

THE USE OF THE PERSONA

BY FOUR AMERICAN

HUMORISTS

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study is devoted to an analysis of a literary device, the persona, as it appears in and informs the work of four American authors: Henry Wheeler Shaw, Charles Parrar Browne, David Ross Looke, and Sainuel Langhorne Clemens. Clemens is the greatest writer of the four, but even his work has not, until recently, been studied closely for its utilization of that character projection of the author known as the persona. Various studios, to be cited subsequently, have called attention to parallels between these four writers and their respective character creations, but almost all of these studies have been primarily biographical, on the one hand, or explicatory, on the other, and thus none has focused solely on the artistic device itself.

As is true with many other literary elements, the history of the persona is dated in the classical tradition. One of the finer discussions of the persona, offered by M. M. Leberman and Edward E» Poster in their book Modern

Justin Kaplan's biography of Mark Twain entitled Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1966) approaches his life through a recognition of the duality which developed in the personality of Clemens himself before his death in 1910.

Lexicon of Literary Terms, traces the term from its origins in the Roman theater when it referred to character masques worn by the actors, to its refined and sophisticated usage in the eighteenth-century satire, and on into twentieth-century fiction criticism. Although they remark that "whenever anyone speaks through a literary creation, he does so through a created self which is only a more or less accurate representation of this full personality," such a broad interpretation is too extensive for use in this thesis.

Since the establishment of the eighteenth-century periodical essay in England, the term persona has traditionally applied to the various literary facades from which authors have cryptically surveyed and satirized their respective societies." The use of the facade, masque, or persona emerged with the rise of neoclassicism and the aloof and impersonal English neoclassical frame of mind. Its popularity among the writers is attested by the numerous pseudonymously written and addressed essays that flooded England during the controversial Restoration period of Charles II after 1660. With the country divided into liberal (Whigs) and conservative (Tories) factions,

Tl. M. Leberman and Edward E. Postor, Modern Lexicon of Literary Terms (Chicago: Scott, Foresman 1964), p. 39.

^Ibid., pp. 8a-89

writers plunged out of the literary woodwork of private lords and nobles, and became hired political propagandists for both parties,^

Among the prominent essay media and news pamphlets which were attempted but failed are included Defoe's Review (1709-1713), Addison and Steele's Tatler (1709-1711), their Spectator (1711-1712), and Dr. Johnson's Rambler (1750-1752) and Idler (1758-1760).^ Defoe's Review approached but never achieved the literary refinements of the Addison and Steele papers, and some critics prefer not to include it in a formal list of the eighteenth-century periodical essays. For purposes here, however, the Review is significant, for even in its chattiness, it sparkled with the presence of "Mr. Review," one of the earliest personas developed in this period.

Four other publications which followed in the same century, however, far outshadow Defoe's simple and scanty little paper. The Tatler and Spectator loom largest in the line-up of periodicals of the period. Addison and Steele

^Donald B. Clark, *et al.*, English Literature; A College Anthology (New York: Macmillan, 1960}, p. 301.

^Ibid.

For two excellent analyses of the Addison and Steele papers, as well as a fair treatment of the eighteenth-century periodical essay in general, see J. A. Stone, Periodical Essays of the Eighteenth Century (London: Oxford University Press, 195^; and George S. Marr, The Periodical Essayists of the Eighteenth Century (New York: Appleton, 1921].), pp. 21-51f,

treated their public parchment with several delightful and perky characters who pecked and probed the Londoners' social sentiments and trivialities. George S. Marr, who, in his book The Periodical Essayists of the Eighteenth Century, calls the Tatler "the first real essay periodical," remarks that "no other paper, with the exception of the Spectator itself, which followed immediately, can vie with it for varied interest." It was also the first medium, despite Defoe's Mr, Review, to employ a well developed persona. Steele borrowed a title from Swift for his character-spokesman, and it is through him, one Isaac Bickerstaff, whom Marr describes as a "benevolent old bachelor," that Steele emerged as a prominent satirist.

However, it was the Spectator, known for its "balance and restraint," that surpassed Steele's Tatler for literary charm and intimacy. Marr remarks:

The general scheme of the Spectator shows less artificiality than the Tatler. It was published daily, and the eidolon reappeared in the first number where the Spectator himself is introduced. But note how chary of detail is the account given. No individual name is applied to the Spectator, he has only general characteristics which are vague and impersonal—he is a 'silent man,' goes everywhere and talks little, and thus he is not tied down to any particular line of conduct. In any case the Spectator is never really obtruded—he is only *nomini umbra*. . . . The second number of the Spectator gives a

^Karr, p. 21.

^Ibid., p. 22.

draft of the characters by Steele, but practically the only one which is developed is that of Sir Roger de Coverley.⁹

The character development of Sir Roger is important for this study, for it was he who became one of the most prominent literary creations of the English eighteenth century. Marr traces his development from an idea of Steele.

The character of Sir Roger had originated with Steele, but was never developed, and we owe to Addison almost the whole of the thirty papers which deal with various aspects of Sir Roger's character, and more particularly with his family, and chooses a chaplain; his fox hunting; his Tory politics; his adventures with the gypsies round his country-seat; and his conversations in Gray's Inn walks; his reflections on the tombs in Westminster Abbey, and his remarks at the playhouse, are all related to us with perfection of style and humour, and finally an account is given of his death and legacies.¹⁰

Sir Roger is by far the firmest model of comparison with those personae employed and developed for political and other reasons in nineteenth-century American literature. But a third and fourth periodical, developed much later in the eighteenth century than the Tatler and Spectator, are also worth mentioning, even if only briefly. They are, of course. Dr. Johnson's highly Latinized Rambler and Idler. The eidolona or spectral personae in both were, as Marr describes them, characters with the "very vaguest descrip-

[^]Ibid.

^{^^}Ibid., p. 31..

tion." What is significant about them is that they both broke somewhat with the established tradition of one-sided political interpreters.¹² The little-developed persona evident was relatively free from political stigmas which characterized Addison and Steele's colorful and congenial, but serious figures.

The purpose of the eighteenth-century periodical essay was primarily satiric, but all of the authors of the period realized the value, if not the necessity, of light, witty, and humorous treatments of their subjects. Obviously, they did not see themselves in the business of producing moral tracts, Steele's purpose was, as he expressed it in the preface to volume one of the Tatler, "to expose the false arts of life, to pull off the disguises of cunning, vanity, and affection, and to recommend a general simplicity in our dress, our discourse and our behavior." -^ But as J. A. Stone remarks in his book periodical Essays of the Eighteenth Century, "Steele realized that to belabor men and women with a heavy moral cudgel was the least effective way of trying to reform them," ^ Comparing the essays of Steele with those of Johnson, Stone comments, "Sincerity,

^^4bid., p. 125.

^lost critics of Johnson characterize his essays as more moralistic than political.

•^^Stone, p. 22.

%bid.

good humour, and manliness, radiate from his /Steele'^7 essays." But Johnson's humour. Stone continues, "is by no means so light-hearted, and at times we can detect a fairly strong vein of sarcasm." -^ Such a heaviness and weighty moralizing may v/ell be the reason why Johnson's essays never reached the popularity of the Spectator or **the Tatler**, the original series of v/hlch had long since passed from the London scene.

Needless to say, the persona contributed to the varying successes of each of the periodicals, and both critics have recognized the development of Sir Roger do Coverley as one of the primary reasons for the Spectator's unchallenged position as the most artistic as well as most popular vehicle for the essay among the virtual library of periodicals of the time.

The effect of the persona in other areas of literature has also been noticeable. The most obvious influence can be seen in the eighteenth-century English novel. Both Fielding and Sterne utilized the form as a narrative device in their respective books Tom Jones and Tristram Shandy. And even the poets have borrowed from the successes of the periodical persona. Several studies have been made, for instance, on the poetry of W/ordsworth, and a similar

•^^Ibid.

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Leberman, p. 90.

analysis could be made for several contemporary poets and their works.

Not unlike eighteenth-century England, nineteenth-century America was peculiarly ripe for satire and the possible use of the persona. Like eighteenth-century England, nineteenth-century America was an unstable place; America was a country marked by monumental achievements in scientific and industrial technology, and stirred by mass migrations across the breadth of the continent. It was a time of striking contrasts. It was the era of the self-made men like Bunker, Astor, and Vanderbilt; but it was also an era when company teamwork brought together the Pacific and Atlantic shores. It was a time when thousands of immigrants swarmed over the Mississippi River and beyond in search of a newer way of life, and they changed the face of the West. Concurrently, the culture of the East was being metamorphosed by changing customs, traditions, and regional peculiarities. The turbulence of this maturing, expanding nation produced a rigorous individualism which celebrated the common man. Frontier demands of survival had first fostered such an outlook, and subsequently, such thinkers as Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman had provided it with a philosophical basis. From the dynamism of both the national temper and the individual temper there developed, quite gratuitously, the kinds of contrasts and disparities that invite satire, and thus the scene was set for the

talents of the American recorders, her literary men.

The first important writer to make use of the persona in American literature was Washington Irving, with his mysterious old Diedrich Knickerbocker of the History of New York (1809). True, almanacs and tracts and various periodicals had been pseudonymously published in New England during the eighteenth-century development of popular periodical

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journalism in England, ' but Irving's History must be recognized as the first significant use of the device in a major American work. Diedrich Knickerbocker, the pretended author of the History, was the product of the whimsical and elusive imagination of the youthful Washington Irving and that of his older brother, William. At the time of the publication of the History, Irving had already established himself among the New York readers with the successful run of Salmagundi, a periodical essay developed and published by William and Washington Irving, and James Kirk Paulding.

The creation of old Knickerbocker and the History was a hoax. Irving, a natural wit and acute satirist, had

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'A few notable periodicals which maintained a degree of popularity at various times throughout the eighteenth century in the American colonies included The New England Courant (1721-1727), The South Carolina Gazette (1732-1775), The Virginia Gazette (1736-1790), The Independent Reflector (1752-1753), and The American Magazine and Monthly Chronicle (1757-1858).

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Although Salmagundi was extremely popular among New York readers, it was discontinued, nevertheless, after only one season between 1807-1808.

eagerly awaited an opportunity for the creation of a rather poignant satire directed at the society he knew best, that of New York.^{^^} The Hlatory, as first conceived by the collaborating team, was to have been a lengthy mock history of the entire world culminating with the discovery of Aznerioa and its subsequent development. It was to be the story as told by Knickerbocker, a fictional but realistic, weathered old professor of history modeled after figures popular in legends of the New York area, the old Dutchmen drawn so comically in the Histo3:*y itself.²⁰ He was first introduced to the New York community on October 26, 1809, when the following notice, a reasonable journalistic description of the educator, appeared in the New York Evening Post:

Distressing

Left his lodgings some time since, and has not since been heard of, a small elderly gentleman, dressed in an old cocked hat, by the name of Knickerbocker. As there are some reasons for believing he is not entirely in his right mind, and great anxiety is entertained about him, and information concerning him either at

^{^^}A History of New York, ed. Edwin T. Bowden (New York: Twayne, 1965)* pp. ^-9.

For a vivid analysis of the character and role of Knickerbocker in Irving's A History of New York, see William Hedges' publication Washington Irving: An American Study; 1802-32 (Baltimore: Tho Goucher Press, *lohn* Hopkins University Press, 1965)> VV* 65-87.

the Columbian Hotel, Mulberry-street, or at the office of this paper, will be thankfully received.²¹

Two other letters followed before the actual release of the History on December 6, and one actually attested the observation of the old man's tramping through New York "much fatigued and exhausted." Both were written by Irving. The hoax was perpetrated with some questionable success, but it was bought by the New York people, and the History became a milestone in American literature.

The Knickerbocker History is significant in this study for two reasons. First, it was, as Professor Beers of Yale University called it, "the first American book in the lighter departments of literature which needed no apology and stood squarely on its own two legs." ^ But secondly, and more important, the History ushered in with the personification of numerous humorous devices which would, according to Lewis Leary, author of an introductory pamphlet Washington Irving, "characterize American humor from Sam Slick through Mark Twain to Faulkner." ^ The "extravagance, mock gravity, and massive irreverence," cited by Leary,

^ Friedrich Knickerbocker's History of New York, ed. John T. Spector (New York: Heritage Press, 1970)* p. xvi.

Tbid., p. XV,

-Henry A. Beers, An Outline of American Literature (New York: Chautauqua Press, 1917), p. 911

^ Lewis Leary, Washington Irving (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1963)* p. 77

define the personality, outlooks and point of view of Diedrich Knickerbocker, and are, of course, reflections of the attitudes of young Irving himself.

Diedrich was for a time a successful persona and a rather transparent one for Irving. But he was not a pliable creation, and in time he became shocking to an older, tempered, and more socially minded Irving. -^ Had Irving elected to employ his persona functionally in other works following the History, alteration would have been unquestionable. (As it was, he simply used Knickerbocker's name and supposed historicity to identify for his readers material dealing with the Dutch background of New York; an example of this appears in the subtitle of some editions of "Rip Van Winkle," "A posthumous Writing of Diedrich Knickerbocker," and in the headnote which re-introduces the fictitious Dutch historian to readers of a later generation.) The satire of the History belonged as much to the persona as it did to the young Irving, and he, not the persona, had changed dramatically. Because Irving had apparently grown to see old Knickerbocker as rigid, fixed, and permanent in traits and temperament, to have used him in later work would have been virtually impossible. He shared the

'^For an interesting account of Irving's reservations about the History by the 181⁸ authoritative edition, read Clarence M. Webster's "Irving's Expurgation of the 1809 History of New York," American Literature, ij. (1932), 293-293f and Irving's own remarks in the "iipology" which appeared in the 181⁸ edition.

problem with many other satirists of his day and with those to follow him in the same century, not to mention the most outstanding one of them all, Samuel Clemens with his controversial and enigmatic persona, Mark Twain.

Lowell, the second important American writer to use the persona, unlike Irving, adopted a flexible figure which was useful in satirizing social elements separated by more than two decades. And unlike Irving's Diedrich Knickerbocker, Lowell's persona, Hosea Biglow, was adapted from a different popular image, that of the New England Yankee, the rustic farmer and witty sage, whom, as Miss Tandy *of* describes him, everybody "recognized and chuckled over."

Even before the writers discovered the Yankee, he had been long known to the folk tradition, and his rough outlines were already sketched by the time the literati were prepared to paint his various portraits for the gallery of fictional figures in American literature. Ironically, America's finest critics and literary creators had claimed, for almost two hundred years, that there was nothing in America, no tradition indigenous to the American experience, worth the consideration and efforts of her writers. This particular view was upheld even in the nineteenth century by such acclaimed writers as Cooper and Hawthorne. Yet

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Jennette Tandy, Crackerbox Philosophers in American Humor and Satire (Port Washington: Kennikat Press, 1961), p. 16; originally published in 1925 by Columbia University Press in New York.

there emerged from the American mind and consciousness a kind of persona, a masque, a caricature of the American whose rising and development is traced by such noted authorities in the field of American humor and American studies as Constance Rourke, ' Walter Blair, and

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Jennette Tandy. ' The unanimously recognized figure is the New England Yankee.

The Yankee, the native American type and caricature, developed on his own from the reality and legend of a group of people whose fame and infamy followed the wagons, log roads, and pack trains through the rugged wilderness.

Already renowned and celebrated in such a historical figure as Benjamin Franklin, and soon to be presented in such fictional creations as Sam Slick and Jack Downing, the Yankee by 1800 was a popular American figure which was soon to

tramp through pages of popular literature and across the American Humor: A Study of the National Character (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1931) reprinted in a Doubleday Anchor paperback edition in 1953 from which all references in this study have been selected. See her chapters "Corn Gobs Twist Your Hair," "The Gamecock of the Wilderness," and "Strollers," for a thorough study of the New England Yankee.

^Native American Humor (New York: American Book Company, 1937); reprinted in a more readily accessible 1960 Chandler paperback edition from which all references here are derived. See his chapter entitled "Down East Humor," pp. 38-62,

^Tandy, pp. 1-61{..

stages of various theaters throughout the country.[^] When the maturing American image became too pushy, aggressive, smug, proud, or belligerent, it was critically chastised by the maturing national conscience. Almost every important American writer of the nineteenth century had his own delineation of the Yankee, but that of James Russell Lowell was not only one of the sharpest but—more important for the purposes of this thesis—provided the most immediate and influential forerunner for the personae of Shaw, Browne, Locke, and Clemens.

Hosea, it seems, was drawn straight from a Down-Easterner's backyard, Lowell first utilized his Yankee's characteristic devices of "turns of phrase, the homely allusions, the dry-lipped sarcasm, /and7 the native exaggeration incongruously coupled with tight understatement" as campaign material, and secondly, as war propaganda.[^] Lowell, "the Yankee of Yankees," had assumed the role of the Northern interpreter of certain national interests and issues, listed by Miss Tandy as "the results of the Mexican War, the problems of Southern migration into the regions across the {Mississippi, of planters' control of Congress and the presidency /of General Taylor, a Southern slave holder

^{-^^}Rourke, pp. 91-114..

^{^-^}Tandy, p. 17.

and influential war hero7»" Hosea was extremely popular in the North, though many Southerners felt with Edgar Allan Poe, that his creator, "Mr. Lowell /was7 one of the most radioal of the Abolition fanatics."-^^ But popular or unpopular Hosea was a prototype for a whole generation of literary personae.

During that subsequent generation, four men—Henry V/heeler Shaw, Charles Parrar Browne, David Ross Locke, and Samuel Langhome Clemens—arose almost simultaneously to help record and criticize (each in his own way) the nineteenth-century American experience while, at the same time, tickling Americans into a heightened awareness of nationality. All of them, with the exception of Clemens, reached peaks of popularity during the 1860's. Each of them, being schooled in journalism, first achieved fame through the medium of newsprint, and each eventually made contributions to hundreds of newspaper columns across the country. Each of them adopted a pen name which, after numerous editorials and articles, became readily associated with recognizable features carefully constructed and arranged by the imaginative authors. Like Diedrich and Hosea before them, each became in time an effective persona which provided centers of attention with manipulatable points of view, an effect

^^Ibid., p. [i4.

^^Edgar Allan Poe, "Lovrell's 'A Fable for Critics'," *Works*, VI, 2lj.0-2i|.9; reprinted in Tandy, p. 1^6.

successfully achieved earlier by the eighteenth-century English writers already discussed.

Two basic points of comparison for the uses of the four personae developed are rather evident. First, each writer considered himself a humorist (with the possible exception of Locke), and each approached the public through that identity. *Even* Locke's trenchant satire, however, was successful primarily because of its comic persona which served as its mouthpiece. Secondly, they all viewed themselves (especially Locke) in different degrees as satirists or at least moralists. Furthermore, as has been suggested by several critics, all *four* were tied to an American heritage which was solidifying and taking shape, and all could turn to Irving and Lowell who had, in their respective ways, ushered in the nineteenth-century satiric frame of mind. And each owed something to Irving and Lowell for both the satiric and humorous devices which they used, expanded, and perfected during their reigns over the nineteenth-century field of humor.

It seems appropriate at this time to make some mention of the methodology used in the arrangement of this thesis. An analysis of Henry Wheeler Shaw is presented first in an approach that considers an order of complexity rather than the chronology of each creation as it appeared in the nineteenth-century American literary scene. A chronological approach, if adopted, would move from

Browne's Artemus Ward, and pass respectively through Shaw's Josh Billings, Locke's Petroleum V. Nasby, and Clemens' Mark Twain. Such an approach can be justified, for each author built, in some degree, on the successes and failures of the others. Yet, to analyze the personae in their order of complexity seems somewhat less plodding, and will justify perhaps the depth and care taken in the analysis of humorous and satiric devices. Needless to say, where chronological data and relationships are reflected in the development of each persona, ample discussion will be given.

CHAPTER II

TOBACCO PHILOSOPHY

One of the influential institutions on the American frontier, indeed, throughout the whole nation in the 1860's, was the newspaper. In each new town the newspaper office ranked high among the social centers along with the general store, the post office, the court house, and the church. All four writers under consideration owe their initiation into the field of comic literature first to the pages of small, local independent newspapers and subsequently to the syndicated columns of national journals. It was an Englishman, the anonymous critic who wrote the Introduction to Josh Billings: His Works, Complete (1876), who first pointed out clearly the significance of the presses in the successes of various American writers:

In America a popular author has much more scope for gaining publicity and popularity than he has in England, The newspapers of the Union are always ready to attach the author's name to them. The great secret of the success of Artemus Ward and of Josh Billings is simply that which the late Albert Smith of England so well understood years ago, never to publish any article, however trivial or lengthy, without the signature or initials of the writer to it. A smart, terse, pungent paragraph inserted with the author's real or assumed name attached, in one of the Journals in the United States, soon finds its way from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the Gulf of St. Lawrence to

the Gulf of Mexico. . . . The wit of the Western world soon gains notoriety, if not fame.³¹

As the success of each of the writers indicates, the progress to comic stardom followed a relatively standard pattern. After the initial recognition of the writer, the next step upward was an invitation to submit material, on a regular basis, to some well-known literary magazine. If he could succeed on this level, then the comic artist was often only a step away from the lecture halls of the country which provided a more lucrative market for his principal wares: his comedy and persona.[^]

Unlike the other three humorists, Shaw came to comic Journalism late in life, having already established a career as auctioneer and realtor in Poughkeepsie, New York. Several studies, however, including articles, introductions, and at least one biography[^]-[^] which pictures Shaw's background, indicate it was almost predictable that Shaw should eventually wander into the field of humor.

Shaw was born April 21, 1818 (fifteen years before Browne and Locke, and seventeen years before Clemens), in

[^] Anon, ed., Josh Billings: His Works, Complete (New York: Carlton, 1876), p. xxv.

[^]Tbid., pp. xxv-xxvi.

^{^^}Donald Day, Uncle Sam's Uncle Josh (Boston: Little, Brown, Co., 1953)* p. 3. Day cites as his most important source Cyril Clemens' biography of Shaw, Josh Billings, A Yankee Humorist (Webster Groves, Mo.: International Mark Twain Society, 1932).

Laneboro, Massachusetts, to a prominent New England family, a family which boasted a noted surgeon, a successful Congressman, and several representatives of the landed gentry*
 In his book Uncle Sam's Uncle Josh, Donald Day indicates Shaw was a carefree boy, irresponsible toward his family and about his own education, a boy who, after his first year at Hamilton College, strayed away from home with the good wishes of his father and a ten dollar bill, and set out with some new friends to tramp about the Western frontier.

A practical joke which helped end his career at Hamilton was only one of several pieces of horseplay that colored his early life.-^ Day records what was probably Shaw's first experience as a lecturer, sometime around 1835 or 1836, in a prank that netted him both his first public image and his first paycheck. The stunt occurred in Napoleon, Ohio, where he and his two friends delivered a burlesque lecture on mesmerism, a subject for which there was much enthusiasm at that time.-^'

Odd jobs carried him from town to town, and the jokes and pranks which he played along his itinerary helped create for him a rather notorious reputation which was to float mistily in a somewhat shrouded past to which Shaw's later writings allude only occasionally. Tired of the West, he

^ ^ay, p. 11. Shaw had stolen the clapper from the chapel bell.

^ ^ibid., pp. 13-114-

returned home at the age of twenty-three, as Day records,

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"without money or position."-^ Unknown to even Shaw himself, the old moral philosopher, "Josh Billings," had already made his first appearance, even if a crude one, before the public, and he had been a success.

Back home again, he rewarmed a childhood love affair, and in 1815, running away from Massachusetts to Lebanon, New York, he and his first love, Zilpha Bradford, were married. That the marriage was successful proved invaluable to Shaw in the development of a rather stiff and conservative view of women from which he would later satirize less than "homey" female images prevalent in the later nineteenth century.

A father by *iQSkf* Shaw moved his family to Poughkeepsie, New York, the eventual hatchery of Josh Billings, and he set about establishing himself in the community as the auctioneer for the town and as a realtor. It was here that he soon began "dabbling" in humorous sketches and articles.^ The remainder of his life belongs to the history of American literature, for by the early 1860's, Shaw had casually begun his belated literary career.

His first attempts at writing were short, pithy humorous sketches written in cacography, a form of misspell-
 ^^Ibid,, p. 19.

-^Some authorities say 1858,

^ W . p. 33.

ing often used in imitating dialect.^ ^ Journalistic in tone, Shaw's sketches, written under the pseudonym of "Effren Billings," reported what was supposedly happening in the area of poughkeepsie,^ The dialect v/as amusing but was also uncomfortable and demanding on the reader. Responding to the encouragement of numerous friends in the community, Shaw elected to submit to local newspapers further pieces v/hich deleted the characteristic cacography. These works sported the pseudonym of "Sledlength." These early efforts rewarded Shaw with praise and acclamation, but his success was only local.

Most critics now consider "Essa on the Muel" his first significant work, although the response to its first appearance was not encouraging. V/hat Shavr had omitted from the first version v/ras the dialectal spelling which served to complement the rusticity of the country "author" of the sketch. Shaw discovered his mistake when he observed Artemus V/ard scoring a nationwide success with a piece quite similar to his ovm but written in dialect. Shaw reworked the sketch v/ith the result that a Boston paper cordially accepted it and rewarded him with a royalty check for \$1.50. Shaw recognized his success, hovrever meager the financial returns, and commented on it v/ith his well-known

-^ The first successful use of the device can be seen in the works of Lowell in the Biglow Papers, and Charles Augustus Davis' "Major Jack Dovming" sketches.

phrase, "I think I have touched oil." He had.

Emerging from "An Essa on the Muel bi Josh Billings" was the first appearance of the figure that would crystalize into the persona of the old Josh Billings of literature and stage. This early image is shrouded in many of the devices characteristic of most successful nineteenth-century American humor: cacography, faulty grammar, exaggeration, and nonsensical logic. The sketch is not noticeably satiric, and is usually taken as the prelude to what Day refers to as "Uncle Josh's Zoo," a menagerie of miscellaneous comic sketches on a multitude of rather unremarkable creatures of the animal kingdom. As Day and others recognize, Shaw later used the animals as metaphors of human nature. Only one remark in the entire essay alludes to mankind in general, so that the essay must be seen simply as a burlesque of the animal and not man.

A glance at the essay reveals a short, terse paragraph which begins credibly enough, but ends in incongruous allusions and metaphors.

The mule is haf hoss, and haf Jackass, and then kimis to a full stop, natur discovering her mistake. Tha weigh more, akording tu their heft, than enny other kreeter, except a crowbar. Tha kant hear enny quicker, nor further than the hoss^ yet their ears are big enuff for snow shoes.M-2

^Ibid., p. 35.

^Thonry V/heeler Shaw, Josh Billings, His Sayings (New York: Carloton, 1865)# PP* 13-15.

After a description of mules, their diet, and the fact that "tha sell for more money than enny other domestik animile," Josh dwindles into nonsense. He remarks, "If tha ever die tha must kum rite tu life agin, for i never herd nobody sa »ded mule', and Enny man who is willing tu drive a mule, ought to be exempt by law from running for the legislatur."^^

Josh ends the essay with an anecdote reminiscent of the tall taler of the frontier:

I herd tell ov one who fell oph from the tow path, on the Eri kanawl, and sunk as soon as he touched bottom, but he kept rite on towing the boat tu the nex station, breathing thru his ears, which stuck out ov the water about 2 feet 6 inches.W

As typical of most frontier tales, which were passed from one story spinner to another, this anecdote was not original with Josh; for, as Josh continues, we learn that "i never knew an auctioneer tu lie unless it was absolutely convenient."^-^ H© relates the incident in full faith of its possibility, but with a twinkle in his eye.

''•^ibid.

^Shav;, p. |||»—Kenneth Lynn cites frontier boasting, exaggeration, and the tall tale as kindred means employed by settlers in coping with the hardships of the frontier; Mark Twain and Southwestern Humor (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1959), p. 26; see also Constance Rourke's chapter "The Gamecock of the Wilderness," in American Hiomor; A Study of the National Character, pp. 37-69.

kS Ibid.

One reference to mankind in the "essay" gives only the slightest hint of what would evolve later in his sketches and aphorisms as Shaw's pessimistic attitude toward the human race. The remark comes somewhat incidentally midway through the sketch. Jose drawls, "Tha are like sum men, very korrump at harte;"[^] but that is all. Like some of the other elements in this sketch, this attitude would become a trademark of his later work.

The cacography is intended, as mentioned, but it is noticeably xansystematic and inconsistent. Only a few words such as "tremenjis" for tremendous, "at tall" for at all, "paster" for pasture, "hoss" for horse, and "kanawl" for canal may smack faintly of New England dialect,[^] but his major reason for using cacography is simply humor.[^] Needless to say, nineteenth-century readers found the device extremely funny. Other words, however, such as "tha" for they, "kould" for could, "enny" for any, "herd" for heard, "rite" for right, "reddy" for ready, and "kums" for comes,

^{^^}Ibid., p. 13.

[^]Carroll E. Reed in Dialects of American English (New York: V/orld Publishing Co., 1967) traces the various American dialects in the United States, and gives credence to several dialectal spellings employed by Shaw; see pp. 29-36.

[^] The nineteenth-century American public was, ironically, a pseudo-sophisticated society in large, vjwhich liked to consider itself somewhat above such crudities as cacography.

are obviously phonetic rather than dialectal spellings, common-sense, natural philosopher which Shaw had in mind and had developed slowly through his earlier sketches.

Popularity came rapidly for Shaw, and he began concentrating all his efforts on his humorous sketches, which he published in numerous newspapers and journals. After his revision of "An Essa on the Muel," it was immediately seized and published by three comic journals: Nick Nacks, Yankee Notions, and Budget of Phun.^ ^

Well established in the New England area as a comic writer, Shaw began to be besieged with invitations to appear before the public, and, like other comic lecturers of the period, he offered himself to what he hoped would be a responsive, enthusiastic America. Miss Tandy remarks, however, that his first efforts in 1836 were dismal failures.^ Ho simply was not well enough known outside the extreme Northeast despite the fact that his work had been published nationally.

It was not until the 1870's that Shaw became a successful lecturer in the guise of his persona. Josh Billings.

Bowing to the fate of nearly all comic men in his native country, Mr. Shaw was ferreted out in his Poughkeepsie home, and urgently solicited to accept an engagement as a public lecturer. He tried the experiment in the Athenaei;ims and Lyceums of his ovjn state, and

^^Tandy, p. ip,

succeeding, followed up his new calling until now he is recognized as an established, legitimate, and lucrative "show," having his proper value in the market, and is assigned status on the rostrum. He travels over the united states with his Lectures, entitled "Hobby Horse"—"Specimen Brix"—"sandwiches"—"What I kno about Hotels"—etc., and is making money more rapidly than ever he did with the hammer of an auctioneer.⁵¹

Like Clemens, who followed him, Shaw was haunted by a nineteenth-century concept of duty and morality, and by the vague suggestion that a profession as a mere humorist offered the public only foolishness and insincerity. The lyceum circuit was cloaked in the heavy gold braid of men like Emerson and Henry Ward Beecher, as well as many lessor spiritual and moral revivalists, and the realization that the public was being entertained only, and not morally rectified for their time and money, left both himiorists chilly. Their shivers of doubt were not dispelled either, by the pompous Bostonian critics who held sway over almost all American literature.

Shaw felt, then (perhaps more strongly than any of the-other three humorists), an obligation as a moralist, and it was possibly for this reason that he turned to humorous satire. Critics of Shaw were quick to recognize his ability and purpose, as the following quotation illustrates:

^{^1}
xxvii. "[^] Shaw, Josh Billings: His Works, Complete, pp. xxvi-

In directing his shafts against humbug, pretension, and falsity, he worthily carries out the true vocation of the comic writer. Many authors there are who write funnily merely to amuse. There is always a higher purpose peeping out from among the quaint fancies and odd expressions of Josh Billings* Just inasmuch as America is prolific of humorists and satirists, does she require them. The jpbane and the antidote grow in the same garden.-^

By the time of the publication of his first book.

Josh Billings: His Sayings (1865)* Shaw had gone far in solidifying his theory of humor. "Pun," Josh remarks in an essay entitled "Pun," "iz a safety-valve that lets the steam pressure off from the boiler, and keeps things from bursting."-'-' Comedy is, then, a psychological and social device for the relief of tension. Such a philosophy suggests at least one role of the comic humorist. But to Shaw, humor was even more valuable than as a mere release of tension. At the very foundation of humor rested wisdom. "Humor," says Josh in his "Hints to Comic Lecturers," "iz wit with a rooster's tail feathers stuck in its cap, and wit iz wisdom in tight harness."-^^ Humor, wit, and wisdom—all three elements define his concept of the humorist's role. Shaw gradually began to see himself as a kind of minister, offering, in a real sense, his parish a salve for its soul.

-^rcbid., p. XXX.

^^Ibid., p. 93.

^^bid., p. 90.

"No man can be a healthy phool," he continues, "unless he has nussed at the brest of wisdom."^- That Shaw believed this is evident from the abundance of aphorisms he published throughout the remainder of his life in the "show business." In fact, aphorisms and moral paragraphs became stock features of his later and most noted works, and helped distinguish him from other contemporary comedians,⁵⁶

Artemus Ward is great in telling a story, having an imaginative power to conceive an accident, plan the action of a piece of drollery, invent an odd character, and describe his creation with infinite humor and force. The talent of Mr. Shaw is of another kind. He is aphoristically comic, if I may use the phrase. He delights in Tupperizing laughingly, and in causing an old adage to appear a new one through the fantastic manner in which it is dished up. He is the comic essayist of America, rather than her comic story-teller.⁵⁷

Old Josh Billings was to be basically a serious character, a comic figure gravely responsible to his audience, a brooding comedian, "solemn as an owl,"-^ who understood the distinction between glib exhibitionism and wit. About

^^Ibid.

^ Tandy makes the distinction along with others between the moralists Ward and Billings, and the true satirists. Twain and Nasby; pp. 156-157*

^^Shaw, Josh Billings: His V/orks, Complete, pp. xxviii-xxix.

^^Bill Arp on Josh Billings in C. H. Smith's The Farm and the Fireside.

lecturing, particularly "comik" lecturing, he was quite apprehensive, as the following remarks, again from "Hints to Comik Lekturers," testify:

Most enny body thinks they kan do it, and this iz jist what makes it so bothersum tew do. . . • Whenever a man haz made up hiz mind that he iz a wit, then he is mistaken without remedy, whenever the publick haz made up their mind that he haz got the disease, then he haz got it sure.⁵⁹

Shaw never underestimated the authority of the audience. It was they, the viewers, who, in the final analysis, determined the success or failure of every would-be "comik" lecturer.

It iz a very pleazant bizzness tew make people laff, but thare iz mutch odds whether they laff at you, or laff at what yu say. When a man laffs at yu, he duz it because it makes him feel superior to you, but when yu please him with what yu have uttered, ho admits that yu are superior *te|i* him.⁶⁰

As his own interpretation of the himiorist's purpose, even his understanding of the nature of humor, jelled, Shaw slowly began to form and mold the figure of Josh. In the maturation of the "Josh Billings" persona, two distinct periods are discernible: the period of the literary persona, and the period of the staged persona.

⁵⁹shaw. Josh Billings: His Works, Complete, pp. 89-90.

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 91.

Although the literary persona exists in no other place than the written page, it is, nevertheless, never absent from the imagination of the reader. As an entirely verbal creation, it conveyed only verbal images to stimulate the imaginations of the readers. In the works of all our writers under consideration, the literary persona emerged first, only to metamorphose in the second period for the lecture stage. With the actual appearance of the personage behind the persona, some faulty impressions accidentally conveyed through verbal imprecision were dispelled. But if the literary persona had been honestly drawn from reflections of the author's own personality, then the merger of the literary and the stage personae would be fairly smooth. Such was the case with the development of Josh Billings. From a literary beginning—and it is safe to assume that the "Josh Billings" persona begins with "An Essay on the Muel"—Shaw conveyed an image that would be complemented by his own appearance after 1863 when he began his lecture tours.

The only exception to this is to be found in Josh Billings: His Sayings, Several sketches within the text as well as the frontispiece to the book picture Josh as anything but the burly, hairy, mustached pulpit pounder depicted in his anthologies and "Allminax," The frontispiece presents a slim and trim young man of perhaps thirty years; he is a Yankee in appearance, wearing checkered pants, a top-coat and billowy bow-tie, slapped around a high collar, and is sitting with a baby on his knee (reminiscent of the warmth of "The Fust Baby," an essay in the book). He is giving a new lecture, *i-rj.th* a multitude of insects hovering about the wreaths of smoke puffing from his clay pipe. The inscription below reads, "Josh Billings

The persona, used by satirists or moralists such as Shaw, afforded for the author a kind of immunity from public criticism and reactions. Indeed, the more vituperative the persona, the more valuable to the principal was the secrecy provided by the masque. On the other hand, speculation about the author's real identity added flavor and appeal to the persona, and for several months following the first publications of *Josh*, numerous names, including

at home—Preparing his new Lecture."

Three other rather crude illustrations in the book do little to enhance the image conveyed by either the frontispiece or the imago of Shaw himself. One entitled "Josh Billings drives out to the races" (p. 97), portrays a corpulent knave in a top-coat trying to contain some spirited horses bent on routing him and his carriage. A second picture (p. 115)⁹ slightly resembles the frontispiece caricature, but this one sports a thin, rigid mustache, and the whole charcoal calls to mind an emaciated Dutch worthy from the pages of *Knickerbocker's History of New York*. The caption reads, "Josh Billings goes bathing at Long Branch." The third sketch, purporting to be a portrayal of Josh, pictures him standing in a pulpit in front of a political rally. With disarrayed hair resembling a rooster tail, spectacles riding over his eyebrows, a long, blunt nose protruding belligerently from a round, paimchy face, "Josh" is leaning out over the audience with his hand raised in a dofisint gesture. "Politics All Right," stamped across the seat of his pants, decorates v/hat appears to be comparable to a mechanic's uniform of today. Again the portrayal is incongruous with the frontispiece and Shaw.

Such vague outlining of caricature, as demonstrated by the sketches above, are hardly significant to the reader of *Josh Billings*. One doesn't approach his book for its pictures, but for the pit and fiber of its wit. Any discussion of the pictures hero is simply to indicate that by the first publication, Shaw was not yet a nationally recognized presentation of the literary persona. Yet, in spite of the sketches, the traits of Shaw and those of Josh were all the same, and, as Shaw's fame spread, would present no problem for the audience's acceptance of them both as the same creature.

Abraham Lincoln's, were suggested as possible authors of "Josh Billings." (Lincoln replied that his shoulders "were hardly broad enough to bear the burdens of the State, without having to carry the sins of all its wits and jesters.")⁶² Once Shaw's identity was discovered, however, the merger of the literary and stage personae was effected, and Shaw and Billings became inseparable. A comparison of the photographs of Shaw with the illustrations in Josh Billings: His Works, Complete (1876), demonstrates the complete transformation and merger after only ten years. His editor makes this observation:

Better fortune led me at last to meet Mr. Shaw in New York City. We were introduced to one another at Artemus Ward's Mormon entertainment on Broadway. I found a man rather above in the middle height, sparse in build, sharp in features, his long hair slightly turning gray, and his age between forty and fifty, reserved in manner, a rustic, unpolished demeanor and looking more like a country farmer than a genial man of letters or a professional wit and public lecturer on playful subjects.⁶³

A shift in the makeup of the persona is one element of its maturation, but it is only a minor shift. More significant changes occur in two other aspects of the persona: the subject matter with which it concerns itself and the treatment of that subject matter.

That Josh Billings, like the personae of the other

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Shaw, Josh Billings: His Works, Complete, p. xxii

^^Ibid., p. xxiv.

three authors, was a satirist is unquestionable, and like the others, he dressed his criticisms in the garb of humor. But his satire differs from the others' in two respects. First, Shaw's treatment of his subject matter was never as intense as were the treatments of his three contemporaries. The adjectives scathing, invective, vituperative, trenchant, and chastizing—words which may well describe certain satiric forays of Nasby or Twain—certainly do not apply to Billings' criticisms. Second, Josh's darts were not usually aimed at contemporary issues and social idiosyncrasies, but rather struck at human nature and human motivation, both abstract considerations which could be treated with less complexity than those of the other authors. As a common sense philosopher of human nature. Josh drew pictures of simple, stereotyped lives in a democratic society. When he chose to attack specific flaws in mankind, he wrote not about prominent individuals who manifested such flaws, but rather challenged certain categories or types which deviated from his concept of an ideal man; hence, his essays on the "Pompous Man," "The officious Man," "The Henpecked Man," "The Fault Finder," "The Loafer," and so the list goes on.^{6k}

[^]All of these essays are to be found in Shaw's Josh Billings: His Works, Complete. The practice of using the brief essay construction for all of these satiric sketches was established early in his first published works and continued to appear from time to time throughout the remainder of his publications.

Josh's view of mankind is pessimistic and reflects traces of orthodox Calvinism of the seventeenth-century American Puritans. Instead of a Calvinistic dichotomy of good and bad, however, the caricatures that emerge are more often divided between the wise and the foolish. As the abundance of his material grew, his comments became more openly caustic, and the nonsensical, notable in a good quantity of his early work, appeared less and less. Besides this shift in tone there was a shift in form from the comic essay to the witty aphorism upon which his fame came to rest.

Although Josh Billings: His Sayings contains few actual attacks on the nature of man, those which do appear are poorly disguised and loom up somberly among his otherwise jocular work like dark shadows on a gaily painted wall, Josh declares in "Proverbs of the Billings Family":

Man was kreated a little lower than the angeles and has bin gittin a little lower ever since, Akordin tu skripter thar will be just about as many Kammils in heavin as rich men. 65

And in "Remarks":

The fust man who v/as born inter the vmrld, killed the sekund one, and i aint sure but it vmd hav bin a good plan if the *men* had tuk their turns at killing ever sinse, 6D

^Shavr, Josh Billings: His Sayings, pp. 82-83.

^^Ibid., p. 7k'

In all men Josh sees the brutish element, and he concludes that the only sure method of keeping mankind in line is with the proverbial rod:

The onla sure resipee tev/ govern mankind with, iz the rod; yu ma festoon it with flowers and case it with velvet, if yu pleze, but it iz the rod, after all, that duz the bizzness.0*7

That he has little faith in man's ability to govern himself is beautifully illustrated in one of the clearest, least cluttered of his essays, a piece, quoted in part below, entitled "A Short and Very Affekting Essa on Man":

Man iz a problem not yet solved, made out ov dirt, and smells ov the material. He wuz given a butiful hum, clus tew the borders ov heaven, the fruit and the flowers waz planted for him, and the sweet waters were led along hiz futpath, birds sung onla for him, and women was bilt tew make hiz joy kimplete, ,0 The lam laid her hod on the lion's buzzum, and the viper knu not ov his sting. Guile there waz none, fear there waz none, even hope thare waz none, for there waz nothing tew want, . . . , Man waz created tew govern a world ov ruggidness, and he couldn't dew it bi being as harmless as a dove; he must have a touch ov a good sized sarpent in him, or ho would have lived, he and hiz wife, growing butiful and useless, forever in the Garden of Eden, Man never waz bilt for the Garden of Eden; he waz onla put thare tew see its buty, but not tew enjoy it till he had arnt it, . . . V/e awl long tew be thare asleep.

^^Ibid.

In Josh's Old Farmer's Allminax he remarks that "thare may cum a time when the lion and the lam will lie down together--i shall be az glad to see it az enny boddy--but i am still betting on the lion,"

but if God don't take us in hiz arms, as forward children are taken, haw few thare will be, who will ever git hum, Man iz the problem, God iz the solution.⁶⁹

Two other primary sources. Josh Billings: His Works, Complete and Josh Billings' Old Farmer's Allminax, provide examples from his late writings that demonstrate an even more intense concentration on human nature. Josh's increasingly frequent use of the aphorism in Old Fanner's Allminax, and subsequent work, was a judicioiis shift in form, for the aphorism proved to be his forte. Tho selec-tions below illustrate his proficiency in this genre.

Man iz mi brother, and i konsider that i am nearer related tew him through hiz vices, "Q than i am through hiz virtews. (July, 1871)

It **iz** so natral to phind fault, that i wonder wo are suited with ennything. (September, 1875)

Thare iz nothing we are more apt to parade before others, than our kares and sorrows, and thare iz nothing the world kares so little about. (December, 1875)

If yu want to git a fust klass situashun in sum alms house, giv all yur property to yure children before yu die. (February, 1876)

What a man gits for nothing, he iz very apt to value just about what it kost. (June, 1877)

I hav seen men so fond ov argument, that they v/ould dispute with a guide board, at the forks

^^Shaw, Josh Billings; His Sayings, pp. 97-100.

"^ No pages are numbered in the Almanac, V/hen a date is omitted as well, accurate documentation is virtually impossible. Such is the case for nuinerous essays printed opposite monthly astrological reports.

ov a kuntry road about the distance to the next toun—what fools. Josh Billings, (n.d.)

Total depravity iz a hard thing for me to believe, but i must say, that i often meet cases that wouldn't pay more than 5 per cent for roktifying. (July, 1878)

Self-made men are most alvms apt tew be a little too proud ov the job. (May, 1873)

Vrtien a man gits tew talking about himself he seldom fails tew be eloquent, and frequently reaches the sublime. (July, 1873)

Life aint much more than a farce ennyhow, but it iz quite necessary that the play should go on, and the farce be well ackted. (February, 1877)

For all of Josh's misgivings, he was not always negative in his appraisal of the human scene. He did occasionally affirm his faith in the kind of person he felt v;as worthy of the title of human being. The following is the most explicitly affirmative statement to be found in any of his material:

"Things That Suit Me"

I like an aimabel man, (not one who will let yu spit on him) but one who don't want tew spit on enny boddy else.

I like a stirring man, (not one who stirs up musses,) but one who haz got sumthing tew dew and duz it. • . .

I like a gritty man, (not a dirty one), but one that pitches like a frog oph a saw log, no matter how deep the water iz.⁷¹

If one v:ere to judge from Josh's remarks about certain

⁷¹ Shaw, Josh Billings; His Sayings, pp. 171j--176.

female types, one could mistakenly conclude that he was a **misogynist**. Notice **the** stringency of his observations, **for example**, on the coquette and the prude:

V/hen a flirt really falls in love, she iz az powerless az a mown daizy. 72

A coquette in love iz az tame az a bottle ov ginger pop that haz stood sum time with **the** cork pulled.out.73

Coquets make better wives than Prudes do, but thank the Lord, thare iz bettei! ones in the market than either ov them.'^

The Prude

It iz the prudes in this world that need the most v/atching. coquets are too kareless to be dangerous.'5

Prudery iz often like the chestnutt-burr: it duz seem as tho it never would open, but by and by it yields tew the frost, and lets the fruit drop out,'0

Qu,—^Did you ever hear an old maid prattle about the falsity ov man, the grate risk thare waz in having one, the bliss thare waz in being boss ov one's self?

"^haw. Josh Billings: His V/orks, Complete, p, 57.

'-^Shaw, Josh Billings' Old Farmer's Allminax, January, 1871.

%bid, , n.d.

"^^Ibid., n.d.

"^^Ibid., June, 1872.

Ans,—It seems tew me that i hav, and i have alwus felt az the old virgin waz taking medicine awl the time she waz saying it, ' '

But such character vignettes, along with those on suffragettes, old maids, and conniving women are efforts to expose the female deviants from normal familial relationships. It was not that he liked women less but that he cherished the family more, as his essay entitled "Marriage" so aptly illustrates:

History holds its tongue who the pair waz who fust put on the silken harness, and promised tew work kind in it, thru thick and thin, up hill and down, and on the level, rain or shine, survive or perish, sink or swim, drovm or flote.

But whoever they waz they must hav made a good thing out ov it, or so menny ov their posterity would not hav harnessed up since and drov out.

Thare iz a grate moral grip in marriage; it iz the motar that holds the soshull bricks together.

But there ain't but darn few pholks who put their money in matrimoney who could set down and giv a good written opinyun whi on arth they cum to did it.

This iz a grate proof that it iz one ov them natral kinds of acksidents that must happen, jist az birds fly out ov the nest, when they hav feathej?s enuff, without being able tew tell why.^8

Having placed woman in the family context and having made his proper obeisance to the sanctity of the institu-

' 'Shaw, Josh Billings, His V/orks, Complete, p. 68.

'^^Ibid., p. 36.

tion of marriage. Josh can safely confess his occasional bedazzlement by the feminine mystique. Despite the irony that occurs when lyrical sentiments are expressed in semi-literate, colloquial style, the following passage remains a romantic eulogy of womanhood:

Menny essays hav bin *vrcit* on the natur ov woman, setting forth her aspirashuns, her genius, her impulses, the delikate mechanicks ov her pashuns, the aroma ov her heart, the soft leading strings ov her dispisishun, the cast iron fortitude ov her resolves, and the lurid glare ov her love and her hate.

I hav read menny ov these, only tew be more solid in mi long cultivated opinyon, that woman and her character in the limip, iz like the ranebo in the East, butiful beyond language, full ov promis and imposible tew paint.

In mi philosophy, rude and untutored, i call woman the lesser light, the moon, gentle as an angel, stealing softly along the buzzum of the skey on an errand ov love, light for the hour ov darkness, pashunt watcher while the world sleeps, queen ov night, jeweled with stars.⁷⁹

Thus far, the development of Shaw's persona, "Josh Billings," has been traced from its emergence in a rough form in "An Essa on the Muel," to its maturation in Shaw's comic literature and lectures. Also considered has been Shaw's pragmatic theory of comedy and its control over Josh's humor. Last, Shaw's comic but moralistic treatments of certain stereotyped caricatures of mankind has been discussed. The remainder of this study is devoted to Shaw's

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 353.

Secondary satiric treatments, his use of several nineteenth century humorous devices popular among humorists of the day, and Josh's final decline as a workable comic figure and persona.

As indicated above, Shaw's satiric remarks were usually aimed at character types or human nature generally. Inevitably, however, he had to take into account some of the concepts and issues that concerned or affected his characters. These are the more abstract topics to which his satire sometimes turned: 1) romanticism, especially its sentiment, 2) religious topics and issues, and the state of American Christianity, 3) innovations in science, philosophy, and education, k) comic lectur-

For commentaries on American romanticism see Josh's remarks in "Kissing," in Josh Billings: His Works, Complete, p. 63; and in the foreword and March, 1875 entries in Josh Billings' Old Farmer's Almanax.

Humorous comments on religion and American Christianity are to be found in the whole range of the "Josh" material. For selected commentaries, see from Josh Billings' Old Farmer's Almanax: October, 1876; June, 1872; April, 1872; and June, 1871.

From Josh Billings; His Works, Complete see: "Faith," p. 171; "Solium TEoughri," p. 286; "The Aunt," p. 171; "V/hat I Know About Ph arming," p. 65; "On Courting," p. k5l.

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Shaw lambasted nineteenth-century America's blind faith in empirical evaluations and scientific investigations. Like many Americans, he could not support the controversial theories of evolution, and he despised fraud and sham in both science and medicine. Likewise, his philosophy of life was founded on pragmatism and common

Ing, -^ 5) the Indian controversy,^ 6) slavery and the Negro situation, ^ and 7) the Temperance movement,^

sense, and he had little use for speculative philosophies. For comments by Josh on the general topics of human knowledge, and science and related fields, see in Josh Billings: His Works, Complete; "Hoss Sense," p. 78; "Branes," p. 17, and "Pissmire," pp. 100-103. See also in Josh Billings' Old Farmer's Allminax: comments from March, 1873; February, 1875; September, 1870; and January, 1876.

-Shaw was irritated by the numerous individuals who attempted comedy on the stage, and was incensed by those who downgraded the comedian profession. On at least two occasions he published considerations on the profession and those men aspiring to succeed in the field. See in Josh Billings; His Works, Complete, "Hints to Comik Lekturers," pp. 89-91, and "Advice tew Lectur Koramittys," pp. 373-375.

^In keeping with his policy of not becoming involved in major contemporary issues, he wrote little about the problem of the Indian resettlement in the West. Only isolated remarks can be discerned in his writings. See Josh's isolated comment in "The Parrot," Josh Billings: His Works, Complete, p. 182.

⁸^Shaw's treatment of the Negro and the whole issue of slavery is as scanty as is his treatment of the Indian problem. Only one extended burlesque appears in all of Shaw's "Josh" material, and only an isolated aphorism in Josh Billings' Old Farmer's Allminax gives any evidence of sympathy for the plight of the Negro. See "The Negro and the Trout," Josh Billings: His Works, Complete, pp. 390-393; and Josh Billings' Old Farmer's Allminax, December, 1870.

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Shaw was much more outspoken on the temperance issue. He opposed female participation in general in the cause; yet, he applauded the principles behind the movement. Ironically, he, himself, was a heavy drinker at times. For his brief comments on the movement, see in Josh Billings; His Works, Complete; "Beer," pp. 116-118; •^Tempranse KluBJ" pp. 377-380. And in Josh Billings; His Sayings, see "Remarks," p. 113; and "Proverbs of the Billings Family," p. 82.

Such then are the objects of attack of Josh Billings, the satirist. But, as has been suggested, he v/as both satirist and humorist. A number of firsthand reports of interviews and audiences attest to the fact that Shaw on stage was extremely funny. His drolleries of sense and satire kept audiences enlivened literally for hours, which is remarkable considering that much of his later lectures were conglomerations of aphorisms loosely strung together, rambling from one subject to another. Obviously, his presentations, which employed numerous comic devices at his disposal, account, to a great extent, for both his literary and stage success as a humorist.

Shaw used, in his own way, numerous devices easily recognized in the works of all four humorists under consideration. The outstanding techniques one finds in his material are 1) cacography, 2) humorous description, comic metaphors and similes, which dressed his aphorisms and advice, 3) the humorous definition, and 5) forms of burlesque.

All of the Josh Billings material is characterized by cacography, discussed above in the analysis of his first important essay, "An Essa on the Muel bi Josh Billings." From the reading of any anthology of his work, one will notice that tho device is grossly over-worked. It must be remembered, however, that most of Shav/'s material appeared as isolated essays or articles in periodicals and news-

papers throughout the country, and in these mediums there **was less** likelihood that his formula would become monotonous.

In Shaw's hands the epigram, or aphorism almost became a humorous device itself. The success of his aphorism is due largely to his witty presentation which combines homey description with comic metaphors and similes. The examples below, completely devoid of sophistication on any degree, utilize these 'combinations, and the structure of a definition.

Hope iz a hen that lays more eggs than she
kan hatch out. "7

PruderjL is nothing but coquetry, gone to
seed, o^

What Josh says is often funny because of his particular style as illustrated by the definitions above. Yet, from one perspective even his loftiest ideas are paradoxically burlesqued by the very persona himself. There is something amusing and ironic about a comic figure who "kant" spell, but can, nevertheless, lambast a society with penetrating wit and v/isdome. Any subject considered by Josh is never enhanced, for the combination of the speaker and the spoken, results in a natural low burlesque. But

'Henry V/heoler Shav/, Josh Billings (Chicago: M. S. Donahue, 1919), p. 268.

^^Ibid., p. 232.

then, because of this effect, attention is centered even more securely on the subject being treated by the old auctioneer.

The persona of Josh Billings, uneducated but wise through experience, literary but illiterate, appealed to a vast audience across the country. His coins of wisdom could be pocketed and exchanged, and his humor could both poke and tickle at the same time. He was no aristocrat, but then, neither were his audiences and this contributed to his appeal. All his subjects touched home at one spot or another, and for that reason, he could not be ignored.

As "America's comic essayist," he was independent and singular in the American literary circle of his time. But as a humorist, he was in many ways, a brother of his contemporaries. Various stances and attitudes, as well as certain tricks of the trade were shared among them all. Josh recognized this when he described the imago of Locke and Clemens:

All the humorists that i am acquainted with are sad, and sober kusses. I never knu a fust rate humorist who v/az a good laff or, they are willing to make other people laff, but prefer themselfs to stand by and look on. If Mark Twain should be kaught laffing, hiz friends v/ould immejately put him to bed and send for hiz family physician. Nasby, the grate political satirist, waz never known to smile but once, and then he, and Poram, v/ere in the bak end ov the groserly at the crossroads, but the cause ov hiz mirth iz a profound sekret to* this day. The best laffers i hav ever knu.

where these who laff at their own jokes.^9

Theories of comedy and an understanding of America's brand of humor were sensed by them all. For an interesting study compare Shaw's kinds of laughter already discussed, and the kinds of humorous stories and those who laugh at them in Clemens's similar discussion in "How to Tell a Story," referred to later in this thesis.

Josh differs from his contemporaries primarily in his level of development. True, he is outspoken, but outspoken to a very limited degree. He comments on many things generally, but few things specifically and concentratedly. This is not to say, however, that he is disinterested and aloof from the inquiries going on around him. He is devout, but not dogmatic. Perhaps because he was born mature at the age of fifty, he changed imperceptibly in his views, while Twain, for instance, was conceived at thirty and passed through countless stages until his death with Clemens some forty-five years later. Finally, Josh played host to another member of the Billings "family," one "Uncle Esok," v/hc found an audience, closed to himself, in the Century Magazine for almost twenty years before Shaw's death in 1885. Shaw was forced to abandon Josh in many publications in preference to Uncle Esek because the crudities of Josh's spellings were no longer permissible in many

^Shaw, josh Billings's Old Farmer's Allminax, n.d.

cultivated Journals, Josh lived on in his brother persona, for Shaw's philosophy was not changed in the "Uncle Esek" creation. He never materialized further, however, than his successes in his Old Parmer's Allminax and a few articles which appeared for several more years in the New York Weekly. Like any literary trend. Josh's characteristics were accepted for a while, but later succumbed to the new mood of his audience.

CHAPTER III

BABES IN THE WOODS

On January 30, 1858» in the office of the Cleveland Plain Dealer, a rough, hand-written letter, penned by an unknown eccentric old show[^]man went to press and announced his calculated arrival from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania:

Pitsburg, Jan. 27, 18&58

The plane Deeler:

Sir:

i v/rito to no how about the show bisnes in Cleeveland i have a show consisting in part of a Calforny Bare two snakes tame foxies &c also wax works my wax works is hard to beat, all say they is life and nateral curiosities among my wax works is Our Saveyer Gen taylor and Docktor Webster in the ackt of killing Parkman. now Mr. Editor scratch off few lines and tel me how is the show/ bisnes in your good city i shal have hanbils printed at your offis you scratch my back and i will scratch your back, also git up a grate blow in the paper about my show don't forgit the v/ax works.

yours truly,

ARTEMUS WARD

Pitsburg Penny

p S pitsburg is a 1 horse town. A.W.^O

In response to Mr. V/ard's inquiry, the city editor, Charles Parrar Broime, replied simply but encouragingly, "We

[^] Don Seitz, Artemus Ward: A Biography (New York: Harper and Brothers, 191[^])» p. 2[^],

believe Mr. Ward would do well with **his** show here, and advise him to come along **immediately.**"⁹¹

The letter was the first of four which appeared within a month from the exuberant sideshow proprietor. They marked the beginning of a series of such epistles which would, within a year, rocket their young **author**, none other than the editor himself, onto the throne of American humor.

A young man **with** only a smattering of education **but with a** pocketful of experience, Browne had managed to earn a somewhat respectable reputation in journalism. Before his appointment to the position of local editor of the Plain Dealer, he had served on the editorial staffs of papers, including the Toledo Commercial and others, which trailed back to his home town area of Waterford, Maine. In all his positions he had attacked his job with enormous zest and energy. His best materials had been founded on the daily affairs of the community in which he was working, and were colored by the point of view of his curious, roving eye, which had always been quick to notice the incongruities of simple local life,⁹²

^^Ibid.

^^According to Seitz, Browne's interest in journalism began in his boyhood after his brother Cyrus had taken up the printer's trade. At the age of thirteen, after the death of his father, he left home and traveled to Lancaster, Nov/ Hampshire, where he was engaged by the Weekly Democrat. He returned in 1849 to a small town, just east of Waterford, called Norway, when a job opened which offered him the

The Ward letters were immediately popular and were reprinted in newspapers throughout the country. In time, enticed by the prospects of better things, Browne left the Plain Dealer and with it the skepticism which refused to believe in the possibilities of New York fame and a comic lecture tour, both of which Browne transformed from dream to reality. *

chance to further his schooling while working. Young Charles remained with the paper, later retitled The Pine State News, during much of its lifetime. From Norway he traveled to Augusta and then to Skowhegan, where he found employment in the Skowhegan Clarion. He did not remain long, however, and he returned soon to Waterford. Charles was seventeen years old. The same year (1851) found him in Boston, employed by the Snow and Wilder Publishing House, publishers of the Pathfinder and the Carpet Bag. For three years young Browne remained there setting type for some of the finest humorous material in that day. It was there that he published his first humorous piece, an account of the Fourth of July celebration held annually at Waterford. He managed to slip it into the mail of Benjamin P. Shillaber, the creator of the comic character "Mrs. Partington." (The article was reprinted in Artemus Ward; His Book under the title of "The Surrender of Cornwallis.") By this time the West was calling for adventurous young "journalists"; and so Browne left for the Ohio country. He landed in Cincinnati, but immediately responded to a teaching offer in a northern Kentucky town. He was no match, however, for his rowdy boys, and Browne concluded at the end of a week that "teaching was not his forte, and, without waiting for his pay, shouldered his carpet-bag and returned on Saturday to Cincinnati and his trade." He visited the shops and found employment as a compositor on the Toledo Commercial. His talents, however, were obvious by this time, and he was soon appointed editor. His success spread his fame to surrounding parts, and by fall, 1857, he was hired by the Cleveland Plain Dealer. Three months later, on January 30, 1858, the first letter from "Artemus Ward" went to press.

^ - ^ Edward P. Kingston, The Genial Shoorman: Reminiscences of the Life of Artemus Ward, and pictures of a Showman's Career in the Western World. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1870), p. 137.

Browne's initial popularity stemmed from his early letters of the traveling wax-works and zoo proprietor. In the opinionated letters, marked by quaint spellings and low regional dialect, the country recognized a bit of itself. The fictional author of these letters, the itinerant Yankee performer, however, was but the first of two images which vied for identity as Artemus Ward. For between 1859 and 1866, Browne's unparalleled reign in the field of American comedy, a second "Artemus" appeared. It was the stage Artemus portrayed by Browne himself. Any study of the Artemus Ward persona necessitates a consideration of both figures. The following analysis will examine first the development of each persona, and will close with a statement of Browne's contributions to nineteenth-century American humor.

Artemus Ward was born, as mentioned, in Cleveland, Ohio, on January 30, 1858. But he matured in both Cleveland and New York. The earliest Ward letters draw a portrait of the persona which remained fairly fixed throughout its use in Browne's literature. The suggested sources for Ward have been many, but Browne himself--see his statement reprinted in Blair's Native American Humor--cites the caricature of Seba Smith as his direct inspiration.^{9k} Although Smith's most noted character. Jack Downing, was a Yankee, Browne's

Artemus Ward combined the Yankee with other national elements so that the outcome was not strictly regional.

Artemus Ward soon found a position among readers the nation over. After developing the comic character, Browne soon realized its value as a persona, and in time it served two functions. The stage Artemus was primarily comic; on the other hand, the literary Artemus, comic as well, demonstrated more satire. A born wit, Browne, according to Stephen Leacock, was one of several journalists-turned-writers who had an uncanny ability for seeing elements of American society and life as they actually were. [^] It was through his literary persona, Artemus Ward the showman, that Browne sought to isolate and burlesque America's idiosyncracies.

Never intentionally malevolent, Browne's satire is generally light. His sincere, passionate, and jovial nature, in fact, earned him the title of the "genial showman." [^] Of the many satiric devices at his disposal, burlesque seemed to him most appropriate. The adoption of a well defined point of view was essential to the device,

[^]Stephen Leacock, *Humour and Humanity* (New York; Henry Holt and Co., 1938), p. 210.

[^] The phrase probably originated with Kingston and appeared in the title of his book cited previously by that name.

and he elected to speak through a persona which he drew carefully, but generally enough, for the sake of flexibility.

An analysis of the corplementary relationship shared by burlesque and a persona is perhaps theoretical to a degree, but seems necessary at this point.⁹⁷ All of Browne's burlesque patterns depend upon the persona, Artemus Ward; his burlesques are produced through characterization and caricature alone. What follows is a brief elaboration and demonstration of this principle and technique.

For the sake of maneuverability Browne often steps out of the real world and into a world of his own making which is a caricature of the real world. The words he speaks are no longer his own, but become those of the old showman, Artemus Ward. And the world described is no longer that in which Browne lives, but the fabricated caricature of that world seen through the eyes of Ward.⁹⁸ This pattern is essential to Browne's satire, for without it much of his satire would border on invective.

'The theory of such a relationship demonstrated in the works of Browne holds true with only slight modifications for the works of both Locke and Clemens yet to be discussed,

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Twain was to do the same in his early works. We can never be sure whether the events described in Roughing It, for example, were actualities or fabrications based upon a tincture of fact.

One of the factors contributing to the popularity of satiric burlesque as used by Browne and others who followed him, is the fact that such comparisons, unlike open attacks, stretch the credibility gap between the two objects, and increases the toleration for the comparisons by the readers. There is a point on the level of the actual where far-fetched critical analysis becomes absurd. Criticism is credible only to that point. But if satiric criticism originates on the level of burlesque, the credibility of the comparison drawn is boundless. This can be demonstrated by an examination of one of Browne's better burlesques, "The Letter to the Prince of Wales," An actual letter from Browne to the Prince of Wales (a popular foreign figure in the United States at the time), as familiar in tone as the one Ward sends to him would have been an inexcusable breach of etiquette. In a society of polite orderliness, as were some parts of American society, the gesture would have been absurd, not humorous or critical. But this is not so in the world of burlesque where the natural order of things borders on absurdity. Once Browne and the prince are reduced to the caricature of Ward and the comic "Prince," the familiarity of the letter can be endured. Even the further pretensions of Ward, who attempts to advise the Prince on the management of "Mrs. Wales," can be tolerated. On the level of burlesque, acceptance of such social breaches is not a great effort. The result is humor, not

shock, because we have for the moment accepted the level of **the** absurd. The **jolt** of the satire comes **at** the return to **the level of** the **actual** from the level of the absurd, or **burlesque**. The **degree** of shock is proportionate to the **degree of** semblance in the burlesque caricatures with the actual **or real** objects—in this case, Charles Browne and **the real** Prince of Wales.

This point of return by the reader to the actual is the critical moment in the whole burlesque. This is the moment which will reveal the satirist's artistic ability. If the distortion of the actual is great enough, the viewer usually becomes disassociated with the objects. The moment of separation produces humor. The line of association may be broken time and again with the same result in subsequent re-readings of the burlesque. The result (humor) lessens, of course, as the renewed intensity or identification with the objects loses personal meaning or relevance. However, if the association with the object is maintained and never broken or diminished, the result might well be a painful repugnance instead of humor. The humorous satirist like Browne aims at an effect somewhere between the two extremes.

Perhaps this analysis explains why most of Browne's satiric burlesques remain humorous rather than invective. Few individuals within the American masses could personally identify deeply with the subjects of his burlesques. That is not to say, however, that individuals were not interested

in the topics, **for** they were. The war, home life, invention, patriotism and peculiar elements within the American society were all topics of concern among the American people. But those topics which appeared humorous were those with which the reading audience had little if any personal identification. This explains why the Westerner would collapse in spasms over burlesque literary romances or satiric anecdotes about the Yankee and other typically Eastern or "New English" subjects, Browne could successfully burlesque minority groups and peculiarities of the nation because in so doing he was not threatening the sentiment of the general population,

Artemus Ward's literary burlesques both define the sentiments of Browne and characterize the persona of the showman himself. Concerning the latter, no other source is as reliable for a character analysis of the showman as the material which he generates. Various essays, articles, and letters reveal the flamboyant and not so superficial character. Artemus Ward: His Book, Browne's first book, reveals much of a biography of Ward which lends a realistic and three dimensional quality to his image. Furthermore, details are added to his surroundings. He is married to Betsy Jane, a farm girl about whom he describes his courtship. Occasionally he even mentions other members of his

family including Artemus Ward, jr., twins, and an older daughter.^{oo}^^

Added to his make-up are fairly consistent traits. In "On the Wing" Ward is distracted by a temperance lecturer who ridicules his imbibing. The lecturer remarks, "This is a cold world" Artemus replies, "That's so. But you'll get into a warmer one by and by if you don't mind your own business better." Taunting by fanatics of other "lunatic fringe" groups makes him equally testy. In all such fictional episodes Ward is drawn as extremely self sufficient and usually affrontive and belligerent.

Replies to rather flat caricatures like the temperance lecturer above are usually lucid and reflect a common sense approach to daily experiences already discerned in the writings of Josh Billings. When infuriated he becomes distraught, and his fiery outbursts sputter into mere verbiage and often nonsense* In "Experience as an Editor," the "Superintendent" of a "Rail Road Office" refuses him free admittance on a train, a privilege enjoyed by news editors for one of whom Ward is substituting. To the statement by the railroadman that "our Road can't pass you," Ward

^{oo}For example, see Ward's essay "Boston," Artemus Ward; His Travels (New York; G. W. Carleton, 1865), pp. 71j.-75^

Charles Farrar Browne, Artemus Ward; His Book (New York; G. W. Carleton, 1865), pp. 31-52.

replies passionately but ludicrously, "Becauz, . . it goes so **darned** slow it can't pass anybody," The literary Artemus Ward, "thought by most people to be a reality rather than a pleasant fiction,"¹⁰² is a burlesque as much as the objects he satirizes. Burlesque characterizations in the Artemus Ward material, when fairly well developed, sometimes react against him.¹⁰^{*} Point of view shifts from Artemus to the burlesque characters, and usually finds Artemus challenged for some remark he has made, or for merely being what he is: a comic man who himself suffers as the butt of various jokesters. On these occasions character traits of Ward such as his cowardice, his blatant and often arrogant but ill-informed patriotism, his nonsensical acts and his reactions are often revealed, and through such traits the old showman, like the same objects drawn from his own vision, is caricatured and burlesqued. But other incongruities, too, like his pretentious knowledge and assumed mission as a reformer, also contribute to his own burlesque,

Charles Farrar Browne, The Complete Works of Artemus Ward (New York: G. W. Dillingham, 1873), p. 59.

^^^Ibid., p. 95.

|n'i

See Browne's burlesque of southern leadership and sympathizers in "Artemus Ward in Richmond," Artemus Ward: His Travels, pp. 90-93.

In an essay entitled "Reporters," first penned during his days on the staff of the Cleveland Plain Dealer, Browne unveiled the heart of the enigmatic Ward personality:

For one, let us quietly and without any show of vanity remark, that we are not only just as good as anybody else but a great deal better than very many wo know of. Wo love God and hate Indians; pay our debts; support the Constitution of the united States; go in for progress, sunshine. Calico, and other luxuries; are perfectly satisfied and happy, and wouldn't swop "sits" with the President, Louis Napoleon, the Emperor of China, Sultan of Turkey, Brigham Young, or Nicholas Longworth. Success to US.'IOM-

The paragraph does not catalogue, of course, all the subjects of Brovme's sentiments, but it does construct the framew/ork for his point of view on various subjects as they pass before his critical eye. The paragraph is typical of much Ward material which attempts to identify with an introspective mood or tendency on the part of many nineteenth-century Americans, Indeed, the most scrutinized subject of the American people was the ever metamorphosing country itself. Throughout his v/orks, as in this paragraph, Brovme, the reporter, catered to this period of introspection, and in so doing, he drew his burlesques from every major idiosyncrasy, eccentricity, and element indigenous to the American experience of the 1860's. In keeping |rith such journalistic practice, this paragraph clearly defines the

[^]Charles Farrar Bro^{^^}me, Artemus Ward in London, and Other Papers (New York: G. V. Carleton, 1[^]6777 P- 187,

sentiments and spirit of a vast majority of a proud American people.

Browne's range of burlesqued and caricatured American subjects is as broad and diverse as all the social facets they represent in American culture. His wide and spotted pattern of satire includes a multitude of isolated comments as well as a few well developed satiric essays on both specialized and general topics. Ward pays only nominal attention to subjects out of the mainstream of American domestic affairs, but within that context his hearty satire saturates such topics as 1) social and cultural eccentricities, 2) the American family, 3) the American womsm and a catalogue of other American characters, 4) sectionalism and other issues of the day, 5) American education, 6) popular entertainment, 7) Americans abroad, 8) flaws in the Congress and the American republican form of government, and 9) incidents in American history.

A relatively unrestricted immigration policy, a rugged individualism spawned by the disciplines of life in the West, and other elements of the nineteenth century often fostered social quirks and oddities occasionally discernible in well organized reactionary and splinter groups representing various political theories, religious beliefs, and philosophies of community. But more often eccentric individuals, not aligned to any one faction or another, scratched their paths throughout the states. Old Artemus

himself is easily recognized as a kind of social freak, with his overbearing, opinionated politics and philosophies, and his ludicrous sideshow. Included in a list of American eccentrics whom Ward attacked are 1) spiritualists, 2) showmen like himself and his progenitor, P. T. Bamum, 3) religious groups like the Shakers, the Fenians, and the Mormons and their leader Brigham Young, 4) the old New England Puritans, 5) the abolitionists, especially the Oberlin College group, and 6) the Free lovers at Berlin Heights.

Little more can be done than merely mention these satiric targets here, yet to help facilitate an understanding of the entrenched partisanship of Ward, a few selected excerpts from his more notable works are presented* One burlesque that reaped Browne more personal torment than any other was Ward's first burlesque of the Mormons. All students of Browne will remember that this burlesque was published long before he ever made a personal visit to the Mormon settlement in Utah. His attacks on them in Artemus Ward; His Book were exaggerated and reflected Eastern sentiments which had originally banished the movement from New York. Polygamy, of course, received the most heated nationwide criticism, and Browne, from his post in Cleveland, joined the haranguers in hurling stones and catcalls via Ward. After a rollicking time in Salt Lake City, Ward records his considerations of the Mormons while making his exit:

I girded up my Lions and fled thro Seen, I packt up my duds and left Salt Lake, which is a 2nd Soddum and Germorer, inhabited by as theavin' & onprincipled a set of retchis as ever drew Breth in eny spot on the Globe.¹⁰⁵

But in Artemus Ward: His Travels Browne published a **formal apology for his** hasty burlesque in Artemus Ward: His Book. He **had not** forseen **his** trip to Salt Lake City at the time, **and his** fears of Mormon reprisals mounted as he entered the city while on his Western lecture tour with Kingston in January, 186[^].. His fears, however, were alleviated, as the following record of his visit there illustrates:

I pleaded, however, that it was a purely burlesque sketch, and that this strong paragraph should not be interpreted literally at all. The Elder didn't seem to see it in that light, but we parted pleasantly.¹⁰⁷

Browne's recantation from his early view indicates not only his comic intentions, but also his persistent carefulness to tread the safe and middle road. The publication of his earlier burlesque was embarrassing, and Browne regretted it. There were, hov/ever, fev/ similar occasions.

Isolated essays treating the Shakers and the Free lovers give Ward opportunities to preach the gospel of the

[^]Browne, Artemus V/ard; His Book, p. 76.

-^{^^^}Seitz, p, 153.

•^{^^"}Browne, Artemus Ward; His Travels, p. 172.

average American while lambasting the two religious and social sects. In "Among the Free Lovers" he closes declaring:

You pussylanermus critters, go away from me and take this retchid v/oman vdth you. I'm a law-abidin man, and bloeve in good, old-fashioned institutions. I am marrid & my orf springs resemble mo, if I am a shov/man J I think your Affinity bizniss is cussed noncents, besides bein outrajusly wicked. Why don't you behave desunt like other folks? Go to work and earn a bonist livin, and not stay round hero in this lazy, shiftless way, pizonin the moral atmosphere v/ith your pestifreus ideesJ You wimin folks, go back to your lawful husbands if you've got any, and take orf them skanderlous gownds trowsis, and dress respectful like other wimin. You men folks, cut orf them piratorcal whiskers, burn up them infumel pamplits, put sum weskuts on, go to v/ork choppin wood, splittin fence rales, or tillin silo. I pored [j.th my indignashun in this way till I got out of breth, when I stopt. I shant go to Berlin Kites agin, Jiot if I live to bo as old as Methooseler.108

Ward's independence and self assertion on the road is complemented by a domineering wife at home. To him the home was the hearth of American life, and no house v/as a home without a presiding v/oman. Brovme's ovm bachelorhood is responsible, perhaps, for the high position afforded v/omen in general, for Brovme admired v/omen and envied the successful home. He never married because his career was his first love and demanded his uninterrupted attention.

-1 *ivi*

Brovme, Artemus V/ard; His Book, pp. 89-90.

But his second love was his home and his mother.

For Brovme, women are always viewed against the backdrop of the home and family. Generally, his observations on women tend to classify them into two camps: those who deviate from the confines of the home, and those who manifest the constant and devoted mother image. The nineteenth century was marked by new conceptions which attempted to revolutionize traditionally held views, and the role of woman was one "sacred cow" that was jarred. Brovme, like Shaw, detested elements within the various nineteenth-century reform movements which upset traditional values.¹⁰⁹ Early Ward comments are unusually harsh, and castigate "disagreeable he-women" for their role in such movements. Even his later burlesques, which present an assortment of rather flatly portrayed females, are sharp in their attacks.

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'John Quincy Reed, Artemus Ward; A Critical Study, an unpublished dissertation (Ames*; Iowa State University, 1955), p. 55.

•••[^]The Cleveland Plain Dealer, March 26, 1859, p. 3; reprinted in Reed, p. 33.

"Most of his fiery burlesques on women are aimed at those participating in the many eccentric minority groups mentioned later. Other writings, directed at the average woman, display a comparable panegyric warmth. See such essays as "The Census" in Artemus Ward: His Book, and "Things in New York; in Artemus Ward: His Travels, •

To initiate the contrast, the "proper" Ward female is almost always gleaned from refined circles and is painted attractively, while her counterpart is drawn from the seamy sides of American society. The former is resolute in her devotion to her family and is usually an effective foil for the many faults of her husband. The finest example in the Ward material is Ward's own wife, Betsy Jane. Fortified with common sense, a quick wit, and an entrenched will, Betsy Jane is juxtaposed against such freakish figures as the "free love hags," the Mormon girls—pretty, but unintelligent and ambitious--and an assortment of fleeting females who appear only once, such as the crooked fortune tellers,¹¹² and the Missouri country girls whom Ward meets while traveling West. ^{11*}_{-^}

Ward's remarks concerning women in general and the numerous types he encounters serve as sounding boards from which he affirms marriage as a pillar of American society. His burlesques are filled with amorous escapades of worthy young females in search for respectable husbands and vice versa.

Although Brovme's attitude toward American women

'brovme, "We See Two v/itches," Artemus Ward in Lon-
don, pp. II4.2-I50.

-^Brovme, "I Am Here," Artemus V/ard; His Travels,
p. 180.

bristles with biases, it nevertheless presents through its **satire**, a circumscribed analysis of the various types of **women** prevalent in this period. His sweeping survey **of women is admittedly** light and superficial, but this is not **to** suggest that Browne ever intended it to be any deeper.

His types of women, however, represent only a segment **of a whole clan** of American folk types rooted in the American experiences of the 1860's. In his family of identifiable American folk types are the American Indians, the American Negroes, casket girls, the bragging hyperbolist Browne calls "Mr. Blowhard," ^ the New England Yankee, western badman, the itinerant clergy, show people as fortune tellers, spirit mediums, gypsies (some of whose traits can be seen in Artemus himself), and a new figure emerging on the world scene known as "the American tourist,"

Browne also burlesques a number of American character traits which, along with the folk types, contribute to a fuller portrait of the strata of American society. Those traits are the attitudes and philosophies of Americans across the states and her territories. One prominent temper, patriotism, was a universal attitude in the 1860's; but although it was universal throughout the states, it was not uniform. The country was hostilely divided both politic-

^Browne, "Mr. Blowhard," Artemus Ward in London, pp. 135-137.

ally and militarily. Sectionalism thwarted agreement on numerous issues **affecting** domestic policies and helped conjure up turbulent debates and intense spread-eagle oratory on **even the** grass roots level of politics. Brovme, born in **mine and** employed throughout his life in the North, was, needless to say, an ardent Union sympathizer during the Civil War. Probably a Democrat in his private persuasion, **he** nevertheless supported Lincoln and the Republicans and all efforts designed to perpetuate the union. Ward, naturally, satirizes the South during and after the War, but with an eye for equality, he notices such Northern blights as draft evasion, the general condition of the Union, and the ineptitude of Congress.

Typical of Ward's sentiments unsympathetic to the South are his remarks below, drafted on the eve of the Civil War in one of his finest essays, "The Draft in Baldinsville":

The war is upon us—upon us all—and we must all fight, V/e can't "Reason" the matter with tho foe. When, in the broad glare of the noonday sun, a speckled jackass boldly and maliciously kicks over a peanut stand, do v/e "reason" v/ith him? I guess not. And why "reason" with those other Southern people who are tryin' to kick over the Republic? Betsy Jane, my wife, says so too.

We must crush tho ungrateful rebels who are poundin' tho Goddess of Liberty over tho head with slung-shots, and stabbin' her with stolen knives! We must lick 'em quick. We must introduce a large number of first-class

funerals among the people of the South.
Betsy says so, too. Up

Americans, since the days of the Puritans, have emphasized a second national trait, a concern for education. The school was one of the first institutions established by the settlers. From the country's early beginnings labor had always been complemented by study; both became a part of the experience of every colonial boy. The same emphasis was responsible for the many colleges, academies, and universities which sprang up along the footprints of the pioneers. Almost every family could boast of a family Bible, many subscribed to newspapers, and some even carted whole libraries across the western prairies. The ability to read and write was fundamental for much employment even in the early nineteenth century. But the ability to read also provided a pastime. Even members of the Lewis and Clarke expedition to Oregon carried with them selected texts of Sir Walter Scott and Lord Byron,¹¹⁶ Literacy became prestigious, and

-^Browne, Artemus Ward: His Travels, pp, 30-31,
(Note: Personifications or the Goddess of Liberty appear throughout the pages of "war" satire and are used, like the example above, to vivify the "general health" of the Union,
For further illustrations of this personification and burlesque, see "Things in New York," p. 35; "Boston," p. 68; and "Artemus Ward in Richmond," p. 93 in Artemus Ward: His Travels,)

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Robert G. Gleland, This Reckless Breed of Men (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950), p. 9; reprinted in Louis B. Wright, Culture on the Moving Frontier (Bloomington: Indiana University press, 1953), pp- 7-75.

it is little wonder that Ward, the itinerant^ takes such pains in his self expression to support his literacy facade,

But language and literature perpetually remain enigmas for Ward. As a showman he relies entirely on his patter to entice crowds to his wax-works show and zoo. Yet, at more serious gatherings, such as the Fourth of July celebrations and political gatherings, he engenders an identification with other commoners like himself through his insistence that "I'm not a plane man. . . »/yih.o7» . . . don't know nothing about no dead languages and I'm a little shaky on livin' ones."¹¹⁷ On the other hand, he appears to be somewhat educated and moderately informed on the issues of the day. From time to time he even assumes the role of a literary critic. As illustrated by the following excerpts. Ward resorts to name dropping of fashionable magazines, and criticizes popular literature supposedly appearing in each:

The Atlantic Monthly, Betsy, is a regular visitor to our western home. I like it because it has got sense. It don't print stories with pirates and honest young men into 'em, making the pirates splendid fellers and the honest young men disgraced idiots—so that our darters very naturally prefer the pirates to the honest young men; but it gives us good square American literature. The chaps that write for the Atlantic, Betsy, understand their business. They can sling ink, they can. I went in and saw 'em, I told 'em that theirs was a high and holy mission. They seemed quite gratified, and asked

¹¹⁷Browne, Artemus Ward; His Book, p. 209.

me if I'd seen the Grate Or gin .•••^

Also creeping into several references and occasionally full blown burlesques, are remarks parodying Shakespeare's plays and the Bible, probably the two most widely read pieces of literature of the American nineteenth century. Two whole comic essays are devoted to burlesque critiques of Othello, witnessed by Ward in both London and the United States. One, entitled "Othello," is a character analysis of the various major characters, and each essay is treated in the typical Ward fashion which tends to localize each character and to attribute to it characteristics of lower class Americans. The second, "Edwin Forrest as Othello," gives more attention to the plot of the play, and in its rendering the play melts into travesty.¹¹⁹

Ward respects most orthodox lines of faith and matters of faith, so whenever he alludes to such subjects within the patterns of his burlesques, his parodies are light. Indeed, many parodies of religious creeds and dogmas assume a weak structure typified by the following rendering taken from a Biblical quotation:

Many of the citizens of San Francisco remember

"^•' 'Brovme, Artemus V/ard; His Travels, p. 71.

•^"^^Brovme, "Othello," Artemus '//ard in London, pp. 116-121; "Edv/in Forrest as Othello," Artemus V/ard: His Book, pp. 80-83.

the Sabbath day to keep it jolly; and the theatres, the circus, tho minstrels, and **the** music halls are all in blast to-night.-^^^

An exuberance and heartiness characterized America's energetic movement westward, and a dogmatic faith in her destiny captivated America's imaginations, Wealth and status rewarded effort, and people in general were not afraid of work* But Americans of the 1860's loved their play as well. When they could escape from the task of building, rebuilding, and maintaining the Union, as well as **from** the humdrum tasks of earning a living, they sought relaxation and entertainment with the same vigor which characterized their work.

Ward's interest in American entertainment is twofold. First, he burlesques and caricatures Americans at their play and pastimes. He exaggerates the sentimentality of courting, burlesques America's romantic tastes in literature (as seen above in Ward's remarks praising the Atlantic Monthly), and caricatures America's enthusiasm for eccentricities, secondly, he criticizes the degenerate elements in the entertainment professions which jeopardize the reputation of the many honest entertainers in the nineteenth-century "show business," and which sought to exploit the

•^^^Broome, "California," Artemus Ward; His Travels, p. li|.0. The excerpt parodies one of the Ten commandments found in Exodus 20:8.

poor and frugal but gullible people throughout the country.

The finest burlesques of nineteenth-century literature appear in serialized parodies of melodramatic romances, popularized by many French writers of the period. Those parodies published in Browne's major works in the style of the showman include "A Romance—Only a Mechanic," "The **Serenade**," "A Romance—The Conscript," "The Last of the Culkinses," "Red Hand; A Tale of Revenge," "Pyrotechny,"¹²⁶ and "Roberto the Rover:—A Tale of the Sea and **Shore**."

Kin to the popular literature of the day were other forms of entertainment which drew the American people before them. The occasions which plucked the most responsive chords in American audiences were moral lectures and such tangential events as morality plays. The lyceum was populated with reformers of all kinds, and most of them never failed to attract an audience. Moralizing, however, was not

¹ Ibid., pp. 65-66.

² Ibid., pp. 51-52.

³ Ibid., pp. 58-61.

⁴ Browne, Artemus Ward in London, pp. 211-219.

⁵ Ibid., pp. 204-210.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 81-91.

⁷ Did., pp. 223-229.

only popular, but it was also influential on other entertainments. Circuses and theatricals traveling throughout the country trailed rather roguish reputations behind them, and many sought to identify their productions with some kind of vague morality. In his essay entitled "Science and Natural History," Ward has fun at the expense of P. T. Bamum whose show was advertised during this period as a "Moral Production."

He said, "You vagabond, I'll have you indicted for exhibiting dangerous and immoral animals." I replied, "Gentle Sir, there isn't a animal here that hasn't a beautiful moral, but you mustn't fondle 'em. You mustn't meddle with their idiosyncracios."*

The bad reputation of circuses and traveling road shows may have been exaggerated, but it was certainly not unfounded. Much of Ward's interest in such traveling entertainments lay in the questionable characters who seemed to hover about and thrive on the shows' environments. In an essay entitled "Scenes Outside the Fair Ground" Ward observes the diffuse elements of swindling among the circus profiteers, rogues including "a smart looking chap, , doing a brisk business with a gambling contrivance," "a seamy, , , grave ministerial looking and elderly" who "solemnly spilled out sympathetic tales of an old Aunt" under his keep, and the "ingenious contrivances to relieve young ladies and

*Ibid., p, 68.

gentlemen from the rural districts of their spare change. ^

Opera, like morality plays, received his scorn, but **for** different reasons. An art, unappreciated by many illiterate country folk, opera was the butt of several V/ard jokes. The following burlesque of an opera singer probably **reflects** the sentiments of many unrefined audiences with whom V/ard was sympathetic:

Then Signer Brignoly cum out and sung
another hairy. He appeared to be in a
Pensiv Mood & sung a Luv song / suppose,
tho he may have been cussin the aulince
all into a hoop for aut I knewd,1^0

The periodical literature and entertainment were only two indices of nineteenth-century American life, V/ard, traveling across the American continent, observed, rebuked, and burlesqued numerous other traits and characteristics indigenous to all the different regions of the united States.

The legends and facts of American history testify to the pride of the American people in their achievements of conquering, colonizing, and civilizing a virgin land. Pomposity and parading, hov/ever, did little to enhance the American image abroad v/here traditions and customs refused to bow before upstart ingenuity. The American fashion of

•^^^Ibid., pp. 12[j.-127.

-^Browne, Artemus V/ard: His Book, p. 88.

the 1860's was **tourism** on the European continent, and **literally** thousands of tourists sailed across the Atlantic to **squander new wealth before** the disdain of sophisticated **Europeans**. A tourist **by** profession, Brovme's V/ard naturally **observes this cultural** phenomenon. In England Brovme **recorded the following** observations in the style of his American persona, Artemus Ward:

Yes. I've been to Stratford onto the Avon, the birth place of Shakespeare. Mr. S, is no more. He's been dead over three hundred (300) years. The poplo of his native tovm **are** justly proud of him. They cherish his mem'ry, and them as sell picturs of his birthplace, &c,, make it prof'tible cherishin it. Almost ovorybic^v buys a pictur to put into their Albion. 131

The American tourist, the Mormons, the spiritualists, the **free** lovers, women, Negroes, Indians, the saints, the sinners, the Lincoln-like men of the sod-house farms, and the enterprising Barnums—all of these figures appear in the pages of Ward's comic and satiric v/ork. But no subject received his sternest and most intense reaction to the extent that the American Congress and the American Republican form of government did in the 1860's,

Brovme never v/itnessed the Reconstruction period imder Grant's administration, yet his prolific criticism of the ante-Re cons true tion Congress and v/hat to him seemed its massive indecisivenoss and irresponsibility v/as embittered.

Typical of a large number of his attacks on congress is the following excerpt from Artemus Ward: His Travels:

There air other choerin signs. V/e don't, for instuns, lack for great Gen'rals, and we cortinly don't lack brave sojers—but thor's one thing I wish v/o did lack, and that is *our* present Congress.

I venture to say that if you sarch the earth all over with a ten-hos power mikrisopo, you won't be able to find such another pack of poppycock gabblers as the present Congress of the united states of America.

Gentlemen of the Senit & of the House, you've sot there and draw'd your pay and made summer-complaint speches long enuff. Tho country at large, incloodin' tho under-sined, is disgusted with you. V/hy don't you show us a statesman—sumbody who can make a speech that v/ill hit the pop'lar hart right under the Great Public weskit? V/hy don't you show us a statesman v/ho can rise up to the Emergency, and cave in the Emergency's head?

Congress, you won't do. Go home, you mizzerablo devils—go homo J

At tho special Congressional 'lection in my district the other day I delib'ritly voted for Henry Clay, I admit that Henry is dead, but inasmuch as v/e don't seem to have a live statesman in our National Congress, let us by all means have a first-class corpse,•'•^^

Brovme's concern for tho preservation of the Union was so intense, in fact, that burlesque sketches and portraits of tho Congress appear in every major v/ork including Artemus V/ard: His Book and Artemus V/ard in London, The follow/ing is representative of the impassioned sorties directed at the factional elements v/ithin the Congress and most assuredly at the Southern secessionists:

Traters, I will here remark, are a onfornit class of peple. If they wasn't, they wouldn't be traters. They conspire to bust up a country—they fall, and they are traters. They bust her, and they become statesmen and heroes.-*-J-5

A final area of criticism, an area with which Ward enjoys light and less obnoxious humor, is the field of American history. Most of his comic treatments of history are of topical interest, like the misfire of the Atlantic cable, but Ward also capitalizes on events of major import like the Civil War which he calls "the Crisis," Similar to the treatments of his "Goddess of Liberty" metaphors, the war is personified, as illustrated by the example below taken from "The Crisis" in Artemus Ward; His Book:

I spose the inflammertory individooals who assisted in projucing this Krysis know v/hat good she will do, but I ain't 'shamed to state that I don't, scacely. But the Krysis is hear. She's been here for several weeks, & Goodness nose how long she'll stay. But I venter to assert that she's rippin things,134-

The stage persona, introduced by Brovme's appearance as the old show/man, was at once an amalgamation of elements borrowed from the literary caricature and Browne himself. In contrast with his polished, dignified presence on stage, Brovme's opening remarks reassured his quizzical audience that, as T. W, Robertson records, "they /Had? recovered

-^_^Browne, Artemus V/ard in London, p. 57.

-^^rovme, Artemus V/ard: His Book, p. 614.

their real Artemus, Betsy Jane, wax figures, and all." ^^
The gaunt face, the frail hands, and spindly figure veiled only momentarily the naive wit, the joviality, and utter nonsense so well identified throughout the country with the boisterous but perceptive wax-works curator. Inevitably, Browne added considerably to the make-up of the persona, although several contemporary reviewers of his show insist that what Browne dramatized was something more than an independent and detached character. On stage and off, Browne curiously but smoothly merged with Artemus Ward, and during his brief period on the platform, audiences were able to accept him as the only Artemus,

At least two reasons account for the disparity between the two images; the most obvious, of course, was the differences between the literary Ward and the real-life Browne, but a similar contrast can be noted in Browne's shifts in the treatments and materials of the two personae. The disparity created when Browne first went on his lecture tour was acute. Audiences never expected the refined, suave gentleman who sauntered out on the platform above the gas lights and introduced himself as the old showman. Audiences in England, who were quite familiar with Ward's literary humor and satire, reacted in much the same manner as Ameri-

i-it:

-^^Edward P. Kingston and T. V. Robertson, ed., Artemus Ward's panorama, as Exhibited at the Egyptian Hall, London (New York; G. W. Carleton, 1869) V* 13.

cans, when he opened his show in Egyptian Hall, England.

T. W. Robertson records the shock:

At first they thought he was a gentleman who appeared to apologise for the absence of the showman. They had pictured to themselves a coarse old man with a damp eye and a puckered mouth, one eyebrow elevated an inch above the other to express shrewdness and knowledge of the world—a man clad in velveteen and braid, with a heavy watch-chain, large rings, and horny hands, the touter to a wax-work show, with a hoarse voice, and over familiar manner. The slim gentleman in evening dress, polished manners, and gentle voice, with the tone of good breeding that hovered between deference and jocosity; the owner of those thin—those much too thin—white hands could not be the man who spelt joke with a "g." 136

Indeed, this response was universal. Audiences were less likely to notice, however, Browne's carefully studied shift from a strong emphasis on satire in his literary works to wit and humor on the stage. A careful study of the recorded lectures extant demonstrates such a shift, which seemed natural for a born humorist. Browne's literary humor was immensely popular in the United States, and he himself, while visiting entertainment centers, heard his own jokes rolling back at him from Negro minstrels and circus clowns. From these encounters, dating back to his Cleveland days, Browne had sensed the possible success of a humorous lecture. And while in Cleveland, he had already

••••Ibid., p. 12.

••••Kingston, The Genial showman, pp. 131j.-135.

begun to **contemplate** the nature of such a presentation. ^

Browne's initial fame had rested on his unreserved opportunism which had capitalized on topical subjects of **the day**. Humorous satire in his books and editorials had **set his** works apart from the slough of common humorous materials in the same period, open satire on the stage, however, posed a possible threat to his reputation, and his format mellowed considerably. Too, a lecture was not bound by the narrow alloys of literary humor. On stage Browne could utilize dramatic comic devices which were naturally divorced from his comic literature. Cacography, for instance, that device already over-worked by the time he opened his first tour, was set aside thankfully for the fresh and uproariously funny gestures and techniques, many of which Browne employed first in the history of comic lecturing. The triumphs of the stage Artemus far outshine the successes of the literary Ward; ^^ yet both contributed to the popularity of the other. The earlier Ward made possible the lectures, while the lectures enhanced the sales of Artemus Ward publications throughout and after Browne's stunted career.

If the stage was ready for a humorist, Browne was certainly congenial to the opportunity. The obscurity of a

^^^Ibid., pp. 1311.-137.

^^^Reed, p. 196.

host of other nineteenth-century humorists testifies to his supremacy. To describe the naturalness of Browne's humor is to delineate his personal charm and his enthusiasm for his every undertaking. "No man," says Robertson, "could see him without liking him at once. When you heard him talk you wanted to make much of him. . . because he was himself." ^ His manager, E. P. Kingston said, "To me he was always . . . the kind, the gentle, the suave, the generous. One who was over a friend in the fullest meaning of the word, and the best of companions in the amplest acceptance of the phrase." ^ His enthusiasm and genuine, almost fanatic infatuation for humor and merriment claimed his every waking moment, and eventually his life.

Public lectures in the 1860's were not new to America. The lyceum circuit had promoted public lectures on a variety of subjects and had been popularized by such notables as Querson, Poe, and England's Charles Dickens in the 1830's and 1840's.^ But never before Browne had a humorist set out on the nation's roads with an evening of pure, humorous patter. An authority on nineteenth-century American entertainment, Kingston remarked:

••••Kingston, Artemus Ward's Panorama, p. 11,

••••Ibid,, p, 55.

••••or an intimate analysis of the lyceum system, see Kingston, The Genial showman, pp. 111-115•

The idea of becoming a public man having taken possession of his mind, the next point to decide was in what form he should appear before the public. That of a humorous lecturer seemed to him to be the best. It was unoccupied ground. America had produced entertainers v/ho by means of facial changes or eccentricities of costume had contrived to amuse their audiences, but there was no one who ventured to joke for an hour before a house full of people with no aid from scenery or dress. 1U3

But Browne, turning dovm the lyceum, initiated his ovm show, and after enthusiastic engagements in New York and New Bigland, ho hired Kingston, whose managerial abilities played a prominent role in the overwhelmingly popular shows throughout the V/est.

The lecture itself was the subject of considerable planning and theorizing, Kingston recalls that Browne's intention v/as to

m.oroely amuse; if possible keep the house in continuous laughter for an hour and a half, or rather an hour and twenty minutes, for that v/as the precise time, in his belief, v/hich people could sit to listen and to laugh v/ithout becoming bored; and, if possible, send his audience home well pleased with the lecturer and with themselves, v/ithout their having any clear idea of that which they had been listening to, and not one jot the v/iser than v/hen they came,--'^-^ •

At this point it must be acknowledged that Browne's lectures v;ere never completely devoid of satire. Indeed,

^^^Hingston, Artemus V/ard's Panorama, p, 23,

^^Ibid., p. 26.

satire found its place in his comic theory. Kingston continues:

If in so making them laugh he could also cause them to see through a sham, be ashamed of some silly national prejudice or suspicious of the value of some current piece of political bunkum, so much the better.^*+5

Brovme had prepared for almost three years before he first opened his lecture to the public in New London, Connecticut, on November 26, 1861. For three years he had carefully filed away bits and pieces of comic drollery selected from his older newspaper columns, editorials, jests shared among fellow humorists, and new materials which had sprouted in his mind since his arrival in New York. His first lecture, entitled "Children" and later "Babes in the Wood," was a flabby discourse, rambling from one gesture and joke to another. The entire speech was totally incongruous with the title, which was finally alluded to at the close of the performance. All subsequent lectures, with the exception of his "Mormon" talk, followed the same format and repeated much of the same materials,^^ New titles superimposed on old speeches created the illusion of new lectures;

^^Ibid., p, 27

•^^The Mormon lecture is the only full lecture in existence today, and it appears today in isolated publications, all now out of print, including Artemus Ward's panorama and Melville Langdon's Kings of the Platform and pulpit -(New York: Salfield Publishing Co., 1907, pp. 33-66. ^For an itinerary of Brovme's tours, see Seitz, pp. 100-111.

willing audiences patronized his lectures night after night, however, without losing their initial enthusiasm for his humor. The key was not so much the material, but Browne's personation under the pseudonym of the old showman.

The role of the now stage persona was, as has been suggested by Kingston, entertainment. And he entertained, says Reed, not primarily through what he said, but rather through how he said it. Reed also cites an analysis of a Ward lecture in London which lends considerable understanding of Browne's shift from the literary Ward to the stage persona:

The character he likes best to fill is that of a sort of intellectual Hans—the world simpleton of the old German stories—in the act of confiding himself to the public. In the German stories Hans only makes a practical fool of himself in all sorts of impossible ways. But Artemus Ward intellectualizes him, shows the inner absurdity of his own thoughts with a pathetic earnestness and candor,^{1M-7}

Ward's somber mood, confidentiality, serious intent, and illusion of literacy is ludicrously offset by his persistent incoherency and confusion of purpose. His ludicrousness, however, is well-timed and effected through a studied use of what Mark Twain would later call "dead-sure tricks of the platform." ^ Among the stage comic devices

""^"London Spectator, November 2k, 1866; reprinted in Reed, pp. 203-204.,

^ Justin Kaplan, Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain (New York; Simon and Schuster, 1966}, p. 8?.

popularized by Ward were many used earlier in his literary
 Ward materials. In his discussion of Browne's stage
 techniques. Rood catalogues the following devices:

In the Mormon lecture one finds puns, non-
 sense, surprise, logical absurdities, asides,
 anticlimax, imderstatoment, exaggeration,
 comic lists, and burlesques of various kinds.
 Although the language, unlike that of his
 Artemus Ward letters, is on a literate level,
 he does not employ language as a constant
 source of humor. Not only does he coin words,
 but he often iriakes them with something even
 more ludicrous.l'^-^

Brovme »s career ignited in Cleveland in 1859 v/ith the
 first Artemus v/ard letter and rocketed to its zenith during
 his six-month lecture series on the Mormons in Egyptian
 Hall, London, His popularity both home and abroad may be
 due in part to the eclipse of himself before the public as
 the old shov/man, in every respect he became the vagabond
 entertainer both on and off the stage,

Brovme's success on the stage set the pace for all
 three of the other humorists imder consideration who fol-
 lov/ed him during the remainder of the century. His death at
 Southampton in the spring of 1867 left the throne of Ameri-
 can comedy vacant. Browne, however, had opened a lucrative
 field. His first book, Artemus Ward: His Book, sold [i.0,000
 copies v/ithin the first six months of its release; one
 lecture in Sacramento, California, had netted over \$1,200,
 The laurels of his reign could not remain unbestowed by the

public **for** long, although it would require a Mark Twain before they were again awarded to an American humorist of international consequence.

Minor figure though he is, Browne has a secure position in American literature as a result of his demonstrable influence on its humor. His original burlesque strokes and patterns were so successful that most other major American humorists who have followed him borrowed, in one way or another, from his presentation. The use of the persona is central to the whole arena of his comedy, and although its appearance in nineteenth-century American humor is not original with him, Browne's peculiar treatment proved its high value. It became an instrument of catharsis which helped stabilize emotional unbalance in America for the remainder of the century, and this is a claim unjustified for any other humorist except Mark Twain.

CHAPTER IV

PETROLEUM VESUVIUS NASBY: DEMOCRATIC SAINT SINNER

"For the genius to write those things," remarked Lincoln to Charles Sumner, while thumbing through a small volume of Nasby letters, "I would gladly give up my office," -^ Perhaps no more fitting tribute could be paid to the character, who, according to Boutwell, a secretary to Lincoln, was the third major reason, along with the Army and Navy, and the Republican Party, for the defeat of the Confederacy,^{1^1} Nasby, whom Jennette Tandy called "a vulgar and unprincipled rascal" who could claim for himself "not one redeeming trait," proved to be the northern "bludgeon" which pulverized any sympathy for the Southern way of life.^{1^2} Throughout the Civil war and Reconstruction until 1887 Nasby, from both the page and the platform, attacked every major social ill blighting the domestic tranquility of America.

-^ David Ross Locke, The Struggles of Petroleum V. Nasby (Boston: I. N. Richardson and Co., 1887), p. 13.

-^ William Matthews, "pleasantry in Literature," The Great Conversers and Other Essays (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1898), pp. 163-164.

Tandy, p. 124. James C. Austin uses the term "bludgeon" in a description of Nasby's effect as a satirist in his book Petroleum V. Nasby (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1965), p. 91.

Petroleum Vesuvias Nasby was the creation of the journalist David Ross Locke (1833-1888). Like Charles Farrar Browne and Henry 'Heler' Shaw, Locke reinforced a spotty education while bonding over type in printing shops in New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. Born and reared in the North, he was naturally sympathetic to northern politics, "^^^ Like Bro;mo he deplored the splintering of the Union, and when the War opened, like Browne, he chose to fight foremost with the press rather than with a gim. But unlike Browne, a Democrat in private who publicly protested affiliation with any party or movement, Locke found in the newly organized Republican Party a political philosophy which commanded his respect and support until his death at the age of fifty-five.

The success of both Locke and his persona Nasby thrived on caisses. The war over slavery fostered Nasby, the debauched pastor of Confedrit X Roads and V/ingert's Corners, and held him in the spot light of popularity throughout its course. Lee's surrender at Appomattox threatened to end his career. But fortunately, at least for the salvation of Nasby, the country was pocked with scandal ripe for the close scrutiny of Locke. Slavery did not end x^ith the last shot of the war, nor would it, according to Locke, in his

^-^For an outline of Locke's life and achievements. see Austin, pp. 19-1^3.

lifetime. Negro rights and equality remained a principal target for Locke's criticism, but other stirring causes also caught Locke's attention, including women's suffrage, general malpractice in the government, organized crime, temperance, and prohibition. No other period in the nineteenth century could have been more congenial for the success of a Nasby.

According to James Austin, author of the latest book-length study of Nasby, entitled petroleum y, Nasby, the first letter to register the Nasby signature appeared on April 23, 1862, addressed to the editor of the Hancock Jefforsonian of Findlay, Ohio, -'^ It was an attack on some local townspeople of Findlay, especially on Levi Fenner, who was circulating a petition to remove all colored people from the state. Fenner was in part responsible for the reprobate Nasby. Local people likewise served as patterns for Nasby's colleagues. Within a year Findlay itself was stigmatized as the notorious V^ingert's Corners, the setting described in the earliest Nasby letters.^{1^5}

Nasby's appearance as the correspondent in the Jefforsonian marked the culmination in the evolution of a character which had actually materialized over a period of at

•^^TEbid., p. 11j., Austin's date, it must be noted, challenges Tandy's previous date of 1860; Tandy, p. 122.

-^^^Austin, p. 7k*

least seven years preceding the first signed letter.'''^^
 Austin cites editorials that date as far back as 1851. in
 which Looke under his own name had ridiculed subjects by
 exaggerating the supposed virtues of their vices, a tech-
 nique which Austin calls Nasby's "reverse logic."^^"

If critics and scholars have had difficulty in deter-
 mining the date of the original Nasby letter, even more
 diligence is demanded in separating the myths surrounding
 the adoption of the pseudonym "Petroleum Vesuvius Nasby."¹⁸
 One of the earliest sources is recorded in a letter penned
 from Robinson Locke, the son of D. R. Locke, to Melville
 Landon, a humorist of some note in the later nineteenth cen-
 tury and the editor of the anthology Kings of the Platform
and pulpit (1890). The letter reads thus:

Dear Eli: /Landon's pseudonym7

My father's name do plume I hardly think
 has any particular significance. The word
 "Nasby" was coined probably from a remem-
 brance of the battle of Naseby. About the
 time the Nasby letters were commenced in
 the Toledo Blade, the petroleum excitement
 was raging in Pennsylvania, and Vesuvius was

^^^Ibid,, p. 68.

•'^'^Ibid., pp. 61^.-98.

•^^^Tandy uses the name "Volcano" instead of "Vesu-
 vius." Locke used both names interchangeably in the
 Nasby.letters. See Tandy, p. 122,

used for euphony. Father never gave any other explanation of this pseudonym than the above.

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Austin, however, disregards this explanation and asserts **that the** pseudonym probably was suggested to Locke by **Charles Parrar** Broome perhaps while Broome was serving **as editor of** the Cleveland plain Dealer at some time v/hen **Locke** may **have** contributed an article,"^ Locke must . **have been influenced** by a number of earlier fictional characters popular at one time or another. In an interview with Melville Landon, Locke even compared Nasby's method of "exaggerating error to make odious" to Cervantes' exaggeration of vice and folly in Don Quixote of La Mancha. Tandy points out nineteenth-century parallels in a metamorphosing American literary tradition that includes Hosea Biglow and Birdofredum Sav/in, Jack Downing, and Sam Slick.¹⁶² Austin adds to the catalog other characters such as Poor Richard, Simon Suggs, Sut Levinsgood, and Artemus V/ard. Locke made profitable use of all these characters.

•^^^Landon, p. 99.

^^^Austin, p. 68.

•^^•hLandon, p. 98-

•^^^andy, p. 121]..

^^^Austin, p. 67.

From Artemus Ward he borrowed Browne's successful **device of** dialect and cacography which, as Austin claims, "**Browne used . . . to mock social pretentiousness.**"^{^^} Suggs and Lovingood had established a precedent of moral **degradation** for the sake of an interesting plot; Nasby acquired **the** characters but abandoned the plots. From **the** Jack Downing letters by Seba Smith (1792-1868), Locke borrowed the un-introduced comic letter as one form to appear throughout the course of the Nasby publications from 1862-1887. Lowell's Hosea Biglow and Bird of Freedom Sawin, used as political scalpels for more than thirty years, first in the Mexican War controversy and later in the Civil War debates, began circulation of the letters on the civil strife just three months before the appearance of Nasby. Both Lowell's successful use of the comic persona and Hugh Henry Brackenridge's attempts with political satire much earlier gave Locke some incentive in his ventures with Nasby.¹⁶⁶

Nasby in print is probably the most unscrupulous

^{^^^}bid., p. 68.

^{-^^}William Charvat, ed. "James Russell Lowell," Major Writers of America, Vol. I (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World [1962]), p. 838.

^{^^^}Austin, p. 54-

character of his type in American literature, even **in a line-up** extending from Simon Suggs and Sut Lovingood in **the** nineteenth century to Faulkner's twentieth-century characters Josus, Nancy's husband in "That Evening Sun," and members of the Snopes clan who range throughout The Hamlet, The Town, and The Mansion^ Faulkner's characters, as cruel as they sometimes are, are more fully developed, and for the purposes of realism they never stretch the limits of credulity. The two-dimensional figure of Nasby, however, restricted only by his function in Locke's satire, was drawn as savagely as was necessary to serve Locke's purpose of ridicule.

Petroleum Nasby often appears in illustrations as a ragged-bearded, cigar-puffing, balding slouch who is over-zealous, sloppy in his dress, and in need of a good drink. In fact, the portrait is not unlike the person of Locke himself, features of whom are exaggerated to emphasize Nasby's rascality. Usually drunk, Nasby is often found in the presence of other reprobates. Austin describes the associates who follow his leadership:

The dominating character was George Washington Bascom, the saloon keeper, who owned mortgages on all the surrounding land because of the residents' unquenchable thirst for liquor and unchangeable aversion to working for a living. The "elite of the Corners" were Elkanah Pogran, Kemal Hugh McPelter, and Squire Gavitt and their families, former landowners and slave owners. They had the vices of Nasby without

the sharpness; and, since they could neither read nor write, they v/oro ready to believo anything Nasby told them to the detriment of **the** "ablisthists" of tho North.^o?

Locke was not a master at characterization, but his purix)se for Nasby never demanded moro development than he gave him. As instruments of satire, Nasby and tho whole gang from V/ingert's Corners or Confedrit X Roads, nevertheless, act out their prescribed roles like bit actors in a magnificent allegory controlled by tho author's predominant motive. Austin describes Locke's achievement:

None of the characters was realistic or well rounded. Each existed for a single purpose and to illustrate a type. Nasby himself had but two dimensions; any further development would bo likely to make us sympathetic and thus destroy the propaganda effect. There v/oro no in-botv/eens; a character v/as either all good or all bad.

The theme of the letters v/as always political and alv/ays Republican. VJhothor Nasby was talking about abolition, reconstruction, prohibition, v/omen's rights, free trade, or tho merits of particular public figures, Locke's ulterior aim was to stigmatize tho Democratic Party and, by implication, to move tho reader to the Republican point of view: "Humanity in the United States is divided into two classes—them ez v/ear clean shirts and SOX, and—Dimocrats." 1^8

Nasby represented the typical Democrat in the eyes of Locke, and, in this sense, he v/as a universal figure

^^"Austin, p. 78.

^^^Ibid., pp. 79-80.

in Locke's satire. Austin calls him a "type familiar in the Midwest and especially in Ohio during the Civil War years." Nasby's character is a product of an original burlesque treatment.¹⁷⁰ Nasby is similar to Artemus Ward, the old show/man, for, like him, he depreciates the value of everything associated with him. But here the similarity ends, because Nasby goes much further than Artemus Ward. Nasby not only depreciates values, he obliterates them. Things Nasby enjoys do indeed become odious to the reader, or otherwise the reader is condemned with Nasby. On the other hand, things Nasby abhors, the reader inevitably defends. Almost any Nasby letter illustrates Locke's "reverse logic,"

In the following letter Nasby swings his support to the 1861 Democratic presidential nominee. General George B. McClellan, who was running on a peace ticket completely ignoring the slavery issue, with the back-

Austin makes a limited effort to establish the **device of sarcasm as** the central technique in the Nasby satires. His support, however, is flimsy. Like Artemus Ward letters, the Nasby letters rely on broad burlesque treatments which make use of numerous devices in accomplishing their caricatures. Sarcasm is only one of these devices.

The few exceptions are those satires, primarily Locke's lectures, which cast aside any functional use of the Nasby persona.

ing of Northern finance, industry, and transportation interests.¹⁷² Carl Sandburg called Nasby Lincoln's "gloom-chaser," and indeed, Nasby pictures Lincoln's opponent, McClellan, as spineless and inconsistent, but nevertheless the unanimous candidate of his party. Typical of Nasby in most decisions, he casts his vote for self-indulging expediency rather than heroic principle.

I am a reasonable man, and am distinguished for not quarreling with my bread and butter, provided I can assert the loquacity of the bread and butter aforesaid with any degree of certainty. . . . The Democracy appears to want McClellan. If he is the only man we can elect, I am content. I have always been a peace man, but expediency, which is the classical phrase for bread and butter, might induce me to flop. I am not so sure. For a Democrat who has voted Bank and Anti-Bank, Tariff and Anti-Tariff, Slavery and Anti-Slavery, Nebraska and Anti-Nebraska, and who has sometimes been on both sides of the same question to wit, for such a wun, I say, to hesitate now would be like the man in the Skriptor, who strained at a gate and swallowed a saw-mill, 17t]-

Nasby's burlesques also utilized another subordinate device, exaggeration, which stretches burlesque to its limits, and occasionally beyond, when this happens,

¹Carl Sandburg, Abraham Lincoln, The Prairie Years and the War Years (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1966) pp. 170-171.

²Ibid., p. 539.

³David Ross Locke, Nasby. Divers Views and Opinions (Cincinnati: R.W. Carroll and Company, 1866), pp. 186-187.

objects once credible in a simple burlesque become absurd. **The reader** loses all identity with the burlesqued **object** in such a condition. More often than not, Nasby's burlesques hang in the limbo of absurdity for the simple reason that Nasby's whole world is absurd. For instance, **from** Nasby's point of view the Negro is reduced to the **"nigger,"** a **perishable** and disposable commodity. The Negroes mentioned in the following passage are totally removed from the reader's sympathy. Nasby is giving a party to celebrate the Amnesty Proclamation. He records the scene:

Afore five minutes hod rolled off into eternity, ther vmz a bonfire blazin on the North side uv the square, the sod bonfire bein a nigger skool-house v/ich the Freedmen's Commishn hod erected, and wich our enthoosiastic citizens hod in their delirium uv joy set fore to. It wuz emblematic. Tho smoke ez it rolled to the South methawt assoomod the shape uv a olive branch—tho cry uv the nigger children v/ich coodent escape, symbolized their desertid condishn, and tho smell uv em ez they roasted v/uz ii^e unto incense, grateful to our nostrils.175

V/o laugh because such a treatment is ridiculous. Should these Negroes command our sympathy in the least, we v/ould pity them, not laugh at them. In short, Locke's whole indictment against the Southern version of the chain of being v/as that it v/as absurd.

•^"^^David Ross Locke, Ekkoes From Kentucky (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1868), pp. "" "" ^

Austin's labeling of a number of the Nasby letters as distasteful might well have included the one above. **Yet it is** not distasteful at all; it is beyond such a **value Judgment**. Its absurdity removes it from the realm **where** common sense and logic may be expected. And Deekin Pogran's remarks upon the occasion illustrate a bit of sharp irony reminiscent of Swift's in Gulliver's Travels.

A informal mootin vmz to v/unst organized by tho lite of the burnin skool-house, to wich Deekin Pogran addressed hisself. He remarked that this vruz a solemn occasion, so solemn indeed that ho felt inadekato to express the feelins v/ich filled him. His mouth vnizn't big enough to give vent to his sole, though ef he didn't he'd bust. "Wat are v/e met for to-nite, my friends?" sod he; "wat calls us together? V/hereforo these sounds uv joy—wherefore this fire, and v/hereforo is Bascom sellin likker at half price? Becoz v/o are rehabilitated—that's v/at x/e are. Becoz the North hez gone into the olive branch bizniss agin, and v/e hov wunst more our rites. We are amnestied. V/e kin vote—we kin go to Congress—v/e are agin citizins uv the great Republic." 177

Locke's Deekin is as ironically deceived as the self-assured Gulliver who describes to the Brobdinnagian king the superiority of his own English culture, where enemies are demolished through the use of gunpowder.

' See, for example, Austin, p, 96.

' 'Locke, Ekkoes From Kentucky, p. 16.

' ''^Jonathan Swift, Gulliver's Travels, ed, by Jacques Barzim (New York; Crovm, 194-7}, PP. 1^9-1!^0,

Yet Austin is confident that in a consideration of Locke's technique, as he says, "Irony is not a strong enough

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word." ¹ The passage cited above refutes such a claim. Irony is indeed a major source of satire. A reevaluation of Locke's use of irony is certainly called for in a future study. Nothing can be more ironical than the antithetical aspirations of the absurd (Deekin Pogrom) to the ideal (the "great Republic").

Austin is sound, however, in his remaining study of technique. Characterization, always an important consideration in any study of fictional devices, is a key to Locke's satire created through the use of his persona. All characters, including Nasby, are flat figures, never more than two-dimensional portraits which have been endowed with both traits and the ability to respond to those traits. But they can never change. Burlesque, especially that which fluctuates between the absurd and the comic, depends upon two-dimensional figures,

Nasby's own character stands in contrast with the persona of Josh Billings and Artemus Ward. Unlike them, Nasby is not witty. He could no more rely on Josh's aphorisms than Josh could rely on Nasby's incidents, situations, and proclamations. To cultivate wisdom is not Nasby's purpose as Locke sees it. Nor is it his

•••Austin, p, 91.

purpose to entertain, as did V/ard, with witty or incongruous remarks. Nasby is plain and direct; ho reacts to the moment and to its circumstances, and his passions direct him. He is motivated by a purely selfish and uninformed egotism. Ho is defined as much by what ho does as he is by what ho says. The resulting composite is Locke's blow against Southern society. Northerners read him and rojoeted him through laughter, not because they saw in him something distasteful in themselves—had they, their rejection would have taken tho form of scorn and not laughter. They rejected him because he was absurd. No one could really bo that degenerate, that unwholesome, that unredeemable. Locke could use him as a persona to criticize the South because Northerners would see in Nasby, not a portrayal of a real Southerner, but objectified abstractions of the worst in Southern beliefs, politics, and in general, the antebellum Southern way of life. Locke's degrading of these abstractions into a crude, unrohabilitable figure like Nasby rendered them absurd. Readers who saw Nasby in this light could laigh, like Lincoln, who prov/led around the IWhite House after hours chuckling as he feasted over his desk copy of Nasby by candlelight.

Other devices used by Locke contribute to burlesque. The humorous catalogues, misquotations, ridiculous definitions, grotesque narratives, sarcasm, and even cacography

are important only in light of their contributions to the general purpose of satire wielded through Nasby, Locke's mouthpiece.

All objects smiled upon by Nasby withered in the confrontation. The impact of Locke's persona was felt throughout the country, and men in positions of responsibility did well to consider its influence. One who misjudged Nasby was President Andrew Johnson. Although he was not the only President to be criticized through Nasby, he did receive the ignominious honor of being the subject of a Nasby pamphlet as well as a whole book of Nasby letters, entitled Swingin' Round the Cirkle (1866), Nasby's second book. Two years later another publication, Ekkoes From Kentucky, continued to pepper Johnson with ridicule.

Locke's pen never rested while corruption in government reigned unchecked. Turning from presidents, Nasby searched out corruption in local government and was influential in the outcomes of numerous elections. During Lincoln's administration Locke made vituperative attacks through Nasby at Ohio's Northern Democrat and Southern sympathizer, Clement L. Vallandigham, the South's most vigorous spokesman from the North, Vallandigham was

David Ross Locke, Swingin' Round the Cirkle
Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1867}7

pro-slavery, but nevertheless; an ardent peace advocate in the Congress. Nasby championed him and his cause throughout the War and kept the spirit of abolition raging against him. Samuel J. Tilden, accused of vote buying in the Presidential election of 1876, was representative of those who received Nasby's praise and Locke's scorn after the Civil War. Locke kept up his campaign against Tilden through Nasby even after the election for fear that he would run again in 1880.^{1ft5} Tilden's defeat was insured for both elections.

Locke's most bitter hatred was reserved for discrimination against the Negro, Consequently, Nasby is the most scathing example of illiterate bigotry directed at the American Negro, Locke's sympathy for Lincoln and the Emancipation of the Negro is reflected inversely by Nasby's "mourning" over the assassination of Lincoln.

The nashen mourns i. The hand uv the vile assassin hez bin raised agin the Goril—the head uv the nashen, and the people's Father hez fallen beneath the hand uv a patr--vilo assassin.

While Aberham Linkin wuz a livin, I need not say that I did not love him. Blessed v/ith a mind uv no ordinary dimensions, endov/ed with all the goodness uv Washington, I alluz bleeved him to hev bin guilty uv all the crimes uv a Negro,

^^^Sandburg, pp. 375-378.

Austin, p. 53.

No man in Noo Jersey laments his untimely death moro than tho undersined. I commonst weopin perfoosoly the minit I diskivered a squad uv returned soljers comin round the corner, v/ho wuz a fore in constooshnel Dimokrats to hang out mournin. . .

Hod it happened in 1862, when it v/ood hev boon uv sum use to us, we wood not be so bov/od down with woo and anguish- It wood hev throwd tho guvornment into confusion, and probably hev sekoored the independence uv the South.

But, alas J the tragedy cum at the v/rong time.

Now, wo are saddled v/ith tho damnin crime, when it will prodoose no results. Tho v/ar wuz over. The game v/uz up when Richmond wuz evacuated, V/hy kill Linkin then? For revenge? Revenge is a costly luxury—a party so near bankrupt as tho Dimokrasy cannot afford to indulge in it. The wise man hez no sich word ez revenge in his dictionary--the fool barthers his hope for it. 183

Locko, hov/ever, v/aged open war against more than Southern sympathy. He cut deeply into the foundation of the South's v/hole economic and cultural life. And he could do so, as he often did, in less than a page, as in the follov/ing letter entitled "Suggests a 'Psalm of Sadness' for his Friends South," Reminiscing over past affluence, Nasby wails this dirge:

V/unst I wuz rich, and that nigger wuz tho basis thereof.

Woe is mei I ov/ned him, soul, body, muscles, sinev/s, blood, boots, and briches.

His intelleck v/uz mine, his body v/uz mine, likev/ize his labor and the fruits thereof.

His wife wuz mine, and she wuz my con-
kubine.

The normal results uv conlcubinage I
sold, combining pleasure and profit in a
eminent degree.

And on the price thereof I played poker,
and drank mint juleps, and rode in gorgus
chariots, and wore purple and fine linen
every day-

V/uz this miscegenashun, or negro equality?
Not any. For she vmz mine, even as my ox,
or my horse, or my sheep, and her increase
v/uz mine, oven as v/uz theirs.¹⁸⁴

The degree to which Locke felt empathy for the plight of the freed slave is graphically illustrated v/hen one surveys the situation of the Negro as portrayed in the Nasby letters. An economic and theological rationale for slavery supported the whole Southern hierarchy. It was that pillar v/hich Locke sought to topple; thence came Nasby's constant struggle to justify the system theologically and economically. Locke v/as so involved in the push for Negro equality that the Negro situation became the topic of his most famous lecture, "Cussid Be Canaan," a v/ork in which ho set aside his Nasby persona and challenged tho issue directly through argument.

The Ilasby literary persona after the V/ar v/as much the same as that before the V/ar, During the Johnson administration (1865-1869), Nasby moved from V/ingert's Corners to Confedrit Roads, Kentucky, where he enjoyed exploiting the

¹⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 193.

Negroes during the Reconstruction.-^^^ Later he traveled to other locations around Ohio and Kentucky and eventually went east to New York and New Jersey from where he addressed numerous letters, in 1882, he even appeared from abroad in Locke's Nasby in Exile,** ° a travel book of letters written in England. After the war the production of the letters went through periods of relaxation until some domestic issue arose to rekindle Locke's ire. Austin observes that the only major change in style was in Locke's gradual shift from his former heavy use of cacography to a more conventional spelling, although cacography was never entirely dismissed from the letters. '

Eventually, the base for Petroleum V. Nasby was Toledo, Ohio, where Locke managed, among other financial ventures, the Toledo Blade, a paper and printing concern. It was through the Weekly Blade, with which Locke became associated as early as 1865, that his Nasby letters first acquired a national audience. Within two years of his

^See "Mr. Nasby Attempts to Get Possession of the Negro Vote," ibid,, p, 619.

^^ David ROSS Locke, Nasby in Exile (Toledo: Locke Publishing Company, 1882).

●^^^Austin, p. 90.

^^^Ibid., p. 35.

first edition of Nasby letters drawn from the Blade, he **found himself invited** to the office of James Redpath, the **founder of the** Boston Lyceum Bureau."^^ Almost overnight **Locke was** transformed on stage before the public as his **literary "hero"** Petroleum Nasby.

Locke's success as a lecturer was phenomenal. Samuel Clemens, **who** also was touring during the 1870's, furnishes us **with** some of the most graphic description of Locke's success **and** presentation on the stage. In his Autobiography Clemens recounts this:

I remember Petroleum Vesuvius Nasby (Locke) very well. . . . I saw him first when I was on a visit to Hartford; I think it was three or four years after the War. The Opera House was packed and jammed with people to hear him deliver his lecture on "Cussid Be Canaan." He had been on the platform with that same lecture—and no other—during two or three years, and it had passed his lips several hundred times, yet even now he could not deliver any sentence of it without his manuscript—except the opening one. His appearance on the stage was welcomed with a prodigious burst of applause, but he did not stop to bow or in any other way acknowledge the greeting, but strode straight to the reading desk, spread his portfolio open upon it, and immediately petrified himself into an attitude which he never changed during the hour and a half occupied by his performance, except to turn his leaves—his body bent over the desk, rigidly supported by his left arm as by a stake, the right arm lying across his back. About once in two minutes his right arm swung forward, turned a leaf, then swung to its resting place on his back again—just the

action of a machine, and suggestive of one; regular, recurrent, prompt, exact. You might imagine you heard it "clash." He v/as a groat, burly figure, uncouthly and provincially clothed, and ho looked like a simple old farmer.

I was all curiosity to hear him begin. He did not keep mo waiting. The moment he had crutchod himself upon his loft arm, lodged his right upon his back, and bent himself over his manuscript ho raised his face slightly, flashed a glance upon tho audience, and bellowed this remark in a thundering bull-voice:

"V/e are descended from grandfathers!"

Then ho went right on roaring to tho end, tearing his ruthless way through tho continuous applause and laughter, and taking no sort of account of it. His lectiu?e v/as a volleying and sustained discharge of bull's-eye hits, v-dlth the slave power and its Northern apologists for target, and his success v-/as due to his matter, not his manner; for his delivery v/as destitute of art, unless a tremendous and inspiring earnestness and energy may be called by that name. The moment ho had finished his piece he turned his back and marched off the stage v/ith the seeming of being not personally concerned vrith tho applause that v/as booming behind him. 190

Paul Fa tout, noted Tv/ainian scholar and author of Mark Twain on the Lecture Circuit, provides another view of Locke on the platform that Clemens, perhaps in his old age, somehov/ overlooked in his appraisal:

Nasby was alv/ays an event, A speaker of long experience, he filled over tv/o hundred engagements a year, alv/ays with the same lecture, "Cussid Be Canaan," A devotee of the bottle, he v/as sometimes too drunk to see the audience.

^ Samuel L. Clemens, Mark Tv/ain's Autobiography, ed. Albert Bigelov/ Paine (Nov/ York; Harper Brothers7 192/{.}), pp. 14.8-114.9.

An unfeeling editor said that to appear in Brooklyn, where puritanism v/as rife, Nasby had to train dovm to eleven drinks a day."^91

Thomas Nast's cartoons of Nasby in Locke's various publications reveal a character v/ho looked much like the real Locko on stage. ^^ And if Fa tout's account of the author's practice is true, then Locke must have ironically complemented the literary image, Locke's personal appearance did not disappoint his audiences as had Brovme's, whose fans complained when ho first stepped out on stago to represent Artemus V/ard.

Any close observer of Nasby in his lecture period could have noticed a v/ide disparity betv/een Locke's earlier i-n?itten satire and his oral approach and presentation of satire, Tho physical Nasby image became simply a thin veneer v/hich covered a radical shift in Locke's satirical content. The sustained personality of Nasby, v/hat fev/ characteristics remained, v/as sacrificed on stage for lectures bordering close to Victorian sermons. In only one of tho lectures, "cussid Bo Canaan," is even scant m.ention

•^^•^Paul Fatout, Mark 'JX'/ain on the Lecture Circuit (Bloomington: Indiana UniversityTress, 1960}, " p. 119.

^^homas Iiast, the nineteenth-century cartoonist, v/as requested to illustrate numerous voluraes of comic literature during the mid-1800's. For his history and collected illustrations, see Albert Bigelow paine's Thomas Nast—His Period and Plis pictures (Hew York: Macraii-Ian Company, 19t5ijJ^

made from time to time of earlier Nasby elements such as the "Corners" or of the name of some familiar friend of the literary Nasby. But in spite of his shift in presentation, Locke's satiric device of "exaggerating error" remained the same.

His lectures were published in an 1872 subscription compilation of the Nasby letters, entitled The Struggles of Petroleum Vesuvius Nasby.^{^^^} One lecture, "In Search of the Man of Sin,"^{^^} delivered in the Boston Music Hall on December 29, 1870, is the most imaginative, although it is rather plodding in form. Locke begins his talk by apologizing for any possible taint of personal egotism, a trait which smothers his comments with lessening degrees through the progress of the lecture. He declares his moral superiority near the beginning:

I am a most excellent man—indeed, I know of no one who has more qualities to be commended, and fewer to be condemned.¹⁹⁵

From this beginning the lecture rambles through a series of anecdotes which penetrate the facades of various men and women and expose their inner motives for their good works. Each anecdote, however, serves to reveal the guilt that

^oLocke, The struggles of petroleum V. Nasby, pp. 629-715.

-^{^^^}bid., pp. 687-715.

•^{^^^}ibid., p. 687.

lies within the speaker himself. At the end of the lecture, Locke reveals this discovery:

I at last found the man of sin. I was the man. I am now busy engaged in reforming,—not the world, but myself,—and I hope I am succeeding. . . . My hearers, all of you who try hard enough and watch closely enough, may, in the course of a great many years, if you are gifted and have patience, get to be as good as I am. I know you will shrink from a task so apparently hopeless, but I assure you the reward is great enough to justify the trial.¹⁹⁶

A second lecture, delivered also in Boston but on December 16, 1868, is entitled "The Struggles of a Conservative with the Woman Question."¹⁹⁷ In a comic spirit Locke addresses himself to the issue of women's suffrage. He begins in an effort to characterize all women, and in the course of the speech, he cites woman's place in the history of man beginning with her temptation by Satan in the Garden of Eden and her subsequent luring of man. Delightful passages attack her vanity and urge her to return to the kitchen. Locke turns at the close of his lecture, however, to a serious, moral position on the subject.

What shall we do with the woman question? It is upon us, and must be met. I have tried for an hour to be a conservative, but it won't do. Like poor calico, it won't wash. There are in the United States some millions

¹⁹⁶Ibid., p. 715.

¹⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 660-686.

of women who desire something better than the lives they and their mothers have been living. There are millions of women who have minds and souls, and who yearn for something to develop their minds and souls. There are millions of women who desire to have something to think about, to assume responsibilities, that they may strengthen their moral natures, as the gymnast lifts weights to strengthen his physical nature.

I know, O ye daughters of luxury, that you do not desire a change. There is no need of it for you. Your silks could not be more costly, your jewels could not flash more brightly, nor your surroundings be more luxurious. Your life is pleasant enough. But I would compel you to think, and thinking, act. I would put upon your shoulders responsibilities that would make rational beings of you. I would make you useful to humanity and to yourselves. I would give the daughters of the poor, as I have helped to give the sons of the poor, the power in their hands to right their wrongs.198

His closing is nothing short of oratory:

I would have your daughters fitted to grapple with life alone, for no matter how you may leave them, you know not what fate may have in store for them. I would make them none the less women, but stronger women, better women- Let us take this one step for the sake of humanity. Let us do this much towards making humanity what the Creator intended it to be, -like Himself.199'

Of all his lectures Clemens reports that the one which Locke gave most frequently throughout the whole country was "Cussid Be Canaan." Fatout points out that

^^^Ibid., p. 681j..

•^^^Ibid., pp. 685-686.

^^^Ibid., pp. 629-659.

it probably was the prominence which Locke gave it in his engagements that was partly responsible for his refusal to join Clemens on a Joint tour through the West. It v/as probably his fear that after four years with the same reading, the response on such a long tour v/ould not warrant the effort involved.^^^

"Cussid Bo Canaan" attempted to shatter every argument that justified the institution of slavery, and it made inroads against v/hite prejudice tov/ards the Negro. Tho lecture in its philosophy v/as decidedly ahead of its time, but it remained one of the strongest voices for Negro equality in that period.

Locke began his lecture vd.th a definition of the black man v/hich distinguished the noble Negro from the "v/retched nigger" of America, After rejecting the theory of Noah's curse on Ham by demonstrating several inconsistent implications v/hich are naturally derived from it, he urged white Americans to give the Negroes the opportunity for personal advancement. He reminded his audience that

I would not make them superior to the v/hite. I v/ould do nothing more for them than I v/ould for other men. But I v/ould not prevent them from doing for themselves. I v/ould tear dovm all the bars to their advancement. I v/ould let them maJce of themselves all that they may. In a republic there should be no avenue to honor or v/ell doing closed to any man. if

they outstrip mo in the race, it proves
thom to be moro worthy, and they are clearly
entitled to tho advantages resultim^. There
is no reason for this inequality.^0^

Continuing, Locke called out for lav/s v/hich v/ould erase
discrimination in tho courts.

I demand for them full equality v/ith us before
the law. Come what may, lot it load to v/hat
it v/ill, this demand i make. I make it as a
worshiper of true Democracy; as one v/ho
believes in tho divine right of man—not v/hito
man, red man, or black man, but MAN, to self
government, I malce it as one v/ho will be free
himself, v/ould havo all others free, I demand
it, not as a gracious gift to the colored man
of something v/e might, if expedient, v/ithhold,
not as a right he has earned by service done,
but humbly, and v/ith shame in my face at tho
v/rong x/o have done, I v/ould give it him as
returning a right that v/as alv/ays his, . . . ,^

Clemens was probably right v/hen he declared that it
was the material and not Locke's manner v/hich made possiblo
tours which broke all records of attendance and rev/arded
his efforts v/ith 9200 a night. ^ Clemens aspired to such
a drawing, but he probably never rose in his lecture career
to tho plateau on which the 1870's and 1880's found
Petroleum Vesuvius Nasby.

²⁰²Locke, The Struggles of petrolouin V. Nasby, p. 658.

²⁰³ibid.

²⁰¹patout, p, 103.

CHAPTER V

THE MOST CONSPICUOUS PERSON ON THE PLANET

In the 1860's **the** pseudonym became one of the **cre-**
dentials of national showmen **like** the humorists. Some
pseudonyms were simply the names of fictional characters
created by v/r iters who then retained the names v/hen they
assumed **the** roles of their characters on the stage and
platform. Charles Farrar Browne became so identified
with his character during the last years of his brief
life that his name and the character's, for many fans,
became synonymous. Henry Vftieoler Shaw and David Ross
Locke assumed their pseudonyms apparently for publicity
and performance only. The only major member of their
group to achieve more than a national identification
with his nom do plixmo was Samuel L. Clemens,

The name "Mark Twain" originated as a pseudonym for
Clemens while he was working on the editorial staff of
the Virginia City Territorial Enterprise in January,
1863. ^ For all practical purposes "Mark Twain" remained
simply **a** pseudonym during Clemens' v/estern growth from
the v/itty editor in Virginia City to the celebrated "V/ild
Humorist of the Pacific Slope" in California. It was
until he joined the Quaker City excursion cruise to the

^Paul Fatout, "Mark Twain's Nom do Plume," American Literature, XXXIV, 1 (March 1962), 1-7.

Holy Land that "Mark Twain" metamorphosed into a highly developed persona.

The western Mark Twain and the eastern Mark Twain wore essentially different. The western "Mark Twain" was Samuel Clemens himself apparently not even thinly disguised. Clemens' reputation stemmed from his ability to construct humorous, fictional accounts based on the barest fact, and from his unrelenting courage in attacking sham wherever he saw it. His contributions first to the Territorial Enterprise, and later to the Golden Era, the Californian, the San Francisco Call, the Alta California, and the Sacramento Union established for him regional notoriety on the Pacific coast. His literary apprenticeship ended when he looked for the first time as an adult to the East.

Clemens' only calling card to eastern literary circles was his weak but genuine reputation established there with the publication of his "Jumping Frog Story" in the New York Saturday Press on November 18, 1865. Van Wyck Brooks and Bernard DeVoto, both eminent Twainians, have debated the question as to whether Clemens was ashamed of his "villainous backwoods sketch" which received such intense, immediate

^^^Ivan Benson, Mark Twain's Western Years (New York Russell and Russell, 1966), pp. 9-160.

acceptance in the East.²⁰⁷ Ivan Benson, in Mark Twain's Western Years, modifies the debate by citing Clemens' pride in his story months later on his Sandwich Island voyage. Nevertheless, he was rightly hesitant to fling himself openly into the arms of eastern society until he had had time to evaluate his position there and adjust accordingly.²⁰⁹ His "literary" credentials, after all, were fabricated from the crudities of old southwestern humor and free-wheeling journalism which were unacceptable to the tastes of refined readers of New York, Buffalo, Hartford, Boston, and Elmira—all places which barricaded him temporarily from real acclaim.²¹⁰

Adjustment to the demands of eastern literary and social tastes provoked problems for Clemens which he would never resolve in his lifetime there. His personality and talents grew out of experiences west of the Mississippi River, and at thirty-two he would never hope to change. Yet he was forced by his ambition for acclaim to bend and to make certain concessions, even apologies.

^^"Albort Bigelow Paine, ed.. Hark Twain's Letters, I (New York; Harpers, 1917), P* 101.

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Benson, p, 131.

^^^aplan, p, 119.

-•^^Gladys Bellamy, Hark Twain as a Literary Artist (Norman: Oklahoma University press, ~1950T, 'p. /9.

for what the East considered an already jaded reputation, Stories had trickled eastward of his incidents with the law/ in San Francisco, of his reputation as a "tavern fly" in Virginia City, of his abortive duel v/hile v/orking on the Territorial Enterprise, and of his racy, indiscreet passages in editorials and travel letters. All burden of proof that he iard his art had changed apprecialbly rested on his shoulders, and he found Now York a forebod- ing, chilly placo for a man who had accepted the challenge to travel and to associate with only his "betters."²¹¹ But Clemens was enterprising and was eager to make his ovm opportunity, V/hen the Quaker City extended its in- vitations to tho eastern elite for a cruise to the Holy Land, Sam Clemens made plans to attend.

After the Quaker City returned to New York in tho fell of 1867, Sam Clemens walked ashore a truly national celebrity. V/ith tho intuitive shrewdness which marked him throughout his life as a businessman and speculator, ho had arranged contracts with two newspapers: an eastern

Anson Burlingame, the American ambassador to China, met Clemens on a stay in the Hav/aiian Islands v/hile Clemens was on special assignment for the Sacramento Union. Aware of Clemens' potential as a writer, Burlingame warned Clemens not to associate with anyone inferior to himself, but to seek only the refined company of those who were in best posi- tion to help him in his career—v/orthy advice v/hich Clemens later put to good practice. See Albert Bigelow Paine, ed., Mark Twain's Biography, I (New York: Harpers, 1912), p. 269; Benson, p. 113-b.

Journal, the New York Tribune, and a western paper, the San Francisco Alta California. To each he had submitted numerous accounts of the voyage's progress, and he had **won** fame through his unconventionally realistic treatment **of lands** legendary, mystic, and sacred in the minds of his **readers.**²¹² A letter **of** January 2^k, 1868, to his mother, **Jane** Clemens, and his sister, Mrs. Moffott, records Clemens' Jubialnt boast that Elisha Bliss, Jr., of the American Publishing Company, had awarded him the highest-paying contract ever offered to any author, to publish a book of his experiences.²¹¹

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Clemens' Notebook, edited by Paine (Harpers, 1935), includes many of the curt remarks v/hich stripped the veneer from many of the religious and romantic elements of the Near East and revealed them for the shams that they v/ere. Illustrative comments, some of which appear in modified versions in The Innocents Abroad, include these:

"Moorish v/omen cover their faces with their coarse v/hite robes—to cover their inhuman damned ugliness no doubt" (p. 65).

"iThere Baalam's ass lived, holy ground" (p. 88).

"The people of this region in the Bible wore just as they are nov/--ignorant, depraved, superstitious, dirty, lousy, thieving vagabonds" (p. 93).

"It seems to me that the prophets fooled av/ay their time v/hen they prophesied the destruction of the cities—old Time would have fixed that, easy enough" (p. 107).

^Paine, Letters, I, p. lii.5.

Innoticoable to a new, eastern audience, Clemens **had** been nurturing a change since his return from the Holy Land. First, the writer who stepped off the boat was **already** pursuing a courtship with a beautiful, proper and polished girl whom he had met only through a brother's locket photograph. The girl was the daughter of a coal magnate, new in the social elite of a tight and snobbish eastern aristocracy, Clemens was ready for a wife, and he had resigned himself to an agent of eastern refinement who knew the proper procedure for such a courtship. In short, he had turned to Mrs. Mary Mason Fairbanks, an acquaintance soon to become his literary mentor, herself a writer of some repute whom he had met on the Quaker City. Secondly, the writer, who now measured each step away from the ship in the glare of acclaim, turned his sights from articles to books, from journalism to literature, and from the bloodshot eyes of the indiscriminating masses to the brooding scrutiny of the eyes of critics now teased into noticing the former "Wild Humorist of the Pacific Slope," the "vagrant" now gave way to the "vagabond,"

For an informative study of Clemens' transition from a journalist to a professional literary writer with his first major work of book length. The Innocents Abroad, see Calder M. Pickett, "Mark Twain as Journalist and Literary Man; A Contrast," Journalism Quarterly, XXXVIII (Winter 1961), 59-66.

and Clemens had entered a second phase of his development **as a writer.**^{21'D}

Sam Clemens' western imago bowed to a newer, more refined **and** dignified persona in the guise of Mark Twain. Clemens' persona would delight the supper clubs and lecture halls from New York City eventually to remote corners around the world. Samuel Clemens, however, faded from sight and began an isolation still unexamined fully. The division of personality was the difference between a public image presented by Mark Twain, and the private imago of Clemens the man. Although Clemens was probably not fully aware of it himself, it was the novel Mark Twain persona rather than Sam Clemens who courted and won Olivia Langdon in 1870. It was the image of Mark Twain, he was to discover, that was always before the public eye, and it was only in the shadows of his own thoughts and in the private company of his immediate family and closest friends that he was himself.

As suggested above, Clemens apparently adopted the pseudonym "Mark Twain" as a stylistic convenience; pseudonyms were customary among the journalists and literati. At first it served neither as masque nor character as did

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^Paine suggests that "cultured association" aboard ^{^^}® QM City was primarily responsible for his shift in style; Notebook, p. 68-

the pen names "petroleum Vesuvius Nasby" and "Artemus Ward." In Virginia City "Mark Twain" was a second name for the extravagant, colorful Sam Clemens, local editor.^{?1A} His adoption of the name reflects only his established position for the newspaper, an editorial post he shared with William Wright, a colleague on the paper, better known as "Dan Do Quille."

In the East, however, "Mark Twain" evoked an image established first by Clemens' studied appearance as a literary, social figure, and then by his presence on the platform as a humorist. It was an overlay, both parts of which differed as noted from the personal private man, Sam Clemens of Nook Farm and future world fame, who was finally resurrected in years that would follow from literary associations in the West.

Encouragement by fellow writers enthusiastic about his potential spurred Clemens on to break down barriers to his work in the East. Mrs. Fairbanks opened the door of eastern society and unprecedented literary success to him through her discreet censorship of his Quaker City letters which were being published simultaneously during the drifto for the Alta California and the New York Tribune, Readers

^•^^aplan, p. 16-

readers of Clemens' biography will recall the gloomy young
 vitor's dropping overboard patches v/hich he had just torn
 from his manuscript. "Mrs. Fairbanks thinks it oughtn't
 be printed, and like as not, she is right . . . She just
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destroyed another four hours work for mo," His transi-
 tion from tho Pacific coast to the Atlantic would not prove
easy. 219

The Innocents Abroad, made up of his Quaker City
 materials, brought Clemens his first solid national repu-
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tation. The overwhelming public reception of The Inno-
cents Abroad, however, opened doors to a bright literary
 career and tho public acclaim on which he would thrive as
 a permanent fixture among the New England elite. The

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Paine, Biography, I, p. 328.

^Mrs, Fairbanks, whom Dixon V/ecter in his book
Mark Twain to Mrs. Fairbanks (San Marino, California:
 Huntington Library, 19^1-9}, describes as "the true arbiter
 of taste, manners, and morals" (p. xxiii), continued to
 assist Clemens' editing for several years, as the massive
 correspondence betv/een the tv/o v/riters demonstrates. But
 she v/as only tho first of several critics v/ho would influ-
 ence his v/ork. In 1870 Livy took over much of the v/ork
 previously assigned to Mrs, Fairbanks and, in time, was
 joined by three other critics in their ovm right: Susy,
 Jean, and Clara Clemens, the rest of Sam's family.

Another influential critic v/as Clemens' lifelong
 friend and literary companion, V/illiam Dean Howells, As
 editor of the Atlantic lionthly, the most prestigious lit-
 erary journal in the last half of the nineteenth century,
 Hov/ells ushered into the mainstream of American literature
 the realistic movement of v/hich Clemens' v/ork v/as so re-
 presentative. It v/as his sustained approval of Clemens'
 publications that eventually projected "Mark Twain," the
 author, before an international audience's acclaim,

^^^Kaplan, p. 57.

Innoents Abroad provided him, says Kaplan, with "prosperity and status; Hartford, a symbol of his eager acceptance, after years adrift and marginality, of a place in the social order. . . ." ²²¹

Clemens' next book, Roughing It, a kind of fictionalized travelogue of his western experiences, did not enjoy the immediate success which followed the publication of The Innocents Abroad in 1869. It was far, however, from any setback to his growing literary reputation. Just weeks after the publication of Roughing It in February, 1872, Clemens revealed in a letter to his niece that he had already received \$10,000 from the book. ²²² Howells found it, like The Innocents Abroad, a book to "re-re-read." ²²³
 On November 21, 1875, Howells penned a letter to Clemens which noted in passing that "I took down Roughing It, last night, and made a fool of myself over it, as usual." ^{pp) i}
 The book was such a success, indeed, that in 1883 Howells

[^][^]bid,, p. 6k*

[^][^][^]Henry Nash Smith and William M. Gibson, eds,, Mark Twain-Howells Letters, I (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960}, p. 10.

[^][^][^]Ibid,, II, p. 833.

[^]%bid., I, p. ill.

wrote Clemens that as far away as Prince Edward Island he had found a woman who carried two books with her--one v/as **the Bible, tho other** Roughing rb. ^^^ Tho author of The Innocents Abroad began watching his farae spread.

Clemens' acclaim early in his literary career was no **passing** phenomenon. He pursued his reputation; he cultivated it carefully. Two factors for v/hich he v/as directly and deliberately responsible secured his fame. First, he capitalized on every occasion to appear before the public. Second, his writing became habitual, a life's vocation, and he found himself composing more and more outlines for projected novels v/hich v/ere geared toward the broadest reading circle of America, the rising middle class families. He onco remarked, "My books are water; those of the great geniuses are v/ine. Everybody drinks water,"^{oof.}

In later v/orks like The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, The Prince and Tho Pauper, and Joan of Arc, he demonstrated his ability to write for the family fireside. Each book received the accolade of the public and critics. Each had been duly reviev/ed by his judicious wife and family before printing. Yet Kaplan disagrees vdth the popular notion that his v/ife's influence badgered his \-io\|s. to the point of

^^^Ibid., p. k2>0.

^^^Paine, Notebook, p. 190,

"emasculatation," a charge often leveled at his female critics. Clemens' rising literary fame as author (and humorist) received several buffeting blows from the critics at home and abroad because of his publications which were not written specifically for fireside culture. Kaplan cites The Gilded Age, published simultaneously in America and in England in December, 1873,^{^^^} as Clemens' "first full-scale product of /His7 Hartford years," a book which he says is "not polite literature, Ahat does no_t7 deal with any of the smiling aspects of American life."[^] "Its raw materials," Kaplan continues, "are disaster, poverty, blighted hopes, bribery, hypocrisy, seduction, betrayal, blackmail, murder and mob violence," " The Gilded Age was only the first of several books v/hich explored such "American elements.

Three other novel-length works. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1885), Pudd'nhead Wilson (1891|.), and Tho I^sterious Stranger (1916)—composed between 1897 and 1908—[^] harshly satirized America and Americans behind

^{^^^}aplan, p, 167.

^{^^^}Ibid., p. 161.

^{^^^}Ibid., p. 162.

-[^] Justin Kaplan, ed-. Great Short V/orks of Mark Tw/ain (New York; Harper and Kov/, 1957), pp. x-xi.

the finished veneer, lace, and glitter of the "Gilded Age" and before. Nineteenth-century Mark Twain enthusiasts found that their author could not be straight-jacketed by Victorian propriety in spite of the New York Tribune, which continued to be one of his most skeptical and often corrosive reviewers. Yet both the desire to please and the inward demand to criticize were equally integral in the shaping of his image as an author.

In his writing Mark Twain was known as a critic and humorist. As a critic he was one of the most forthright, unshackled thinkers of his day. From his point of view he was merely following an American tradition.

Our papers have one peculiarity—it is American—it exists nowhere else—their irreverence. May they never lose and never modify it. They are irreverent toward pretty much everything, but where they laugh one good king to death, they laugh a thousand cruel and infamous shams and superstitions into the grave, and the account is squared. Irreverence is the champion of liberty and its only sure defense.¹

He attacked corruption in politics, racism, inept government, prejudice, fraud, institutional religion, inhumanity wherever he found it, and even literature. Techniques of his assaults varied. He could measure out his scorn in the form of open vituperation, as in his essay "The United States of Lyncherdom," through objective exposure, employed in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, and

¹—Taino, Notebook, pp. 195-198.

through humor, as in A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. No other author was so attuned to his time and so **adept** in representing it in his works. Although his early literary career was firmly based on his humor, it was not until the waning years of his life that he was actively sought after for his commentaries and assumed wisdom on almost every conceivable subject.

His comments on the dirt and filth, and sham of the Holy Land were refreshing to American readers of The Innocents Abroad and Roughing It was filled with "some of the most racy specimens of his7 savory pleasantries."²³² If The Innocents Abroad launched Clemens' literary career, Roughing It established it. The Adventures of Tom Sawyer secured it. But it secured it within the-ranks of the nineteenth-century clowns, America's literary humorists.^^^ Try as he did on occasions, he never broke the association between his humor and his literature. More often than not he actually depended on his tools as a humorist for the structure and presentation of his humorist for the structure and presentation of his fiction- What was to be his finest literary work. The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (1885), published as a sequel to The Adventures of Tom

-^ Smith and Gibson, p. 11.

^-^-^Stephen Leacock, Mark Twain (Edinburgh: Peter Davies Limited, 1932), p. 77.

Sawyer, relied heavily on devices v/hich had initiated his popularity in the V/est as a comic journalist. Some of the same techniques which contributed so much to his V/estem editorials and theatricals--comic burlesque, exaggeration, elaborate descriptive hoaxes, tall tales, and pithy, direct, and often ironic evaluations--are all employed throughout the devolopmont of the narrative's rambling, episodic archetypal journey down the river. Until his comic frame of mind melted in the pathos of his last years, Clemens continued to find that humor v/as the element v/hich made it possible for him to bandy about the most perplexing questions and analyses of human life.

The identity of Mark Tv/ain v/as useful to Clemens' literary ventures. Already a colorful figure in at least his journalistic (not literary) ventures, Clemens found that his pseudonym sold his books. But "Mark Tv/ain" played a more integral role in Clemens' literary productions. Through "Mark Ti/ain" Clemens created a fictional world to complement his emerging persona. Although that v/orld sprang initially from the experiences of Samuel Clemens, the author found that straight recording of those experiences v/as not the "truest" rendering of that v/orld. Clemens' own comment about his method of v/riting reveals the foundation for Mark Twain and his v/orld.

V/hen I v/as younger I could remember anything v/hether it happened or not; but I am getting

old and soon I shall remember only the
latter. 23k,

"Mark Twain" fiction was alv/ays the fiction of the humorist. Clemens had learned early as a journalist that his forte was comic reporting, straight fact to him, even in an unpredictable placo like Virginia City, was boorish and uninteresting. But facts wore always amendable. It was this philosophy v/hich shaped his v/hole theory of writing. In his Notebook ho records.

If you attempt to create a v/holly imaginary incident, adventure or situation, you v/ill go astray and the artificiality of the thing will be detectable, but if you found on a fact in your personal experience it is an acorn, a root, and every created adornment that grov/s up out of it, and spreads its foliage and blossoms to the sun v/ill seem reality, not inventions. You will not be likely to go astray; your compass of fact ^ is thero to keep you on the right course. ^^^

By exploiting fact through such devices as comic hyperbole and burlesque, he highlighted incongruities of human nature, fraud, hypocrisy, or anything else v/hich drew his attention. In his hands even the most trivial and insignificant event could be turned into a hilarious and bristling, imaginative anecdote that tovmsfolk v/ould' talk about for v/eeks. Notable examples of the early Mark Tv/ain

^^aine, Mark Tv/ain's Autobiography, I, p. xii.

^^^aine. Notebook, pp. 192-193.

treatment can be found throughout most of his lighter works from Roughing It in 1872 through A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court published in 1889. In Roughing It, for instance, a potentially fatal incident is **rendered** impotent when Mark Twain reports it. To prevent a powder keg from exploding during an Indian raid, Mark Twain and a soldier at the outpost where he was staying put **tho** the keg on a shelf over an old cook stove. After the raid, indeed, several months later, the keg, which had been long forgotten, was ignited by a "half-tamed Indian" who had been hired to wash some clothing. He had built a fire on the stove, and the keg was set off.

The stove blew up with a prodigious crash and disappeared. But the Indian betrayed no trepidation, no distress, no discomfort. He simply stopped cussing, leaned forward, and surveyed the clean, blank ground around him, and then remarked: "Mphj Damn stove

heap gone," and then resumed his scrubbing, , ,236

Incidents like these fed the imagination of Sam Clemens and became inextricable from biography in the growing legend of "Mark Twain." By the turn of the century Mark Twain had become an enigma with roots not only in the American West but also in England, France, Germany, Italy, and even as far away as India,

As literary humor the Mark Twain books were enjoyed; as moral treatises they became respectable and, in time.

-^Samuel L. Clemens, Roughing It (New York: Harper's, 1899), pp. 306-307.

revered. By 1906, because of constant demands for his opinions, Clemens felt obligated as a reformer to cry out against the slaughter and lynching of a community of Negroes in the southern part of his own state of Missouri. And he signed Mark Twain pamphlet entitled "The United States of Lyncherdom" rolled off the presses before the eager eyes of a nation which had begun to demand such evaluations from the point of view of a philosopher on the international scene.

William Dean Howells was the critic who had dubbed Clemens "the Lincoln of our literature."[^] More than sentiment from a man who had loved him for years, the accolade resounded in the austere chambers of three major universities. In 1901 and 1902 he received honorary degrees respectively from Yale University and the University of Missouri. And in 1907 he received the highest honor of his life when he sailed to London to accept an honorary degree from Oxford. Little Sammy was, indeed, in a wonderland.

Besides the imago of the literary humorist, the literary moralist, and the real-life humanitarian shocked by "man's inhumanity to man," there was still another image known to countless thousands; the comic lecturer. This image appeared as early as 1866 and did much to secure Clemens' fame abroad.

•[^]William Dean Howells, My Mark Twain (New York: Harpers, 1912), p. 186.

Although influenced by numerous "Lyceum" lecturers and elocutionists, -^ Clemens admittedly owed most of his **initial** success to Charles Farrar Browne, who also proved **that** comic lecturing could be financially profitable. Clemens borrowed many of the techniques Browne had first demonstrated on the platform. The well-timed pause, anti-climax. The well-timed pause, anticlimax, incongruous logic, understatement, and the droll though seemingly innocent presence before the audience were all devices which the attentive Clemens witnessed when Browne brought his lecture to Virginia City in 1863.^"^^ Yet when Clemens later appropriated the same devices in his lectures, the results were original.

A comparison between the stage productions reveals the gulf between the two performers. Where Ward's subjects were generally poorly outlined and developed, Mark Twain's more often than not were treated fully; where Ward's humor was primarily ludicrous, Mark Twain's was sensible and sometimes even didactic. A major difference between the styles was derived from the fact that Mark Twain was a master storyteller, while Ward was the funny man who lured his audiences into traps of wit and innocuous incongrui-

^ Fatout, Mark Twain on the Lecture Circuit, p. 119.

^^^Ibid., p. 28.

ties. Paul Fatout, in Mark Twain in the Lecture Circuit, attributes much of Mark Twain's early appeal on the platform to his facility at description.^ ^ Like Brovme, however, he v/as crude enough to destroy his high moments with buffoonery like applauding himself or misdirecting his audience with some comic barb which nevor failed to undercut his majestic description. Throughout his lifetime on the platform, says Fatout, "Mark TVain v/as a paradoxical man who wanted it both ways; a reputation for eloquent seriousness and for humor—all at once.^

As enthusiastic as he was about what he called the circuit "menagerie," Clemens developed a two-part theory of his ovm v/hich defined his format and established a standard by v/hich he could evaluate each performance. His theory evolved slov/ly though his first two series of lectures during which he and his performance v/ere exposed to almost every conceivable kind of audience and lecture setting. He knev/ audiences of old Dutch stock in the East and of sober corn-fed country folk of Indiana and Ohio v/ho dared him to make them smile. He learned, hox'/ever, to appeal to their imaginations through eloquent descriptive passages and to beguile their sentimentalities v/ithout offending their sense of propriety. After a speech for a V/ashington

^^Ibid., p. 106.

^•^Ibid., p. 60.

banquet Just before publishing The Innocents Abroad, for instance, he remarked in a letter to Mrs. Fairbanks that **his part** in **the** program v/as "frigidly proper," and he learned that he could be "most laceratingly 'fimny v/ithout **being** vulgar.'"^^ Usually by the end of his performance the once squeamish audiences could attest to having had an evening of fun. The first and foremost principle of his literary theory was the production of laughter.

Although his only obligation, as Fred Lorch says, "was to send them home happy,"^-^ Mark Twain felt a further duty toward his audiences: to offer them suggestions that were instructive or moralistic. How much of this conviction was his own and how much of it was forced upon him by critical censors and guardians of conventional mores is a moot question.^^^ He was even led so far at one point to proclaim that such instruction set him apart from all other humorists of his day. "Humor," he said, "must not professedly teach and it must not professedly preach, but it must do both if it would live forever. By forever, I mean thirty years," Later he remarked, "I have always preached.

^ weeter, pp. 18-21.

^-^rod V/. Lorch, "Mark Twain on the Lecture Circuit," a paper read at Austin College, Sherman, Texas, in the Fall 1966.

^^^or observations on Clemens' reaction to press censure, see Fatout's Mark Twain on the Lecture Circuit, p. 107.

That is the reason that I have lasted thirty years."^^
 However valid the hypothesis may be, it was not always supported by his practice.

While he fidgeted, off and on, for years about his dual allegiance to humor and instruction, Clemens had subconsciously always favored the humorist in his temperament. The jokes and buffoon commanded him for a lifetime. Graceful and elegant monologues, of which he was a master, often degenerated without warning into coarse and even ribald banter; he could seldom lead an audience for long without eventually leading them astray. A personal friend of Virginia City days, Tom Phelps, once rebuffed him for such misleading waggery and warned him never again "to sell his audience."^ In later years he apparently learned his lesson, but it took a while. After a performance in Philadelphia on December 8, 1870, a reviewer remarked that "if it were not for Twain we should set him down as a wit, but the inevitable presence causes

^%aplan, Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain, p. 111.

^^atout, Mark Twain on the Lecture Circuit, p. 13kt
 Clemens liked to think of himself "as a humorist as opposed to a wit. In his Notebook he once recorded, "Wit and Humor—if any difference it is in duration—lightning and electric light. Same material apparently; but one is vivid brief, and can do damage—the other fools along and enjoys elaboration" (p. 187).

us to classify him with the humorists."^^ This critic recognized the disparity between the man Sam Clemens and Mark Twain, the lecturer.

Fatout notes Clemens' studied practice as an actor who judiciously found his complex characterizations.^ Mark Twain the lecturer became such a character. Well defined in mannerisms and disposition, he assumed Clemens' enthusiasm for the jest and produced an image for Clemens that his followers gladly welcomed in his stead for the remainder of his life. By his seventieth birthday celebration Clemens had achieved not just identity with but the very personality of his character-persona, Mark Twain.

At first Sam Clemens on stage was himself. Although he was rightfully concerned about the effects of his broad-burlesque strokes staged before the curious and somewhat demanding San Franciscans,"^ the droll journalistic humor, often bordering the indecorous, found ready acceptance out in the hills where his first editorials had enjoyed great successes. When "Virginia City's best known citizen"²^ returned to that Nevada town to lecture, he spoke to a

^^Fatout, Mark Twain on the Lecture Circuit, p. 135.

^^Ibid., pp. 36-37.

^^Ibid., p. Sk*

2^^Ibid.

house of over 800 "jammed to the doors."^^-^ Basking in the glow of hundreds of invitations in the West, Clemens kept as many engagements as he could. What drew the crowds was what his western audiences expected of him--what the Territorial Enterprise referred to as his "drollest humor," "inimitable style," and "lofty flights of descriptive eloquence."²⁵² Unfortunately, none of his early lectures, not even excerpts, are extant today. We do know, however, that even in this beginning there were traits which would in part characterize the Mark Twain lecture-persona for years to come. The emerging persona, says Kaplan, was marked as

a daring manipulator of audience psychology and values, outrageous enough to hoax, surprise, and disorient, but careful not to offend; a humorist and entertainer with moral and educational zeal to assuage a puritan conscience; a painter of word pictures who makes fun of the effect he creates, thereby both gratifying his audience's hunger for "literature" and reassuring them that he is no litterateur, that fancy talk and three-dollar words are just as alien to him as to any storekeeper or clerk, publicly, he is not a bohemian. He is traveled and worldly, but he has *BXI* air of surprised innocence, and he manages to be a man and a boy at the same time. The vices he confesses to--laziness, petty dishonesty, lying when tempted, swearing when provoked--are, by the business-success values which most of his audience accepts, capital sins in a man. But he juggles these vices into seeming merely the bad habits of a boy playing hooky and fibbing to

^^^Ibid., p. 56

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Kaplan, Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain, p. 30.

his mother. His audience likes him for this.^-^

Perhaps one of the most telling observations ever made concerning the Mark Twain image on the stage was written by the eminent critic of the Nov/ York Tribune, Nod House. He recorded the following analysis after seeing one of Clemens' performances:

No other lecturer, of course excepting Artemus Ward, has so thoroughly succeeded in exciting the mirthful curiosity, and compelling the laughter of his hearers. Mark Twain's delivery is deliberate and measured to the last degree. He lounges comfortably around his platform, seldom referring to notes, and seeks to establish a sort of button-hole relationship with his audience. He is even willing to exchange confidences of the most literal nature. The only obvious preconcerted "effect" which he employs is a momentary hesitation or break in his narration before touching the climax of an anecdote or witticism. But his style is his own and needs to be seen to be understood. 25k

To help establish the proper atmosphere for his performances, Clemens went about the towns in which he was to lecture, meticulously writing up comic press releases and bulletins. Fatout cites in part the contents of one bulletin.

Announcing a program of sleight-of-hand, he promised "At a given signal" to "go out with any gentleman and take a drink. If desired, he will repeat this unique . . . feat . . . until the audience are satisfied that there is no deception in it." He promised J'At a

^^^Ibid., p. 3k'

^TPatout, Mark Twain on the Lecture Circuit, p. 51.

moment's warning" to "depart out of town and leave his hotel bill unsettled," an amusing trick at that, "performed . . . many hundreds of times, in San Francisco and elsewhere /whichZ has always elicited the most enthusiastic comments." Furthermore, "At any hour of the night, after 10," he would "go through any house in the city, no matter how dark . . . and not miss as many of the articles as the owner will in the morning." ⁵⁵

Shades of Artemus Ward continued to influence his lecturing- People still remembered Browme's genial good humor and often contrasted Clemens with him, much to the annoyance of the latter, Clemens' shrewdness, however, capitalized on Ward's waning memory. During a series of engagements in 1871, he hastily patched together a talk on Artemus Ward- It failed because he relied too heavily on Artemus Ward material still fresh on the mind of a country which had widely applauded the "genial showman." The repeated charge of Clemens' lack of originality was painful and distressing,²⁵⁶ He discovered that if he was ever going to eclipse the still luminous star of Browme, he was going to forget him, drop his material, and turn to his own works as the primary source for his lectures.

He learned a lesson when he and his family crossed

^^^Ibid., p. 157.

^^^Ibid., p. 181.

the Atlantic to England in 1873. In the country which had adopted Artemus Ward less than ten years before, he deliberately abandoned the identity which for months had associated him with Broome. He changed his manners on the platform. After one of his performances in London, the Spectator remarked that, unlike Ward, Mark Twain was the "easy man of the world." His humor, continued the critic,

consists in the unconscious, matter-of-fact way in which he habitually strikes false intellectual notes, the steady simplicity with which he puts the emphasis of feeling in the wrong place, with which he classifies in the most unassuming way, the most irreconcilable of common nouns, and so glides into sarcasm or caricature, while seeming to pursue. . . the even tenor of his way.⁵⁷

The speech he used that evening was his Sandwich Island lecture, a talk which, worn out in the States, found a delightfully refreshing acceptance in England. Returning to his own work on this trip foreshadowed a major shift which was to recur in lectures back in America just two years later. ⁵⁸ Mark Twain, the storyteller, was to become a wise and seasoned sage.

In 1896 Clemens published his now famous essay

⁵⁹⁶⁰⁶¹Ibid., p. 189.

⁶²⁶³⁶⁴Samuel L. Clemens, How to Tell a Story and Other Essays (New York; Harpers, 189?), pp. 3-12.

"How to Tell a Story," his own definitive study of the narrative techniques which made him so famous as a speaker dating from his 1875-1876 tour.^^^ In it he decried the American style of joking^^^ and suggested for the comic lecturer's practice his own more elaborate and carefully contrived narrative method. His pattern combined dramatic devices of characterization, such as rendering of dialects, comic situations like the forgetting of narrative incidents, and the use of such effective strategies as the calculated pause and the anticlimax. His method allowed him, he claimed, to "string incongruities and absurdities together in a wandering and sometimes purposeless way, and seem innocently in a way that they are absurdities."^{pf.}

^{2.9} Clemons' source for his theory may well date to his Quaker City voyage, in the summer of 1867, when in his Notebook, he records his observations of a young passenger. "He says the most witless things and then laughs uproariously at them and he has a vile notion that everything everybody else says is meant for a witticism, and so laughs loudly when very often the speaker had spoken seriously or even had meant to say something full of pathos. But this fellow doesn't know. , . I wish he would fall in the harbor" (p. 57).

Pf.Q

Fatout, Mark Twain on the Lecture Circuit, p. 190.

In London he recorded in his Notebook the following agenda which indicates that he had gone almost entirely to the anecdotal lecture by 1895.

"Dead Man. Christening- Prog, Old Ram. Small Pox. Watermelon. Crusade. Golden Arm" (p. 21j.6).

He illustrates his discussion of technique with "The Golden Arm," a ghost story which found an almost permanent position in his major lectures.

His new lectures, unlike the readings of the past to which he would still return occasionally, consisted of a number of such "anecdotes." ^{o^} They included, as Fatout records,

the stories of the Mexican plug; of Dick Baker, the miner, and his sagacious cat, Tom Quartz, who got "blowed up" and never thereafter approved of quartz mining; of grandfather's old ram, as told by a maudoring narrator v/ho floundered around in so many irrelevant details that he always fell asleep before he got to the remarkable ram; of the misguided blue jay that tried to fill an empty cabin with acorns and thereby became the laughingstock of a swarm of guffav/ing jays; of the incorporated company of mean men, the Nevada duel, the champion liar, /and7 the j\;imping frog. ^63

It v/as on the platform that Clemens cultivated an imago which, coupled with his literary fame, sent him soaring far above all figures before or after him in the field of American humor. And during his development he was not unav/aro of his rising star. The 1870's v/ore some of his most vigorous lecturing years. Married only a short time, he found the tours more and more difficult because they kept him from home. Livy, herself, forced

fatout, Mark Twain on the Lecture Circuit, pp. 189-190.

[^]Lorch, "Mark Twain on the Lecture Circuit."

him to decline numerous lucrative offers for tours. ^ Yet the tours brought him the spotlight and fame, if not the fabulous returns they might have had it not been for heavy travel expenses. ^ Mark Twain was a lucrative creation. Even while on tours he found himself maintaining the image of his character long after the candles in the auditorium had been snuffed. On stage he could joke about smoking, and off stage he cultivated a taste for the finest Havana cigars. On stage he castigated interviewers and hotel managers, while afterwards, *do\in* the block, he demolished them personally in the printer's office.

Even his physical features became trademarks. His mustache, his frizzled,, immanagoablo hair, his piercing eyes, quaint drawl, and baggy, rumped suits all became

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identifiable traits of Mark Twain. V/hilo his popularity increased, he continued to complement his ronox-m by cultivating an ambience of flamboyance. He became the epitome of affluence and the "Gilded Age." He traveled in only the best of circles, built a \$135,000

26Wd.

^^^Ibid.

^^^It is somewhat ironical that Mark Twain should ever be negligent about his personal attire. Yet on board the Quaker City he recorded on one occasion that "It is funny, but somehow I don't seem to care how I look" (Notebook, p. 59).

home at Hartford, made a fortune, lost it, and regained it once **again after a** monumental working trip around the world, and returned to America at the zenith of his career<

Around the world Clemens was heralded in his "declining" years as author and lecturer. But at home he became recognized in the private, exclusive corners of eastern society as a dinner speaker. Clara Clemens, his oldest daughter, remembers well her father's figure as a supper speaker.

Father gradually fell into the way again of accepting invitations to dinners and banquets, at which he invariably had to speak. And almost daily newspaper reporters telephoned for his opinion on this or that matter until he was even more in the public eye than before. In fact, he enjoyed the title of "the belle of New York." 267

His ability to see things as they were and the incomparable style of his evaluations contributed to his popularity, and his views of life as well as his droll humor were sought. In fact, continues Miss Clemens, "He came to be a good deal more than an entertaining figure, . . . for his advice was solicited on weighty matters by all types of people."²⁶⁸ Miss Clemens recalls in her book the similar impression shared by the Evening Mail, which, in an editorial, commented that

'Clara Clemens, My Father Mark Twain (New York: Harpers, 1931), P. 260.

^^^Ibid., pp. 261-262.

Mark Twain in his "last and best years of **life for** which the first was made" seems to be advancing rapidly to a position which makes **a** kind of joint Aristidos, Solon, and **Themistooles** of the American metropolis--an Aristidos **for** justice and boldness as v/ell **as** incossancy of opinion, a Solon for wisdom **and** cogency, and the popularity of his person. Things have reached the point where, **if** Mark Twain is not at a public meeting or banquet, he is expected to console it with one **of** his inimitable letters of advice and encouragement, if ho deigns to make a public appearance, thero is a throng at tho doors which overtaxes the energy and ability of tho police. V/e must bo glad that we havo a public commentator always at hand and his wit and wisdom continually on tap. His sound, breezy Mississippi Americanism is a correctivo to all sorts of snobbery. He cultivates respect **for** human rights by always making sure that he has his ovm. ^^

Mark Twain's appearance on imoxpected occasions often produced spontaneous rounds of applause from his audiences. After his return from his lecturing around the world, a tour which had absolved his bankruptcy, he had become for Americans almost as symbolic and as representative of tho country and v/hat it stood for as the national flag. Miss Clemens remarks,

Mark Twain was . . . , so generally recognized by everyone on the street or in public places that it was difficult to realize he was only a man of letters. Sometimes he v/as greeted by applause v/hen he entered a theater or public dining-room. I remember one little incident a friend related v/ho had accompanied Father to v/atch a professional game of billiards played by tv/o young men, one of v/hom had achieved fame for the excellence of his game. A large crowd was v/itnessing the spectacle

^^^Ibid, p. 265.

when Father entered the place. At once the Billiard-players were forgotten and rousing applause greeted the white-haired gentleman as he approached. When the game concluded Father v/as invited to make a speech, so he told an experience he had had some years before.²⁷⁰

Such compliments, however, had not alv/ays come so gratuitously. Clemens could remember lectures which had failed and even dinner speeches which had cooled rather than enlivened his audience. One, in particular, shook him to the very foundation of all his being as a humorist. It was delivered for John Greenleaf V/hittier's honorary Seventieth Birthday Celebration banquet on December 17, 1877, sponsored by The Atlantic Monthly. ' Clemens, with three popular publications--The Innocents Abroad, Roughing It, and The Adventures of Tom Sav/yer--under his literary belt, had boon the enthusiastic choice of William Dean Howells, editor. Prominent Boston socialites had been invited, and other honored literary guests included Dr. Oliver V/ondoll Holmes, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Henry Wadsworth Longellow. The occasion was particularly rich for the engaging sport of Sam Clemens, v/ho in a typical Mark Twain burlesque, gave them something they had not

^^^Henry Nash Smith, *Mark Twain; The Development of a V/riter* (Cambridge; Harvard University Press, 1962), pp. 93-94..

expected.

According to "Mark Twain" the three distinguished guests, Emerson, Longellow, and Holmes, interrupted an old miner late one evening in the West and drank his liquor and swindled him out of his money in a poker game, ' Henry Nash Smith in Mark Twain has considered the speech "clearly an act of aggression against the three poets as representatives of the sacerdotal cult of the man of letters." ' The result was a catastrophe for Clemens and the highest embarrassment to Howells. As the Master of Ceremonies, Howells, had somewhat ironically, or perhaps prophetically, anticipated what he had feared of Clemens' speech in his Introduction. Howells had remarked,

I think I may properly appeal for oblivion from our vain regrets at their absence to the humorist, . . . who never makes you blush to have enjoyed his joke; whose generous wit has no mesmoss in it, whose fun is never at the cost of anything honestly high or good. . . ,27k

Some smiled, and some even chuckled occasionally, but most winced and tried to duck the abuse as best they could,

I went on with this awful performance /says Clemens' and carried it clear through to the end, in front of a body of people who seemed

^^^Albert Bigelow Paine, ed., "The Story of a Speech," Mark Twain's Speeches (New York: Harpers, 1910), pp. 1-16.

^^^Smith, p. 97.

^^^Howells' introduction was published in the Boston Journal, December 18, 1877, P« 3; reprinted in Smith, pp.911.-95.

turned to stone with horror. It v/as the sort of expression their faces v/ould have worn if I had been making these remarks about the Deity and the rest of the Trinity. , , ?75

Ten days later Howells consented that Clemens should address an apology to all three of the "revered old literary immortals." In his comments Clemens remarked that

I did it innocently and unwarned. I did it'- as innocently as I ever did anything But when I perceived what it was that I had done, I felt as real a sorrow & suffered as sharp a mortification as if I had done it with a guilty intent.276

Looking back some thirty years later on the event, Clemens still had not forgotten the fiasco. But the years had glossed over some of the horror recalled at the time by himself, Howells, his wife, and much of the country. In his consideration of the event in Mark Twain's Speeches he stated that

if I had those beloved and revered old literary immortals back here now on the platform at Carnegie Hall I would take that same old speech, deliver it, v/ord for word, and melt them till they'd run all over the stage. Oh, the fault must have been with me, it is not in the speech at all.277 ~

'^Paine, Speeches, p. 12.

^"^^Clemens' letter ~~was~~ published, according to Henry Nash Smith, in the Harvard Library Bulletin, 9: 161|-.

' 'Paine, Speeches, p. 16.

Clemens, however, had learned **a** lesson which ho was **reminded of for at least** two weeks after.'the event by **loading** critics **in** both Chicago and New York. At that timo **he,** himself, **had** not achieved that "revered" state that would characterize his presence before the American public late in **his** life. The bent for old southwestern humor never quite left him, and "Mark Twain" in tho East learned to guard more care ully his remarks. The persona was not alv/ays so protective.

Clemens apparently lost himself in his creation cf Mark Twain. He himself v/as knovm to his family, to his close, hand-picked friends, and inadvertently to a few business associates. ' But the man Clemens is knovm to his students today only in those manuscripts, letters,

^^ Clemens seemed to reserve his raw fury for those business associates v/ho irritated or openly crossed him. Even a firm like the Hartford Gas Company received his reprimands:

"Dear Sirs;

Somo day you will move me to the verge of irritation by your chuckle-headed God-damned fashion of shutting youj? Goddamned gas off v/ithout giving any notice to your Goddamned parishioners. Several times you have come v/ithin an ace of smothering half cf this household in their beds & blowing up the other half by this idiotic, not to say criminal, custom of yours. And it has happened again today. Haven't you a telephone?

Ys

S L Clemens"

(Notebook, p. 212)

and notebooks he deemed personal and private. The fine lines of demarcation separating Sam Clemens and Mark Twain as they were seen before the public are almost imperceptible today and remain the subject of further study. All the world crosses Mark Twain's stage, and over it all he fumed and fretted. The world, not just America, claimed him as its *o|m* or at least as its distinguished visitor, and mourned his death in April 1910. But Mark Twain or Clemens, whichever he was, "writing from the grave" in his Autobiography, defied those scholars who in the remaining twentieth century would claim they know him.

That a very little part of a person's life are his acts and his words. His real life is led in his head, and is known to none but himself. All day long, and every day, the mill of his brain is grinding, and his thoughts, not those other things, are his history. His acts and his words are merely the visible, thin crust of his world, with its scattered snow summits and its vacant wastes of water--and they are so trifling a part of his bulk! a mere skin enveloping it. The mass of him is hidden--it and its volcanic fires are his life, and they are not written, and cannot be written. Every day would make a whole book of eighty thousand words—three hundred and sixty-five books a year. Biographies are but the clothes and buttons of the man--the *h±o^vQ.r>h.y* of the man himself cannot be written.⁷⁹

Perhaps a man's biography cannot be written, especially when that life is in truth a duality. What Clemens created

⁷⁹Paine, Autobiography, I, p. 2.

in Mark Twain was something more than a persona for himself, the enigmatic personality of a philanthropist, social philosopher-critic, moralist, humanitarian, historian and humorist. In time, Mark Twain became symbolic of the spirit of a world.

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