patterns are observable without the outside influence of the critic. A country-western song, for example, has a pattern which is distinct from a rock ballad. Fourth, performances are emergent. Bauman writes: "The concept of emergence is necessary to the study of performance as a means toward comprehending the uniqueness of particular performances

73. Bauman, *Story, Performance, and Event*, 3.

74. Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance*, 22.

within the context of performance as a generalized cultural system in a community.”⁷⁵ An example might be a Jimmy Buffet concert where Jimmy plays both his hit song “Margaritaville” and his new song “Breathe In, Breathe Out, Move On.” Both songs follow the established pattern of “Jimmy Buffett songs,” but each song is unique. Finally, this emergent quality “has implications for the creation of social structure.”⁷⁶ The example Bauman gives is of a boy who, like Woody Allen, makes use of self deprecating humor to turn former attacks into a reputation-building comic repertoire, and eventually using that reputation as the grounds for launching attacks against the ludites. Thus, Bauman’s framework progresses as a series of interconnected hypotheses which build to the conclusion that performance might influence society. In order to better understand this framework, two articles that employ this framework will be examined. The first of these articles is Patricia Sawin’s “Performance at the Nexus of Gender, Power and Desire: Reconsidering Bauman’s Verbal Art from the Perspective of Gendered Subjectivity as a Performance.”⁷⁷

The purpose of Sawin’s article is to expand Bauman’s framework to include a consideration of gender. To accomplish this goal Sawin’s study employs Bauman’s framework for the performative analysis of the artist Bessie Eldreth. Sawin begins by examining Eldreth’s recollections of prior performances, which consisted of singing in both religious and secular settings. Sawin argues that Eldreth performs in both settings because Eldreth is competent, enhances audience appreciation of expression through song, and is subject to the evaluation of an audience. Sawin then shows how Eldreth keys the performances within culturally specific frames, and patterns the performances. Finally, Sawin shows how the performances are emergent. While Sawin claims that Bauman’s framework is faulty because women are limited in the venues in which they may perform, she proves that Bauman’s framework ultimately works

75. Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance*, 37.

76. *Ibid.*, 43.

77. Sawin, “Performance at the Nexus of Gender, Power, and Desire,” 28-61.

by showing that Eldridge was able to enact social change by means of performance. Where once it was unacceptable for a black female to perform in a secular setting, Eldridge's performances outside of the church, outside of the acceptable religious sphere, allowed for the expansion of women's performative role to include both the religious and the secular.

Harris Berger and Giovanna Del Negro also use Bauman's framework in their article "Bauman's Verbal Art and the Social Organization of Attention: The Role of Reflexivity in the Aesthetics of Performance." Their study examines two types of musical performance, American heavy metal music and the promenade of central Italy, in order to explore the role of reflexivity—communication about communication—in the audience perceived aesthetics of performance. The authors argue that a performer's responsibility to an audience for the display of communicative skill is wrapped up in that performer's keying of the performance. When a performer displays reflexivity, the audience becomes aware of their status as recipients of the attention of the performer, thus heightening their awareness of the emergent quality of a performance. Ultimately, my study furthers the applicability of Bauman's framework outside the realm of verbal art: "Implicit in Bauman's definition is the fact that performance is not merely the creation of text for the transmission of signs; performance is grounded in an underlying awareness that both the self and the other are subjects, that both the self and the other have the potential to experience the world and share their experiences with others."⁷⁸ This sharing may take place outside of face-to-face interaction, as when a written text communicates reflexively to an audience indicating that the writer is writing in an artful manner thereby allowing a written text to be an emergent text.

This study will seek to examine Twain's writings within a comic frame and as a special artful mode of communication because it is accountable to an audience for a display of

78. Berger and Del Negro, "Bauman's Verbal Art and the Social Organization of Attention," 85.

communicative competence in the presenting a perspective and it is subject to audience evaluation for the skill and effectiveness with which it presents incongruity. Blending Burke's comic frame with Richard Bauman's framework for performance will allow this study to examine, both as a participant in the act of communication and as an observer of the communicative event, Twain's foreign travel writing, thereby situating Twain's writing within the purview of the comic frame described by Burke, and subject to analysis as a performance as described by Bauman. By examining Twain's writing as participant in action and observer of event, this study will be able to examine Twain's performance of perspective by incongruity.

In order to accomplish this goal, the following chapters will examine representative passages from each of Twain's foreign travel novels. The second chapter will look at Twain's descriptions of Lake Como and The Sea of Galilee from *The Innocents Abroad*. The third chapter will look at Twain's descriptions of a Wagnerian Opera and an ancient legend of the Rhine from *A Tramp Abroad*. The fourth chapter will analyze Twain's descriptions of the Australian Aborigine and the Boer from *Following the Equator*. The fifth chapter will synthesize the results of the previous three chapters' analyses, and outline areas for possible future study.

Chapter 2

“No ingenuity could make such a picture beautiful—to one’s actual vision”: Comic Performance in Mark Twain’s Incongruous Descriptions of Lake Como and The Sea of Galilee in *The Innocents Abroad*

In *The Innocents Abroad* Twain describes two particular bodies of water in a fashion particular to his style and faithful to their actual appearance in 1869. The first is Lake Como, and the second is the Sea of Galilee. In order to fully appreciate Twain’s masterful descriptions, the following paragraphs first identify the performative elements of keying, cultural specificity, patterning, and emergence. Second, the social implications of the incongruities Twain describes in these performative passages are analyzed.

Cultural Specific Keying in The Innocents Abroad

Keying. Twain keys both passages in *The Innocents Abroad* using the same device. He undercuts the beauty of the bodies of water. Twain writes of Lake Como: “I did not like it yesterday. I thought Lake Tahoe was *much* finer.”⁷⁹ In the culturally-specific constellations of communicative means that serve to key performances in travel literature, Twain is indicating in these lines that what follows will serve to correct not only his own misapprehensions of the lake, but also those of his audience.⁸⁰ This is a keying mechanism derived from the definition of travel literature as linguistic conquest of Other time and space. In the opening lines of this description the audience is initially bound to the performer because of a wish to know what their travel companion, the narrative persona Mark Twain, did not like about Como. Having examined Twain’s keying of the Lake Como passage, let us turn our attention to the second passage.

Of the Sea of Galilee Twain writes:

79. Twain, *Innocents.*, 200.

80. Bauman, on page 295-6, writes that “the essential task in the ethnography of performance is to determine the culture-specific constellation of communicative means that serve to key performance in particular communities.” In the above referenced lines, Twain has employed keying devices specific to the culture of travel literature, as argued further below.

The celebrated Sea of Galilee is not so large a sea as Lake Tahoe by a good deal—it is just about two-thirds as large. And when we come to speak of beauty, this sea is no more to be compared to Tahoe than a meridian of longitude is to a rainbow. The dim waters of this pool cannot suggest the limpid brilliancy of Tahoe; these low, shaven, yellow hillocks of rocks and sand, so devoid of perspective, cannot suggest the grand peaks that compass Tahoe like a wall, and whose ribbed and chasmed fronts are clad with stately pines that seem to grow small and smaller as they climb, till one might fancy them reduced to weeds and shrubs far upward, where they join the everlasting snow.⁸¹

While Twain uses the same device, undercutting the overly romanticized beauty of the Sea of Galilee, he deploys it in a more heavy-handed manner in this passage. While the keying in the first passage binds the audience by interesting them in Twain's dislike of the lake, the keying of the second passage indicates a major conquest of Other space. Twain is not merely going to disagree on the degree of beauty the Sea of Galilee possess, but question whether the sea possesses any beauty at all. Where Twain follows up his initial dislike of Lake Como with the suggestion that his judgment "erred somewhat, though not extravagantly,"⁸² there is no such qualifier on the beauty of "this lake of Gennesaret."⁸³ In both passages the bonding of audience to narrative persona is a keying mechanism specific to the culture of travel literature.

Cultural Specificity. As noted in the definitions, one expectation of travel literature is the linguistic conquest of Other time and space while providing information to a sedentary audience. Twain's undercutting of overly romanticized beauty fits within this expectation of travel literature, by tantalizing the audience with the promise of first hand reports about the two bodies of water, thereby informing the sedentary audience about places they may never visit. Using this

81. Twain, *Innocents.*, 235-6.

82. *Ibid.*, 200.

83. *Ibid.*, 238.

keying mechanism, Twain begins to fulfill his promise from the preface of *The Innocents Abroad*, “to suggest to the reader how *he* would be likely to see Europe and the East if he looked at them with his own eyes instead of the eyes of those who traveled in those countries before him.”⁸⁴ Thus Twain’s keying is culturally specific because it follows observably the conventionalized means which indicate that the travel persona is present in a foreign place and is preparing to inform the audience about that place in an understandable linguistic mode. This linguistic mode will both conquer Other time and space, and follow patterning elements consistent with the genre of travel literature.

Patterning in The Innocents Abroad

Patterning is represented by five characteristics: genre, setting, institution, events and roles. Twain’s performance, as argued in the introductory chapter, is part of the travel literature genre. This is seen in the stylized movement of a narrative persona who linguistically conquers Other time and space for the benefit of a sedentary audience. Twain is the persona, he moves according to the itinerary of the Quaker City, as he travels he describes the places according to an American aesthetic that conforms time and space to Twain’s particular vocabulary, and all of this is done for the amusement of a subscription audience. Thus, Twain’s writing is patterned by genre.

Within the larger discussion of genre, the characteristics of setting, institution, events and roles take form. The setting of Twain’s performance of description might at first appear to be the place Twain is describing, Lake Como or the Sea of Galilee. In fact, the setting is an assumed set of descriptive ideas to which Twain’s descriptions will serve as emendations. In the passage concerning Lake Como, then, the setting may be described as being amongst Edward Lytton’s play *Lady of Lyons*, and the setting for the Sea of Galilee passage is the entire subgenre of travel

84. Twain, *Innocents.*, v.

literature consisting of pilgrimages to the Holy Land.⁸⁵ In these descriptive passages, Twain does not invoke a particular institutional characteristic. There is some allusion to religious institutions as a result of the place Twain is describing in the Sea of Galilee passage, but aside from this allusion the characteristic of institution is seemingly non-existent. Within the genre of travel literature, the act of travel itself is the event which necessitates description. Therefore, Twain's performance of description is tied to the event of travel to Lake Como and the Sea of Galilee. Furthermore, Twain, as the traveler, is required by his role as traveler to perform descriptions for his audience. Thus, Twain's descriptions are most significantly patterned by genre and setting, while patterning by institution, event and role pass into the background of his descriptive performances.

Having discussed ways in which Twain's descriptions are patterned, it is now possible to look at their emergent qualities. While Twain's description of Lake Como and the Sea of Galilee follow the pattern of description appropriate for the genre in which Twain writes, his initial undercutting of the beauty of the places allow him to manipulate his audiences' expectations in a way that is unique to his style.

Emergence in The Innocents Abroad

The emergent quality of a performance, Bauman informs us, involves three structures: textual emergence, event emergence, and social emergence. The texts of Twain's descriptions are emergent to the degree in which they are able to express an interplay between Twain's communicative resources, his competence, and his audiences' goals, within the context of a

85. Twain combines all books of this subgenre into one, and cites only from that one fictitious book *Nomadic Life in Palestine* by William C. Grimes. The passages Twain "cites" are representative of descriptions found in Holy Land travels such as *Tent Life in the Holy Land* and *The Land and the Book*. However, William C. Grimes is the name of a newspaper reporter and later Republican politician most famous for instituting a system of territorial law and government in the 1890's. For more on the subgenre of Holy Land Pilgrimage see Paul Zumthor and Catherine Peebles' article, "The Medieval Travel Narrative."

particular situation.⁸⁶ The same is true of the event and social emergence of Twain's descriptions. The following paragraphs will examine how Twain is able to create emergence within all three of these structures by competently using the communicative resource of setting to entertain his audience through these two passages.

Emergence in text and event. The characteristic of setting provides what Bauman refers to as a "point of entry into the description and analysis of the performance system of a community."⁸⁷ By referencing an outside author in his description, Twain shows that he is familiar with his audiences' expectations of his description of Lake Como. Including the text from the *Lady of Lyons* situates Twain's description within a particular cast of previous descriptions, but also amongst the corpus of descriptions with which a reader might be familiar. In introducing the citation from Lytton's play Twain remarks, "I suspect that this was the same place the gardener's son deceived the Lady of Lyons with, but I do not know. You may have heard of the passage somewhere."⁸⁸ Here Twain quotes Melnotte, the gardener's son, describing a house to which he could lead Pauline, the Lady of Lyons.

A deep vale,
 Shut out by Alpine hills from the rude world,
 Near a clear lake margined by fruits of gold
 And whispering myrtles:
 Glassing softest skies, cloudless,
 Save with rare and roseate shadows;
 A palace, lifting to eternal heaven its marbled walls,
 From out a glossy bower of coolest foliage musical with birds.⁸⁹

86. Bauman, "Verbal Art," 302.

87. *Ibid.*, 300.

88. Twain, *Innocents.*, 203.

89. *Ibid.*

By using this introduction and quotation Twain makes his performance emergent textually in so far as the audience supplies additional descriptions from their own experiences. Furthermore, Twain is alluding to his own description a few paragraphs before, where he describes Lake Como as being “beautiful as a picture. A scarred and wrinkled precipice rises to a height of eighteen hundred feet...skirting the base of the cliff are a hundred orange groves and gardens...and in the burnished mirror of the lake, mountain, chapel, houses, groves, and boats are counterfeited so brightly and so clearly that one scarce knows where the reality leaves off and the reflection begins.”⁹⁰ Not only is Twain using the setting of his romantic description and his source, the romantic description from *Lady of Lyons*, but also of any other similar description with which his readership might be familiar. He cites neither the title of the play, nor the name of the author; rather he gives the description line for line and suggests that it serve as a representative for a certain class of description. Twain’s competence lies not only in his ability to judge his audiences’ awareness of a popular play, but also in his ability to suggest the universality of that play’s overly romantic description of Lake Como. Thus, Twain’s description is also emergent as an event through the interplay between Twain’s description and Lytton’s description. The social emergence of Twain’s description of Lake Como will be discussed further below.

Twain’s description of the Sea of Galilee is emergent for many of the same reasons that his description of Lake Como is emergent. Twain’s references to the fictitious *Nomadic Life in Palestine* by Wm. C. Grimes⁹¹ show Twain’s familiarity with the subgenre of Holy Land Pilgrimages, and his expectation that his audience is also familiar with their descriptions of the Sea of Galilee. Rather than generalizing the introduction to his quotations, Twain quotes a text exemplary of its *class* to suggest the universality of the description. Therefore, Twain’s

90. Twain, *Innocents.*, 201-2.

91. See note 85 on page 40.

description of the Sea of Galilee is emergent in text and in event, just as Twain's description of Lake Como is emergent in text and event.

Social emergence. The final element of Bauman's framework is that the performance, as a result of its emergent qualities, has societal implications. Twain's descriptions have potential for social transformation as a result of the incongruities they highlight. In the Lake Como passage Twain first denigrates the lake, then he describes it as beautiful, then he quotes a representative description of it that is overly romanticized, then he corrects this with a final description of the lake. In this process Twain provides incongruous descriptions of the lake as "crooked as any brook,"⁹² but with a great feature of attractiveness in its "multitude of pretty houses and gardens that cluster upon its shores and on its mountainsides"⁹³ and its "hundred orange groves and gardens," and concludes that "in the great burnished mirror of the lake," all the points of its surrounding beauty are refracted, culminating in what was "beyond all question...the most voluptuous scene" Twain had yet laid eyes on.⁹⁴ Yet, after quoting Lytton's description, Como is depicted as clear, but not overly so, with the overall effect of a "bedizened little courtier"⁹⁵ that is blue, but not dead enough blue to indicate a depth of eighteen hundred feet, about a mile wide from the town of Bellagio to its northern most point, and half a mile wide from Bellagio to the southernmost point. In presenting this incongruous montage of Lake Como Twain is building to a climax of social significance. His dismissive statements, such as his response to Lytton's description, "That is all very well, except the 'clear' part of the lake,"⁹⁶ illustrate his competence as a humorist by turning a glowing description on its head through a relatively minor point of clarification.

92. Twain, *Innocents.*, 200.

93. *Ibid.*, 201.

94. *Ibid.*, 202.

95. *Ibid.*, 204.

96. *Ibid.*, 203.

As Twain builds two separate identities of the lake, he highlights the incongruity of romantic perceptions of the lake, not merely Lytton's brief description, but any romantic description to which his audience has access. Twain's own description, then, serves to suggest an alternative perspective of the lake. As one laughs at the image of the Mississippi flowing through the Alps, of a great European lake as the painted whore of a regal American lake, one begins to question both Twain's initial description and one's own conceptions of the lake. Twain uses this moment of incongruity to introduce his favored perspective: the lake is a symbol of European refinement, and physically an inferior body of water when compared to Lake Tahoe. Twain's argument, then, is not that Lake Como is a hideously ugly lake, but that it is not the pinnacle of lake-ness either. It is a beautiful lake in a beautiful country.

Twain's description of the Sea of Galilee operates in the same way as his description of Lake Como, though he draws from a larger body of work. According to Twain's representative description of the Sea of Galilee from Wm. C. Grimes:

The sea was not more than six miles wide. Of the beauty of the scene, however, I can not say enough, nor can I imagine where those travelers carried their eyes who have described the scenery of the lake as tame or uninteresting. The first great characteristic of it is the deep basin in which it lies. This is from three to four hundred feet deep on all sides except at the lower end, and the sharp slope of the banks, which are all of the richest green, is broken and diversified by the wâdys and water-courses which work their way down through the sides of the basin, forming dark chasms or light sunny valleys. Near Tiberias these banks are rocky, and ancient sepulchers open in them, with their doors toward the water. They selected grand spots, as did the Egyptians of old, for burial places, as if they designed that when the voice of God should reach the sleepers, they should walk

forth and open their eyes on scenes of glorious beauty. On the east, the wild and desolate mountains contrast finely with the deep blue lake; and toward the north, sublime and majestic, Hermon looks down on the sea, lifting his white crown to heaven with the pride of a hill that has seen the departing footsteps of a hundred generations. On the north-east shore of the sea was a single tree, and this is the only tree of any size visible from the water of the lake, except a few lonely palms in the city of Tiberias, and by its solitary position attracts more attention than would a forest. The whole appearance of the scene is precisely what we would expect and desire the scenery of Genessaret to be, grand beauty, but quiet calm. The very mountains are calm.⁹⁷

Twain then suggests that Grimes' description is "an ingeniously written description, and well calculated to deceive. But if the pain and the ribbons and the flowers be stripped from it, a skeleton will be found beneath."⁹⁸ Twain then reveals the skeleton as:

[A] lake six miles wide and neutral in color; with steep green banks, unrelieved by shrubbery; at one end bare, unsightly rocks, with (almost invisible) holes in them of no consequence to the picture; eastward, "wild and desolate mountains" (low, desolate hills, he should have said); in the north, a mountain called Hermon, with snow on it; peculiarity of the picture, "calmness"; its prominent feature, one tree... I wish to state, also, not as a correction, but as a matter of opinion, that Mount Hermon is not a striking or picturesque mountain, by any means, being too near the height of its immediate neighbors, to be so. That is all. I do not object to the witness dragging a mountain forty-five miles to help the scenery under

97. Twain, *Innocents.*, 239-240.

98. *Ibid.*, 240.

consideration, because it is entirely proper to do it, and, besides, the picture needs it.⁹⁹

Twain follows this corrective picture with another description culled from “‘C.W.E.’ (of *Life in the Holy Land*).”¹⁰⁰ In this second description no correction is included because Twain emphasizes how the author reveals the true barrenness of the land in the final sentence:

A beautiful sea lies unbosomed among the Galilean hills, in the midst of that land once possessed by Zebulon and Naphtali, Asher and Dan. The azure of the sky penetrates the depths of the lake, and the waters are sweet and cool. On the west, stretch broad fertile plains; on the north the rocky shores rise step by step until in the far distance tower the snowy heights of Hermon; on the east through a misty veil are seen the high plains of Perea, which stretch away in rugged mountains leading the mind by varied paths toward Jerusalem the Holy. Flowers bloom in this terrestrial paradise, once beautiful and verdant with waving trees; singing birds enchant the ear; the turtle-dove soothes with its soft note; the crested lark sends up its song toward heaven, and the grave and stately stork inspires the mind with thought, and leads it on to meditation and repose. Life here was once idyllic, charming; here were once no rich, no poor, no high, no low. It was a world of ease, simplicity, and beauty; now it is a scene of desolation and misery.¹⁰¹

Twain does not correct this description; rather he notes its apt conclusion as an undercutting of its description: “This is not an ingenious picture. It is the worst I ever saw. It describes in elaborate detail what it terms a ‘terrestrial paradise,’ and closes with the startling information

99. Twain, *Innocents.*, 240-241.

100. I have not been able to find either the author “C.W.E.” or the work “*Life in the Holy Land*” in WorldCat. I believe that this is another compilation of texts where the names and titles have been changed to protect the guilty.

101. Twain, *Innocents.*, 241.

that this paradise is ‘a scene of *desolation and misery*.’”¹⁰² However, just as Twain’s description of Lake Como ends with a realistic picture of the lake that appreciates its literary importance, Twain provides a final description of the Sea of Galilee that appreciates the historical importance of the Sea of Galilee. He writes:

Night is the time to see Galilee. Gennesaret under these lustrous stars has nothing repulsive about it. Gennesaret with the glittering reflections of the constellations flecking its surface, almost makes me regret that I ever saw the rude glare of the day upon it...But when the day is done, even the most unimpressible must yield to the dreamy influences of this tranquil starlight. The old traditions of place steal upon his memory and haunt his reveries, and then his fancy clothes all sights and sounds with the supernatural. In the lapping of the waves upon the beach, he hears the dip of ghostly oars; in the secret noises of the night he hears spirit voices; in the soft sweep of the breeze, the rush of invisible wings...In the starlight, Galilee has no boundaries but the broad compass of the heavens, and is a theatre meet for great events; meet for the birth of a religion able to save the world; and meet for the stately Figure appointed to stand upon its stage and proclaim its high degrees.¹⁰³

This conclusion ties Twain’s detestation and Grimes’ admiration with Twain’s final revision to create incongruities which lead the audience to a new perspective.

Perspective by Incongruity

Twain uses incongruity in the emergent contexts of his descriptions to lead his audience to new perspectives where they are able to perceive the flaws in Lytton and Grimes’ descriptions. The old authors have masked the flaws of foreign places in order to sell books, support literary

102. Twain, *Imocents.*, 241-2.

103. *Ibid.*, 244-5.

allusions, or simply out of a malevolent desire to deceive, but Twain will out.¹⁰⁴ The importance of Twain's new descriptions is first that he provides description of how the place he is describing actually appears in photographs and to his own eyes. Lake Como really does appear more as a winding brook surrounded by snow capped mountains than a clear basin surrounded by golden fruit and singing birds. The Sea of Galilee does look plain by the light of day, with steep banks, bare rocks, and low hills. Second, armed with this more realistic description, it is possible for Twain's audience to better appreciate what makes the places Twain has visited significant. It is not that Como or Gennesaret is beautiful that makes it significant, it is that Como is a literary device used to denote Alpine elegance, and it is that Gennesaret is the lake upon which the Savior walked that makes it historically significant.

Twain's descriptions are important because they place the old descriptions (flawed as they are) in their proper place as eulogies, and allow the new (better) descriptions to take the place of the old as actual descriptions of places. This is seen as one participates in Twain's descriptions by willfully suspending disbelief in the veracity of Twain's citations from previous travelers, by accepting Twain's disenchanting descriptions, and by accepting Twain's corrected descriptions while at the same time observing that Twain is duping his audience in order to find a median of description which acknowledges the literary or historical significance of the place yet still provides an accurate description of the place as he perceives it to exist.

104. Twain, *Innocents.*, 242.

Chapter 3

“We never understood anything but the thunder and lightning; and that was reversed to suit German ideas”: Comic Performance in Mark Twain’s Incongruous Descriptions of a *Lohengrin* and The Lorelei in *A Tramp Abroad*

In *A Tramp Abroad*, Twain includes descriptions of Wagner’s opera *Lohengrin* and the legend of Lorelei. Through these descriptions Twain provides an accurate depiction of German culture as an American might perceive it. As in his description of place in *The Innocents Abroad*, Twain’s descriptions are performative, and culminate in a suggestion for a new societal perception of the culture Twain describes through a jaded and realistic lens. The following analysis will consider three chapters from Twain’s tramp through Germany, selected because they include Twain’s descriptions of Germanic culture through his description of a performance of Wagner’s opera *Lohengrin* and through his description of the Rhine legend, Lorelei. In order to understand how Twain’s descriptions function, the passages are examined according to Bauman’s framework for performance culminating in a discussion of comic performance within these passages. Since it is not likely that the opera and legend Twain explores are much known, a brief description of *Lohengrin* will introduce the analysis of Twain’s description of the opera, and a brief description of the Lorelei will introduce analysis of Twain’s description the legend.

Keying in A Tramp Abroad

Lohengrin tells the story of Elsa, the protector of her younger brother whom she is accused of murdering. Elsa pleads to have her innocence proven through contest, and a mysterious knight appears in a swan boat and offers to defend Elsa’s by combat. The mysterious knight’s only condition is that Elsa is not to ask the mysterious knight’s name. The swan knight defeats Elsa’s accuser, and Elsa and the knight swiftly make plans to wed. The final act opens with Wagner’s famous bridal chorus, but Elsa asks the mysterious knight, her husband, for his

name. The knight is forced to oblige his wife, and explains to her and the king the story of the Holy Grail, revealing himself as Lohengrin, son of King Parsifal and Knight of the Holy Grail. Lohengrin then bids his wife farewell, and as Lohengrin prepares to depart, the swan which brought him returns and transforms into Elsa's lost brother. Elsa, heartbroken over her husband's departure, dies.

Keying in Twain's description of Lohengrin. Keying, according to Bauman, is the act by which a performer indicates to his or her audience that a specialized use of communication is about to take place. Twain's description of Wagner's opera *Lohengrin* begins with a keying device Bauman refers to as "special formulae that signal performance, such as conventional openings and closings, or explicit statements announcing or asserting performance."¹⁰⁵ In Twain's description of *Lohengrin*, the keying device is the phrase, "One day we took the train." This simple phrase indicates that Twain will describe a side journey which is related to his larger trip. The mention of Twain's mode of travel, the train, is peculiar to *A Tramp Abroad*, because it evokes the theme Twain uses to stitch all of his observations together. Throughout the book Twain makes reference to the double meaning of *A Tramp Abroad's* title. It suggests both that Twain is a tramp, and that Twain's journey is a tramp.¹⁰⁶ The latter of these meanings is Twain's primary means of stitching his narrative together. As Twain moves from country to country, he makes reference to the preparations for a long walking tour and then explains why he chose to use a carriage, train, or surrogate to complete the journey in the end. Therefore, Twain's mention of a means of travel serves as a keying device because it is a conventional opening used to indicate that a descriptive performance follows.

105. Bauman, *Verbal Art.*, 295.

106. The suggestion that Twain is a tramp refers both to his loss of fortune immediately prior to his agreement to write *A Tramp Abroad*, and to his backwoods realistic style of writing which initially prevented his entrée to the inner circle of Eastern writers like Emerson, Longfellow, Holmes, or Whittier. For more on this, see Robert Sattelmeyer's article "The Awful German Influence, or How the Blue Jay Got to Heidelberg."

In the keying of his description of *Lohengrin*, Twain exemplifies travel literature as the stylized movement of a narrative persona through time and space. As Judith Adler notes, geographical movement, the mere movement of a body through space incidental to the accomplishment of other goals, is not the concern of travel performance.¹⁰⁷ The performance of travel is about a “primary concern for the meanings discovered, created and communicated as persons move through geographical space in stylistically specified ways.”¹⁰⁸ Throughout *A Tramp Abroad*, Twain uses the metaphor of a tramp not taken to link his larger narrative about Other cultural meaning together. Twain’s use of this metaphor does not work well as a literary narrative device because, as Janet Giltrow notes, the extreme Otherness Twain is attempting to encapsulate causes traditional narrative devices to break down: “Ordinary principles of dramatic or psychological coherence which structure novelistic prose are not applicable to a prose genre which originates in the need to communicate entire information of far countries, and in which the rhetorical authority of the writer rests on the accuracy and completeness of this information.”¹⁰⁹ Twain’s references to means of travel serve to push his larger narrative along, while allowing for digressions to discuss specific elements of Other culture. Thus, Twain’s metaphor does not work well as a literary device because it obstructs the narrative advance of the book, but as a keying device specific to the genre of travel literature, Twain’s metaphor works well because it supports digressions which are necessary to accommodate as much data as possible.¹¹⁰ Having examined Twain’s keying of *Lohengrin*, it is now possible to turn attention to the Rhine legend of Lorelei.

Lorelei is the story of a beautiful nymph, one of the Rhine maidens, who lives on a stretch of the Rhine where there was a swift current and partially submerged rocks. Lorelei, like the Greek sirens, would sing to unwary boaters and cause them to founder on the rocks and die.

107. Adler, “Travel as Performed Art,” 1368.

108. Ibid.

109. Giltrow, “Speaking Out,” 18.

110. Ibid., 19-20.

A young nobleman, hearing of the beauty of Lorelei, ventures out by land to serenade the Rhine maiden and is captivated by a vision of her loveliness. The nobleman is ordered to war by his father, in hopes that the young man may forget Lorelei and save himself, but the young man slips away on the eve of his departure and, with a squire, ventures down the Rhine in a small boat. Lorelei appears, plunges the nobleman to the depths of the Rhine, and casts the squire on the bank. After that, Lorelei is never seen again.

Keying in Twain's description of The Lorelei. Twain's description of Lorelei begins with a disclaimer of performance. While rafting on the Neckar, Twain hears the story of the cave of the specter, which reminds him of a Rhine legend, and since "It is not possible that it is much known in America, else I should have heard it there" Twain repeats the legend of the Lorelei. Twain keys the performance, writing, "The fact that I never heard it there, is evidence that there are others in my country who have fared likewise; therefore, for the sake of these, I mean to print the words and the music in this chapter."¹¹¹ This is a particularly interesting passage of description, because Twain not only tells the legend, but describes the legend, the song written about the legend, and several versions of the song translated into English, and concludes with a commentary on translation in general. This performance, then, is about the Lorelei, but more importantly, about German folk culture.

Because one element of travel writing is reporting on the culture of places visited by the narrative persona, Twain's descriptions of German folklore are keyed in a manner specific to travel literature. By announcing that he will relate a German legend, the subject of a popular German song, Twain is keying his audience into a performance which will linguistically conquer German culture.

Patterning in A Tramp Abroad

111. Twain, *Following.*, 119.

Patterning in Twain's description of Lohengrin. Twain's keying device allows him to transition from his mockery of modern French dueling practices to German theatrical performance. Once the audience is keyed to Twain's performance, he is expected to follow certain patterns which will determine how his performance unfolds. If Twain's performance follows the patterns dictated by the genre, setting, events, and roles he has keyed his audience to expect, then Twain's performance meets the patterning expectations of his audience and his performance is a success. In Twain's description of a performance of *Lohengrin* that he saw in Mannheim his description of the opera is patterned according to genre, setting, institution, events, and roles just as was Twain's performance in *The Innocents Abroad*.

Genre remains the same in *A Tramp Abroad* as it was in *The Innocents Abroad*. Both works fall within the genre of travel literature. Therefore, Twain operates as a narrative persona linguistically conquering other time and space for the benefit of a sedentary audience. Twain's use of English to describe a fundamentally German opera is the Other time and space in his linguistic conquest of this description. Twain's statements that, "I have since found out that there is nothing the Germans like so much as an opera,"¹¹² and "Where and how did we get the idea that the Germans are a stolid, phlegmatic race"¹¹³ suggest that he is linguistically conquering the German opera for the benefit of his sedentary audience, a suggestion further supported by Twain's comment that, "Our nation will like the opera, too, by and by, no doubt."¹¹⁴

Unlike the analysis of *The Innocents Abroad*, where Twain's description is set amongst other descriptions of Lake Como and the Sea of Galilee, the setting of Twain's description of *Lohengrin* is not amongst critiques of opera. Rather, Twain's description is set within the

112. Twain, *Tramp*., 66

113. *Ibid.*, 73.

114. *Ibid.*, 66. Twain goes on to suggest that there are those in the States who do appreciate opera, but they are "one in fifty" and "a good many of the other forty-nine go in order to learn to like it, and the rest in order to be able to talk knowingly about it." Therefore, Twain gives his sedentary audience the ability to talk knowingly about German opera, should the subject arise.

German style of theatre called *Sturm und Drang*, and is patterned by setting as it attempts to make sense of this German theatrical style.¹¹⁵ As Twain looks at the performance of *Lohengrin* in comparison to the performance of *King Lear*, and other unnamed operas, he situates his description of *Lohengrin* within his larger experience of German performance.¹¹⁶ Twain accomplishes this setting of his description by using the stylized patterns of storm and stress drama throughout his description of the *Lohengrin*.¹¹⁷

As in the descriptive passages analyzed from *The Innocents Abroad*, patterning by institution is negligible, while patterning by event and role are overshadowed by the patterning of genre and setting. Again, the event of Twain's travels patterns the description. As Twain moves to Mannheim and back to observe the dramas he describes, his travel through space and time is patterned according to the event of travel, which is an element of the genre of travel literature. Twain is expected to travel to and from a place in order to give a report of the Other happenings there, and by so doing, make an understandable report to his audience. The characteristic of role is played out by Twain the traveler and conforms to expectations of narrative personae in travel literature. Twain acts as a companion to his audience, commenting on the things he sees and does, in order to allow them to experience *Lohengrin* in Mannheim alongside him.

115. The phrase refers to the title of Friedrich Von Klinger's play about the American Revolution, and can be translated "Storm and Stress." This style of drama is notable for its use of heightened emotion, and some of its more prominent practitioners would be Goethe and Schiller (before their alignment with Weimar Classicism), Friedrich Müller, and Johann Hamann. For more on the practitioners and philosophers behind *Sturm und Drang* see Pascal's chapter "The Personalities" in the book *The German Sturm und Drang*. The principle elements of *Sturm und Drang* will be further discussed later in this chapter.

116. "I said I had been to the opera in Hanover, once, and in Mannheim once, and in Munich (through my authorized agent) once..." Twain, *Tramp.*, 71.

117. Twain's comments that he understands the thunder and lightning of *King Lear* only in German, his description of opera as a shivaree, and the physical stress of sitting through the heightening conflict on the stage all suggest the style of German *Sturm und Drang* which deals with metaphorical storms and stresses such as the emotional thunder and lightning of *King Lear* and the emotional noise of Wagnerian opera. Additionally, Twain's description uses popular *Sturm und Drang* subjects for his description of the performance.

Patterning in Twain's description of Lorelei. Twain also patterns his description of Lorelei according to genre, setting, event and roles. The genre remains that of travel literature, as seen in Twain's description of Other culture. The setting is within the oral folklore of river culture, as described in Mary Wheeler's book *Steamboatin' Days*, which will be further discussed in following paragraphs. As with Twain's description of *Lohengrin*, institutional patterning is not evident, and event and role patterning are part of Twain's patterning the entire description according to genre.

The genre of travel literature patterns Twain's description of the Lorelei legend. As the narrative persona, Twain is responsible for reporting in detail on the cultures he visits. Therefore, Twain tells the story of Lorelei, recites the song, and includes several translations. Twain begins by relating the story to his location on the river Neckar. He has just given an account of the cave of the specter and is reminded of a popular song. Twain does not simply tell the story of Lorelei, he describes the story. Twain includes the outline of what happens and comments upon the tale as he is relating it. In this way, Twain's patterning derives from the genre of travel literature. Twain does not merely give his audience the story of Lorelei; he provides them with a commentary which contextualizes the story. Because Twain's description is patterned according to the genre of travel literature, he is also able to include several versions of the poem, including his own, and discuss his opinion of those translations. Twain includes his translation of Heine's poem, which Twain argues "may not be a good one, for poetry is out of my line, but it will serve my purpose—which is, to give the un-German young girl a jingle of words to hang the tune on until she can get hold of a good version, made by some one who is a poet and knows how to convey a poetical thought from one language to another."¹¹⁸ Twain then provides a more literal translation of the poem by Garnham, which would not fit his original purpose because "it don't

118. Twain, *Tramp*, 123.

fit the tune snugly enough; in places it hangs over at the ends too far, and in other places one runs out of words before he gets to the end of the bar.”¹¹⁹ Ultimately, Twain rejects Garnham’s translation “because it simply won’t go with the tune, without damaging the singer.”¹²⁰ Twain then includes Garnham’s translation for accuracy, because “it is a most clingingly exact translation” and “fits it like a blister.”¹²¹ This comparison of lyrical and literal translations leads Twain to a discussion of the principles of translation in general. All of these discursions are part of Twain’s description of Lorelei, and it is only because Twain is patterning his performance within the genre of travel literature that his description is capable of incorporating this extraneous data.

In addition to patterning his performance by genre, Twain patterns his performance by setting. The setting of Twain’s performance is not on the river Neckar or the river Rhine, but amongst river folklore. Twain’s description, then, is patterned after a style of performance which describes the river, its history, and how it ought to be navigated. The Lorelei, like the sounding songs described by Wheeler, describes the dangers of a particular portion of the Rhine and suggests that one must remain wary in order to pass those broken reefs. According to Wheeler, the folk songs about sounding were originally composed to aid the pilot of a riverboat as he listened for the relayed report of the lead line, an instrument used to sound the depth of a river and determine if the boat would be able to pass through potentially shallow water. The leadsman would sing out the depth of the river and “hold it [the musical tone] out so the man who is passin’ the word kin hear it mo bettuh than if you cuts it off short.”¹²² That is, the leadsman would relay the sounding depth to the pilot through a sustained song so that the message would not be mistaken and the boat run aground in shallow waters. These songs would have been

119. Twain, *Tramp.*, 126.

120. *Ibid.*, 128.

121. *Ibid.*

122. Wheeler, *Steamboatin’ Days*, 60.

intimately familiar to a man who had been a pilot, and whose very pseudonym, Mark Twain, comes from the sounding song which meant the water was deep enough for a steamboat to pass safely. Additionally, the story of Lorelei eulogizes those who lost their lives on the river, and explains the murmuring sound of the rapid current as it flows through the narrow portion of the Rhine and around the high rocks of the Lorelei, just as songs like “B’y Sara Burned Down” or the song sung about the tragedy of the riverboat Gold Dust memorialized those ships and their routes.¹²³

Finally, Twain’s description is patterned by event and role. In this description, as in the previous description of *Lohengrin*, these two elements are subsumed by the pattern of genre. The event of travel necessitates that Twain’s description follow a time sequence pattern, but within this pattern the genre of travel literature allows Twain to include digressions about interesting elements of the culture he is describing, such as the problem of translation. Furthermore, Twain as the narrative persona is expected to provide his personal opinion of the places and cultures he visits. Thus, event and role patterning are subject to the overall patterning of genre in Twain’s description of The Lorelei.

Emergence in A Tramp Abroad

Emergence in Twain’s description of Lohengrin. While a performance is expected to follow a pattern, a competent performer must also demonstrate an ability to adapt the performance to the context in which it is performed. Bauman refers to this as *emergence* and suggests that the emergent quality of a performance may involve three structures: textual emergence, event emergence, and social emergence. The texts of Twain’s descriptions are emergent in the degree to which they are able to express an interplay between Twain’s

123. “B’y [Bayou] Sara Burned Down” is about a side-wheel packet that burned along with some members of her crew. *The Gold Dust* was the boat upon which Mark Twain completed part of his journey in *Life on the Mississippi*, and while anachronistic, it is both typical of the memorial folk songs of the river and significant for its connection to Twain’s life.

communicative resources, his competence, and his audiences' goals, within the context of a particular situation.¹²⁴ The same is true of the event and social emergence of Twain's descriptions. The following paragraphs will examine how Twain is able to create emergence within all three of these structures by competently using the communicative resource of setting to entertain his audience through this passage.

By setting his description within the German style of *Sturm und Drang*, Twain is able to explain a facet of German culture by making fun of it and connecting it to experiences available to his audience. The argument is not that Twain's description is tied to some myopic observance of the *Sturm und Drang* style, but that Twain's description is loosely connected to certain conventions of that style, which pattern his performance and allow him to display his competence within a distinctly German style for the enjoyment of his audience. The overarching theme of *Sturm und Drang* is that of the individual struggling to find meaning within a subjective society. As Roy Pascal writes in his book, *The German Sturm und Drang*, "In the Sturm und Drang, all the emphasis is laid on the subjective factor in this dialectical, dynamic interaction of nature (or society) and the individual. It is from the individual that comes the impetus towards action...Activity is not conceived as something opposed to inward development, but as the means to it."¹²⁵ Twain's use of storm and stress to set his description employs three elements of the German *Sturm und Drang*, his description of the young woman, his inability to function within high culture, and his mocking of the same high culture. By exploring these three elements, it is possible to see how Twain's description of *Lohengrin* is textually emergent, emergent as an event, and socially emergent.

Textually, Twain's description is emergent because he uses the idealized young woman of class to display the value of practicality. As Pascal notes, "For one type within the lower

124. Bauman, "Verbal Art," 302.

125. Pascal, *Sturm und Drang*, 307.

bourgeoisie the Stürmer und Dränger showed exceptional sympathy—for the young daughters.”¹²⁶ Twain’s description of *Lohengrin* conforms to this aspect of *Sturm und Drang* through his story about the daughter sitting with her elderly aunt in the box with him and his agent. The young lady holds Twain’s interest because she displays a charm that arises from her unsophisticated and unreflecting simplicity, and she “has all the charm of a self-willed, simple girl, wanting nice things and gaiety, unsure of herself, capricious to others,”¹²⁷ in Twain’s hand she serves as a “criticism of the fashionable feminine ideal” without confinement to the home or an incapability of intellectual companionship.¹²⁸ Twain writes of his box companions:

A gentle, old-maidish person and a sweet young girl of seventeen sat right in front of us that night at the Mannheim opera. These people talked, between the acts, and I understood them, though I understood nothing that was uttered on the distant stage. At first they were guarded in their talk, but after they had heard my agent and me conversing in English they dropped their reserve and I picked up many of their little confidences; no, I mean many of *her* little confidences—meaning the elder party—for the young girl only listened, and gave assenting nods, but never said a word. How pretty she was, and how sweet she was! I wished she would speak, but evidently she was absorbed in her own thoughts, her own young-girl dreams, and found a dearer pleasure in silence. But she was not dreaming sleepy dreams—no, she was awake, alive, alert, she could not sit still a moment. She was an enchanting study. Her gown was of a soft white silky stuff that clung to her round young figure like a fish’s skin, and it was rippled over with the gracefulest little fringy films of lace; she had deep tender eyes, with long curved lashes; and she had peachy cheeks, and a dimpled chin, and such a dear

126. Pascal, *Sturm und Drang*, 62.

127. *Ibid.*, 63.

128. *Ibid.*, 66.

little dewy rosebud of a mouth; and she was so dovelike, so pure and so gracious, so sweet and bewitching. For long hours I did mightily wish she would speak.

And at last she did; the red lips parted, and out leaped her thought—and with such a guileless and pretty enthusiasm, too: “Auntie, I just *know* I’ve got five hundred fleas on me!”¹²⁹

Twain’s description conforms to the textual expectation of the *Sturm und Drang* style by presenting a daughter in the company of her elder. The girl is elegant and refined, her beauty tastefully rustic, as seen in Twain’s comparison to doves, rosebuds, and fish scales. The girl’s silence indicates unease in the face of her betters as she does not comment on the opera or offer anything but assenting nods to the commentary of her elder. And her refusal to satisfy Twain’s desire to hear her speak indicates capriciousness, though it is wholly ascribed to her by Twain. All of these elements conform to Pascal’s definition of the young women of the *Sturm und Drang* who are expected to “have all the charm of a self-willed, simple girl, wanting nice things and gaiety, unsure of herself, capricious to others.”¹³⁰ The text is emergent, though, not because it holds with this style of description, but because Twain uses this style to bring his audience to a point of heightened tension as we wait to hear what the girl will say when she opens her mouth, and then in true Twain style he has her complain about fleas.¹³¹ The girl is ultimately concerned not with the significance of the opera, the solemnity of the scene, or the commentary of her aunt but with the utter triviality of fleas. Twain concludes his evocation of *Sturm und Drang* with this critique of the feminine ideal, which Pascal notes is the purpose of the young daughter character in *Sturm und Drang*, to serve as a “criticism of the fashionable feminine ideal.”¹³² Having

129. Twain, *Tramp.*, 67-8.

130. Pascal, *Sturm und Drang.*, 63.

131. For Twain’s style of composing stories for utmost performative effect, see his essay, “How to Tell A Story” in *The Complete Essays of Mark Twain* ed. Charles Neider, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1963.

132. Pascal, *Sturm und Drang.*, 66.

examined how Twain's description is textually emergent, it is now possible to examine how his description is emergent as an event and emergent socially.

Twain's description is emergent as an event in the way he negotiates the storm and stress of the Opera. Twain's description of the opera is not flattering. He begins by calling the whole thing a "shivaree—otherwise an opera" the "banging and slamming and booming and crashing" of which "were something beyond belief."¹³³ Twain compares the experience to having his teeth fixed, being skinned alive, and "the time the orphan asylum burned down."¹³⁴ He describes a particular tenor's voice as "not a voice at all, but only a shriek—the shriek of a hyena" and wonders if Germans prefer singers who can't sing.¹³⁵ However, through all of this cacophony, Twain concludes that the Germans are "warmhearted, emotional, impulsive, enthusiastic, their tears come at the mildest touch, and it is not hard to move them to laughter."¹³⁶

As Twain negotiates the storm and stress of the German opera, he arrives at a conclusion which is counter to his original conception of the German people, thereby making his performance socially emergent. Through this it is possible to see that Twain's description is emergent in event as it moves through the initial linguistic conquest of the opera itself, to the final portrayal of the German people as something other than what Twain believed them to be. This is Twain's comic performance. He leads his audience to believe that the Germans are cold and dispassionate through their love of an artless stage production, but concludes that they are a deeply sentimental culture due to the way they embrace operatic performance no matter how bad the performance might be.

Emergence in Twain's description of The Lorelei. Just as Twain's description of *Lohengrin* is emergent, so too is his description of the Lorelei. Textually, Twain's description is

133. Twain, *Tramp.*, 63-4.

134. *Ibid.*, 64-66.

135. *Ibid.*, 71.

136. *Ibid.*, 73.

emergent through his display of competence as a commentator and translator of German folk culture. Twain's description is also emergent as an event by means of his competence as a commentator and translator. Twain's audience will determine whether his commentary and translation show competence in comparison to Garnham's version of the story and Garnham's translation of the poem. Finally, Twain's description is socially emergent as his description suggests a reinterpretation of German folk culture.

Twain's description of Lorelei is not just a recitation of the story found in Garnham's book, he also comments on the story. Garnham's text, as Twain presents it, tells us that a beautiful nymph named Lore sat near the Lei¹³⁷ singing like the siren of the Odyssey and luring unwary pilots to their doom on the broken reefs. A young count named Hermann, hearing of the beauty of Lore, wanders near the Lei playing a zither and singing to her. Count Hermann's father, concerned for the health of his son, orders the boy away. Hermann agrees to leave, but first takes a faithful squire and a boat down to the Lei where he sings and plays for the nymph. Here Twain inserts his commentary, saying:

That Hermann should have gone to that place at all, was not wise; that he should have gone with such a song as that in his mouth was a most serious mistake. The Lorelei did not "call his name in unutterable sweet Whispers" this time. No, that song naturally worked an instant and through "changment" in her; and not only that, but it stirred the bowels of the whole afflicted region round about there—for—"scarcely had these tones sounded, everywhere there began tumult and sound, as if voices above and below the water."¹³⁸

137. In Twain's retelling of the story the name of the nymph is Lore and the rock upon which she sat was the Lei. The actual location where this legend is set is named Lorelei, a combination of the two names.

138. Twain, *Tramp.*, 122.

Twain continues the quotation from Garnham, telling that the young count sinks into the depths, but his squire is thrown to safety. Twain's final commentary contextualizes the entire tale as a description of the story of Lorelei and as an opinion of romantic warblers:

The bitterest things have been said about the Lorelei during many centuries, but surely her conduct upon this occasion entitles her to our respect. One feels drawn tenderly toward her and is moved to forget her many crimes and remember only the good deed that crowned and closed her career.¹³⁹

Twain's commentary moves his description beyond the textual confines of telling the story of Lorelei into the realm of emergence as his audience is asked to evaluate Twain's conclusion about Lorelei's character in her final scene. The audience is asked to chuckle with Twain over the Rhine Maiden's drowning of a character whom Twain has painted as an obnoxiously romantic Teutonic knight similar to Sir Robin's minstrels in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* who plague the travelers with their constant song and dance.

After commenting on the story Twain includes two translations of the song Lorelei is said to have sung when luring pilots to their doom. The first translation is performed by Twain and is meant to conform to the tune Twain includes. The second version is a literal translation of Heinrich Heine's lyrics by Garnham. The two translations provided by Twain allow him to discuss the problems of translation. Twain argues that a translation should "exactly reflect the thought of the original," but then points out that an exact translation fails to capture the aesthetic value of the original song because the words no longer fit the music.¹⁴⁰ As Twain's audience reads his description, they must determine whether Twain's translation fits the tune and whether it is more important that his translation fit the tune or convey the exact meaning of the original German. This push for the audience to judge is what makes Twain's description emergent. Twain

139. Twain, *Tramp*., 122.

140. *Ibid.*, 128.

is either a competent translator who provides an amusing commentary on the German Rhine Lore, or he fails as a performer. Thus, Twain's performance is emergent in text and event through Twain's commentary on Garnham's version of the story and through comparison of Twain and Garnham's translations. Socially, Twain's description is emergent in its push for the audience to judge the appropriateness of Twain's commentary on German culture and its translation into the English language. By including not only his own translation of Lorelei but also that of Garnham, and by including the original German lyrics and musical notation, Twain allows his audience to judge his work.

Perspective by Incongruity in A Tramp Abroad

Perspective by incongruity, in this book, is the intentional misuse of metaphorical association to highlight the superiority of Twain's method of description in light of the inferiority of current perceptions. Twain describes German culture exactly as it is not, thus highlighting incongruities and allowing Twain to change his audience's perception of German culture. Twain presents a stolid and phlegmatic picture of German opera, and then comments that the people are sentimental at heart. Twain argues for both the literal and lyrical translations of a popular German folk song. Twain's descriptions are incongruous, but lead us to better understand German culture through the suggestion of a new perspective. By presenting romantic elements of German folk lore through a jaded and realistic lens, Twain leads his audience to a new perspective of German culture as sentimental and artistic.

Twain's textual, event, and socially emergent descriptions of *Lohengrin* and the Lorelei build to the impossible synthesis of incongruity. The storm and stress style of Wagner's opera cannot work in a society which is stolid and phlegmatic. The cultured young lady cannot retain her cultured veneer and speak. The opera cannot be a shivaree and maintain the adulation of its audience. Twain's commentary on *The Lorelei* cannot be good, if it does not reveal some

conclusion about a German folk legend. Likewise, his translation cannot be good if it does not fit the meaning of the original German, yet Garnham's cannot be good without fitting the meter of the song. Ultimately, Twain asks his audience to reevaluate German culture as worthy of high artistic treatment, the argument Wagner makes through his reinvention of opera, and the argument Johann Herder makes in his suggestion for the preservation of folksong in *Sturm und Drang* almost one hundred years before Twain's visit to Germany.¹⁴¹ As Twain's audience is bound to him in these performances of description, they are presented with incongruous descriptions of German culture, and the new perspective Twain suggests is that German culture, when stripped of illusions of European grandeur, is similar to American culture.

141. Johann Herder, an author, philosopher and critic from the *Sturm und Drang* tradition, collected German folksongs for their aesthetic appeal, rather than their cultural significance. For more on this topic see Pascal's chapter, "The Sturm und Drang and the Social Classes" in *The German Sturm und Drang*.

Chapter 4

“A dozen direct censures are easier to bear than one morganatic compliment”: Comic Performance in Mark Twain’s Incongruous Descriptions of Australian Aborigine and the Boer in

Following the Equator

Following the Equator is Twain’s last work of travel literature. At this point, Twain has written of his two trips to Europe, his travels in the West, his trip to the Sandwich Islands, and his journey down the Mississippi. This book begins with Twain’s departure, just like *The Innocents Abroad* and *A Tramp Abroad*, but instead of traveling merely for the sake of traveling as in those two books, in *Following the Equator* Twain is on a lecture tour and the book is his account of the tour. However, the most interesting comparison to his earlier foreign travel works is the change in Twain’s characterization. Twain is no longer the young American dandy out for a pleasure cruise as in *The Innocents Abroad*, nor is he the pleasant tramp “hiking” through the Alps by means of rail cars, rafts, and carriages. The Mark Twain in this last book is older; he has a family and complains of the burdens of failing health as related to age; he is wiser, and he has words of wisdom about the human race to impart to a younger generation; and he is more cynical. Those words of wisdom do not look kindly on the depravity of so-called civilized societies. It is this context which gives rise to Twain’s descriptions of the Australian Aborigine and the South African Boer from *Following the Equator*. In these passages, Twain describes the people of Australia and South Africa using secondary and tertiary sources. By analyzing these passages through comic performance Twain’s descriptions will be shown to undercut the original source material and expose romantic re-visioning on the part of the original authors.

Culturally Specific Keying in Following the Equator

Keying in Twain’s description of the Australian Aborigine. Twain never saw an aboriginal during his lecture tour. All of his information about these people came from his

reading, his conversations, and the rumors he overheard. Despite this lack of firsthand experience with the people he is describing, Twain uses two keying devices to tell his audience that he will perform a description of the Australian Aboriginal. Twain introduces the Australian Aborigine through their device the “weet-weet,” which he describes as:

A fat wooden cigar with its butt-end fastened to a flexible twig. The whole thing is only a couple of feet long, and weighs less than two ounces. This feather—so to call it—is not thrown through the air, but is flung with an underhanded throw and made to strike the ground a little way in front of the thrower; then it glances and makes a long skip; glances again, skips again, and again and again, like the flat stone which a boy sends skating over the water. The water is smooth, and the stone has a good chance; so a strong man may make it travel fifty or seventy-five yards; but the weet-weet has no such good chance, for it strikes sand, grass, and earth in its course. Yet an expert aboriginal has sent it a measured distance of *two hundred and twenty yards*.¹⁴²

The device leads Twain to a question about the acuteness of the race that developed proficiency with such a remarkable instrument. Twain asks what gave the Aborigine, “such unapproachable trackers and boomerangers and weet-weeters,” the “low-rate intellectual reputation which they bear and have borne this long time in the world’s estimate of them.”¹⁴³ This question serves two purposes. First, it serves as a research question. Twain is interested in understanding how a purportedly skilled race could be so underappreciated that they are dismissed as sub-human and pushed to the brink of extinction. Second, this question indicates that Twain is going to answer it with a description of the Australian Aborigine in more detail. Thus, this question, what gave the world such a low opinion of the Aborigine, is the way Twain

142. Twain, *Following.*, 183.

143. *Ibid.*, 184-5.

indicates to his audience that the description which follows is a performance. Therefore, Twain's question is his keying device for the passage describing the Aborigine.

Keying in Twain's description of the South African Boer. Twain introduces the Aborigine through their device the weet-weet, but the Boer Twain introduces through their wars with the English. He takes two chapters to outline the conflict between the Boer and the English, concluding with mention of the Johannesburg gold fields, which leads Twain into his past life as a miner, and when he grows bored with that subject, he gives a description of the Boer as he is, according to Twain. The description is keyed with what Bauman refers to as an announcement of performance:

I had been a gold-miner myself, in my day, and knew substantially everything that those people knew about it, except how to make money at it. But I learned a good deal about the Boers there, and that was a fresh subject. What I heard there was afterward repeated to me in other parts of South Africa. Summed up—according to the information thus gained—this is the Boer.¹⁴⁴

With this final statement, “this is the Boer,” Twain announces to his audience that what follows will be a performance describing the Boer according to the evidence Twain has collected.

Through a question about a people's quixotic ability with a simple toy, and through an announcement, Twain keys his performances of the Australian Aboriginal and the South African Boer. Having examined the means Twain employs to indicate his performance, it is now possible to consider how these keying devices are specific to the culture in which Twain was writing.

Cultural Specificity. The keying mechanisms Twain uses are specific to travel literature because they meet audience expectations and bind the audience to the traveler's performance. Twain's audience expects him to reveal details about the people he observes during his journey.

144. Twain, *Following.*, 356.

Therefore, setting up a question as a result of an interesting report is an appropriate formula for introducing a performance. By formulating an interesting question, Twain binds his audience to the description which follows. Likewise, Twain's audience expects that he will report of strange people or peoples he encounters during his travels. So when Twain discovers a people who are "fresh," his audience expects a description. By announcing the description of the "fresh" Boer, a people who harried the English almost as much as colonial America, Twain binds his audience to his description of the Boer by describing their war with the English. In both instances, the binding of Twain's audience is a facet of his writing within the culture of travel literature, a culture which expects a narrative persona, Twain, to make meaningful the exploits of foreign peoples through linguistic conquest. Twain's audience expects to be entertained by a distinctly American report of Australian Aborigine and South African Boer.

Patterning in Following the Equator

In both descriptions, Twain's performances follow a culturally determined pattern. They are patterned by genre, setting, events, and roles. As has been shown in previous chapters, Twain is writing within the genre of travel literature. This genre patterns the elements Twain chooses to describe and dictates that he will attempt to make the things he describes sensible to an American audience. In both of the passages to be analyzed, Twain's descriptions are patterned by setting because Twain situates his descriptions within the literature about the Aborigine and the Boer. In his description of the Aborigine Twain references Mrs. Campbell Praed's book *Sketches of Australian Life*, Mr. Philip Chauncy's report to the Victorian Government, and the Reverend Henry N. Wolloston's reports from his time as a surgeon. Through these references, Twain builds his description of the Australian aboriginal, and in building his description with reference to these works, Twain is patterning his description according to its setting within these works. Twain's description of the Boer is similarly patterned by setting, but Twain references only the

books of Olive Schreiner, and then he does not employ a proper citation, but an allusion only. Twain writes: “I think that the bulk of those details can be found in Olive Schreiner’s books, and she would not be accused of sketching the Boer’s portrait with an unfair hand.”¹⁴⁵ Schreiner’s works do support Twain’s description, and her body of writing strives to present an accurate description of South Africa for her audience, just as does Twain’s writing.¹⁴⁶

As in Twain’s descriptions from *The Innocents Abroad*, and *A Tramp Abroad*, Twain’s descriptions in *Following the Equator* are patterned by events and roles as a result of their patterning by genre. As Twain travels through Australia, he collects data about the Aborigine of that land and transcribes these data for his audience. The event of his travel, and not the events of his travel, patterns his description because he would not have need of describing the aboriginal if he had not traveled to Australia on his lecture tour. Likewise, as Twain travels through South Africa, he collects accounts of the Boer and transcribes these data for his audience, and he would not have needed to describe the South African Boer if he had not traveled to South Africa. In both instances, the event of Twain’s travel patterns his description by creating a need for Twain to describe in as much detail as possible the people he met or heard of while he was away from home.

Finally, Twain’s descriptions are patterned by his role as subjugator of foreign people to American linguistics. His descriptions betray a uniquely American sentiment, as they are intended to be read by an American audience. Most obviously, Twain describes the Aborigine and the Boer in American English, and not in the slang of the Australians, the Dutch of the Boer,

145. Twain, *Following.*, 357.

146. In the preface to her book *Story of an African Farm*, which Twain mentions on page 364, Schreiner defends her realistic depiction of African life by writing that she cannot include “encounters with ravening lions, and hair-bredth escapes” because: “Such works are best written in Piccadilly or in the Strand: there the gifts of the creative imagination, untrammelled by contact with any facts, may spread wings. But, should one sit down to paint the scenes among which he has grown, he will find that the facts creep in upon him. Those brilliant phases and shapes which the imagination sees in far-off lands are not for him to portray. Sadly he must squeeze the colour from his brush, and dip it into the gray pigments around him. He must paint what lies before him.” Schreiner, *African Farm.*, 42.

or the language of the Aborigine. Furthermore, Twain describes the Aborigine and the Boer in a manner intended to maintain the interest of his audience and “not so much to render faithfully as to invent a scene, to ‘heighten the effect’ for sheer aesthetic pleasure.”¹⁴⁷ Thus, Twain describes the aboriginal who can jump higher, track better, and endure more pain than anyone else in the world, and includes the sardonic remark, “Fenimore Cooper lost his chance. He would have known how to value these people. He wouldn’t have traded the dullest of them for the brightest Mohawk he ever invented.”¹⁴⁸ Twain also describes the Boer with a view to American tastes. Despite the fact that the Boer favor a style of dress and find it appropriate amongst themselves, Twain ridicules their attire, writing of one particular Boer gentlemen:

A gaunt, shakly country lout six feet high, in battered gray slouched hat with wide brim, and old resin-colored breeches, had on a hideous brand-new woolen coat which was imitation tiger skin—wavy broad stripes of dazzling yellow and deep brown. I though he ought to be hanged, and asked the station-master if it could be arranged. He said no; and not only that, but said it rudely; said it with a quite unnecessary show of feeling. Then he muttered something about my being a jackass, and did everything he could to turn public sentiment against me. It is what one gets for trying to do good.¹⁴⁹

By holding this gentleman to Twain’s particularly American style of dress and not the style obviously common to the station-master and public sentiment, Twain patterns his description according to the taste of an American audience who want to know about the strange and exotic people Twain discovers during his journey. While each of Twain’s descriptions follows general patterns required by genre and setting, and through these elements patterned by events and roles as well, his descriptions are also able to adapt to the specific context in which Twain performs.

147. Caesar, “The Other Way around,” 27.

148. Twain, *Following.*, 198.

149. *Ibid.*, 363-4.

Emergence in Following the Equator

As Bauman informs us, emergence is the ability of a performance to follow a pattern, while maintaining a unique quality specific to its textual context, the context of the event in which the performance takes place, and the context of the society in which the performance takes place, thereby allowing the audience to judge the competence of the performer according to a specific performance within a larger pattern of performances.¹⁵⁰ Textually, Twain's descriptions are both emergent in their interaction with other texts. Twain counterpoints his descriptions with the descriptions of others mentioned above. This contrapuntal performance highlights Twain's description as it interacts with the descriptions of others in the same way that Abbot's straight man character highlights Costello's antics.¹⁵¹ Through this interaction, the audience is able to see Twain's competence as a performer within the setting of previous descriptions of Aborigine and the Boer. The event of Twain's description is emergent for the same reason. As Twain's descriptions interact with the descriptions of others, his performance is able to be adjudicated according to the quality of his description when compared to Praed, Chauncy, Wolloston, or Schreiner.

In order for Twain's performance to be judged according to its setting, the descriptions are entwined as follows. First Twain introduces a people, then he comments upon them, then he counterpoints his initial observation with "support" from outside sources that contradict his initial statement. Twain concludes with some synthesizing remark, and leaves his audience to judge the descriptions.

150. Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance*, 37.

151. Abbot and Costello were a comedy team from the early days of film and television, the precursor to more recent situation comedies such as *Seinfeld* or *Friends* where Kramer, Phoebe, or another doltish character becomes sucked into a wildly overblown situation and the straight man Jerry, Monica or another responsible character, has to be a voice of reason.

Twain introduces the Australian Aborigine through the “weet-weet,” which Twain describes as “a fat wooden cigar with its butt-end fastened to a flexible twig.”¹⁵² Twain then comments:

There must have been a large distribution of acuteness among those naked, skinny aboriginals, or they couldn't have been such unapproachable trackers and boomerangers and weet-weeters. It must have been race aversion that put upon them a good deal of the low-rate intellectual reputation which they bear and have born this long time in the world's estimate of them.¹⁵³

Twain then summarizes the perceived failings of the Aborigine with his description of them as lazy, saying: “surely they could have invented and built a competent house, but they didn't. And they could have invented and developed the agricultural arts, but they didn't. They went naked and houseless, and lived on fish and grubs and worms and wild fruits, and were just plain savages, for all their smartness.”¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, the Aborigine did not, in Twain's estimation, sufficiently multiply and subdue their given territory, and even “diligently and deliberately kept population down by infanticide—largely, but mainly by certain other methods.”¹⁵⁵ Twain then describes what he refers to as “the primary law of savages,” which is “if a man do you a wrong, his whole tribe is responsible—each individual of it—and you may take your change out of any individual of it, without bothering to seek out the guilty one.”¹⁵⁶ Twain then explains how the white settlers misunderstand this basic principle, writing:

When a white killed an aboriginal, the tribe applied the ancient law, and killed the first white they came across. To the whites this was a monstrous thing.

Extermination seemed to be the proper medicine for such creatures as this. They

152. Twain, *Following.*, 183.

153. *Ibid.*, 184-5.

154. *Ibid.*, 185.

155. *Ibid.*

156. *Ibid.*, 186.

did not kill all the blacks, but they promptly killed enough of them to make their own persons safe. From the dawn of civilization down to this day the white man has always used that very precaution.¹⁵⁷

Having thus described the aboriginal as an acutely gifted savage who must be exterminated in order to make the frontier safe for white conquest, Twain includes contradictory information from his counter punctual authors.

Twain's depiction of the aboriginal is of a lazy, vile race innocent despite their wrongdoing—they may have done wrong, but it is a fault of their savagery and not due to malicious intent. Mrs. Campbell Praed's description is quite opposite from Twain's depiction. She describes a race which begins as a nuisance, killing livestock but generally staying clear of white advances, but then advancing to insidious attacks on innocent shepherds. Twain, quoting Praed, writes that "shepherd's huts and stockmen's camps lay far apart, and defenseless in the midst of hostile tribes, the Blacks' depredations became more frequent and murder was no unusual event."¹⁵⁸ This does not support Twain's initial suggestion that the Aborigine were generally harmless and attacking only to redress wrongdoing on the part of white settlers; rather, it is a contradiction. Twain then reiterates his description of the Aborigine as lazy savages, and includes further contradictory support from Mrs. Praed: "At Nie Nie station, one dark night, the unsuspecting hut-keeper, having, as he believed, secured himself against assault, was lying wrapped in his blankets sleeping profoundly. The Blacks crept stealthily down the chimney and battered in his skull while he slept."¹⁵⁹ Again, Mrs. Praed describes the Aborigine as an insidious group who are intent on evil. In Twain's last quotation from Mrs. Praed in this passage we are led to understand that "There was treachery on both sides," and Mrs. Praed explains how a settler distributed a poisoned Christmas pudding to his unsuspecting aboriginal neighbors. However,

157. Twain, *Following.*, 186-7.

158. *Ibid.*, 187.

159. Twain, *Following.*, 188.

her exclamation at the end of this story, “Next morning there was howling in the camp, for it had been sweetened with sugar and Arsenic!” suggests a clever trick on the part of the settler rather than the genocide that took place.¹⁶⁰ While Twain informs us that Mrs. Praed would have the settler’s name handed down in contempt to posterity, she does not name him in her story, thus reinforcing the suggestion that the settler performed a clever trick.¹⁶¹ Twain then comments that the settler who poisoned the Christmas pudding was acting in the proper spirit of the white race, though he should have acted without the guise of friendship. Twain suggests that the settler should have stuck with precedent and removed his neighbors through “robbery, humiliation, and slow, slow murder, through poverty and the white man’s whisky.”¹⁶² Twain finally synthesizes his description of the benignly homicidal savage and the ignorant settler with Mrs. Praed’s description of the insidiously homicidal native and the generally noble settler by saying, “There are many humorous things in the world; among them the white man’s notion that he is less savage than the other savages.”¹⁶³

Twain’s performative description of the Aborigine is textually emergent and emergent as an event due to the way Twain has intertwined his description with the descriptions of other authors. Twain began by introducing the Aborigine. After introducing the Aborigine, he commented on them, and voiced his opinion that they were merely savages and incapable of civilized brutality. Twain then supported his position with evidence from outside sources that directly undermined his original opinion. If Praed’s description of the Aborigine is correct, then they are an insidious race bent on destroying the peaceful settlers of Australia. Twain concludes his performative description with a synthesizing remark that trivializes the disparity between opposing descriptions. Therefore, Twain’s text is emergent because it adjusts to the specific

160. *Ibid.*, 189.

161. *Ibid.*, 190.

162. *Ibid.*, 191.

163. *Ibid.*, 192.

context of other writers who have described the Aborigine, and Twain's description is emergent as an event because it adjusts to the event of description and allows the audience to judge Twain's performance according to a larger pattern of performances which describe Aborigine. The further implications of this textual and eventual emergence will be further discussed in a later section dealing with perspective by incongruity. Having examined emergence in Twain's description of the Australian Aborigine, it is now possible to consider emergence in his description of the South African Boer.

Twain introduces the Boer through the Jameson raid, a failed British plot to capture Johannesburg through insurrection and revolt. Twain issues strong condemnation for the British but then describes their opponent, the Boer, as follows:

He is deeply religious, profoundly ignorant, dull, obstinate, bigoted, uncleanly in his habits, hospitable, honest in his dealings with the whites, a hard master to his black servant, lazy, a good shot, good horseman, addicted to the chase, a lover of political independence, a good husband and father, not fond of herding together in towns, but liking seclusion and remoteness and solitude and empty vastness and silence of the veldt; a man of mighty appetite, and not delicate about what he appeases it with—well satisfied with pork and Indian corn and biltong, requiring only that the quantity shall not be stinted; willing to ride a long journey to take a hand in a rude all-night dance interspersed with vigorous feeding and boisterous jollity, but ready to ride twice as far for a prayer-meeting; proud of his Dutch and Huguenot origin and its religious and military history; proud of his race's achievements in South Africa, its bold plunge into hostile and uncharted deserts in search of free solitudes unvexed by the pestering and detested English, also its victories over the natives and the British; proudest of all of the direct and effusive

personal interest which the Deity has always taken in its affairs. He cannot read, he cannot write; he has one or two newspapers, but he is apparently not aware of it; until latterly he had no schools, and taught his children nothing; news is a term which has no meaning to him, and the thing itself he cares nothing about. He hates to be taxed and resents it. He has stood stock-still in South Africa for two centuries and a half, and would like to stand still till the end of time, for he has no sympathy with Uitlander notions of progress. He is hungry to be rich, for he is human; but his preference has been for riches in cattle, not in fine clothes and fine houses and gold and diamonds. The gold and the diamonds have brought the godless stranger within his gates, also contamination and broken repose, and he wishes that they had never been discovered.¹⁶⁴

In this passage, Twain describes the Boer through a long list of descriptors. Each item in the list points to a flaw in the person of the Boer.¹⁶⁵ The length of the list and the nature of the offenses builds to a fully repulsive picture of the Boer. Then Twain suggests that the lawmaking of the Boer is a direct result of the characteristics listed above, and states that the British Uitlanders are ignorant for expecting anything other than hostility and ignorance from such a group of people. Having completed an initial description of the Boer, Twain next undercuts his description.

Twain next counterpoints his own material by quoting two passages from his journal. Just as in Twain's description of the Australian Aborigine, there are discrepancies in this performance of description. Unlike the description of the Aborigine, though, Twain does not highlight the discrepancies by citing an additional author as subversive support for his description. In Twain's first journal entry, he comments:

164. Twain, *Following.*, 356-7.

165. Even hospitality becomes a negative characteristic, as the Boer is thereby forcing his repugnant squallier on his guest.

[T]he ancient Boer families in the great region of which this village is the commercial center are falling victims to their inherited indolence and dullness in the materialistic latter-day race and struggle, and are dropping one by one into the grip of the usurer—getting hopelessly in debt—and are losing their high place and retiring to second and lower. The Boer’s farm does not go to another Boer when he loses it, but to a foreigner. Some have fallen so low that they sell their daughters to the blacks.¹⁶⁶

This negative description of the Boer is then followed with what Twain calls a “positive” description of them. Twain writes:

Dr. X told me that in the Kafir war fifteen hundred Kafirs took refuge in a great cave in the mountains about ninety miles north of Johannesburg, and the Boers blocked up the entrance and smoked them to death. Dr. X has been in there and seen the great array of bleached skeletons—one a woman with the skeleton of a child hugged to her breast.¹⁶⁷

This so-called positive view of the Boer reinforces Twain’s comment at the conclusion of the passage about the Australian Aborigine, that all men are savages.

Twain’s performative description of the Boer is textually emergent and emergent as an event because of Twain’s intertwining positive and negative descriptions of the Boer. Twain begins by introducing the Boer. After introducing them, he comments negatively on them, highlighting their slothful, brutish, oppressive behavior. Twain then counterpoints his description with a second description that claims to show the Boer to be a positive civilizing force in South Africa. By labeling the two descriptions as negative and positive, Twain forces his audience to reconsider the civility of the White race, just as in his description of the Australian Aborigine.

166. Twain, *Following.*, 359.

167. *Ibid.*

Therefore, Twain's text is emergent because it adjusts to the specific context of the Boer, and Twain's description is emergent as an event because it adjusts to the event of description and allows the audience to judge Twain's performance according to a larger pattern of performances that describe foreign people. The further implications of this textual emergence and emergence due to event will be further discussed in a later section dealing with perspective by incongruity in *Following the Equator*.

Finally, Twain's performances in these two passages are socially emergent in that they hold implications for the social order. Twain's conclusion that all men are savages, asserted plainly at the conclusion of his description of the Australian Aborigine, and alluded to again in his description of the Boer, suggests that Twain's audience should rethink their high and lofty rank amongst the earth's passengers. Twain's descriptions highlight the incongruity of man's perception of himself as civilized and advanced, thus leading Twain's audience to a new perspective. As Twain concludes, "Human pride is not worth while; there is always something lying in wait to take the wind out of it."¹⁶⁸

Perspective by Incongruity in Following the Equator

Perspective by incongruity in Twain's description of the Australian Aborigine. In the discussion of emergence in Twain's description of the Aborigine, no further implications of Twain's textual emergence and emergence due to event were considered because the implications rightly belong in the discussion of perspective by incongruity. The audience of Twain's description is left to judge the appropriateness of Twain's description of the Aborigine. If Twain's description is correct, then the Aborigine have been horribly mistreated by the settlers, but if Praed's description of the Aborigine is correct, then they should be rounded up and shipped to a penal colony where they can no longer abuse the blighted settlers. The intertwining

168. Twain, *Following.*, 382.

of the two descriptions does not allow the audience to synthesize them because they are too incongruous. Therefore, Twain forces a final synthesis on his readers with his concluding statement, “There are many humorous things in the world; among them the white man’s notion that he is less savage than the other savages.”¹⁶⁹ This statement is the new perspective Twain shifts his audience towards. If it is impossible to accept a benign homicidal maniac, then our perception must shift to understand how Twain is able to wrench the notion of homicide from a social flaw to a social norm. The only way for the audience to understand how a friendly settler could lace a Christmas pudding with arsenic in order to murder his neighbors is for the audience to gain Twain’s perspective and see that all men in their natural state are savages, regardless of the color of their skin. This same conclusion is also supported by an analysis of perspective by incongruity in Twain’s description of the Boer.

Perspective by incongruity in Twain’s description of the South African Boer. In the discussion of emergence in Twain’s description of the Boer, it was noted that Twain labeled his final descriptions as negative and positive. The first, labeled a negative description of the Boer, describes their current disreputable state wherein they are losing their jobs, their homes, and their children. Twain’s second description, which claims to be a positive view of the Boer, should highlight the ingenuity of the Boer, that is, the steps they are taking to reclaim their jobs, homes, and children. Instead, Twain describes how the Boer ruthlessly sealed fifteen hundred refugees in a cave and suffocated them to death, men, women, and children. Twain’s labeling of this description as positive highlights an incongruity in our view of these people. By wrenching the term “positive” out of its original context and metaphorically applying it to what we today call genocide, Twain is requiring his audience to reconsider their perception of themselves and

169. Twain, *Following.*, 192.

suggesting that we consider man's inhumanity to man the proof that there is no such thing as civility.

In Twain's final work of travel literature, he carries the reader to the far reaches of the world in order to show that mankind is the same savage creature, whether he lives in a civilized settlement in Johannesburg or an Australian hut. By examining Twain's descriptions of the Australian Aboriginal and the South African Boer, this study has seen how the performative nature of these descriptions argued that his audience should rethink their high and lofty rank amongst the earth's passengers. Twain's descriptions highlight the incongruity of man's perception of himself as civilized and advanced, thus leading Twain's audience to a new perspective. Twain required his audience to reconsider their perception of themselves and suggested that humanity should be more humane.

Chapter 5

“None of us can have as many virtues as the fountain-pen, or half its cussedness; but we can try”:

Some Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Research

In the first chapter, I reviewed Kenneth Burke’s tool of *perspective by incongruity*, by placing that tool within Burke’s concept of the *comic frame*. I suggested that Burke developed his concept backwards, beginning by explaining the comic frame in the book *Permanence and Change* and then explicating the elements of the frame in the later book *Attitudes Towards History*. In order to avoid following Burke’s reversed order, I situated this entire study of Twain’s performance within the comic frame and then used Burke’s tool of the comic frame, *perspective by incongruity*, to unlock the social implications of Twain’s comic performance. In this way, it was possible to analyze Twain’s descriptions as a series of moments with every moment, and the events of that moment, existing within a self contained framework without reference to a unifying *monas monadum*—a master principle connecting singular metaphysical entities. It would normally be impossible to analyze a text in this way, but because Twain’s descriptions fit within the performative framework proposed by Richard Bauman, it is possible to see each description working as one discrete performance which culminates in a moment shifting perspective brought about as a result of perceived incongruity. By analyzing Twain’s descriptions in this way, it was possible to see how each description progressed to an implication for social structure.

In order to understand the implications of the comic frame on this study of Twain’s descriptions of places, cultures, and people in his travel literature, it will be helpful to (1) review the comic frame, (2) reconsider the placement of this study within the comic frame, (3) examine the specific implications of Twain’s comic performances in each of the analytical chapters, and (4) consider some suggestions for further research.

Through the comic frame one is able to see things as both participant and spectator, but in order for one to use this ability one must be able to reason beyond the level of childish theses—statements of mere fact such as one might hear in a kindergarten class where argument and rebuttal consist of “did so,” “did not.” In order to use the ability granted by the comic frame one must be able to reason syllogistically, using the tools of the market place. Burke writes: “The comic frame, in making a man the student of himself, makes it possible for him to ‘transcend’ occasions when he has been tricked or cheated, since he can readily put such discouragements in his ‘assets’ column, under the head of ‘experience.’”¹⁷⁰ What Burke is saying is that a person viewing life from the comic frame is able to fully engage in a description which falsifies an object, and simultaneously identify the falsified elements of the description in order to better understand the full dimension of the object. Thus, Twain’s descriptions, when placed in the comic frame, allow a critic to fully suspend disbelief while at the same time critically engaging the descriptions through a form of folk-criticism which consists of the “metaphorical migration of a term from some restricted field of action into the naming of acts in other fields.”¹⁷¹ “In sum,” writes Burke, “the comic frame should enable people *to be observers of themselves, while acting.*”¹⁷² If the critic participates in Twain’s descriptions of foreign places, cultures and people through the eyes of a jaded, backwoods character then the critic sees that the descriptions and the things described are incongruous with romantic re-visionings of the places, cultures, and people. The critic can then observe that Twain’s performance highlights the superiority of his realistic style of description for conveying a holistic view of the places, cultures, and peoples described.

To summarize, the comic frame is an attitude towards history which considers the human person as a fool caught in his mistake. When viewing history through this attitude, one is able to see history both as a participant and as a spectator. The ability to see history as both a participant

170. Burke, *Attitudes Toward History*, 171.

171. *Ibid.*, 173.

172. *Ibid.*, 171.

and a spectator requires one to understand scientific-causal relationships. The tool for exposing these relationships is perspective by incongruity, which is a “method for gauging situations by verbal ‘atom cracking’...a word belongs by custom to a certain category—and by rational planning you wrench it loose and metaphorically apply it to a different category.”¹⁷³ In order to better understand the use of the comic frame and perspective by incongruity, the following paragraphs will consider how and why the study diverges from previous uses of the frame and tool. Having reviewed the comic frame, it is now possible to briefly reconsider why the study was situated in the comic frame in the first chapter.

This study examined Mark Twain’s travel literature from within the comic frame in order to understand the social shifts Twain was suggesting through his performative descriptions. By approaching criticism from within the comic frame this study engaged Twain’s writings as participant in and observer of perspective by incongruity. Because firsthand accounts of others’ perspective shift were unavailable, casting the study in the comic frame allowed for a study of Twain’s use of incongruity as both participant in the shift of perspective and observer of the planned incongruity. This placement of the study within the comic frame allowed the critic to analyze the internal incongruities of the text in order to understand how the author intended to shift audience perspective.

In *The Innocents Abroad* Twain placed old depictions of Lake Como and The Sea of Galilee in their proper place as eulogies, and allowed his new descriptions to take the place of the old as more accurate visions of those two places. As the audience accepted Twain’s disenchanted reports, willfully suspended disbelief in previous travelers’ reports, and accepted Twain’s final corrected descriptions, he was able to suggest a change in societal perception of Lake Como and The Sea of Galilee. Twain’s new perception created a median of description which

173. Burke, *Attitudes Toward History*, 308.

acknowledged the literary or historical significance of the place yet provided an accurate description of the place as he perceived it.

In *A Tramp Abroad* Twain's textual, event-oriented, and socially emergent descriptions of *Lohengrin* and the Lorelei build to the impossible synthesis of incongruity. The storm and stress style of Wagner's opera cannot work in a society which is stolid and phlegmatic. The cultured young lady cannot retain her cultured veneer and speak as her girlish and naïve self. The opera cannot be a shivaree and maintain the adulation of its audience. Twain's commentary on *The Lorelei* cannot be adequate if it does not reveal some conclusion about a German folk legend. Likewise, his translation cannot be accurate if it does not fit the meaning of the original German, yet Garnham's cannot be accurate without fitting the meter of the song. In both instances, Twain's competence as a performer, his ability to satisfy the expectations of his audience related to a culturally specific performance, is an argument for a change in social perceptions. Twain asks his audience to reevaluate German culture as worthy of high artistic treatment, the argument Wagner made through his reinvention of the opera, and the argument Johann Herder made in his suggestion for the preservation of folksong in *Sturm und Drang* almost one hundred years before Twain's visit to Germany. As Twain's audience was bound to him in these performances of description, they were presented with incongruous descriptions of German culture, and the new perspective Twain suggested was that German culture, when stripped of illusions of European grandeur, was similar to American culture.

In *Following the Equator* Twain's suggestion that all men are savages, asserted plainly at the conclusion of his description of the Australian Aborigine, and alluded to again in his description of the Boer, argues that his audience should rethink their high and lofty rank amongst the earth's passengers. Twain's descriptions highlight the incongruity of man's perception of himself as civilized and advanced, thus leading Twain's audience to a new perspective. The

audience of Twain's description is left to judge the appropriateness of Twain's description of the Aborigine. If Twain's description is correct, then the Aborigine have been horribly mistreated by the settlers, but if Praed's description of the Aborigine is correct, then they should be rounded up and shipped to a penal colony where they can no longer abuse the blighted settlers. The only way for the audience to understand how a friendly settler could lace a Christmas pudding with arsenic in order to murder his neighbors is for the audience to gain Twain's perspective and see that all men in their natural state are savages, regardless the color of their skin. This same conclusion is also supported by an analysis of perspective by incongruity in Twain's description of the Boer where he labels his final descriptions as negative and positive. Twain's labeling highlights an incongruity in our view of these people. By wrenching the term "positive" out of its original context and metaphorically applying to what we now call genocide, Twain requires his audience to reconsider their perception of themselves and suggests that we consider man's inhumanity to man proof that there is no such thing as civility.

Through this progression from Twain's first self described pleasure cruise aboard the *Quaker City* to his last lecture tour around the world the objective of Twain's performance undergoes a notable change. Initially Twain is a free young man who slips off ship and tours Grecian ruins by night, who travels the desert in a caravan, who is interested in seeing the places he has only read about in books. This is the Twain who describes Lake Como and The Sea of Galilee in *The Innocents Abroad*. The objective of his performance was to more accurately portray places and simultaneously proclaim their historic and literary significance. While this is an interesting objective, it is not as significant as the objective of Twain's performance in *A Tramp Abroad*. Valuing German culture is a loftier objective not only because it requires additional adroitness on Twain's part, but also because this objective deals with a more significant topic. While Twain humorously incorporates the voices of several previous travelers

to Italy and the Middle East in his first travel book, in his second he not only incorporates voices, but he does so while evoking the style of the culture he is describing. This sophisticated narration enhances Twain's performance, and echoes the significance of culture over landscape. When Twain describes *Lohengrin* and the legend of Lorelei, he emphasizes the importance of German culture and connects it to American culture thereby raising the cultural awareness of his audience. However, both of these objectives pale in comparison to Twain's objective in his final book. In *Following the Equator*, Twain abandons clever narration and focuses his performative energy on the problem of social morality. The message that universally man is a savage beast is not one that a young roustabout could have made. The Twain of this last travel book is older, wiser, more curmudgeonly, and more conscious of the world than either of his earlier narrative selves. With this rise in consciousness Twain was elevated from a mere pleasure tourist or cultural savant and became an international moralist.

By reviewing the conclusions of these analytical chapters, it is clear that Twain is able to suggest social changes through his performance of description. In *The Innocents Abroad*, Twain argues that we should consider prior descriptions of Lake Como and the Sea of Galilee as literary or historical descriptions and not literal descriptions of place. In *A Tramp Abroad*, Twain argues that we should consider German culture as a fully formed culture, the simpatico of American culture. In *Following the Equator* Twain argues that we should consider all humans as equally uncivil and immoral, regardless the pigment of skin. By analyzing Twain's descriptions within the comic frame, it was possible to reach these conclusions about Twain's descriptions and to see how Twain brings his audience to these conclusions through the use of Bauman's framework for performance.

Having considered the implications of this study, the following suggestions could expand on the work completed here and further the rhetorical tool of comic performance. First, this study

was limited in scope to specific representative passages from three of Twain's books. Future study could consider one single book in greater detail, analyzing all of the instances of descriptive performance. Furthermore, this study was limited to a focus on Twain's foreign travels. Future study could consider Twain's domestic texts as well, specifically looking at how Twain corrects misperceptions of the South through *Life on the Mississippi*, and how Twain corrects misperceptions of the West promulgated by Fenimore Cooper.

In addition to further study of Twain's literature, comic performance, as a method of rhetorical criticism, should be used to analyze artifacts other than the type of texts analyzed here. For example, there is a great deal which could be learned from an analysis of standup comedy using the comic performance tool. It would be possible to consider how artists such as Bill Cosby, Dmitri Martin, or Woody Allen use comic performance to persuade their audiences to change society as a result of new perceptions gained through incongruity. The rise in popularity of standup comedians at the Edinburgh International Festival Fringe, the political, social and ethical nature of their material, and the lack of scholarly scrutiny of their performances indicate that this would be an ideal field for further study using the tool of comic performance. Finally, shows such as *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, *The Colbert Report*, *Saturday Night Live Weekend Update*, and *Saturday Night Live Weekend Update: Thursday* would benefit from analysis using the rhetorical tool of comic performance. These entertaining texts appear to have a profound impact on social consciousness surrounding current issues, and the tool of comic performance could explicate the means these texts employ to reach their audiences

Mark Twain was a master story teller, and his descriptions of foreign lands, cultures, and people are able to argue for new perspectives. Despite the power of these arguments, Twain's books remain enjoyable means to escape from the world over here and experience Europe, the Middle East, Australia, and Africa from the comfort of one's own armchair as if one were really

trudging up a mountainside and gazing at a Alpine lake. Through the power of his performance, Twain impacts his audience, contemporary and current, in its view of culture. As we read about *Lohengrin* and Lorelei we are presented with the value of German lore and its connection to our own folk culture. Finally, as Twain's performative descriptions reveal the origins of apartheid, we see the master story teller as master moralist, and his performance reveals the implications for all mankind of man unkind.

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