> So far as I know, Mr. Clemens is the first writer to use the fashion we all use in thinking, and to set down the thing that comes into his mind without fear or favor of the thing that went before or the thing that may be about to follow.
>
> -- William Dean Howells.

CHAPTER III FIRST WORKS

The Innocents Abroad is a travel book recording Twain's experiences during his trip to Europe and the Holy Land in 1867. However, it is a departure from the usual style of travel-writing because of the unique purpose of the author stated in the Preface:

> ... to suggest to the reader how he would be likely to see Europe and the East...with his own eyes instead of the eyes of those who travelled in those countries before him.[36]

The most significant thing in the book is his several uses of narrative voice. Having put stress on honesty, sincerity and realism, Twain assumes the role of an average uncultivated, practical American travelling in the old world, a role he of course fills quite naturally. Up into the 19th century, America was busy building up the country; there was no time to devote to artistic and cultural creation. It became a nation remarkable for material and mechanical progress. Meanwhile, Europe culturally surpassed it with a treasure-house of works of the old masters, paintings and sculptures. Twain, as well as his fellow-countrymen, was proud of his country, proud even of his crude manners and lack of literary training. At the same time he had a secret but unmistakable feeling of cultural inferiority in relation to Europe.

Twain's ambiguous feelings towards the European culture can be seen in his uses of narrative voice. Twain as a man of the new world refuses to be impressed with what he does not understand about the old, and strongly insists on the value of his own country and its institutions. In the section about "The Last Supper," in which tourists come from all parts of the world to admire and glorify a picture which has been scarred and discolored by time, Twain makes fun of the hypocrisy of those travellers in Europe:

> I only envy these people: I envy them their honest admiration, if it be honest -- their delight, if they feel delight....How can they see what is not visible?... What would you think of a man who looked at some decayed, blind, toothless, pock marked Cleopatra, and said: "What matchless beauty ! What soul ! What expression!"... You would think that these men had an astonishing talent for seeing things that had already passed away[57].....But I cannot work this miracle.

The passage shows realism versus sentimentalism. Twain refuses to sentimentalize something reputed to be wonderful which is not really there.

Again, with a democratic point-of-view, Twain fails to fully appreciate the paintings of the old masters in the Louvre. Though he honestly accepts that they are beautiful, he finds only small pleasure in looking at them since the works "carried such evidences about them of the cringing spirit of those great men." Instead of being able to appreciate the charms of color and expression claimed to be in the pictures, Twain is distracted by the old masters' "nauseous adulation" of their patrons.[38] Similarly, Versailles is beautiful but it was built on the suffering of thousands.

Twain's contempt and anger towards European culture and treasures can be more clearly seen during his examining a grand mausoleum in Florence, which was built to contain the body of Jesus Christ, but after the failure of the Jerusalem expedition, the place was turned into a family burying place of the Medici:

> The dead and damned Medicis who cruelly tyrannised over Florence and were her curse for over two hundred years, are salted away in a circle of costly vaults, and in their midst the Holy Sepulchre was to have been set up.[39]

Twain is unable to see the beauty of the chapel-architecture and sculpture -- the creations of an Italian named Michelangelo Buonarroti -- because he is blinded by his rage at the authoritarianism that had built it. Twain, lacking any aesthetic sense to speak of, would have preferred the chapel to have been commissioned by a democracy, even though it might have commissioned a lesser artist and produced a lesser work of art.

Twain contemptuously attacks the old masters who, he thinks, prostituted their noble talents simply for daily bread. They allowed themselves to be persuaded by their patrons to paint such shameful pictures as the Saviour and the Virgin throwing bouquets to the Medicis out of the clouds; and Catherine and Marie, de Medicis seated in heaven and conversing familiarly with the Virgin Mary and the angels. Twain feels sorry for the old masters who in lacking self-pride devastated their "grand gift".[40] Understood more deeply, Twain as an uncultured representative American wants to ease his yearning to belong to the polished, elevated world by continually debunking the cultural treasures that are lacking in his own country. It is interesting to note the similarity between the proud American's hardly hidden yearning for the Europe he derides and the boastful Westerner's yearning for the East he scorns.

Another example of his method of attack is seen in his visit to the Cathedral of Notre Dame, built in Gothic style. Jean Sans-Peur, Duke of Burgundy, had murdered the Duke of Orleans and to set his conscience at rest he donated a sum of money to build one portion of the church. Twain makes fun of the social conditions which gave rise to artistic creation:

> Alas! those good old times are gone, when the murderer could wipe the stain from his name and soothe his troubles to sleep, simply by getting out his bricks and mortar and building an addition to a church.[41]

Similarly, Twain can't help poking fun at European taste for relics which he finds ridiculous, for one can't be assured which is the real one and which the fake:

> We find a piece of the true cross in every old church we go into, and some of the nails that held it together. I would not like to be positive, but I think we have seen as much as a keg of these nails. Then there is the crown of thorns; they have part of one in Sainte Chapelle, in Paris, and part of one, also, in Notre Dame. And as for bones of St.Denis, I feel certain we have seen enough of them to duplicate him, if necessary.[42]

During his walk in the public park of Bois de Boulogne, the guide shows Twain the place where a mysterious fellow tried to shoot the Russian Czar, but luckily the bullet missed him and struck a tree. Twain comically compares the European convention to his native country's:

> Now, in America, that interesting tree would be chopped down or forgotten within the next five years, but it will be treasured here. The guide will point it out to visitors for the next eight hundred years, and when it decays and falls down they will put up another there and go on with the same old story just the same.[43]

Twain in the above passage is the practical American observer of things and strongly ridicules them. However, the tone is completely shifted when the author assumes, for comical effect, the voice of a regular tourist. During his trip to the Holy Land, Twain describes the area as it really is -- barren, rocky, desolate and uncomfortable. Yet, it is the Holy Land where thousands of pious pilgrims come weeping, sentimentalizing over each spot of sacred history. Twain burlesques the genteel tourists by pretending to lament over a supposed tomb of Adam. He is shown grief-stricken that he has not met Adam, his distant ancestor:

> The tomb of Adam! How touching it was
> here in a land of strangers, far
> away from home and friends, and all
> who cared for me, thus to discover
> the grave of a blood relation. The
> unerring instinct of nature thrilled
> its recognition. The fountain of my
> filial affection was stirred to its
> profoundest depths.... I leaned upon
> a pillar and burst into tears........
> Noble old man -- he did not live to
> see me -- he did not live to see his
> child. And I -- I -- alas, I did not
> live to see him. Weighed down by sorrow
> and disappointment, he died before I was
> born -- ...
> But let us try to bear it with fortitude.
> Let us trust that he is better off,
> where he is.[44]

Twain's sardonic note is sounded when he goes to the church of Santa Croce to weep over the tombs of Michelangelo, Raphael and Machiavelli. Sometimes, he goes to stand on the bridges and admire the Arno for, "It is popular to admire the Arno".[45] The message, clearly enough, is that Americans in Europe feel only the emotion guide books tell them to feel.

Twain is proud of his native country and its institutions:

> I am satisfied, also, that genuine old masters hardly exist at all in America, because the cheapest and most significant of them are valued at the price of a fine farm.[46]

Yet, Twain honestly admits that he, as well as other Americans, is inexperienced and without good taste. The trip familiarizes him with European culture and ways of living which are strikingly different from that of Americans. Twain clearly understands that his country still lacks that fine charm of life that exists in Europe -- the true knowledge of how to live. Most Americans rush on in their lives without fully treasuring the happiness of life. Besides, America is a nation of energetic capitalists where people keep thinking, scheming and making money:

> In our life we hurry -- which is well; but when the day's work is done, we go on thinking of losses and gains, we plan for the morrow, we even carry our business cares to bed with us, and toss and worry over them when we ought to be restoring our racked bodies and brains with sleep. We burn up our energies with these excitements, and either die early or drop into a lean and mean old age at a time of life which they call a man's prime in Europe.[47]

On the other hand, there is a clear-cut separation between work and recreation in European life. They appreciate happiness to the full:

> I do envy these Europeans the comfort they take. When the work of [illegible]

> the day is done, they forgot it....
> They are always quiet; always orderly, always cheerful, comfortable
> and appreciative of life and its
> manifold blessing.[48]

Twain frankly admits a change occurred in his travelling group influenced by the tranquil atmosphere of European life. They lost some restlessness and became absorbed in spiritual quietude and ease. They begin to grow wise and understand what the purpose of life is.[49]

Thus, the tone of The Innocents Abroad is constantly shifting, because Twain speaks to us in several authorial voices. Most often he is the crude American overseas, praising his own country at the expense of the culture he is seeing and misunderstanding. At times he attacks his fellow-tourists who see what the guidebooks tell them to see instead of what is before their eyes. Their crime is falsification of experience, one of the most terrible in the Twain hierarchy. At other times Twain wears the mask of the sort of tourist he mocks and indulges a comic rhapsody to parody the misrepresentations of the guidebooks.

So, in some ways the "innocent" Mark Twain isn't really so innocent, but a complicated man indeed. His severe attack on social structure which gave rise to European culture and artistic creations amounts to an ignorant glorifying of his own stupidity. And his attitude towards the European culture is similar to his reaction against the more cultivated, refined, cultural literary men of the New England. Twain shows irreverence towards the representative, established literary figures of the Eastern United States just as he debunks the old masters and European treasures. He yearns to be accepted in the more polished society of the East; similarly, he secretly envies the European ways of life. His search for realism and honesty is only part of a more complex effort to ease his cultural inferiority complex.

Roughing It came after The Innocents Abroad. It covers the period of his life from his abandonment of soldiering in 1861 through his experiences as a miner and reporter in Nevada, California, and Hawaii. Roughing It, as well as The Innocents Abroad, is autobiographical in form. They share a share a common theme of anti-romanticism but have different methods of presenting it.

Roughing It relates Twain's travel to the West as a private secretary to his brother Orion, the appointed Secretary of Nevada Territory. Since the narrator has no experience of the West, he has been immersed in romantic notions about this journey. His glamorous opinion of his brother's trip can be seen in:

> Pretty soon he would be hundreds
> and hundreds of miles away on the
> great plains and deserts,...and
> have all kinds of adventures, and
> maybe get hanged or scalped...and
> write home and tell us all about it,
> and be a hero. -- And he would see
> the gold-mines and the silver mines
> and ...pick up two or three pailfuls
> of shining slugs and nuggets of
> gold and silver on the hillside...
> and return home by sea and be able
> to talk as calmly about San Francisco
> and the ocean and "the isthmus" as
> if it was nothing of any consequence
> to have seen those marvels face to face.[50]

We can trace the anti-romanticism through the book. It consists of the difference between the narrator's forecast and expectations and the disappointment of each actual experience of his journey.

The first disappointment is the account of their miserable, jolting coach-trip to Carson City. All of them have to stretch out on the bumpy mail sacks. The narrator looks for Noble Red Men and instead finds Goshoots: the most backward tribe of Indians living in the most rocky, wintry, repulsive wastes of America, Rocky Canyon. They are small, lean creatures with dull black complexions. They are prideless beggars and are always hungry and never refuse to eat anything. They have no villages or strictly defined tribal communities; their only shelter is a "rag cast on a bush."[51] In fact those Goshoots are completely different from Cooper's Noble Red Indians. Besides, Twain expects to meet romantic desperadoes on his way. Instead he finds Slade, who shoots men in cold blood, and at last even Slade dies whimpering on the gallows.

Again, during his escape from the flood and his sojourn in an inn, he watches with fascination the overbearing bully, Arkansas, prepare to murder Johnson only to see Arkansas collapse as the inn-keeper's wife waves her scissors under his nose. The narrator's dream of wealth is shattered when he finds millions of dollars worth of gold glittering and winking in a stream bed turn out to be nothing but a lot of granite, rubbish, and glittering mica. At Esmeralda, after the fascinating trip to the alkaline Mono Lake, Twain's and Higbie's experiences as millionaires for week vanish when they find a notice of the relocation of their blind lead mine. Each of these episodes juxtaposes romantic expectation with more sober actuality.

Twain's romantic notions about horsemanship are displayed in his description of the Californian and Mexican horsemen, "these picturesquely-clad Mexicans, Californians and Mexicanized Americans," "swept through the town like the wind," "wild, free, magnificent horsemanship." etc. He therefore longs to ride in a similar fashion and decides to buy a horse, a creature described to him as a "genuine Mexican Plug"[52] who can out-buck anything in America. Twain unfortunately does not know the meaning of "buck," but he learns all too soon when he is thoroughly bruised and pummelled in his attempt to stay on the volcanic animal. It is too late when he learns the nature of the creature from an "elderly-looking comforter,"[53] and tries in every way to get rid of the horse:

> Stranger, you've been taken in. Everybody in this camp knows that horse. Any child, an Injun, could have told you that he'd buck; he is the very worst devil to buck on the continent of America....And moreover, he is a simon-pure, out-and-out, genuine d-d Mexican plug, and an uncommon mean one at that, too. Why, you turnip, if you had laid low and kept dark, there's chances to buy an American horse for mighty little more than you paid for that bloody old foreign relic.[54]

A funny episode is the snowstorm incident in which the three travellers who realize their approaching death give out their death-speeches of confession and lamentation. At last, they find themselves within fifteen steps of a comfortable inn. The episode shows that the romantic death of a repentant sinner is not so easily accomplished, nor is repentance itself, when the three "shook hands, and agreed to say no more about "reform" and "examples to the rising generation".[55]

As a whole, the entire book may be called a burlesque of Far Western romances. Yet, some episodes in the book seem true and convincing real [illegible], such as the actual events of the journey out to Nevada. This section cannot be called a travel-burlesque. On the contrary, it is Twain's real narrative voice, relating his actual personal experiences. Similarly, his discussion of the distress and difficulty of administering a [illegible] reckless territory on grants and regulations issued by a distant bureaucracy that refuses to recognize local variations in prices has its personal truthful aspects. His account of political administration points out the growing moral complexity of government of his day. However, the anecdote about gold-mining is something Twain invents out of his own imagination. He wants to present a picture of the flush days in Nevada, a booming new mining territory. He shows his countrymen -- including himself -- rushing out with a gold-mining scheme since the get-rich-quick fever was an epidemic in that territory. Encountering the crudity and discomfort of life in the mining settlements, they realize how their effort in the struggle for wealth ends up in wastefulness, since there is only small chance for reward for most of the labor invested.

The combination of his real narratives and his anecdotes are due to the spontaneity of Twain's method of writing. In this book -- as in most of the books he was to write -- one has the feeling that he began not knowing precisely where he would end. He invents things in spurts of inspiration and does not write according to a preconceived scheme. The book, therefore, is very uneven and has no well-planned organization. The evidence of this spontaneity and unevenness can be seen in his account of the Mormon community, where he and his friends spend a sociable hour. The episode at first seems to be written out very straightforwardly, for example, the account of Mr. Street's visit to the Mormons' leader, Brigham Young, to present him with a case against the Mormons. Then, suddenly, Twain invents a long comic set-piece about Brigham Young's harem and his difficulties in appeasing the jealousies of his polygamous household. The anecdote is not characteristic of Southwestern humor, but a tall story beginning from a single joke and then blown up bigger and bigger in exaggeration simply for entertainment. Its ultimate source is the humor of the literary comedians. The anecdote is set in a Southwestern humor framework through the mouthpiece of Johnson. In the opening framework, Johnson is introduced to us:

> None of our party got an opportunity to take dinner with Mr. Young, but a Gentile by the name of Johnson professed to have enjoyed a sociable breakfast in the Lion House.[56]

Then Johnson relates his long account in a humorous tone about Mr. Young's harem and the problems of his household. Before leaving the residence, Brigham Young gives him moral advice:

> My friend, take an old man's advice, and don't encumber yourself with a large family -- mind, I tell you, don't do it...and in a small family only, you will find that comfort and that peace of mind which are the best at last of the blessings the world is able to afford us....Take my word for it, ten or twelve wives is all you need -- never go over it.[57]

Then Twain ends the humorous tale with a closing framework pointing out that it is an obvious joking lie:

> Some instinct or other made me set this Johnson down as being unreliable... and I doubt if some of the information he gave us could have been acquired from any other source.[58]

The balance between speaking voice and literary formula ✓ is another significant character in Twain's writings, especially his early works. Being a newspaper reporter, Twain searches for an accurate, realistic and faithful way of saying things. However, in his early works even Twain cannot help following the traditional, literary formulas and the landscape idiom of his times. Evidence for this can be seen in his depiction of landscape in Roughing It:

> It was a superb summer morning, and all the landscape was brilliant with sunshine. There was a freshness and breeziness, too, and an exhilarating sense of emancipation from all sorts of cares and responsibilities, that almost made us feel that the years we had spent in the close, hot city, toiling and slaving, had been wasted and thrown away....Just here the land was rolling -- a grand sweep of regular elevations and depressions as far as the eye could reach -- like the stately heave and swell of the ocean's bosom after a storm.[59]

Here, Twain inflates his description by using elaborate, conventional aesthetic vocabulary, such as, "superb," "brilliant," "exhilarating," "emancipation," "stately," etc. They are not simple, commonplace words to be found in a straightforward speaking voice. And neither is his poetic comparison of the land's unevenness to the ocean's "bosom" after a storm.

Roughing It is not an ambitious work and gains greatly from the modesty of its conception. Twain is not tempted to write outside his range -- something that always proved fatal to his art -- and the result is a minor American classic, a faithful, lively, and colorful account of the Wild West.

The Gilded Age is Twain's first attempt to write a novel. Since he was young and unsure of his status and place as a writer, he wrote it in collaboration with his more experienced writer-neighbor Charles Dudley Warner. The book is composed of Warner's sentimental romance and Twain's satire.

The title of the book gave the name to an age in American history, "The Gilded Age," the era between 1869-1877 and, by extension, the twenty or thirty years following the Civil War.[60] The age was distinguished by confusion, dishonesty and corruption, both personal and national. During that time the country was immersed in a fever of speculation. The age shared this aspect with the time when the South-western humor came into its prominence. Most people dreamt of getting rich quickly and were absorbed in various schemes of speculation.

When Philips and Henry walk in Broadway on a spring morning, the authors' comment sets the atmosphere of the age:

> To the young American, here or elsewhere, the paths of fortune are innumerable and all open; there is invitation in the air and success in all his wide horizon. He is embarrassed which to choose.... He has no traditions to bind him or guide him, and his impulse is to break away from the occupation his father has followed.[61]

Most Americans, especially the young generation, had utmost confidence in life and their ready victory in it. Twain presents one of his most memorable characters, Colonel Sellers, an optimist with magnificent schemes for making his fortune, while he and his family dine off turnips and cold water and warm themselves at a stove with a candle in it and a transparent door to flicker the appearance of heat. He is, in fact, an exemplary character type of the Gilded Age. At one and the same time

Sellers was scheming to corner the corn and hog crops, buy up the wild-cat banks and experiment with an eye-water, "Optic Liniment," and sell it throughout the world. In spite of many failures, Sellers still keeps on expecting that his next project will succeed. Sellers' wild expectations for his money-making schemes can be seen in his conversation with Washington Hawkins when Sellers explains the nature of the eye-water market:

> You ought to know that ...I throw my time and abilities into a patent medicine....Why what is the republic of America for an eye-water country?... in the Oriental countries people swarm like the sands of the desert ... and every separate and individual devil of them 's got the ophthalmia! It's as natural to them as noses are and sin....Three years of introductory trade in the Orient and what will be the result?... Annual income-- well, God only knows how many millions and millions apiece![62]

This scheme stupefies Washington who is young and inexperienced. He even insists that the Colonel accept his money and allow him to join the project. Sellers is a flat but very animated character whom we laugh at every time he appears in the book with the same type of conversation and action. It is clear that he is an American version of Dickens' Mr. Micawber.

The Gilded Age is the age of chaos and credit as the basis of society. The corruption of public servants is revealed sarcastically:

> This is true, Colonel. To be sure you can buy now and then a Senator

> or a Representative, but they do not
> know it is wrong, and so they are
> not ashamed of it. They are gentle,
> and confiding and childlike, and,
> in my opinion, these are qualities
> that ennoble them far more than
> any amount of sinful sagacity could.[63]

The Hawkins family attempts to unload their undesirable land, "the Tennessee Land," on the government as a site for a university, Knobs Industrial University, a Negro institution. Laura cooperates in this scheme with Senator Dilworthy. They dream that the Hawkinses will become millionaires overnight. The Knobs Industrial University bill is passed in the House of Representatives after a bitterly contested battle. At the same time Laura meets her former seducer, Colonel Selby. She requests him to divorce his wife and run away with her but instead he tries to escape to Europe himself with his wife and children. Laura confronts him at the Southern Hotel and shoots him dead. She is acquitted of the murder on the grounds of temporary insanity but soon meets her death from a fatal heart attack.

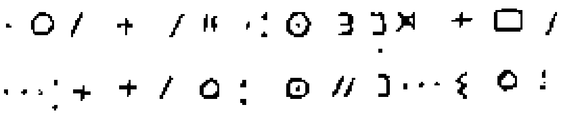
Dilworthy wants to secure his nomination by the State Legislature as Senator by attempting to bribe Mr. Noble, the opposition leader. Finally the Senator succeeds in remaining at his post to the end of his life.

The book is loosely organized. There are many set-pieces like the exciting steamboat disaster, the Negro corpse in the dissecting room and the description of the corrupt city of Washington. Yet, the vision of America is clearly protrayed, the sense of greatness of America, of freedom and liberty, but also of youth and political and financial confusion. Throughout the book, the authors reveal their ambiguous feelings about the Gilded Age America. Sometimes they are proud of their country as the land of opportunity. America is the promised land where everyone has a chance to get rich quickly if he makes a start. This is

> the foundation of modern society.
> Who shall say that this is not the
> golden age of mutual trust, of un-
> limited reliance upon human promises?[64]

On the other hand the authors make fun of the Americans who are excessive optimists. The book ends with a moral lesson that modest income earned honestly is preferable to frantic schemes to get rich quick. It is remarkable that even the author himself overlooked this lesson. Twain later became bankrupt because of a stamp-mill operating and type printing speculation.

One of Twain's comic contributions to the book is the series of very scholarly-looking epigraphs at the beginning of each chapter taken from nearly every language: Chapter XVIII has its heading:



Beddá ag Idda.[65]

and Chapter XXIX

> Nihma hatak osh ilhkolit yokni
> yahloyullit tumahn holihta vlhpisa
> ho hvshke : untuklo ho hollissochit
> holisso ufohkit tahli cha.[66]

Such headings traditionally have vague relation to the matter following them in each chapter. The avowed purpose of the authors' comic use of this convention is stated in the Preface:

> Our quotations are set in a vast number
> of tongues; this is done for the
> reason that very few foreign nations
> among whom the book will circulate
> can read in any language but their
> own; whereas we do not write for
> a particular class or sect or nation,
> but to take in the whole world.[67]

The authors are making fun of their work. They do not really expect the book to get a world-wide popularity though they intend it to. Indeed the above passage sounds like one of the comically optimistic visions of Colonel Sellers and probably was intended to. In fact, the purpose in providing such headings is to poke fun at the writers of their day who wanted to show off their inexhaustible knowledge by putting learned epigraphs at the beginning of each chapter of their works. The authors imitate this convention [illegible] it to be ridiculous. (The epigraphs I have used myself designated for illumination rather than ostentation.) In one of Twain's late novels, when his spirit has darkened and the buoyant good humor of his writing apprenticeship has deserted him, he will use chapter epigraphs again but for an entirely serious purpose.

Twain's first attempt to write a novel is an American version of what we think of today as the Victorian novel. The book has the girth of the typical Dickens or Thackeray novel and it encompasses the same materials: comedy, caricature, sentimental romance and a rousing mystery. I think it is demonstrable, though not within the confines of this thesis, that Laura, the focal point of the book, is conceived as an American version of Becky Sharp, the story of her relentless ambition designed to expose the sham of Gilded Age American society in the same way that Becky's career is a comment on English society. Only in his later works does Twain find his way to writing his own novels. Tom Sawyer, Huck Finn and A Connecticut Yankee are the earliest fullscale works of Mark Twain. Though each of the works discussed in this chapter is flawed, each has great qualities of wit. Though they represent Twain at his earliest, in them are already sown the seeds of all his future development.