

MARK TWAIN'S DUAL VISION OF HAWAII:
SUBLIME WILDERNESS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA

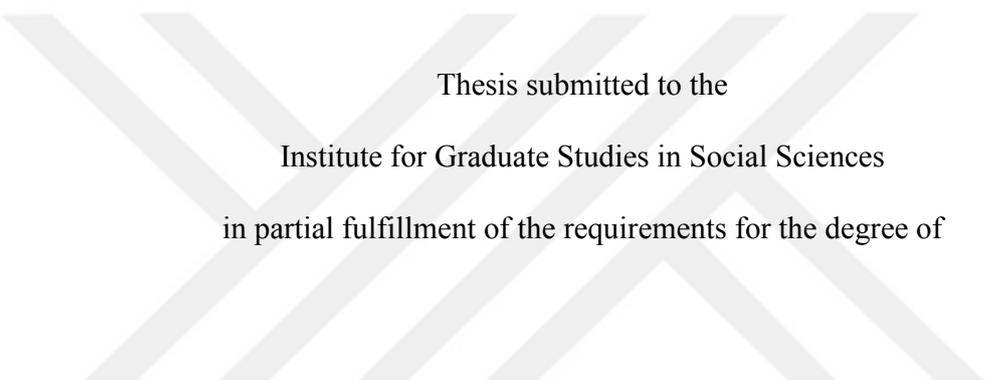


GÜLSİMA ERYILMAZ

BOĞAZIÇI UNIVERSITY

2019

MARK TWAIN'S DUAL VISION OF HAWAII:
SUBLIME WILDERNESS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA



Thesis submitted to the
Institute for Graduate Studies in Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in
in
English Literature

by
Gülsima Eryılmaz

Boğaziçi University

2019

Mark Twain's Dual Vision of Hawaii:
Sublime Wilderness in Nineteenth-Century America

The thesis of Glsima Eryılmaz

has been approved by:

Assoc. Prof. Kim Fortuny
(Thesis Advisor)



Prof. Matthew Gumpert



Assist. Prof. Defne Tzn
(External Member)



June 2019

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Gülsima Eryılmaz, certify that

- I am the sole author of this thesis and that I have fully acknowledged and documented in my thesis all sources of ideas and words, including digital resources, which have been produced or published by another person or institution;
- this thesis contains no material that has been submitted or accepted for a degree or diploma in any other educational institution;
- this is a true copy of the thesis approved by my advisor and thesis committee at Boğaziçi University, including final revisions required by them.

Signature.....

Date27.06.2019.....

ABSTRACT

Mark Twain's Dual Vision of Hawaii:

Sublime Wilderness in Nineteenth-Century America

When Mark Twain set sail for his journey to the Sandwich Islands in 1866, the frontiers in America had not been closed yet, and the concept of “wilderness” was undergoing a significant transformation toward becoming “a sacred American icon”. This thesis is inspired by William Cronon’s argument that the American wilderness is a cultural construct, and that two important cultural movements helped transform the “wilderness” into an icon: “the Romantic sublime” and “the national myth of the frontier”. The prevalent discourses of nature in nineteenth-century America brought about some cultural constraints, one of which was the view that certain landscapes were considered sublime. The question of to what extent and in what ways Twain subverts these conventions that provide the nineteenth-century paradigm for the representation of the landscape will guide the discussion. This thesis argues that Twain’s dual vision rejects participation in the construction of the popular discourses of wilderness in nineteenth-century America through parodying and subverting the conventions of the “sublime” and the “frontier”. Within this framework, the focus will be on *Letters from Hawaii*, though *Roughing It*, *Innocents Abroad*, *Life on Mississippi*, *Following the Equator*, *A Tramp Abroad*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and some of his letters will also be among the primary sources.

ÖZET

Mark Twain'in İki Yönlü Hawaii Tasavvuru:

19. Yüzyılda Amerika'da Vahşi Doğa Kavramı

Mark Twain, 1866'da, daha sonra yazdığı kitapların bazılarının da içeriğini oluşturacak Sandwich Adaları yolculuğuna başladığında, Amerika'nın sınırları henüz kapanmamıştı ve "vahşi doğa" kavramı, "kutsal bir Amerikan ikonu"na dönüşecek şekilde bir değişimden geçmekteydi. Bu tez, William Cronon'un şu fikrinden esinlenmiştir: Amerikan vahşi doğası kültürel bir yapıdır ve vahşi doğanın böyle bir ikona dönüşmesine iki kültürel hareket katkıda bulunmuştur: "romantik yüce" ve "ulusal sınırların". 19. yüzyılda yaygın olan söylemler, bazı kültürel kısıtlamaları da beraberinde getirdi. Bunlardan biri de belli doğa manzaralarının yüce görülmesi gerektiği ve bu manzaralarda edinilecek deneyimin, yücenin görkemi beklentisiyle koşullanacağıydı. Twain'in, 19. yüzyıl doğa temsillerinde paradigmayı oluşturan bu söylemleri ne ölçüde ve nasıl alt üst ettiği sorusu, bu çalışmaya rehberlik edecektir. Bu çalışmanın savunduğu tez şudur: Twain'in ikili yaklaşımı, "yüce" ve "sınır bölgesi" kavramlarını parodi yoluyla ters yüz ederek, 19. yüzyılda Amerika'da vahşi doğa üzerine var olan popüler söylemlerin oluşturulmasına katkıda bulunmayı reddetmiştir. Bu çerçevede, Twain'in *Letters from Hawaii* kitabı, ana odak noktası olacaktır. Bunun yanı sıra, *Roughing It*, *Innocents Abroad*, *Life on Mississippi*, *Following the Equator*, *A Tramp Abroad* ve *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* kitapları ve çeşitli mektupları da birincil kaynaklar olarak kullanılacaktır.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Firstly, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor Assoc. Prof. Kim Fortuny, who always encouraged and supported me greatly throughout my years at Boğaziçi University. Her guidance and patience helped me all the time during my research and writing. I would also like to thank the jury members Prof. Matthew Gumpert and Assist. Prof. Defne Tüzün for their invaluable comments and insights into my thesis.

I thank my wonderful friends, Suzi, Bahar, Bal, Selin, Nazım, Jeffrey and Ayfer for inspiring and supporting me both spiritually and intellectually.

Heartfelt thanks to dear Hinrich and Alke, without whose invaluable presence and friendship the idea of writing on Twain's Hawaii would not have been possible.

My deepest thanks go to my family, my sister and brother, and especially my mother, whose loving presence, patience and continuing support gave me the inspiration and strength to carry out this research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2: OUTLINING THE SUBLIME: THE BURKEAN, KANTIAN AND AMERICAN SUBLIME.....	4
2.1 The Burkean sublime.....	9
2.2 The Kantian sublime.....	16
2.3 The American sublime.....	29
CHAPTER 3: TWAIN’S REJECTION OF ROMANTIC SENTIMENTS: PARODYING THE SUBLIME AND THE FRONTIER MYTH.....	46
3.1 Debunking the sublime: <i>Letters from Hawaii</i>	46
3.2 The frontier and the escape motif.....	81
CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION.....	98
REFERENCES.....	105

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Any analyses of Twain's view on prevalent discourses of nature in his time will be challenged by the difficulty, and in a way impossibility, of categorizing his approach, as his narrative technique combined with his rich humor leave the reader with a multiplicity of perspectives and conventions that are both maintained and unsettled. In his book, *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain: A Biography*, Justin Kaplan (1991) calls him "a double creature" and emphasizes his play with established conventions, saying "[h]e wanted to belong, but he also wanted to laugh from outside" (p. 18). It is this dual character of his writing that enables him to see the world through different frameworks without being confined to any of them. When he articulates his dual experience of nature, he reaches beyond aesthetic appreciation alone: "One can enjoy a rainbow without necessarily forgetting the forces that made it" (Twain, 2015, p. 21).

This thesis explores Mark Twain's relationship with the conventions of the representation of wilderness in nineteenth-century America. It argues that Twain rejects participation in the construction of the popular discourses of wilderness in nineteenth-century America through parodying and subverting the conventions of the "sublime" and the "frontier". William Cronon's criticism of the concept of wilderness as a cultural construct rooted in nineteenth-century concepts of the sublime and the frontier provides the theoretical framework. The discussion is divided into two chapters: In Chapter 2, an outline of the Burkean, Kantian, and American sublime is given. In Chapter 3, Mark Twain's *Letters from Hawaii* and passages from his other works are analyzed in terms of the concepts of the sublime and the frontier.

In Chapter 2, an outline of the Burkean, Kantian, and American sublime will provide a context for understanding the appropriation of Romantic conventions of the sublime to the American context. This will help locate Twain's use of the sublime in his works. It will be argued that it would be inaccurate to confine Twain's use of the sublime to a single tradition because he appeals to all of them at various times in in different texts. To exemplify this, close readings of related passages in his works, mostly from his letters, will be presented. In addition to the differences between the Burkean and the Kantian sublime, the main characteristics of the American sublime will be discussed together with passages from Thoreau and Muir. The domestication of the sublime in its appropriation in the American context and its role in turning wilderness into a national symbol will be emphasized in the discussion.

In Chapter 3, it will be argued that Twain presents a calculated staging of the Romantic traditions of the sublime and the frontier, which he unsettles through his narrative structure and humor, which in turn creates a dual vision of wilderness. To exemplify this, close readings from his *Letters from Hawaii* will be presented. Passages from his other works, such as *Innocents Abroad*, *Following the Equator*, and *Roughing It* will also be analyzed in terms of his dual treatment of Romantic traditions of nineteenth-century America.

The chapter will be divided into two sections: "3.1 Debunking the sublime: *Letters from Hawaii*" and "3.2 The Frontier and the Escape Motif". In the first section, Twain's "Letter 25" in *Letters from Hawaii*, in which he writes about his visit to the Great Volcano of Kilauea, will be the main focus of the discussion of the sublime since it offers one of the best examples of how he parodies the concept. Twain uses the raw material from this passage in *Roughing It* and *Following the Equator* again, though with

some adjustments in his narrative. These passages will be visited to examine different versions of the same travel experience. Exploring the differences in these narratives of the same journey will provide more insight into understanding the narrative techniques, particularly the comedic, that create a dualism which challenges Romantic sentiments.

The chapter will continue with the discussion of the concept of frontier. Before the textual analysis of Twain's works, an outline of Turner's frontier thesis will be given. This will be followed by passages from Muir, which exemplify the Romantic tradition of primitivism and spiritual redemption through nature. *Letters from Hawaii* will be the main text analyzed in terms of Twain's dual approach to frontier ideals while close readings of passages from his other works will contribute to the discussion. The chapter ends with the conclusion that Twain's dual vision resists participation in the construction of a symbolic landscape through a narrative structure that renders any symbolism in the text unreliable.

In Chapter IV, the study arrives at its final destination with the proposition that Twain's rendering of nineteenth-century notions of the Romantic sublime and the frontier is still relevant in today's discussions on the environment since his works reflect the prevalent discourses on wilderness in the nineteenth century when the term was radically transformed into a sacred American icon. Therefore, Twain's dual approach to wilderness can further guide us in seeing what lies behind the symbolic language of Romanticism still used for the representation of nature today.

CHAPTER 2

OUTLINING THE SUBLIME:

THE BURKEAN, KANTIAN AND AMERICAN SUBLIME

In “The Missing Landscapes of Mark Twain,” Gary P. Henrickson (2004) argues that there were certain cultural constraints Twain had to deal with as a writer in the second half of the nineteenth century. In his article, he argues that these constraints are a consequence of confronting new kinds of land in the “New World”, and of having to find the language to represent this landscape that differed from European land. One significant constraint he mentions was the idea that certain landscapes were “sublime”. The consequence of this constraint created another one: Since certain landscapes are worthy of being considered sublime, others were deemed to be insignificant, therefore not worthy of description in literature. The third constraint is also related to the other two: The American landscape was new and different from the familiar European land; it was difficult to find the vocabulary to depict it. Among these, Henrickson (2004) emphasizes the notion of the sublime the most (pp. 41-42). It was mostly the Burkean sublime that influenced the expectations from such landscapes. As John F. Sears (1998) states in *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century*, the Burkean sublime provided “a paradigm for the emotional experience” in the presence of “grand objects” (p. 14). This paradigm created a certain expectation and almost a guideline that helped one register this experience. In nineteenth-century America, this paradigm was “well established” and Niagara Falls became the symbol which evoked the emotional experience of the sublime as “the most sublime and beautiful of God’s creations” (Sears, 1998, p. 16).

Twain produced his works in such an atmosphere, when certain landscapes were popularized through the discourse of the sublime and tourists flooded to see such sights. This chapter argues that Twain uses a calculated staging of the experience of the sublime only to undermine it through a dualism he creates in his texts. He tends to show a skeptical approach to Romantic sentiments, which is one of the characteristics of his writings. In his book *Life on the Mississippi* published in 1883, the narrator explains how his view of nature changed from a Romantic and poetic one, to a practical one:

Now when I had mastered the language of this water and had come to know every trifling feature that bordered the great river as familiarly as I knew the letters of the alphabet, I had made a valuable acquisition. But I had lost something, too. I had lost something which could never be restored to me while I lived. All the grace, the beauty, the poetry had gone out of the majestic river! I still keep in mind a certain wonderful sunset which I witnessed when steamboating was new to me ... I stood like one bewitched. I drank it in, in a speechless rapture. The world was new to me, and I had never seen anything like this at home. ... But as I have said, a day came when I began to cease from noting the glories and the charms which the moon and the sun and the twilight wrought upon the river's face; another day came when I ceased altogether to note them. Then, if that sunset scene had been repeated, I should have looked upon it without rapture, and should have commented upon it, inwardly, after this fashion: This sun means that we are going to have wind to-morrow; that floating log means that the river is rising, small thanks to it ... No, the romance and the beauty were all gone from the river. All the value any feature of it had for me now was the amount of usefulness it could furnish toward compassing the safe piloting of a steamboat. (Twain, 2006, Chapter 9, para. 5)

In this long passage, the narrator explains two different experiences of the same river, and how one replaced the other throughout years. His earlier experience has Romantic implications as he used to see the “romance”, “beauty”, and “poetry” of the river. There is also a traditional notion of sublimity in this experience as the words “bewitched” and “speechless rapture” suggest the awe found in the experience of the sublime. Although what replaces the previous experience is “a valuable acquisition”, there is still a feeling of loss, and the acceptance that it cannot be “restored” again. It is interesting that the

narrator uses the word “restored” since it implies construction rather than an experience that can be evoked; on the other hand, he became too familiar with the river and its “every trifling feature” to have a transcendent experience that elevates nature into a symbolic order. Instead, nature “means” other things with practical implications now. At this point in the text, he draws an analogy between his new vision of nature and a doctor’s professional feelings in front of a beautiful woman. He says

Since those days, I have pitied doctors from my heart. What does the lovely flush in a beauty's cheek mean to a doctor but a 'break' that ripples above some deadly disease. Are not all her visible charms sown thick with what are to him the signs and symbols of hidden decay? Does he ever see her beauty at all, or doesn't he simply view her professionally, and comment upon her unwholesome condition all to himself? And doesn't he sometimes wonder whether he has gained most or lost most by learning his trade? (Twain, 2006, Chapter 9, para. 7)

The duality of his experience is more evident when he asks the question whether the loss or the gain is bigger. Moreover, the feeling of “pity” adds to the feeling of loss since it implies that he also pities himself after his own loss. “Visible charms” are accompanied with “signs and symbols of hidden decay”. In other words, unworldly beauty and death are woven into each other and are experienced as two layers of the same nature.

Twain’s experience of piloting the steamboats on the Mississippi River in his early years seems to have shaped his vision of nature dramatically. This account is very significant in that it offers insight into the source of his dual visions in his representations of the nature in his writings. In his article, “The Pilot and the Passenger: Landscape Conventions and the Style of Huckleberry Finn”, Leo Marx (1956) claims that Twain sometimes “descends” to “sentimentality”, which he considers one of Twain’s “typical faults” (p. 129). Although Twain is regarded as a realist writer who avoids Romantic sentimentality, his use of the dualism between accuracy and sentimentality in his narratives reveals a subtler approach to the representation of nature

than Marx suggests. As the passage above exemplifies, while he chooses to represent the natural phenomena in realistic terms, he is aware of the sentimentality such a scene can evoke in a person, since he had this experience before. He sees the conditions that create both experiences. In this sense, Marx's criticism is to the point in that it underlines Twain's use of sentimentality in his writings. However, to consider it as a "fault" may risk missing the subtle layers in his writing. Twain's use of dualism will be discussed as a narrative technique that is used to undermine sublimity in further writings in the following sections.

Another example of Twain's use of dualism that offers both the sublime and the realistic vision is the famous sunrise scene in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*:

The first thing to see, looking away over the water, was a kind of dull line—that was the woods on t'other side; you couldn't make nothing else out; then a pale place in the sky; then more paleness spreading around; then the river softened away off, and warn't black any more, but gray; you could see little dark spots drifting along ever so far away—trading scows, and such things; and long black streaks—rafts; sometimes you could hear a sweep screaming; or jumbled up voices, it was so still, and sounds come so far; and by and by you could see a streak on the water which you know by the look of the streak that there's a snag there in a swift current which breaks on it and makes that streak look that way; and you see the mist curl up off the water, and the east reddens up, and the river, and you make out a log-cabin in the edge of the woods, away on the bank on t'other side of the river, being a woodyard, likely, and piled by them cheats so you can throw a dog through it anywheres; then the nice breeze springs up, and comes fanning you from over there, so cool and fresh and sweet to smell on account of the woods and the flowers; but sometimes not that way, because they've left dead fish laying around, gars and such, and they do get pretty rank; and next you've got the full day, and everything smiling in the sun, and the song-birds just going it! (Twain, 2012a, p. 89)

The river is described with words that create a sentimental mood: It is "softening", the "mist" slowly lifting, and the "nice breeze" "fanning", which is "sweet to smell on account of the woods and the flowers". The scene resembles a Romantic painting with all its colors, obscure images and tranquility. This lyrical scene could end up as an

experience of the sublime. Henrickson (2004) states that in Twain's travel works and elsewhere, the sublime is rejected, parodied and undercut, and he asks if this famous scene is an exception of his treatment of the sublime. The narrator knows the river too well to represent it only in idealized terms one can argue. Instead, nature is represented in its duality: The dead fish and the ideal beauty of the dawn on the river exist side by side within the same nature. A moment of potential sublimity is undermined with the acknowledgment of death and decay in the same paragraph.

At this point, it seems necessary to ask what tradition of the sublime is referred to in this discussion. The aesthetic of the sublime has a long history and can be traced back to Longinus in the 1st century AD. Longinus' (1890) *On the Sublime* describes the sublime as a linguistic effect. On the other hand, regarding the sublime in natural objects, two traditions were very influential in the nineteenth-century: the Burkean and the Kantian sublime. In "The Unreliable Traces of the West: Mark Twain's Appropriation of a Symbolical Landscape in *Roughing It*", Delphine Louis-Dimitrov (2012, p. 13) states that the American sublime "relies" on the Burkean sublime. In order to locate Twain's use of the sublime in its historical context, at this point, it seems necessary to examine the traditional Western conceptions of the sublime, specifically Burke's and Kant's theories, and the American appropriation of the term.

In this section, it will be argued that Twain makes use of both the Burkean and the Kantian sublime, and that the American version of the sublime can be exemplified in his writings, as well. To broaden this argument, first, an outline of the Burkean sublime will be offered, and it will be exemplified by a close reading of lines from Wordsworth's *Prelude* as an example of the British tradition. Twain's use of this tradition will also be exemplified. This discussion will be followed by an outline of the Kantian sublime and

the vital differences between both traditions. Twain's use of the Kantian sublime will be examined through a passage from his works. Finally, the concept of the "American sublime" and its main features will be explored to better understand what changes the concept underwent on its way to the other side of the Atlantic. This section will include passages from Henry David Thoreau and John Muir to examine their understanding of the sublime within the framework of American transcendentalism and nature writing. This will provide further insight into the cultural atmosphere and the discourse of the sublime in the second half of the nineteenth century in which Twain produced his works.

2.1 The Burkean sublime

Louis-Dimitrov's proposition that the American sublime is based on the Burkean sublime brings about the question of whether it is possible to assume that Twain uses a specific tradition of the concept. It does not necessarily mean that Twain parodies only the Burkean sublime in his writings; indeed, a closer look at his works makes it clear that his use of the term is not confined to either the British or the German tradition. To understand his use of different traditions of the sublime, this section will examine the Burkean sublime and offer a preliminary example of Twain's use of it, which will be followed by the other sections on the Kantian and the American sublime.

Edmund Burke's treatise of aesthetics, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, was published in the second half of the eighteenth century, in 1757. It was almost two decades after William Smith's translation, *Dionysus Longinus on the Sublime*, was published in 1739, which brought the concept of the sublime into the current discussions at the time. Burke's theory of the sublime presents an understanding of the sensations within a traditional empiricist

framework. In this empiricist tradition, whose most important figure is John Locke, the sensations are considered the direct impressions of physical things. In this sense, Burke finds the source of the sublime in physical/external things; that is, in nature itself.

In his *Enquiry*, Burke (1823) distinguishes between the sublime and the beautiful in nature. The beautiful has positive qualities that give pleasure whereas the sublime causes feelings like terror and anxiety. He says,

For sublime objects are vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small: beauty should be smooth and polished; the great, rugged and negligent; beauty should shun the right line, yet deviate from it insensibly; the great in many cases loves the right line; and when it deviates, it often makes a strong deviation: beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy; beauty should be light and delicate; the great ought to be solid, and even massive. They are indeed ideas of a very different nature, one being founded on pain, the other on pleasure. (Burke, 1823, p. 182)

While the beautiful is associated with balance, smoothness, clarity, smallness, and light, the sublime is associated with the opposite qualities. The object of the sublime must be vast, rugged, obscure, dark, gloomy and massive. In addition, the impressions they produce are also in contrast to each other. However, he considers the sublime to have a stronger effect than the beautiful. He finds the source of the sublime in several attributes of nature that create impressions in our mind. Among these, the strongest impression that creates the experience of the sublime is the feeling of “terror”:

Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger; that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling. I say the strongest emotion, because I am satisfied the ideas of pain are much more powerful than those which enter on the part of pleasure. (Burke, 1823, p. 44)

In this description, the “terror” and “pain” are the strongest impressions that the “terrible” objects create in the mind. Since he associates the feeling of pleasure with the beautiful, a hierarchy between the power of the emotions is implied; the experience of

the sublime is “much more powerful” in its effect than the experience of the beautiful. However, for the mind to experience the sublime, the danger should not pose a real threat. He argues that “[w]hen danger or pain press too nearly, they are incapable of giving any delight, and are simply terrible; but at certain distances, and with certain modifications, they maybe, and they are, delightful, as we every day experience” (Burke, 1823, p. 46). The nature should not be “simply terrible” since not feeling safe in front of the destructive forces of the nature prevents the “delight” the experience of the sublime paradoxically contains. The subject should be able to experience a safe distance to enjoy the overwhelming power of the nature as an aesthetic experience. This experience involves opposite impressions such as delight and terror and pain and pleasure.

Other strong feelings that are evoked by the sublime objects are the feelings of astonishment and awe, which leave the mind unable to reason on the object of the sublime. He explains that

The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature, when those causes operate most powerfully, is astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object which employs it. Hence arises the great power of the sublime, that, far from being produced by them, it anticipates our reasonings, and hurries us on by an irresistible force. Astonishment, as I have said, is the effect of the sublime in its highest degree; the inferior effects are admiration, reverence, and respect. (Burke, 1823, p. 74)

Again, emphasizing a certain distance with the object of experience, he argues that the passion created in the mind, that is, astonishment, rips the mind of its rational powers, which is its effect “in its highest degree”. He also underlines that it is an “irresistible force”, which implies that the experience of the sublime cannot be controlled by the subject exposed to it. This passion in the form of astonishment results in the subject’s annihilation in front of the power of the nature. He puts that “whilst we contemplate so

vast an object, under the arm, as it were, of Almighty power, and invested upon every side with omnipresence, we shrink into the minuteness of our own nature, and are, in a manner, annihilated before him (Burke, 1823, p. 93). The sublimity in nature does not only cause certain sensory impressions in our mind to create an aesthetic experience, but also has an impact on the subject's position in front of nature, which reminds it of its own finitude.

Another characteristic of the Burkean sublime that is suggested here is the presence of the divine in this experience. The sublimity in nature is caused by the terror of feeling as if in such a presence. The divinity found in this experience is not necessarily religious in the strict sense; it is more of an acknowledgment of the powers of nature overwhelming the finite subject. Another source of the sublime in this sense is infinity, and it is not less important than the other causes. He states that “[i]nfinity has a tendency to fill the mind with that sort of delightful horror, which is the most genuine effect, and truest test of the sublime” (Burke, 1823, p. 99). In this description, the idea of infinity in nature is juxtaposed with the subject's finite nature. Furthermore, greatness of dimension and obscurity are two other qualities of the object of the sublime. For Burke, the former is too obvious to necessitate any illustration (1823, p. 96). Regarding the latter, he thinks that “in nature, dark, confused, uncertain images have a greater power on the fancy to form the grander passions, than those have [sic] which are more clear and determinate” (Burke, 1823, pp. 82-3). In addition, he makes it clear that if we know the “full extent” of the danger contained in the object of the experience, we get accustomed to it, and the “apprehension” disappears. (Burke, 1823, p. 76) On the other hand, when the mind is full of “great and confused images”, it is affected more since

they are “crowded and confused”. Any attempt to “separate” them results in the loss of their “greatness”. (Burke, 1823, p. 82)

This account of the relationship between physical nature, the sensations it creates in the mind and the annihilation of the experiencing subject also gave the British Romantics the theoretical framework for their aesthetic experiences. In his seminal article, “The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature”, William Cronon (1996) thinks that Wordsworth’s *Prelude* is a “classic description” of Burke’s theory of the sublime:

Into the narrow chasm; the brook and road
Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy Pass
...
The immeasurable height
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
And in the narrow rent at every turn
Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light-
Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of Eternity,
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end (Wordsworth, 1904, p. 161)

The poem speaks of “immeasurable heights”, “waterfalls”, “winds”, torrents, and “rocks” in such an atmosphere that implies the feeling of terror. The heights suggest the idea of infinity since the mind is incapable of measuring them. In other words, the mind does not experience the objects through its rational faculties. In addition, although the subject is not in real danger, it is accompanied by other natural entities since they look as

if they are capable of having a “voice” in them. The fact that he chooses the word “voice” is interesting since one would expect the physical nature to have sounds rather than “a voice”. It implies the presence of an entity in natural objects which has more than physical attributes. However, it cannot be clearly heard and is not described in the poem. Together with “eternity” and references to the “great Apocalypse”, it is clear that one is not in the presence of physical nature only; the feeling of the presence of the divine in the natural entities is also suggested in these lines. There are contrasts in the poem such as “tumult and peace” and “the darkness and the light”; nevertheless, they all seem to be rooted in the same source: all these contrasts exist in the same mind. The poem evokes the feeling of the sublime with contrasting impressions, the idea of divinity, and of infinity in nature. The poet seems to feel the paradoxical duo, “delightful terror”, in his descriptions of his journey through the Alps.

Having examined the fundamental characteristics of the Burkean sublime, it seems necessary to turn to the question of which parts of this tradition of the sublime Twain uses. Burke’s theory of the sublime provided a framework for the aesthetic experience of nature in the Romantic tradition in Europe. Likewise, its echoes were received on the other side of the Atlantic, too. In a time when the frontiers were not closed yet, and when new lands were still “discovered”, Burke’s idea of the sublime provided the basis for the experience of the encounter with wild nature in America, too. Twain is one of the writers who made use of this framework for his descriptions of the overwhelming effect of nature. In his trip to the Swiss Alps, for example, Twain sees the Jungfrau and describes it in the following way in his book *A Tramp Abroad*:

This was the mighty dome of the Jungfrau softly outlined against the sky and faintly silvered by the starlight. There was something subduing in the influence of that silent and solemn and awful presence; one seemed to meet the immutable,

the indestructible, the eternal, face to face, and to feel the trivial and fleeting nature of his own existence the more sharply by the contrast. (2004, Chapter XXXIII, para. 2)

The narrator sees the mountain in the darkness under the star lights. It is a “mighty dome” in contrast to the small body of a human being. The shape of the dome stands out against the sky, though “softly outlined”. Its presence also includes contrasts: it is “silent and solemn”, yet “awful”, which suggests the terror felt in a safe distance. Moreover, the reference to the infinite nature of the mountain in contrast to the “fleeting nature” of the subject suggests that Twain’s use of the sublime in this passage is close to the Burkean tradition. The qualities of the Burkean sublime, such as darkness, terror, infinity, annihilation of the subject, and the presence of the divine can all be found in this description of the famous mountain. Cronon (1996) states that “[b]y the eighteenth century this sense of the wilderness as a landscape where the supernatural lay just beneath the surface was expressed in the doctrine of the sublime” (p. 10) For the Romantics, it was the sublime landscapes which provided the setting for the subject to come “face to face” with the divinity in the nature. The theories of the sublime in the eighteenth century found the object of the sublime in “rare places” where one could have more chance to “glimpse the face of God”. Cronon (1996) also states that

Romantics had a clear notion of where one could be most sure of having this experience. Although God might, of course, choose to show Himself anywhere, He would most often be found in those vast, powerful landscapes where one could not help feeling insignificant and being reminded of one's own mortality. Where were these sublime places? The eighteenth century [sic] catalog of their locations feels very familiar, for we still see and value landscapes as it taught us to do. God was on the mountaintop, in the chasm, in the waterfall, in the thundercloud, in the rainbow, in the sunset. (p. 10)

The catalog he mentions includes both Wordsworth’s and Twain’s object(s) of the sublime, and they both experience the presence of the divine. As Vanessa L. Ryan

(2001) states in her article, “The Physiological Sublime: Burke's Critique of Reason”, in this tradition of the sublime, “Burke minimizes the role of the mind in the experience of the sublime and characterizes the sublime as a natural force that is by its very definition beyond man’s ability to control” (p. 267). Twain’s account of the “subduing” influence of the sublime on the human reason seems in parallel here.

Having outlined the Burkean sublime, and having offered a brief, preliminary example from Twain, it is necessary to examine another influential theory of the sublime proposed in the second half of the eighteenth century: Kant’s theory of the sublime. Published in 1790, *Critique of Judgment* follows Burke’s theory in that it follows the idea of terror and delight blended together in the experience of the sublime. However, it differs from the Burkean sublime in fundamental ways. The first significant difference is that unlike Burke, who finds the source of the sublime in physical nature, Kant finds it in the mind itself. Secondly, while the Burkean sublime emphasizes the overpowering of reason by the passions created by physical objects, the Kantian sublime puts emphasis on the triumph of reason over the destructive forces of nature.

2.2 The Kantian sublime

Kant’s *Critique* shares similarities with Burke’s ideas on the sublime in that both philosophers consider the feeling of pain that is caused by terror or fear as the basis of the experience of the sublime. In “Part I. Critique of Aesthetic Judgement” he states that

Burke who deserves to be mentioned as the foremost author in this way of treating the subject, discovers along this route (p. 223 of [the German translation of] his work) "that the feeling of the sublime is based on the impulse toward self-preservation and on fear. i.e., on a pain, a pain that, since it does not go so far as actually to disarrange the parts of the body, gives rise to agitations". (Kant, 1987, p. 138)

He gives credit to Burke's *Treatise* that precedes his *Critique* while at the same time following the British thinker's "discovery" of the nature of the pain in the experience of the sublime. The feeling of "fear" is vital in this experience; however, the danger should not be real and threatening the life of the subject. In parallel to Burke's account, Kant emphasizes the importance of the feeling of fear as well as being in a safe distance. If the threat is real, the experience of the sublime cannot be possible:

On the other hand, consider bold, overhanging and, as it were, threatening rocks, thunderclouds piling up in the sky and moving accompanied by lightning and thunderclaps, volcanoes with their destructive power, hurricanes with all the devastation they leave behind, the boundless ocean heaved up, the high waterfall of a mighty river, and so on. Compared to the might of any of these, our ability to resist becomes an insignificant trifle. Yet the sight of them becomes all the more attractive the more fearful it is, provided we are in a safe place. (Kant, 1987, p. 120)

The natural scenes mentioned here all share the common characteristic of having the potential to destroy a human being. Kant admits it when he points out that our "ability to resist" cannot be compared with nature's might. Indeed, it is the very quality of the destructiveness of nature and the fear it causes that enhance the sublimity of the experience. There is one condition, though: The subject should be able to enjoy being free of any real danger as much as feeling pain in the presence of a fearful object.

Kant follows Burke's theory regarding the contrast between the beautiful and the sublime in aesthetic experiences, too. Burke emphasizes the pleasure that is created by the experience of the beautiful and argues that the beautiful should not be obscure. Likewise, Kant (1987) maintains that there are significant differences between the two concepts: "The beautiful in nature concerns the form of the object, which consists in [the object's] being bounded. But the sublime can also be found in a formless object, insofar as we present *unboundedness*" (p. 98). He underlines the significance of the form in the

beautiful objects and emphasizes that they are “bounded”; in other words, they do not suggest infinity. The beautiful also creates pleasure in that it carries with it “a feeling of life’s being furthered”. In contrast, for the sublime, form is not a prerequisite. To present it in Burke’s terminology, with its obscurity, the sublime evokes the idea of infinity. In addition, the sublime contains the feelings of pleasure and displeasure simultaneously, though the two thinkers find the sources of these in different mental processes.

One significant difference between Kant’s and Burke’s theories is the source of the experience of the sublime. While according to Burke, the objects in nature which “excite” the “pain and danger” are considered sublime, Kant (1987) finds the source of sublimity not in the objects of nature but in the mind itself:

We see from this at once that we express ourselves entirely incorrectly when we call this or that object of nature sublime, even though we may quite correctly call a great many natural objects beautiful ... Instead, all we are entitled to say is that the object is suitable for exhibiting a sublimity that can be found in the mind. For what is sublime, in the proper meaning of the term, cannot be contained in any sensible form but concerns only ideas of reason, which, though they cannot be exhibited adequately, are aroused and called to mind by this very inadequacy, which can be exhibited in sensibility. Thus [sic] the vast ocean heaved up by storms cannot be called sublime. The sight of it is horrible; and one must already have filled one's mind with all sorts of ideas if such an intuition is to attune it to a feeling that is itself sublime, inasmuch as the mind is induced to abandon sensibility and occupy itself with ideas containing a higher purposiveness. (p. 99)

Unlike Burke, who finds sublimity in natural objects that evoke fear in us, Kant argues that we can only find the beautiful in objects of nature, since it is their form that gives the idea of beauty. However, in the case of the sublime, it is the mind that contains the sublimity, and the natural objects only help one recognize this sublimity that is already present in the mental faculties. Another idea Kant underlines here is that the experience of the sublime reveals the inadequacy of sensibility, since sublimity is not related to the form but to the “ideas of reason”. He gives the example of “the vast ocean heaved up by

storms” to better explain that the scene evokes merely the feeling of terror if the sensibility is not abandoned and the mind does not contain ideas attuned to sublimity. Therefore, the sensible phenomena—the physical nature—must be transcended, since sensibility is proven to be inadequate; however, this fact still makes rational sense, and this is the source of the sublime. Furthermore, Kant emphasizes the “attunement of the mind” to the ideas of the sublime as a condition to have this experience, which contains not only the feeling of terror but also the pleasure driven from the ideas of the reason.

He says:

It is a fact that what is called sublime by us having been prepared through culture, comes across as merely repellent to a person who is uncultured and lacking in the development of moral ideas. In all the evidence of nature's destructive force [Gewalt] and in the large scale of its might, in contrast to which his own is nonexistent, he will see only the hardship, danger, and misery that would confront anyone forced to live in such a place. Thus ... the good and otherwise sensible Savoyard peasant did not hesitate to call anyone a fool who fancies glaciated mountains. (Kant, 1987, p. 124)

There are a few ideas here. First, Kant underlines the fact that the sublime cannot be experienced by people who have not been educated accordingly with the ideas related to it. Such people will only see the destructiveness in nature and, thus, will not be able to “abandon” sensibility to be transcended by the reason. Secondly, this will be an experience of feeling overwhelmed by nature’s might and will be accompanied with merely displeasure caused by fear and terror. A transcendental experience of these mountains will not make sense at this level. Here, the emphasis on “culture” brings the mind the question of whether Kant implies the fact that the sublime is a mere construction introduced to society. He foresees this potential confusion and explains it in these words:

But the fact that a judgment about the sublime in nature requires culture (more so than a judgment about the beautiful) still in no way implies that it was initially

produced by culture and then introduced to society by way of (say) mere convention. Rather, it has its foundation in human nature: in something that, along with common sense, we may require and demand of everyone. (Kant, 1987, p. 125)

In this passage, the mind as the source of the sublime is emphasized as “the foundation in human nature”. By stressing “human nature”, he seems to claim that, though the experience of the sublime requires culture, and, therefore, is subjective, it is also universal since all human beings share the same nature in which the sublimity resides. As a consequence, the same “glaciated mountains” and “the vast ocean heaved up by storms” can lead to the experience of the sublime in all human beings. The feeling of insignificance when one is confronted with the destructive might of nature is transcended by the reason by both rising above human nature and the nature outside. He says,

Thus any spectator who beholds massive mountains climbing skyward, deep gorges with raging streams in them, wastelands lying in deep shadow and inviting melancholy meditation, and so on is indeed seized by amazement bordering on terror, by horror and a sacred thrill; but, since he knows he is safe, this is not actual fear: it is merely our attempt to incur it with our imagination, in order that we may feel that very power's might and connect the mental agitation this arouses with the mind's state of rest. In this way we [feel] our superiority to nature within ourselves, and hence also to nature outside us insofar as it can influence our feeling of well-being. (Kant, 1987, p. 130)

He suggests that in this process that leads to the feeling of “superiority” over nature, the imagination plays a key role. At the level of sensibility, the nature outside is only threatening, since the senses fail in the presence of such a might. At this point, the imagination and reason strive towards different directions. He argues that “our imagination strives to progress toward infinity, while our reason demands absolute totality as a real idea, and so [the imagination] our power of estimating the magnitude of things in the world of sense, is inadequate to that idea” (Kant, 1987, p. 106). As a result,

the imagination fails to meet the rational faculties in understanding the object. On the other hand, this inadequacy is the very reason which arouses the feeling that there is a “supersensible power” in human nature. Acknowledging this inadequacy of the imagination in the world of sense, and yet, realizing this supersensible power that transcends this world and gives superiority to the human reason is what causes the pleasure in this experience. Kant’s theory is interested in what is beyond the sensibility, since it looks beyond the senses and the feelings and concentrates on the relation between these senses and the reason. He maintains that the “[s]ublime is what even to be able to think proves that the mind has a power surpassing any standard of sense” (Kant, 1987, p. 106). The experience of the recognition of a supersensible power is followed by “negative pleasure”, which results from the fact that the object does not pose a threat to one’s essential safety. It is negative because the mind acknowledges its inadequacy in creating a representation of the object, yet, with the supersensible power, finds pleasure in this recognition.

At this point, it seems necessary to explain the two different types of the sublime that Kant offers: the mathematical and the dynamical sublime. The mathematical sublime is related with the magnitude of the objects and the concept of infinity that is felt in their presence. When one estimates the magnitude of an object mathematically, it will be limited to the relative magnitude of it compared with other similar objects. On the other hand, an aesthetic estimation seeks the “absolute magnitude” provided that the mind can take it in in one intuition. In other words, the aesthetic estimation of magnitude differs from the mathematical in that it does not make use of numerical concepts but uses mere intuition by the eye. One definition he gives of the mathematical sublime is that “[w]e call sublime what is absolutely [schlechthin] large” (Kant, 1987, p. 103). Kant

explains that by “absolutely large”, he does not mean the magnitude of the object, but that “this magnitude is superior to that of many other objects of the same kind” (1987, p. 104). However, this superiority should not be put in numerical concepts. He continues with another definition: “That is sublime in comparison with which everything else is small” (Kant, 1987, p. 105). In this sense, sublimity is not in the magnitude of the object but in the mind, and the idea of infinity makes all object look smaller. He states that nature “offers” examples to this kind of sublime whenever the imagination is given. He finds it when one estimates the magnitude of a tree by a man’s height and takes it as a standard to estimate the height of a mountain. Then one can consider this mountain’s height equal to a mile, which in turn will help estimate the earth’s diameter. Similarly, this will serve for estimating the planetary system, and in turn, the Milky Way system. When one starts thinking about the bigger systems made of systems like the Milky Way, the imagination strives toward infinity:

Now when we judge such an immense whole aesthetically, the sublime lies not so much in the magnitude of the number as in the fact that, the farther we progress, the larger are the unities we reach. This is partly due to the systematic division in the structure of the world edifice; for this division always presents to us whatever is large in nature as being small in turn, though what it actually presents to us is our imagination, in all its boundlessness, and along with it nature, as vanishing[ly small] in contrast to the ideas of reason, if the imagination is to provide an exhibit adequate to them. (Kant, 1987, pp. 113-4)

He emphasizes that the sublime resides not in the magnitude which can be expressed in numerical concepts; it is rather in the imagination’s extension to infinity. In an aesthetic judgment, the realization of every object’s being smaller than the other connects the imagination to infinity where compared to this “immense whole”, everything else is small. When the senses are inadequate to provide a representation and the imagination cannot estimate the magnitude of an object, the ideas of reason step in and are proven to

be superior to nature, which in turn provides pleasure in the fact that sensibility is inadequate but is still in harmony with rational ideas. He states that

that magnitude of a natural object to which the imagination fruitlessly applies its entire ability to comprehend must lead the concept of nature to a supersensible substrate (which underlies both nature and our ability to think), a substrate that is large beyond any standard of sense and hence makes us judge as sublime not so much the object as the mental attunement in which we find ourselves when we estimate the object. (Kant, 1987, p. 112)

In the mathematical sublime, the world of reason is transcended by reason which makes the judgement of the sublime possible. Once again, he emphasizes that it is the mind of the judging person which harbors the sublimity.

The second type of the sublime according to Kant's theory is the dynamical sublime. While the mathematical sublime is related to the magnitude in natural objects, the dynamical sublime is more about nature's might. Here, Kant emphasizes the feeling of fear felt at a safe distance more, since it implies the destructiveness of nature. He says, "[w]hen in an aesthetic judgment we consider nature as a might that has no dominance over us, then it is dynamically sublime" (Kant, 1987, p. 119). The "dominance" here implies the real threat that comes from nature; instead, the human mind gains superiority over nature. In Kant's (1987) famous definition, the sublime is "the feeling of a momentary inhibition of the vital forces followed immediately by an outpouring of them that is all the stronger" (p. 98). "A momentary inhibition" may suggest that the subject is faced with the crisis of representation and cannot make sense of the object. Thus, mighty nature challenges the subject and makes it face its own inadequacy and insignificance compared with nature's power. However, this is only temporary; the reason reverses this dominance by acknowledging the presence of a higher faculty which is supersensible and which makes the experience of the sublime

possible. The forces are restored back even more powerfully, and the subject transcends the sensible world. The whole process serves for the subject's triumph over the terror in nature:

In the same way, though the irresistibility of nature's might makes us, considered as natural beings, recognize our physical impotence, it reveals in us at the same time an ability to judge ourselves independent of nature, and reveals in us a superiority over nature that is the basis of a self-preservation quite different in kind from the one that can be assailed and endangered by nature outside us. This keeps the humanity in our person from being degraded, even though a human being would have to succumb to that dominance [of nature]. Hence if in judging nature aesthetically we call it sublime, we do so not because nature arouses fear, but because it calls forth our strength (which does not belong to nature [within us]), to regard as small the [objects] of our [natural] concerns: property, health, and life, and because of this we regard nature's might (to which we are indeed subjected in these [natural] concerns) as yet not having such dominance over us, as persons, that we should have to bow to it if our highest principles were at stake and we had to choose between upholding or abandoning them. Hence nature is here called sublime [erhaben] merely because it elevates [erhebt] our imagination, [making] it exhibit those cases where the mind can come to feel its own sublimity, which lies in its vocation and elevates it even above nature. (Kant, 1987, pp. 120-1)

In this long passage, Kant sums up the relationship between the subject and nature in an experience of the sublime. To begin with, he underlines that we are “natural beings”, too. Therefore, as stressed earlier, the superiority is not only physical nature but also our own nature. He considers this experience as a process in which we face our “physical impotence” yet recover from this lack through our capability of judgment. Transcending this physical inadequacy, the subject judges itself as “independent of nature”, which is accompanied by a feeling of “superiority over nature”. Here, Kant borrows the term “self-preservation” from Burke’s (1823) *Treatise*, as Burke argues that the strongest of all the passions, that is, “a sort of delightful horror”, or “a sort of tranquility tinged with terror” “belongs to self-preservation” (p. 197). Nevertheless, while Burke stops at the acknowledgment of the inadequacy in the world of senses and ends the process with the

subject's annihilation before nature's superiority, Kant adds another step in which he considers the subject's superiority over nature as the basis of self-preservation. He seems to suggest that without this final step, "the humanity" is "degraded", which undermines the framework of the Burkean sublime, since Burke finds sublimity in acknowledging the power of nature over the subject. In the passage above, Kant also maintains that the reason one experiences the sublime in the presence of nature is not because it evokes fear or the subject's vulnerability. The reason is that the presence of nature reveals one's strength and leads the subject to see its own nature smaller compared to its strength. Unlike Burke's limitation to physical nature outside us, Kant finds freedom from the subject's "natural concerns" such as "property, health, and life", too. In this description, nature seems to play an instrumental role in the subject's discovery of its own sublimity. In her article "Humanism and the Comic Sublime: From Kant to Friedrich Theodor Vischer", Raimonda Modiano (1987) claims that "[f]or Kant, the main function of the sublime is to bring man to a realization of his freedom from all external constraints and of his unrivalled greatness in the world, compared to which 'all else is small'" (p. 234). She is very skeptical of Kant's description of the sublime and does not believe that the negative moment in the experience, which is the subject's recognition of the powerlessness of the imagination, ever has the same "seriousness" as in Burke:

Kant turns Burke's sublime into fiction over which the mind has full control. The mind constructs a phantasy in which it suspends disbelief for a moment; it pretends to itself that nature is sublime in order to claim sublimity to itself and savor its power over nature. For Kant man's humanity during the experience of the sublime is never in jeopardy, because man is not subject to the power of nature at any time. (Modiano, 1987, p. 235)

Her remark suggests that Kant, in a way, stages this experience to prove the superiority of the human reason, and the subject does not go through an actual crisis in which there

is “momentary inhibition” in its real sense. She even calls this process a construction of a “phantasy” of the mind.

On the other hand, some critics do not think that Kant’s theory uses nature merely as an instrument for its own ends. In her book *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature*, Emily Brady (2013) argues that nature is significant in the experience of the sublime: “In this tradition, nature is observed and valued independently of human life, yet its vitality is also essential for captivating the subject’s imagination and enriching the self. Nature and the self therefore become interwoven in this tradition” (p. 100). She emphasizes nature’s role in arousing our imagination and does not see a separation from nature. Furthermore, she argues against any implication of seeking dominance over nature. She underlines that “the self is situated in a relationship of interdependence with nature, not determined by it or seeking power over it, but dwelling in nature, with imagination and emotion deeply affected by natural places and events.” (Brady, 2013, p. 100) She gives credit to the effect of nature on the subject’s imagination and senses and does not consider the experience as one-sided. While nature cannot “determine” the subject (as it would do in the Burkean sublime), the subject in turn does not look for dominance over nature. This approach makes Kant’s theory seem more sympathetic to the value of nature; however, a closer look at his terminology reveals that there are many implications of rivalry between the self and the nature, which results in the subject’s triumph. He says, “reason must exert its dominance over sensibility, except that in an aesthetic judgment about the sublime [sic] we present this dominance as being exerted by the imagination itself, as an instrument of reason.” (Kant, 1987, p. 128). One can argue that Kant suggests a hierarchy here. Sensibility is transcended by reason; however, between sensibility and

reason, there is the imagination, which reason uses as an “instrument”. Moreover, the words “exert” and “dominance” point out the force that is used in this process of the recovery of feeling of inadequacy. Similarly, he uses phrases, such as “superiority, “elevation”, “nature’s seeming omnipotence”, “raising the soul’s fortitude”, and “nature as vanishingly small in contrast to the ideas of reason”. In all these phrases, a comparison is implied in which nature proves to be inferior to the subject’s faculty of reason. While in her article, “Reassessing Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature in the Kantian Sublime”, Emily Brady (2012) argues that “Kant is not arguing for a hierarchy of humans over nature”, she cannot deny the fact that “his discussion uses language that suggests a strong separation of humans and nature, where through the sublime, we come to feel our ‘dominion’ or ‘superiority’ over nature” (p. 102). Ryan (2001) argues that “[h]is primary concern is to reclaim the “freedom” and “autonomy” of the subject ... He rejects the eighteenth-century British thought, which emphasizes the overpowering of reason by the passions” (p. 268). Here, Ryan implies the Burkean sublime, which, according to her, came to represent the British thought in the eighteenth-century. She emphasizes that in Burke’s *Treatise*, the role of the mind is minimized, and the sublime is defined as “a natural force that is by its very definition beyond man’s ability to control” (Ryan, 2001, p. 267). She asserts further that Burke’s physiological version of the sublime offers a critique of reason. Ryan goes on: “The sublime for Burke is a question not of the subject's increasing self-awareness but of the subject's sense of limitation” (2001, p. 266). In this sense, the Burkean sublime acknowledges the power of the external forces on the subject whereas the Kantian sublime overcomes this moment of negativity arising from the inadequacy of sensibility and confirms the independence of the subject from any external or internal forces.

Just as Burke's sublime influenced the aesthetic experience of the American wilderness, Kant's sublime also had its effect across the Atlantic. Faced with the lack of vocabulary in defining the new land, Americans used the Enlightenment sublime of Kant, too. The mathematical sublime offered the terms to describe the infinity that Americans found in their experience of the wilderness. Kant's mathematical sublime also provided a framework for the aesthetic experience of nature in some of Twain's writings. An example of such treatment of nature can be found in one of his letters to his mother, Mrs. Jane Clemens, written in 1861:

And surrounded on all sides by such prodigious mountains, that when you gaze at them awhile,--and begin to conceive of their grandeur—and next to feel their vastness expanding your soul—and ultimately find yourself growing and swelling and spreading into a giant—I say when this point is reached, you look disdainfully down upon the insignificant village of Carson, and in that instant you are seized with a burning desire to stretch forth your hand, put the city in your pocket, and walk off with it. (Twain, 1988, pp. 137-8)

In this description, the narrator starts with the world of sense in which he sees the “prodigious mountains” surrounding him. However, after a while, he surpasses his sensibility and “conceives” the “grandeur”; in other words, he turns to reason and its ideas. And finally, the magnitude of the mountains, the “vastness”, finds its expression in its connection to the infinite, which rises the soul above physical nature. At this stage, the vastness of the mountains is overcome by the superiority of the subject, who is also freed from the nature that has made him feel insignificant in the beginning. Instead, it is the village that is “insignificant” now, which in turn causes the narrator to go to the extent of looking at it “disdainfully”.

2.3 The American sublime

The discourse of the sublime exemplified here in Twain has a long history that dates back to the first century AD, and sixteen centuries later. This discourse also offered a framework for the aesthetic experience of the writers of the Romantic tradition on both sides of the Atlantic through Burke's and Kant's works. On the other hand, although Burke's *Treatise*, and later, Kant's theory both provided the paradigms for the unexplainable/unrepresentable in the subject's encounter with nature in the eighteenth century, its adoption and adaptation by American literature was not exempt from any change. In his book *Robinson Jeffers and the American Sublime*, Robert Zaller (2012) argues that in the European tradition, the sublime was principally based on "an encounter between individual subjectivity and natural grandeur" (p. 9). He points out that Europe had been domesticated for a long time and the aesthetics of the sublime offered a new perspective in which nature was not taken for granted based on the subject's familiarity with it. It challenged the subject for "a revaluation of the familiar", thus, for "a new way of seeing" what was already known. He emphasizes the fact that the Romantic tradition in Europe was not challenged by finding "new Edens" since they were "rediscovering the Eden already underfoot".¹ He argues that in America, though, the terms were different: "In the New World, however, the wilderness was not metaphor but reality, and clearing space a practical task" (Zaller, Robert, 2012, p. 13). In this sense, one can argue that the Romantic tradition in America did not have the need to establish a new relation to nature in the same way the Europeans did since the frontiers were still open, and the land was far from familiar.

¹ See Carolyn Merchant (2003), *Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture*, for how "the Recovery of Eden story" became a "mainstream narrative" of Western culture, especially since the seventeenth century.

According to Zaller (2012), the concept of the sublime basically included “a single individual, a site of encounter, and a divine presence”, and this is the “pattern” that has been followed since its formulation (p. 13). In the New World experience, the site was a “cleared space”, while in Europe, the space outside was not necessarily wilderness. Zaller suggests that this cleared space also functioned as a type for the mind cleared by prayers, a clearing necessary to reach the divinity in nature. The rhetoric of the sublime was loaded with images of the Old Testament wilderness. Cronon (1996) also agrees that the word wilderness was most associated with biblical terms in the eighteenth century. He emphasizes that in the King James Version, the places that were referred to as wilderness were those “on the margins of civilization” or those in which one could easily lose oneself in moral terms. Cronon’s examples are Moses, who wandered with his people in the desert for forty years after they abandoned their God and worshipped an idol. He mentions Pharaoh who referred to the Children of Israel shut in by the “wilderness”. He goes on with Christ’s struggle with the devil for forty days in the “wilderness”. Milton’s Eden was also surrounded by land that was called “wilderness”. Cronon (1996) concludes that “[w]ilderness, in short, was a place to which one came only against one's will, and always in fear and trembling” (p. 9). He also states that the word had no positive connotations in the eighteenth century since it referred to landscapes which were defined with adjectives, such as "deserted," "savage," "desolate," and "barren". As a consequence, the emotions that this “waste” evoked were “bewilderment” or “terror” (Cronon, 1996, p. 8).

In the nineteenth century, however, this understanding of the wilderness as a hostile wasteland where one risked losing oneself changed. Wilderness areas began to be seen as almost sacred places in their wild beauty, which needed to be preserved from

civilization and its contamination. Cronon (1996) argues that Thoreau and Muir were two very influential figures who contributed to this transformation and construction of a new understanding of the wilderness in the American paradigm. Now the wilderness was likened to Eden, which was welcoming the human subject rather than exposing it to dangers. The humans in turn could feel at home in the wild corners of the continent that were called wilderness. This was followed by the public interest in these natural sites and the American map was marked with places whose wild beauty attracted tourists who wanted to come and see these places themselves. The tourists also expected to experience the sublimity and the grandeur of these natural sites. In a sense, the construction of the understanding of wilderness in America in the nineteenth century offered a guideline to show how to establish contact with wild places. Both Thoreau and Muir followed the basic formula of the sublime that included a subject, a site of encounter, and divine presence in their nature writings. However, while Thoreau made use of terror and awe in some of his writings together with a sense of harmony with nature, Muir presented a more domesticated sublime which was free of the feeling of terror, and which brought the concepts of the sublime and the beautiful closer.

Thoreau is an early advocate for the conservation and preservation of nature in the second half of the nineteenth century. His writings mainly derive from his visits to his native Concord in Massachusetts, where he stayed by Walden Pond in the famous cabin he built for himself. Shortly before he left Walden Pond in 1846, he spent two weeks hiking in Mount Katahdin, which provided the experience that was written in the essay called "Ktaadn" in his book *The Maine Woods*, published two decades later in 1864. In "Ktaadn", Thoreau describes his experience in these terms:

It was vast, Titanic, and such as man never inhabits. Some part of the beholder, even some vital part, seems to escape through the loose grating of his ribs as he ascends. He is more lone than you can imagine. There is less of substantial thought and fair understanding in him than in the plains where men inhabit. His reason is dispersed and shadowy, more thin and subtile like the air. Vast, Titanic, inhuman Nature has got him at disadvantage, caught him alone, and pilfers him of some of his divine faculty. She does not smile on him as in the plains. She seems to say sternly, why came ye here before your time. This ground is not prepared for you. Is it not enough that I smile in the valleys? I have never made this soil for thy feet, this air for thy breathing, these rocks for thy neighbors. I cannot pity nor fondle thee here, but forever relentlessly drive thee hence to where I am kind. Why seek me where I have not called thee, and then complain because you find me but a stepmother? Shouldst thou freeze or starve, or shudder thy life away, here is no shrine, nor altar, nor any access to my ear. (2010, p. 64)

In his description of the experience of his encounter with the mountain, Thoreau shows two different faces of nature: In the mountains, nature is not welcoming at all and full of dangers whereas in the “plains where men inhabit”, she is kind. The mountain is described in terms associated with Burke’s theory of the sublime. Thoreau finds the mountain “vast and titanic”, which echoes the vastness of the magnitude as a quality of the sublime in Burke’s *Treatise*. The subject is also alone, “more lone than you can imagine”, in front of the mountain, which is in line with the basic formulation of the sublime that requires a solitary subject and a site of encounter. Indeed, the mountain “caught” the subject alone, which suggests that it is nature that overwhelms the subject here rather than vice versa. He emphasizes this with the state of being caught at “disadvantage” by nature. The disadvantage is not only physical compared to the magnitude of the mountain. It is also mental since nature overwhelms the faculty of reason and understanding and leaves them “dispersed and shadowy”. This is another reference to the Burkean sublime, in which the mind is filled with its object, yet cannot reason it away. Nature is presented as that which is beyond man’s ability to control and in front of which the subject is annihilated. He experiences this annihilation as the

“escape” of “some vital part” of “the beholder”. Nature has the upper hand to “pilfer” one of “his divine faculty”. Finally, the mountain recounts the terrors of being up in the wilderness. Nothing is human from the air to the soil and the rocks. It is a place in which humans “freeze or starve”, or “shudder” their life away. One cannot help but feel the terror in his description of the encounter with the mountain, and this feeling of terror is the true source of the Burkean sublime.

In his article, “On Thoreau's Trail in the Maine Woods: A Photographic Journey Worth Taking, Critics Howling in the Wilderness”, Ronald Wesley Hoag (2014) argues that in “Ktaadn”, “[t]he theme is human hubris and limitation confronted by sublime wildness” (p. 2). Unlike the Enlightenment sublime in which this feeling of limitation is overcome by the superiority of reason and humanity in the human subject is saved, in Ktaadn, nature stays “inhuman” and the subject is faced with its limitations. Another example of the sublimity arising from terror in the mountaintop can be found in Thoreau’s *Journal* passage for October 29, 1857. In this passage, Thoreau writes about a recurring dream about a mountain. He remembers that he “shuddered” as he was going along and that he was alone at night. He goes on:

I steadily ascended along a rocky ridge half clad with stunted trees, where wild beasts haunted, till I lost myself quite in the upper air and clouds, seeming to pass an imaginary line which separates a hill, mere earth heaped up, from a mountain, into a superterranean grandeur and sublimity. What distinguishes that summit above the earthy line, is that it is unhand-selled, [sic] awful, grand. It can never become familiar; you are lost the moment you set foot there. You know the path, but wander, thrilled, over the bare and pathless rock, as if it were solidified air and cloud. That rocky, misty summit, secreted in the clouds, was far more thrillingly awful and sublime than the crater of a volcano spouting fire. (Thoreau, 2013, p. 142)

The surface of the mountain is “rocky” and rugged like the objects of sublimity in the Burkean sublime. Imagination also plays a role, by the help of which the “mere earth” is

transformed into a “grandeur and sublimity” that cannot be limited to the sensory world. The subject loses itself and the reason cannot function to make this wildness familiar. The subject is overwhelmed by nature which is “awful” and thrilling. Thoreau uses the imagery of a crater of a volcano spouting fire, which was among the places that evoke sublimity in the catalogs of both the Burkean and the Kantian sublime. He states that the mountain in his dream was “far more awful and sublime” than one of the most used examples in the tradition of the sublime. Hoag (2014, p. 3) argues that in Thoreau’s lexicon, “the wild” and “the sublime” mean the same thing. In her book *The Ecopoetics of Entanglement in Contemporary Turkish and American Literatures*, Meliz Ergin (2017, p. 18) states that Thoreau’s notes about Mount Katahdin and Wordsworth’s writing about the Alps in *Prelude* share significant similarities. One can add the recurring dream of the mountain among these accounts of the mountaintop as the place to experience the sublimity whose source is the feeling of terror.

On the other hand, Thoreau also thought over the source of the sublimity and questioned Burke’s theory that proposed terror as the “ruling principle” of the sublime:

I would make an inherent respect, or reverence, which certain objects are fitted to demand, that ruling principle; which reverence, as it is altogether distinct from, so shall it outlive, that terror to which [Burke] refers, and operate to exalt and distinguish us, when fear shall be no more. (Thoreau, 1975, p. 96)

In this passage, Thoreau replaces the terror with “reverence” as the ruling principle of the sublime and argues that it outlasts the terror. In Burke’s (1823, p. 74) terminology, astonishment is the highest degree while “reverence” and “respect” are considered the inferior effects. Thoreau offers a revision of the Burkean sublime and concludes that one should be “calm” and “collected” since “[t]he Deity would be revered, not feared” (1975, p. 96). Just like Burke, he finds divinity and incomprehensibility in the

experience of the sublime, too. However, he emphasizes that “that principle which prompts us to pay an involuntary homage to the infinite, the incomprehensible, the sublime, forms the very basis of our religion. It is a principle implanted in us by our Maker” (Thoreau, 1975, p. 98). Thoreau’s writings contain both the eighteenth century understanding of the sublime, which is characterized by nature and its forces which evoke the feelings of terror and awe, and the nineteenth-century understanding of a more domestic sublime in which nature is more welcoming rather than awful and inhuman.

Cronon (1996) notes this change:

But even as it came to embody the awesome power of the sublime, wilderness was also being tamed—not just by those who were building settlements in its midst but also by those who most celebrated its inhuman beauty. By the second half of the nineteenth century, the terrible awe that Wordsworth and Thoreau regarded as the appropriately pious stance to adopt in the presence of their mountaintop God was giving way to a much more comfortable, almost sentimental demeanor. (p. 12)

Cronon emphasizes the fact that it was not only settlers who helped this transformation occur but also those who promoted the “inhuman beauty” of the wilderness. According to him, the rise in the number of tourists who wanted to experience the wilderness as a spectacle to be seen and enjoyed also played a big role in this change. In this process, the sublime was also being “domesticated”. He notes that these natural places were still regarded sacred; however, it was very different from the eighteenth century understanding of the wilderness as a “grand cathedral” or a “harsh desert retreat”. It evoked religious feelings more similar to those of a “pleasant parish church”. He adds that John Muir’s writings exemplify “this late Romantic sense of a domesticated sublime” the best in which one does not find the terror as the source of sublimity (Cronon, 1996, p. 12).

Like Thoreau, Muir is another significant name who contributed to the conservation movement and the national park system in the second half of the nineteenth century. In May 28, 1892, he established The Sierra Club, which is still a significant environmental preservation organization that operates today. Muir's understanding of nature and the sublime contributed to the construction of the nineteenth-century concept of the wilderness as a sacred place where one finds divinity, and which needs to be preserved from the effects of civilization. In his nature writings, he made use of biblical imagery from the Old Testament, too; however, his use of biblical references did not carry the terror that is found in the eighteenth-century understanding of the wilderness. In his descriptions of Yosemite, he writes about God's first temples:

A few minutes ago [sic] every tree was excited, bowing to the roaring storm, waving, swirling, tossing their branches in glorious enthusiasm like worship. But though to the outer ear these trees are now silent, their songs never cease. Every hidden cell is throbbing with music and life, every fibre thrilling like harp strings, while incense is ever flowing from the balsam bells and leaves. No wonder the hills and groves were God's first temples, and the more they are cut down and hewn into cathedrals and churches, the farther off and dimmer seems the Lord. The same may be said of stone temples. Yonder, to the eastward of our camp grove, stands one of Nature's cathedrals, hewn from the living rock, almost conventional in form, about two thousand feet high, nobly adorned with spires and pinnacles, thrilling under floods of sunshine as if alive like a grove-temple, and well named "Cathedral Peak." (Muir, 1997, pp. 237-8)

Muir's Yosemite resembles an immense temple in which the trees carry emotions and share a kind of spirit that is shared by everything in nature. They move with "music and life", in what resembles worship. He suggests that nature had already built temples for God in the form of "hills and groves" long before human beings did, and their artificial temples are not considered as close to divinity as those in nature. Muir uses the words "stone temples" and "Nature's cathedrals" for the rocks, and these rocks are "living". In

his universe, the rocks join the trees in manifesting the divinity in nature and they are all in harmony.

In another passage, he writes about a cubical mass of granite rock and his feelings when he climbed on top of it. He calls it “the most Romantic spot” he had yet found and thinks it resembles “an altar”. He finds tranquility in the wilderness:

How soothingly, restfully cool it is beneath that leafy, translucent ceiling, and how delightful the water music—the deep bass tones of the fall, the clashing, ringing spray, and infinite variety of small low tones of the current gliding past the side of the boulder-island, and glinting against a thousand smaller stones down the ferny channel! All this shut in; every one of these influences acting at short range as if in a quiet room. The place seemed holy, where one might hope to see God. (Muir, 1997, p. 180)

The place inspires the feeling of being in a “quiet room”, in a temple with an “altar” where the sounds of nature are almost like hymns that are soothing and delightful. Far from being awful, it is a “holy” place and one can feel at home in the presence of divinity. Furthermore, in this universe, even the events which can evoke the feelings of terror are considered as part of this divine harmony. His description of an earthquake in Yosemite reveals how much at home he feels in the wilderness:

At half-past two o’clock of a moonlit morning in March, I was awakened by a tremendous earthquake, and though I had never before enjoyed a storm of this sort, the strange thrilling motion could not be mistaken, and I ran out of my cabin, both glad and frightened, shouting, “A noble earthquake!” ... as if Nature were wrecking her Yosemite temple, and getting ready to build a still better one. [To calm one visitor’s fears] I said, “Come, cheer up; smile a little and clap your hands, now that kind Mother Earth is trotting us on her knee to amuse us and make us good.” In this work of beauty, every boulder is prepared and measured and put in its place more thoughtfully than are the stones of temples. If for a moment you are inclined to regard these taluses as mere dragged, chaotic dumps, climb to the top of one of them, and run down without any haggling, puttering hesitation, boldly jumping from boulder to boulder with even speed. You will then find your feet playing a tune, and quickly discover the music and poetry of these magnificent rock piles—a fine lesson; and all Nature’s wildness tells the same story—the shocks and outbursts of earthquakes, volcanoes, geysers, roaring, thundering waves and floods, the silent uprush or sap in plants,

storms of every sort—each and all are the orderly beauty-making love-beats of Nature's heart. (Muir, 2001, p. 41)

His first reaction to the earthquake is not just a feeling of fear of losing his life or getting injured as one would normally expect. He is “frightened” but also “glad”, knowing that nature has a purpose: It is shaking the “temple” to build a better one. His sense of being in a holy temple is not shaken by this event. He calls nature “kind Mother Earth”, suggesting it is not disinterested in humans. Nature wants to “amuse” people and make them “good”. When he looks at the stones, even in the moment of an earthquake, he sees an order and harmony much better than the stones of temples made by humans. This is in line with his view that no artificial temple can compare to Yosemite. Nature is always superior and more divine than any man-made temple. The destructive forces of nature which are considered sublime are transformed into “love-beats of Nature's heart” resulting in beauty. In this understanding of wilderness, nature has a purpose in whatever it does, and it always has a meaning in the harmonious order of the universe. The music and the rhythm in nature continues no matter what happens. Unlike the Burkean and the Kantian sublime, which make a contrast between the sublime and the beautiful, they exist side by side in Muir's writings. In Burke's theory, one can experience sublimity in an earthquake as long as one is at a safe distance and the danger is not real. Then, the subject can both feel the terror and delight in such a destructive event. Kant maintains the necessity of a certain distance and safety, which protects the subject from the destructiveness of the event and results in negative pleasure. Neither would see beauty in such a catastrophic event since they both agree that the beautiful cannot contain both terror and delight, since it only evokes positive feelings. However, Muir sees beauty in a sublime event while at the same time he is “frightened”. In his understanding of

wilderness, one is protected by motherly nature: “Perhaps almost everybody in the least natural is guarded more than he is ever aware of. All the wilderness seems to be full of tricks and plans to drive and draw us up into God’s light (Muir, 1997, p. 298).

Besides the references to holiness and temples, Muir also makes use of biblical imagery in his descriptions. He sees a glacier as “God’s crystal temple” and says that “Solomon’s marble and ivory palaces” cannot compare with it (Muir, 2001, p. 93). In another passage, he writes about his experience of being in an avalanche. He calls this flight “a milky way of snow-stars” and thinks it was “the most spiritual and exhilarating of all the modes of motion” he had experienced. He compares it to “Elijah’s flight in a chariot of fire” and finds his own experience much more exciting (Muir, 1997, p. 33). An important aspect of Muir’s use of biblical figures may bring about the question of whether he found God in the Bible in the religious sense. In his article “Milton in Yosemite: ‘Paradise Lost’ and the National Parks Idea”, Mark Stoll (2008, p. 238) states that the main source of Muir’s use of biblical imagery in his depictions of Yosemite as a Garden of Eden was Milton’s paradise rather than the Bible itself. In this sense, Muir maintains a cultural connection with the European Romanticism through shared images while interpreting nature in his own understanding of divinity in the wilderness. In this understanding, nature itself is holy and superior to any man-made temple.

The concept of sublime wilderness underwent a profound change from the one century to the next. While in the eighteenth century it was considered as a site which was barren and inhuman, in the next century, it became a sacred temple welcoming humans and opening the doors of a higher spirituality. The sacredness also brought about the need for conservation and preservation of nature. The concept of the sublime in Burke’s and Kant’s writings provided the framework of the aesthetic experience of

nature both in European and American Romanticism and its “uniquely American manifestation of the Romantic movement”—Transcendentalism—as Ergin (2017, p. 18) suggests. Although these movements were not homogenous in their view of sublime wilderness, they shared certain common characteristics that shaped the understanding of wilderness. Cronon (1996) argues that although the writings of Wordsworth, Thoreau and Muir show differences in their relationship with wildness in nature, “all three men are participating in the same cultural tradition and contributing to the same myth: the mountain as cathedral” (p. 12). He considers them as the worshippers of the same “church” and the same “holy book” (Cronon, 1996, p. 13). In this sense, Cronon sees a continuity between the understanding of the sublime in European and American Romantic traditions.

Indeed, while the American sublime made use of the Burkean and the Kantian understanding of the term, it showed a significant difference because of the geography it was born in. In his book *American Sublime: The Genealogy of a Poetic Genre*, Rob Wilson (1991) notes the character of this change:

Crossing the Atlantic, the sublime underwent an ideological seachange. If the Enlightenment sublime had presented the unrepresentable, confronted privation, and pushed language to the limits of imagining the vastness of nature and stellar infinitude as the subject's innermost ground, the Americanization of this sublime rhetoric represented, in effect, the interiorization of national claims as this Americanized self's inalienable ground. ... The genre of the sublime helped consolidate an American identity founded in representing a landscape of immensity and wildness (“power”) open to multiple identifications (“use”). (pp. 4-5)

Wilson emphasizes the “ideological” character of this change and argues that national identity played a significant role in the appropriation of the notion of the sublime in the American wilderness. The vastness and the wildness of the landscape in the New World offered a basis for American identity, which opened the path to establish new

connections and identifications with nature.² Zaller (2012, pp.1-2) points out the fact that in Europe, different versions of the sublime are not pronounced with nationalities.

However, he finds it interesting that there is a “nativist prefix” in the American sublime.

This brings about the question of why the sublime was associated with national terms in America. To be able to answer this question, it seems necessary to understand the reason that gave rise to such a need for identification.

In his article, “If Thomas Jefferson Had Visited Niagara Falls: The Sublime Wilderness Spectacle in America”, Gordon M. Sayre (2001) states that shortly after the United States was founded in the eighteenth century, “its citizens were seeking out the land’s scenic marvels, measuring their sublime effects in language, and even staging an informal competition for which site would claim pre-eminence as a scenic emblem of the young nation” (p. 141). This search continued in the nineteenth century with a rise in the interest in tourism. As Jeffrey Alan Melton (2002) asserts in his book *Mark Twain, Travel Books, and Tourism the Tide of a Great Popular Movement*, in nineteenth-century America, “readers ... had a powerful need to define their place and identity in relation to—or, more frequently, in opposition to—the rest of the world. Travel books recorded and shared touring experiences that reflect this desire” (p. 55). He describes the new nation’s contradicting desires of wanting to respect and debunk the accomplishments of the Old World at the same time. The travel writers were mostly successful balancing these contradictory desires; therefore, “[t]heir focus, then, most often became Europe’s past with an inherent confidence that the United States represented a more idyllic present and future” (Melton, 2002, p. 55). The aesthetics of

² In the nineteenth century, Americans believed in being destined by God to carry out territorial expansion, spread democracy and establish dominion. This is otherwise known as “manifest destiny”, a term coined in 1845.

the American sublime was shaped by the needs of the aesthetics of such a nationalism, too. The aesthetic of the wilderness of the eighteenth century gradually gave way to an understanding of the wilderness as a tourist spectacle. Cronon (1996) asserts that “Niagara Falls was the first to undergo this transformation, but it was soon followed by the Catskills, the Adirondacks, Yosemite, Yellowstone, and others” (p. 9). The national park system also began in the second half of the nineteenth century with Yosemite and Yellowstone. Sayre (2001) also notes that Niagara Falls became one of the earliest “nationalist emblems of the American landscape” (p. 143).

The history of how Niagara Falls was transformed from being a sacred place that represents sublimity and natural grandeur to a touristic site as a national emblem reveals the transformation wilderness underwent in nineteenth-century America, too. Sayre (2001, pp. 141-2) notes that treating Niagara Falls as a site which represents the “expression of inexpressibility” was common—actually, a “cliché”—among many writers at the time. As Sears (1998) states, the Burkean sublime had provided the paradigm which would become “the first guidebook” to the Falls. The site was well-known even to ordinary tourists since it was found in guidebooks, travel literature, paintings, and prints (Sears, 1998, p. 16). While it was very popular in literature, the conditions that made it possible for the common people to visit had not developed until the 1820s. Unlike Europe, where tourism was well established by the late eighteenth century, America still had a lot to do to create the right conditions. Sears (1998) summarizes the necessary conditions in two groups: One is physical conditions, such as “a population with money”, “leisure to travel”, “an adequate means of transportation”, “conditions of reasonable safety”, and “comfort at the places people go to visit” (Sears, 1998, p. 3). The other group consists of “a body of images and descriptions” of certain

places and “a mythology of unusual things to see” (Sears, 1998, p. 3). These would excite people’s imagination and increase their desire to travel to those places, he argues (Sears, 1998, p. 3). After wars and the challenges wilderness posed, people enjoyed the opportunity that the new means of transportation offered to them. The construction of railroads, the use of steamboats in the rivers, and the opening of canals together with the emerging middle class supported by the new industrial developments contributed to the new tourist population in the early nineteenth century. Niagara also had the advantage of being more easily reached than other sites such as Yosemite and Yellowstone, which were still in the far West. Still, in popular culture, Niagara Falls represented the hardship similar to those in pilgrimage. Sears (1998) explains how the writers that describe their visits to Niagara tended to call themselves “pilgrims”, and how the site served as a sacred site that suggested transcendent meanings. One significant reason why the Falls had a religious function is that America was so divided into different religious sects whose numbers were still growing that such tourist attractions provided a common ground for national unity and the myths around it without an emphasis on a single sect (Sears, 1998, p. 7). Therefore, the “pilgrims” would be initiated to a common sacred place without the tensions created by the divided interests of different groups in the nation. In other words, the experience of national unity and myth was based on the experience of the sublime. The Falls became the most popular tourist attraction that created the experience of sublimity in nineteenth-century America. The basic formula of the sublime—an individual, a site of encounter, and a divine presence—was appropriated as an experience of national unity in the form of a sacred ritual by the influx of tourists.

While the growing literature on the Falls created the expectation of sublimity and an intense emotional/religious experience in the first half of the nineteenth century, by the late 1800s, tourist attractions faced the danger of turning into mere spectacles ripped of their religious and sublime qualities. The Falls had already been a popular honeymoon destination by then, but now it was also surrounded by souvenir shops and other distractions that focused on entertainment. Sears (1998) argues that this irreverence and the transformation of an originally “sacred” site through commercial means “inspired” the attempts to protect the environment, which resulted in the establishment of National Parks in the West, which were not threatened by mass tourism yet. While writers such as Thoreau and Muir emphasized the preservation of nature as sacred places, their focus was on the spiritual aspect of the experience of wilderness. Niagara Falls, on the other hand, came to be treated by the common tourists as a natural spectacle that represented the inexhaustible resources of the new nation. Hoag (2014) claims that Niagara was regarded as “the principal shrine of the American sublime” in Thoreau’s time. Yet, it was too domesticated by the industry and tourism for Thoreau’s taste. In the section of “Ktaadn” in *The Maine Woods*, while he describes the passage of Aboljacarmegus Falls, he comments on how much of its sublimity Niagara had lost:

In a very few minutes [sic] they had accomplished a passage in safety, which would be as fool-hardy for the unskilful [sic] to attempt as the descent of Niagara itself. ... One might have thought that these were falls, and that falls were not to be waded through with impunity like a mud-puddle. There was really danger of their losing their sublimity in losing their power to harm us. Familiarity breeds contempt. (Thoreau, 2010, p. 75)

For him, the increasing accessibility and domestication of Niagara Falls in favor of mass tourism threatened the feeling of “terror” emphasized in the Burkean sublime. In his understanding of the sublime, falls should inspire strong emotions and spiritual renewal,

and one should not feel at home in their presence. The taming of such natural grandeur was far from Thoreau's understanding of sacred sites, who found sublimity in the inhumanness of Mount Katahdin.



CHAPTER 3

TWAIN'S REJECTION OF ROMANTIC SENTIMENTS: PARODYING THE SUBLIME AND THE FRONTIER MYTH

3.1 Debunking the sublime: *Letters from Hawaii*

When the American writer Samuel Langhorne Clemens (1835-1910) arrived at Honolulu on a steamer called *Ajax* on Sunday, March 18, 1866, he had recently begun to use the pseudonym “Mark Twain”, and he had not yet published any books. He was known as a humorist on the West coast. Yet, this four-month adventure in the Sandwich Islands, as it was called at the time, was going to provide material for him to become a famous reporter. He had worked in journalism in Nevada and California, and now he was a reporter for the Sacramento *Union*, which was a popular and powerful newspaper on the West Coast. He was sent to the Sandwich Islands, which would be annexed and later become the fiftieth state—the Aloha State—of the USA. He narrates this turning point in his life:

I was without money or work; then I had a pleasant turn of fortune. The proprietors of the Sacramento Union, a great and influential daily journal, sent me to the Sandwich Islands to write four letters a month at twenty dollars apiece. I was there four or five months, [sic] and returned to find myself about the best known man on the Pacific Coast. (Twain, 2012b, p. 52)

His twenty-five letters printed by the *Union* do not form a unified narrative by their very nature as Stephen H. Sumida (1989) notes in his article “Reevaluating Mark Twain's Novel of Hawaii” (p. 5). Besides, the letters were not published as a book until 1947. Nevertheless, his Hawaiian experience provided the material for some parts of his books published later. In *Roughing It*, published in 1872, for example, he used thirteen of his letters to the *Union* as a coherent narrative in chapters 74 to 78. He also used his

impressions on Hawaii in his famous lecture called “Our Fellow Savages of the Sandwich Islands” following his return from the islands in 1866 and in his tours until 1873. Another significant book that had its share of the Hawaiian experience is *Following the Equator* (1897), in which he wrote a whole chapter on Hawaii. Finally, in 1884, he was working on a novel whose setting was Hawaii, but unfortunately, he was not able to finish it. He had a strong desire for a long time to go back to Hawaii again, which he called “the loveliest fleet of islands that lies anchored in any ocean” (Twain, 1966, p. vi). He expressed his longing in a lecture he gave about the Sandwich Islands in New York in 1889:

No alien land in all the world has any deep, strong charm for me but that one, no other land could so longingly and so beseechingly haunt me, sleeping and waking, through half a lifetime, as that one has done. Other things leave me, but it abides; other things change, but it remains the same. (Twain, 1976, p. 246)

After almost thirty years, finally he had a chance to see the islands again, though from a distance from the ocean. When he had gone bankrupt and started a lecture trip to pay his debts in 1895, his first stop in the Pacific was Hawaii, and he was able to see Diamond Head and Honolulu from the deck of the steamer *Warrimoo*. Unfortunately, he was not allowed to go ashore because of a cholera break in what had become the Republic of Hawaii then. In the chapter about Hawaii in his book *Following the Equator*, he wrote about his feelings on not being able to have that experience he had been longing for for so long.

Twain’s twenty-five letters cover a variety of topics and give a lot of details about the islands, which were at this point in history under the reign of the fifth Kamehameha, and in which Captain Cook had been killed only around fifty years earlier in 1779. In his letters, one can find the description of the beauty of the islands as well as

detailed information and numbers about the sugar and whaling industry. He wrote about the climate, politics and the royal succession, the social and cultural conditions, the work of the missionaries, the Polynesian culture, history, and legends, the horse-traders, business opportunities, the threat of the growing trade of China in the Pacific, and even the “millions of cats” of Honolulu. He watched naked Hawaiian women surfing and reported on the one-month funeral of the young princess. While his serious reports on the business in the islands and his commercial prophecy favor the interests of the American businessmen, his keen observation of comic details and his dialogues with the invented character Mr. Brown, who represents the stereotype of the boorish American tourist, add a humorous tone in his descriptions. The dualism between the character Mr. Brown who is crude and inconsiderate, and the sober persona of Mark Twain, who is sentimental yet busy, as a newspaper correspondent seems to have helped Twain present different perspectives, attitudes and biases of the American travelers of the nineteenth century. It also provides the ground on which he could criticize the prevalent stereotypes and conventions at the time using, one can argue, his comic genius.

As Sumida (1989) notes, although Twain’s remarks on Hawaii were taken as endorsements of the “paradise image”, he also provided a criticism of the popular view of Hawaii (p. 586). Early in the *Letters*, he reveals his feelings about the landscape and the sublime in wilderness. In the seventh letter titled “Honolulu, March, 1866”, he writes about his “equestrian excursion” with a group of people on his horse called “Oahu” around the extinct crater of Leahi, better known as Diamond Head today. After he describes their journey to the summit and back, he writes about a historical place on their way back. The place is described as covered in deep sand and full of bleached bones of man. After he mentions various theories of whether the place was an ancient

battlefield or the consequence of a terrible pestilence, he stops and utters these words under the title “Sentiment”:

SENTIMENT

Impressed by the profound silence and repose that rested over the beautiful landscape, and being, as usual, in the rear, I gave voice to my thought. I said: "What a picture is here slumbering in the solemn glory of the moon! How strong the rugged outlines of the dead volcano stand out against the clear sky! What a snowy fringe marks the bursting of the surf over the long, curved reef! How calmly the dim city sleeps yonder in the plain! How soft the shadows lie upon the stately mountains that border the dream-haunted Manoa Valley! What a grand pyramid of billowy clouds towers above the storied Pari! How the grim warriors of the past seem flocking in ghostly squadrons to their ancient battlefield again—how the wails of the dying well up from the--"

At this point the horse called Oahu deliberately sat down in the sand. Sat down to listen, I suppose. Never mind what he heard. I stopped apostrophizing and convinced him that I was not a man to allow contempt of court on the part of a horse. I broke the backbone of a chief over his rump and set out to join the cavalcade again. (Twain, 1966, pp. 58-59)

In the middle of wilderness, Twain’s imagination is taken by the beauty and the tranquility of the landscape, and he expresses his “thoughts”. In this beautiful “picture”, he notices almost all the details in nature, such as the glory of the moon, the outlines of the dead volcano against the sky, the curves of the reef, the city, the mountains, and the valley. In all these details, he depicts the atmosphere as a calm, peaceful one, as the moon is “slumbering”, the dim city is sleeping “calmly”, the stately mountains have soft shadows, and they border Manoa Valley, which is “dream-haunted”. The repose in this moment calls to mind the American sublime that is characterized by tranquility and beauty, especially in Muir’s works, in which the sublime is side by side with the beautiful in a peaceful harmony. After these descriptions, Twain abandons himself to his imagination and transcends the sensory world, which leads him to imagine the past and crowd his imagination with images. Although there is no terror in this experience, this transcendence seems similar to the second stage in the Burkean sublime. Burke (1823)

describes the state of mind in this stage: “The mind is hurried out of itself, by a crowd of great and confused images; which affect because they are crowded and confused” (p. 82). As he imagines the flocking crowd of ancient grim warriors of the past, suddenly he stops. This moment of potential sublimity is interrupted by the horse Oahu’s “deliberate” act. The narrator thinks that it sat down on the sand on purpose to listen to his “apostrophizing”. Suddenly, the reader is left with the confusion of how it is possible that an animal can do what would be a human action. It is obvious that a horse cannot understand, though it can listen. Twain seems to suggest that whatever is happening in his imagination does not have any correspondence outside it. The fact that he calls the whole experience “apostrophizing” makes it even more dramatic, since it implies that that sentimental mood which was interrupted by the presence of a nonhuman being whose mental faculties are different from a human being may be constructed by the human mind. With this dualism between a human and a nonhuman character, the use of Romantic conventions such as the sublime is made unreliable in the text. This interval is a comic one, the absurdity of the moment characteristic of Twain’s writings. What the dualism and comic intervention serve here is the realization of the fact that such sentiments are constructed in the human mind. When it is realized that imagining a horse as becoming interested in such thoughts and being convinced by a human being seems absurd and funny, the transcendence of the sensory world seems equally groundless. The fact that Twain named this section “Sentiment” adds to this consciousness, one can argue. Twain’s experience seems parallel to Cronon’s criticism of the Romantic sentiments as he thinks they are constructed by the human mind. As he argues, “[i]ndeed, one could almost measure wilderness by the extent to which our recognition of its otherness requires a conscious, willed act on our part. The Romantic legacy means

that wilderness is more a state of mind than a fact of nature” (Cronon, 1996, p. 22). As Twain discloses the fact that his perception of nature in a symbolic order does not exist in a horse’s mind, he also divulges the state of mind he “constructed”. Moreover, he does not stop there. Following this humorous intervention, he breaks the backbone of a chief and sets out to join his group. As the necessary elements in a moment of sublimity, the individual and the site of encounter are there, but the subject is too conscious of the “reality” around him to yield himself to imagination and forget that he is traveling on a historical site with its own historical traces independent of the subject’s imagination. He does not take the next step which could let him appropriate the landscape according to the desires of clearing the site of these traces and assert the subject’s freedom.

Twain expresses his interest in reality rather than sentiments and prescriptions in his other works, too. In his “Preface” to *Innocents Abroad*, he makes it clear that one should rely on his/her eyes and not on the descriptions of others who saw a place:

I make small pretense of showing anyone how he ought to look at objects of interest beyond the sea—other books do that, and therefore, even if I were competent to do it, there is no need. I offer no apologies for any departures from the usual style of travel-writing that may be charged against me—for I think I have seen with impartial eyes, and I am sure I have written at least honestly, whether wisely or not. (Twain, 2010, Preface section, para. 1)

He claims that he consciously makes a choice and writes differently than the popular mode of travel writing in his time. His statement that he does not want to show anyone the way people “ought to” look at objects suggests that he himself would also prefer not to follow a prescribed discourse, a tourist guide, or the popular imagery of a place he experiences. He subtly criticizes “other books”, implying that they offer the readers their own prescription and follow the conventional mode of travel writing.

Besides his observations focusing on the business prospects in the islands, the letters provide such scenes in which the seemingly sentimental character of Mark Twain finds himself involved in a duality which twists the expectation of Romantic sentiments. The last letter is about the description of a site which was typically represented as an example of sublimity both in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this twenty-fifth letter, “Volcano House, June 3d [sic]—Midnight”, he describes his visit to the great volcano of Kilauea with Mr. Brown. It is a long letter with details of the volcano and his feelings about this natural wonder. Volcanoes were in the list of sublime landscapes in Kant’s theory as he defined “volcanoes with their destructive power” as a scenery that evokes the sublime as long as a safe distance is possible (Kant, 1987, p. 120). Thoreau (2013) had used “the crater of a volcano spouting fire” as a standard to compare the mountain in his dream and concluded that the mountain was “more thrillingly awful and sublime” (p. 142). Muir also had it in his list besides “earthquakes”, “thundering waves” and “floods” (Muir, 2001, p. 41). In his book *Shifting Ground: Reinventing Landscape in Modern American Poetry*, Bonnie Costello (2003), notes that volcanoes were very popular with the nineteenth-century Americans, and they were very interested in seeing Etna and Vesuvius (p. 69). Since it was not as easy to travel to Kilauea as it was to the volcanoes in Europe at the time, one can argue that Twain had less access to literature on this volcano due to its location in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. However, he must have heard the treatment of the volcanoes as sites of sublimity, which was popular in his time. Therefore, it does not seem too surprising that he starts his description of the volcano under the title “The Great Volcano of Kilauea” with his feelings about Niagara Falls:

I suppose no man ever saw Niagara for the first time without feeling disappointed. I suppose no man ever saw it the fifth time without wondering how he could ever have been so blind and stupid as to find any excuse for disappointment in the first place. I suppose that any one of nature's most celebrated wonders will always look rather insignificant to a visitor at first, but on a better acquaintance will swell and stretch out and spread abroad, until it finally grows clear beyond his grasp - becomes too stupendous for his comprehension. (Twain, 1966, p. 291)

In this passage, he makes a generalization about how people's feelings change from the first encounter to the last in front of "nature's most celebrated wonders". There is a distinction here. It is not just any natural wonder but the most celebrated, which suggests that his generalization can be applied specifically to those natural sites which have become famous. This also implies that these sites have already been loaded with transcendental meanings, symbolic identifications, and Romantic sentiments. Here, he may be referring to the state of being surrounded by prescriptions of how to experience these natural wonders and the expectation of sublimity, which may end in disappointment. He goes on, however, with the claim that sublimity will come in the following encounters. The description of the natural object that will "swell" and "stretch out" and "spread abroad", "until it finally grows clear beyond his grasp, becomes too stupendous for his comprehension" seems similar to the Burkean sublime in which the object of the sublime overwhelms the subject and "robs the mind of all of its powers" (Burke, 1823, p. 74). In Twain's description, similarly the mind cannot grasp the object since it grows beyond its understanding. Following the Burkean sublime, one would expect the imagination to take the reins and experience a divine moment. However, what follows is a twist on this expectation:

I know that a large house will seem to grow larger the longer one lives in it, and I also know that a woman who looks criminally homely at a first glance will often so improve upon acquaintance as to become really beautiful before the month is out. (Twain, 1966, p. 291)

The sharp transition he makes lowers the experience of the increasing sublimity of a most celebrated natural wonder to the same level as the experience of ordinary objects, such as a large house growing larger by acquaintance. The example of a woman who is “criminally homely” but whose look improves as one sees her more is hard to locate in terms of the experience of Niagara Falls. Twain’s example presents a calculated use of the convention of the sublime which is undermined by the existence of both an elevated discourse and a sudden descend to the trivia. The incompatibility of an object of the sublime that exceeds the human understanding, and of that which is mundane, functions as a debunking strategy to break the symbolic frame.

Sears (1998) explains how far the prescription of the experience of Niagara Falls went in controlling the tourists’ responses in the nineteenth century. He claims that educated people knew how they should feel when they visit the Falls, but this prescription was also “a heavy burden” for the spectator. Especially after the experience of the Falls became a cliché in the first half of the nineteenth century, people’s responses tended to fall short of meeting this expectation. Sears notes that the word disappointment appeared often in the visitors’ accounts and guidebooks. Nevertheless, even disappointment was appropriated by the discourse of the experience of the Falls. Sears (1998) explains that for those who worshipped Niagara Falls, the disappointment at first sight functioned as a stage in the subject’s grasp of the “true wonder of the Falls” and it was commonly believed that after several days, their feelings would change (p. 15). Like a religious initiation in which every possible response is marked, named and its purpose within the metaphysical harmony is explained, this gradual coming to the truth seems to

be in line with the “sacred” quality attributed to the Falls by the nineteenth-century American visitors or “pilgrims”.

Twain explains his feelings about how much control this discourse has on people’s experience of Niagara Falls. In *Following the Equator*, originally published in 1897, he writes about how “heated imagination” can deceive the mind:

I had to visit Niagara fifteen times before I succeeded in getting my imaginary Falls gauged to the actuality and could begin to sanely and wholesomely wonder at them for what they were, not what I had expected them to be. When I first approached them it was with my face lifted toward the sky, for I thought I was going to see an Atlantic ocean pouring down thence over cloud-vexed Himalayan heights, a sea-green wall of water sixty miles front and six miles high, and so, when the toy reality came suddenly into view—that beruffled little wet apron hanging out to dry—the shock was too much for me, and I fell with a dull thud. Yet slowly, surely, steadily, in the course of my fifteen visits, the proportions adjusted themselves to the facts, and I came at last to realize that a waterfall a hundred and sixty-five feet high and a quarter of a mile wide was an impressive thing. It was not a dipperful to my vanished great vision, but it would answer. (Twain, 1897, p. 577)

He starts with the effect of being conditioned by the expectation of a natural grandeur that can only be shaken off after multiple visits. The vocabulary he uses reveals his feelings about the prevalent discourse on the Falls. He writes about “gauging” the Falls to the “actuality”, and when he can finally do it, he says he “succeeded”. The fact that he “had to” see the Falls fifteen times to make this adjustment also suggests that it was a necessity and a challenge that he needed to overcome. Only after this achievement, he can “sanely and wholesomely” appreciate the wonder of the Falls, which suggests that the alternative state is not healthy and lacks the totality of the experience. At this point, he juxtaposes the reality and the expectation, referring to “what they were”, not what he “had expected them to be”. His expectation was exaggerated in terms of the size and power of the Falls, and as a characteristic of his humorous writing style, Twain exaggerates his responses even more. The Atlantic Ocean and the Himalayan heights

contribute to this exaggeration until he reduces the Falls to a “little wet apron hanging out to dry”, which shocks him. Only after this initial stage can he start to appreciate the true size and grandeur of this natural wonder. It seems in parallel with the nineteenth-century prescription including the disappointment stage; however, unlike the dominant discourse, Twain’s description does not go so far as to transcend the sensory world. It is “an impressive thing”, and he seems to stop there. In the following paragraphs, he laments the loss of his “private mighty Niagara”:

I ought never to hunt up the reality, but stay miles away from it, and thus preserve undamaged my own private mighty Niagara tumbling out of the vault of heaven ... It is a mistake for a person with an unregulated imagination to go and look at an illustrious world's wonder. (Twain, 1897, p. 577)

There seems to be another twist in which the narrator does not seem to favor the reality he struggled so much to obtain. Nevertheless, the fact that he accuses his unregulated imagination of damaging his “private” Niagara may imply a subtle criticism of Romantic imagination which should be “regulated”. This passage echoes his experience of the Mississippi River, in which he explains how he lost the poetry of the river but gained the practical reality of it as he became more familiarized with it. The beauty and the poetry would never be restored again, which he mourned, but he still asked whether it was a gain or a loss (Twain, 2006, Chapter 9, para. 5). Niagara Falls also appears in Twain’s other works, such as ‘Extracts from Adam’s Diary’, *Innocents Abroad*, *Roughing It*, and *A Tramp Abroad*. In her article “Imagining Boundaries: Visualizing Space in Mark Twain's *Following the Equator*”, Debra Cochran (2015) states that “Niagara becomes a leitmotif for Twain of sorts ... as a familiar reference for his reader. Niagara Falls’ splendor is so widely known and appreciated, it orients all other wonders” (p. 97).

Twain's sentiments with regards to other celebrated natural wonders, offers a context for the experience of the great volcano of Kilauea in the *Letters*. Twain's use of the example of Niagara Falls in this letter and the twist he puts in it seems to serve as a preparation to the experience of the volcano. Before he describes a site that was by nature defined in terms of sublimity, he again makes his use of the convention of the sublime unreliable. He introduces the volcano within the same framework:

I was disappointed when I saw the great volcano of Kilauea (Ke-low way-ah) today for the first time. It is a comfort to me to know that I fully expected to be disappointed, however, and so, in one sense at least, I was not disappointed. (Twain, 1966, p. 291)

Twain seems to have the same struggle of escaping the prescription in the presence of a celebrated wonder of nature. However, it is not guaranteed that he will be able to visit the site again and again. Playing with the rules of the disappointment game, he finds a way to escape real disappointment, which implies that the narrator is looking for the unprescribed experience. He goes on:

As we "raised" the summit of the mountain and began to canter along the edge of the crater, I heard Brown exclaim, "There's smoke, by George!" (poor infant - as if it were the most surprising thing in the world to see smoke issuing from a volcano), and I turned my head in the opposite direction and began to crowd my imagination down. When I thought I had got it reduced to about the proper degree, I resolutely faced about and came to a dead halt. "Disappointed, anyhow!" (Twain, 1966, pp. 291-2)

His response to Mr. Brown's excitement makes it more obvious that he is not even moved by the presence of the volcano, set aside feeling "awe" or "astonishment" as would be expected in front of an object of the sublime. He even calls Mr. Brown "poor infant", which is consistent with his treatment of him throughout the *Letters*. His attempt to eliminate the expectation and the disappointment so as to appreciate the true grandeur of the great volcano fails even when his imagination is "regulated" to a "proper degree".

His resolution cannot change the fact that he finds the volcano disappointing, which suggests that he is truly disappointed now. The following remarks suggest that his disappointment becomes even worse:

I said to myself. [sic] "Only a considerable hole in the ground ... a wide, level, black plain in the bottom of it, and a few little sputtering jets of fire occupying a place about as large as an ordinary potato-patch, up in one corner—no smoke to amount to anything. And these 'tremendous' perpendicular walls they talk about, [sic] that inclose [sic] the crater! they [sic] don't amount to a great deal, either; it is a large cellar—nothing more—and precious little fire in it, too." So I soliloquized. (Twain, 1966, p. 292)

The vocabulary he uses, such as a “hole in the ground”, “potato-patch”, and “large cellar” are anything but Romantic. His disappointment is accompanied with a contempt that reduces the volcano to the level of a trivial object. Even the lava in the crater looks like an ordinary fire to the narrator, who relies on his sensory experience rather than the discourse of the sublime or imagination. Besides, the “tremendous perpendicular walls” he has heard about prove to be an exaggeration. The quality of being “perpendicular” is associated with sublimity in Burke’s (1823) account, as he wrote, “[a] perpendicular has more force in forming the sublime, [sic] than an inclined plane” (p. 98). Just as the reader is led to think that the volcano is represented as an ordinary object which does not evoke the emotions found in sublimity, Twain (1966) throws in a surprising remark: “But as I gazed, the ‘cellar’ insensibly grew” (p. 292). Suddenly, he talks within the framework of the sublime as he uses the phrase “insensibly grew”, which suggests that after the initial disappointment, he is now on track towards the transcendence of the sensory world and sublimity. However, he makes another twist and surprises the reader again:

I was glad of that, albeit I expected it. I am passably good at judging of heights and distances, and I fell to measuring the diameter of the crater. After considerable deliberation I was obliged to confess that it was rather over three

miles, though it was hard to believe it at first. It was growing on me, and tolerably fast. And when I came to guess at the clean, solid, perpendicular walls that fenced in the basin, I had to acknowledge that they were from 600 to 800 feet high, and in one or two places even a thousand, though at a careless glance they did not seem more than two or three hundred. The reason the walls looked so low is because the basin inclosed [sic] is so large. (Twain, 1966, p. 292)

Just as one starts to think that he surrenders to his imagination, he comes back and resumes full control of his experience and leaves the reader perplexed in his play of the convention of the sublime. After he expresses his gladness of the outcome, he starts to give calculations and measurements of the volcano. Once more, the minute he comes closer to the experience of the sublime, he sobers up and never lets his reason be overwhelmed by imagination. The words he chooses to explain his feelings, such as “obliged to confess” and “had to acknowledge” imply that he feels the pressure of his sensory experience and the numeric concepts that result from it. He is neither occupied by the obscurity of the crowded images as in the Burkean sublime nor does he transcend the numeric concepts so as to reach the concept of infinity as in the Kantian sublime. He goes on:

The place looked a little larger and a little deeper every five minutes, by the watch. And still it was unquestionably small; there was no getting around that. About this time [sic] I saw an object which helped to increase the size of the crater. It was a house perched on the extreme edge of the wall, at the far end of the basin, two miles and a half away; it looked like a martin box under the eaves of a cathedral! That wall appeared immensely higher after that than it did before. (Twain, 1966, pp. 292-3)

One can picture Twain having fun with the idea of growing size of the object of the sublime. Even when he perceives the volcano as growing larger and deeper, he still confesses that it does not work. The sentence “there was no getting around that” seems to add to the humor of the scene when one pictures him trying every way to see the place as bigger, including measuring it with other smaller objects. He uses the word

“cathedral”, though it is not related to the sacred temple of the Transcendentalists in any way.

In the following paragraph, Twain finds himself thinking about the best time to enjoy this natural grandeur:

I reflected that night was the proper time to view a volcano, and Brown, with one of those eruptions of homely wisdom which rouse the admiration of strangers, but which custom has enabled me to contemplate calmly, said five o'clock was the proper time for dinner, and therefore we spurred up the animals and trotted along the brink of the crater for about the distance it is from the Lick House, in San Francisco, to the Mission, and then found ourselves at the Volcano House. (Twain, 1966, p. 293)

Twain's use of the phrase “proper time to view a volcano” suggests that there are specific conditions, such as the night time, which suit nature's one of the most celebrated wonders. His emphasis on darkness implies that it will have an effect on the object of perception. Indeed, Burke (1823) mentions the effect of darkness in his *Treatise*: “But darkness is more productive of sublime ideas than light” (p. 111). It does not seem clear whether Twain desires the conditions for the production of the “sublime ideas”, but the word “proper” brings to mind that he follows some kind of prescription in his mind. Nevertheless, his reflection is interrupted by the crude practicality of the character Mr. Brown: It is “the proper” time for dinner. Once again, the symbolic and the mundane coexist in the text, and the contrast between them undermines the construction of the symbolic language. Then he goes on:

On the way we passed close to fissures several feet wide and about as deep as the sea, no doubt, and out of some of them steam was issuing. It would be suicidal to attempt to travel about there at night. As we approached the lookout house I have before spoken of as being perched on the wall, we saw some objects ahead which I took for the brilliant white plant called the "silver sword," but they proved to be "buoys" - pyramids of stones painted white, so as to be visible at night, and set up at intervals to mark the path to the lookout house and guard unaccustomed feet from wandering into the abundant chasms that line the way. (Twain, 1966, p. 293)

He continues using numeric concepts in his description of the volcano. He also emphasizes the danger it poses. While he favors the night time, he also underlines that the danger is real, and at night, “it would be suicidal” to go there. He maintains his descriptions within the frame of the sensory world. His confusion about the white objects does not last long. They turn out to be “buoys” and not plants, which reveal the fact that the path is marked, and the danger of the volcano is somehow reduced for the unaccustomed feet—probably those of the tourists.

Finally, the night time comes, and they go to the lookout-house:

By the path it is half a mile from the Volcano House to the lookout-house. After a hearty supper we waited until it was thoroughly dark and then started to the crater. The first glance in that direction revealed a scene of wild beauty. There was a heavy fog over the crater and it was splendidly illuminated by the glare from the fires below. The illumination was two miles wide and a mile high, perhaps; and if you ever, on a dark night and at a distance beheld the light from thirty or forty blocks of distant buildings all on fire at once, reflected strongly against overhanging clouds, you can form a fair idea of what this looked like. (Twain, 1966, pp. 293-4)

It seems clear that his view of the volcano changes in darkness considerably. What seemed a “large cellar” to him in the daylight is now “a scene of wild beauty”. His use of the words “wild” and “beauty” side by side echoes the domesticated sublime found in Muir’s work. Twain already has mentioned the danger in the volcano, and they are able to enjoy the scene from a safe distance. The heavy fog illuminated by the fires below add to the visual effect of the scene, creating a harmonious picture. However, Twain seems to be more interested in giving a “fair idea” of how it looks than a Romantic picture. He begins giving measurements again and uses an analogy from everyday life—buildings on fire—to convey his sensory experience. After he frames the scene with the

triviality of the example of the burning houses, Twain goes on with another passage under a new title that evokes biblical imagery:

THE VISION OF HELL AND ITS ANGELS

Arrived at the little thatched look out house, we rested our elbows on the railing in front and looked abroad over the wide crater and down over the sheer precipice at the seething fires beneath us. The view was a startling improvement on my daylight experience. I turned to see the effect on the balance of the company and found the reddest-faced set of men I almost ever saw. In the strong light every countenance glowed like red-hot iron, every shoulder was suffused with crimson and shaded rearward into dingy, shapeless obscurity! The place below looked like the infernal regions and these men like half-cooled devils just come up on a furlough. (Twain, 1966, p. 294)

Twain emphasizes once again the contrast between the perception of the same object under the light and darkness. His description of the others implies how darkness affects his imagination. His perception is blurred, as he sees them in a “dingy”, “shapeless obscurity”. This moment echoes the experience of the Burkean sublime in which the mind is full of “obscure” images whose form or “shape” is not clear. The sensory world is transcended in the identification of the volcano with the “infernal”. In his article, “Mark Twain's Infernal Transcendentalism: The Lake Episodes in ‘Roughing It’”, Michael Hobbs (1993) argues that this infernal symbolism in the description of the volcano reveals a “transcendental quality” that can be found in the works of transcendentalists, such as Thoreau. Yet, it is “an inversion of the sacredness typical of the transcendental vision” he adds (Hobbs, 1993, p. 14). The following remarks reveal that he plays with these conventions. The construction of elevated symbolism using the biblical imagery is followed by a comic interval. The image of “half-cooled devils just come up on a furlough” unsettles and ridicules the symbolism through disruption by humor. The fact that Twain names this section “The Hell and Its Angels” adds to the absurdity when one tries to picture Mr. Brown as one of those angels.

In the next paragraph, Twain continues to go back and forth between the imaginary and the sensory world, connecting the landscape with new imagery:

I turned my eyes upon the volcano again. The "cellar" was tolerably well lighted up. For a mile and a half in front of us and half a mile on either side, the floor of the abyss was magnificently illuminated; beyond these limits the mists hung down their gauzy curtains and cast a deceptive gloom over all that made the twinkling fires in the remote corners of the crater seem countless leagues removed—made them seem like the camp-fires of a great army far away. Here was room for the imagination to work! You could imagine those lights the width of a continent away—and that hidden under the intervening darkness were hills, and winding rivers, and weary wastes of plain and desert—and even then [sic] the tremendous vista stretched on, and on, and on!—to the fires and far beyond! You could not compass it—it was the idea, [sic] of eternity made tangible—and the longest end of it made visible to the naked eye! (Twain, 1966, pp. 294-5)

The volcano is defined as a “cellar” again, which suggests that the initial perception which led to the disappointment is still there. This is followed by measurements of the area illuminated by lava. However, the mist hanging down over the “abyss” inspires his imagination: The twinkling fires resemble “the camp-fires of a great army”, and this imagery seems to have a symbolic meaning. The *Letters* were written in 1866, right after the American Civil War (1861-1865) which threatened the unity of the new nation. As Ronald Hartwell (1983) argues in his article “Journey to Kilauea: Mark Twain and Frederick Jackson Turner”, the image of camp-fires reminds Twain of the Civil War. Twain turned his back on the war for his “quest” he says and continues: “The fiery strife is remembered as part of our new nation's history that took place at the same time as the mid-nineteenth century western expansion” (Hartwell, 1983, p. 32). He argues that Twain sees the nation’s post-war conditions in the fire down below: “As with the nation, Kilauea's molten fire has not cooled and hardened completely; there is still the dangerous inferno of the chasm, the unsafe floor of the abyss with all of its glory and mysterious sense of beauty” (Hartwell, 1983, p. 32). While Twain lets his imagination

connect with national imagery, he, as usual, keeps his distance as he marks the “gloom” over the scene as “deceptive”. Before he continues with new imagery, he also marks the moment as one that inspires the imagination, saying “[H]ere was room for the imagination to work”. The cellar slowly turns into a continent with “hills, and winding rivers, and weary wastes of plain and desert”. What he describes seems to be a continent of wilderness. Hartwell (1983) argues that it is the American continent as its topography with hills, winding rivers, plains and deserts reveals (p. 32). This time, the national imagery is not that of war but a wild continent in unity. It is “tremendous”, and it extends the limits of perception. The sensory world is transcended, and here his imagination strives toward infinity. The mind cannot “compass” it, and it reaches “the idea of eternity made tangible”. Twain narrates this experience within the framework of the American sublime with its national tone, in which the subject finds itself in a crisis of representation and faces its limitation. There is one significant detail, though. Besides letting the reader know that the scene makes it possible for imagination to work, two times in the paragraph, he uses the modal auxiliary “could”. He says, “you could imagine” and “you could not compass it”, which seems to suggest that rather than actively imagining, he points out the possible imagery that the imagination “could” bring out in the presence of such a scene. In the next paragraph, the imagery changes from the infinite continent stretching on and on to a map of industrial work on a specific part of the American continent:

The greater part of the vast floor of the desert under us was as black as ink, and apparently smooth and level; but over a mile square of it was ringed and streaked and striped with a thousand branching streams of liquid and gorgeously brilliant fire! It looked like a colossal railroad map of the State of Massachusetts done in chain lightning on a midnight sky. Imagine it—imagine a coal-black sky shivered into a tangled network of angry fire! (Twain, 1966, p. 295)

The vocabulary that he uses to describe the floor, such as “vast”, and “desert” echoes the seventeenth-century understanding of wilderness which is characterized as a hostile environment for humans. His imagination, however, makes a contrast and defines the scene with images of industry and domestication of wilderness. Now the vast wild continent is replaced by the map of a “colossal railroad” of a land which is named by the new nation as a “state”, “the State of Massachusetts”. The use of the three imagery, “camp-fires of an army”, “vast continent stretching on and on”, and the “map of the colossal railroad” help the narrator appropriate the landscape to the national discourse and symbolism through the framework of the sublime. The national quality of the American sublime provides the paradigm in which the subject can imagine unfamiliar landscape within the national discourse, appropriate it according to its desire and make it familiar. As Henrickson (2004) states, the unfamiliar land in the “New World”, which in the popular discourse had no match in the Old World, created the problem of developing a vocabulary that could describe the vastness and the sublimity of the landscape. This led to a close identification with the wild landscape and the nation, one can argue. In his book *The Landscape of the Mind: Cultural Transformations of the American West*, Richard C. Poulsen (1992) notes the nineteenth-century Americans’ “need” to “endow the landscape with the impressed meanings of human actions and perceptions” to make it meaningful: “To be tolerated ... the land must reflect the dominant images a culture portrays. Without the images, there is no landscape—only a wasteland of cultural oblivion. This seems particularly true in the waste places of the American West” (p. 22). Thanks to Twain’s use of national symbolism, a place like Hawaii, which is the farthest piece of land to the nearest land in the world, and which was considerably unfamiliar due to its location is made familiar with “the dominant images” the American culture

“portrays”. After three paragraphs of detailed descriptions of the color and movements of the flowing lava, Twain uses other familiar imagery to describe it:

I forgot to say that the noise made by the bubbling lava is not great, heard as we heard it from our lofty perch. It makes three distinct sounds - a rushing, a hissing, and a coughing or puffing sound; and if you stand on the brink and close your eyes it is no trick at all to imagine that you are sweeping down a river on a large low pressure steamer, and that you hear the hissing of the steam about her boilers, the puffing from her escape pipes and the churning rush of the water abaft her wheels. The smell of sulfur is strong, but not unpleasant to a sinner. (Twain, 1966, p. 297)

Faced with the difficulty of describing a natural wonder which was not easy for common tourists to visit due to its distance from the continent, Twain refers to an experience that was familiar to the nineteenth-century American readers. He himself had worked on the steam boats on the Mississippi River and knew the river well as he tells in his book *Life on the Mississippi*. He imagines the sound of the “bubbling lava” as that of a steamer. He shares this imagined similarity with a community of readers, in other words, the nation. As Benedict Anderson (1991) argues in his *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, a newspaper reader observes that other people around read the same replicas of his own paper, which in turn reassures him/her that “the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life” (pp. 35-36). In this sense, the community of readers of the Sacramento *Union*, the oldest newspaper west of the Mississippi, shared the same “imagined world” by reading the same text and making the same links. As it is his characteristic move to take an object, elaborate on it, and then to drop it to go on with another, he makes a sudden transition to the infernal connotations of the volcano by picturing it as a hell in which sinners enjoy the strong smell of sulfur. Again, his sudden interruption with a comic inversion serves to unsettle the construction of a symbolic landscape—in this case, volcano as hell.

The complexity of Twain's use of biblical imagery, such as "infernal", exemplifies the strategy he uses both to construct and debunk nineteenth-century Romantic conventions that are used to describe wilderness. The following description of the eruption of the volcano of Kilauea reveals how far he goes in using popular discourse of wilderness, especially the sublime, loaded with biblical imagery:

THE PILLAR OF FIRE

We left the lookout house at ten o'clock in a half-cooked condition because of the heat from Pele's furnaces, and wrapping up in blankets (for the night was cold) returned to the hotel. After we got out in the dark [sic] we had another fine spectacle. A colossal column of cloud towered to a great height in the air immediately above the crater, and the outer swell of every one of its vast folds was dyed with a rich crimson luster, which was subdued to a pale rose tint in the depressions between. It glowed like a muffled torch and stretched upward to a dizzy height toward the zenith. I thought it just possible that its [sic] like had not been seen since the children of Israel wandered on their long march through the desert so many centuries ago over a path illuminated by the mysterious "pillar of fire." And I was sure that I now had a vivid conception of what the majestic "pillar of fire" was like, which almost amounted to a revelation. (Twain, 1966, pp. 297-8)

In all the descriptions of the volcano in the twenty-fifth letter, this passage seems closest to the experience of the sublime. The subject and the site of encounter is present. Now, with the biblical imagery of encountering God, the third element in the basic formula of the sublime has been completed. Twain's phrasing in the beginning, "another fine spectacle", suggests that what he experiences is not unique, but one of the "fine" spectacles seen in the volcano. However, as he continues his description, he reveals that he lets his imagination soar beyond sensory experience. His identification with the "children of Israel" wandering in the desert, whose path was illuminated by the divine presence is another moment in which Twain taps into the Romantic symbolism and established conventions of sublime wilderness. Cronon (1996) finds the same convention in Romantic writers' imagery: "In effect, Romantics like Thoreau joined

Moses and the children of Israel in Exodus when ‘they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the Lord appeared in the cloud.’” (p. 12). Twain takes the scene of the “colossal column of cloud” towering above the crater and appropriates it to the subject’s fantasy of facing the divine presence, framing it with the discourse of sublimity as a sacred site. Indeed, Twain plays with different conceptions of wilderness. He uses the eighteenth-century idea of wilderness where the subject finds itself on an inhuman land running the risk of meeting devils and other terrors. The infernal connotations in his descriptions of the volcano interrupted by humor unsettles the constructions of the eighteenth-century discourse of the sublime in the text. He also borrows the nineteenth-century conventions when he presents natural wonders as “sacred” sites which evoke sublimity in divine presence. Representing the volcano in the image of a sacred site where one can find God, he seems to participate in the construction of the symbolic landscape. In the experience of the sublime, the subject is overwhelmed by the emotions evoked, and the rational faculties cannot grasp the object. Thus, it transcends the sensory world by using imagination. This moment of transcendence ends in revelation in different forms, such as infinity or divine providence. Muir’s use of biblical imagery and his transcendentalism exemplify his revelations as the sacredness of the sublime wilderness in a harmonious universe guided by divine presence. Twain makes use of this convention; however, his last sentence changes the serious tone of the elevated discourse. It does not seem clear whether he means a real revelation which prophets experience in the Bible. Still, he distances himself from the identification with the biblical imagery by using the phrase “almost amounted to”.

The final paragraph in the letter is about the accommodation and the facilities around the volcano:

ACCOMMODATIONS FOR MAN AND BEAST

It is only at very long intervals that I mention in a letter matters which properly pertain to the advertising columns, but in this case it seems to me that to leave out the fact that there is a neat, roomy, well-furnished and well-kept hotel at the volcano would be to remain silent upon a point of the very highest importance to anyone who may desire to visit the place. The surprise of finding a good hotel in such an outlandish spot startled me considerably more than the volcano did. The house is new—built three or four months ago—and the table is good. One could not easily starve here even if the meats and groceries were to give out, for large tracts of land in the vicinity are well paved with excellent strawberries. One can have as abundant a supply as he chooses to call for. There has never heretofore been anything in this locality for the accommodation of travellers but a crazy old native grass hut, scanty fare, hard beds of matting and a Chinese cook. (Twain, 1966, p. 298)

Twain makes a cautious transition to a subject which he finds more suitable for “advertising columns” and puts a distance between himself and his topic by stating that he does not do it often. What follows seems to be a subtle criticism of the change tourism brings about. He juxtaposes the “crazy old native glass hut” and the “new”, “well-kept hotel”. The facilities he mentions reveal that the conditions have improved to such a degree that “one could not easily starve here”. His description is that of a domesticated place where the “travelers” can find comfort, luxury and food—a touristic spot. He argues that this is “a point of the very highest importance” for the visitors. However, his following remarks suggest that he is not one of those common tourists whose priority is comfort. He finds it more surprising to find such a good hotel than the volcano itself. The vocabulary he uses, such as “the surprise”, “startled me considerably”, and “such an outlandish spot” portray how much change wilderness was going through. While on the surface Twain seems to advertise a good hotel to his readers whose priority is touristic facilities, on a deeper level, his careful phrasing of his shock

reveals his disapproval of the recent changes. Thanks to his decision not to leave out this surprising change, it is possible to see how far tourism went in domesticating wilderness from Niagara Falls to the great volcano of Kilauea.

In his twenty-fifth letter in *Letters from Hawaii*, Twain presents a complex view of nature by playing with multiple perspectives and unsettling established conventions of sublime wilderness in nineteenth-century America. As Joseph L. Coulombe (2011) states in his book, *Mark Twain and the American West*, “Twain’s responses to nature were first documented in his western letters and in *Roughing It*, and they resist easy categorization” (p. 114). Twain started writing *Roughing It* four years after his *Letters from Hawaii*, and it was published in 1872. There are many passages in *Roughing It* that he copied from the original *Letters*. He also added new passages in the Hawaiian chapters, such as a second visit to the great volcano of Kilauea the following night. There is a significant difference between both texts, though. In *Roughing It*, the invented character Mr. Brown is omitted, which makes the narrative lose many instances in which Twain uses comic interruptions as a tool to undermine Romantic conventions. As Sumida (1989) argues, while the Hawaiian chapters in *Roughing It* are briefer and more coherent as a narrative, “these chapters are considerably less exuberant, a change resulting in part from the deletion of the recurring low comic figure Mr. Brown” (p. 589). She emphasizes that by inventing the character Mr. Brown, Twain created “a foil for Twain's busy and relatively sober persona of the Union correspondent” (Sumida, 1989, p. 589). In his article “The Development of the Mark Twain Persona in the Early Travel Letters”, Gary V. West (1980-81) also explains how Mr. Brown functioned as a balancing character in the *Letters*. He argues that the narrative structure of the letters “enabled” Twain to achieve two goals at the same time: Through the perspective of the

persona of Mark Twain, he was able to report “serious journalistic material” while at the same time offering the perspective of “his vulgar companion named Mr. Brown” who functions “as a comic chorus” (West, 1980-81, 14). Another critic who underlines Mr. Brown’s role in creating the dual perspective in the *Letters* is John Bird. In his article “Review: Mark Twain, Journalist”, which he wrote as a review of *Mark Twain, Unsanctified Newspaper Reporter* by James E. Caron, Bird (2009) argues that “[t]he Hawaii letters mark the emergence of yet another alter ego, Mr. Brown, Mark Twain’s ‘wise fool’ traveling companion, who punctures sentiment and pretense with his down-to-earth observations” (p. 143). He claims that the “Mark Twain/Mr. Brown split persona” allowed the writer to “subvert comically the genre of travel writing”, which he continued in his big travel books, such as *The Innocents Abroad* and *Roughing It*, though by then, “Clemens had found a way to combine the two personae into one Mark Twain” (Bird, 2009, p. 143). While the *Letters* juxtapose the characters Mark Twain and Mr. Brown to create dual perspectives and represents the former as more serious and sentimental and the latter as more comic and vulgar, the persona of Mark Twain itself does not offer a consistent perspective, either. It is also divided and expresses multiple perspectives as exemplified in scenes, such as the one in which Twain stops “apostrophizing” upon seeing the horse “Oahu” sit down to listen to his Romantic imagination. In that moment, the persona Mark Twain himself seems to enjoy Romantic sentiments while at the same time criticizing a Romantic view of nature. In his book *The Cambridge Introduction to Mark Twain*, Peter Messent (2007) argues that “Twain’s use of persona may appear simple. In fact, his art is skilled and never quite as obvious as it seems” (p. 18). He notes that around the middle of the nineteenth century, it was a “standard procedure” for comic writers in America to construct an “alternative persona”,

and Clemens also copied this convention (Messent, 2007, p. 17). He uses Mark Twain's original name, Clemens to point out the difference between both. In her article "Introduction: Mark Twain in Context", Gillman (2006) also makes this distinction and claims that Clemens refers to his "extra-authorial identity" and Twain refers to his "authorial self", though she also underlines that "the two selves do not remain fixed in their proper categories, making it difficult to maintain the linguistic distinction consistently" (p. 115). Bird (2009) also uses the convention of separating Clemens and Mark Twain when he argues that besides the split, there is also a "comic and performative interplay between the two", (p. 139). Messent (2007) goes even further and explains how complicated the multiple identities Clemens uses are when all his works are considered:

Thus a complicated interchange takes place between at least five identities – Samuel Clemens the man, the Samuel Clemens whose history is recovered in Twain's work, Mark Twain the author, the persona 'Mark Twain', a semi-fictional protagonist who plays the leading part in so many sketches and travel books and the Mark Twain who speaks in the first-person voice or appears within the author's work, but who (in this case) directly represents that author. (p. 17)

Considering this multiplicity of identities in Twain's works, his claim to represent his subject matter through "impartial eyes", as he says in his "Preface" to *Innocents Abroad*, becomes problematic. He makes a similar claim in his lecture on Hawaii which he gave following his Hawaiian trip in the same year on October 2, 1866 in San Francisco.

The Sandwich Islands will be the subject of my lecture—when I get to it—and I shall endeavor to tell the truth as nearly as a newspaper man can. If I embellish it with a little nonsense, that makes no difference; it won't mar the truth; it is only as the barnacle ornaments the oyster by sticking to it. That figure is original with me! I was born back from tidewater and don't know as the barnacle does stick to the oyster. (Twain, 1976, p. 4)

Following his four-month Hawaiian trip as a newspaper reporter, Twain seems to imply that he tells the truth both as a reporter and a lecturer, as he says, "I shall endeavor to tell

the truth as nearly as a newspaper man can". He allows for "a little nonsense", though, and his example of barnacles and oysters suggests that the barnacle (nonsense) will still look separate from the oyster (the truth) in his speech no matter how much it sticks.

Twain's lecture reveals his dual perspectives on nature, too. However, this time, the duality is seen when the lecture and his Hawaiian letters are compared in terms of his treatment of nature. Indeed, the lecture itself presents a more coherent view on nature than his Hawaiian letters do. The Islands were his favorite topic in his lectures, and he used them more than any other topic. The title of these lectures, given more than a hundred times on both sides of the Atlantic, were usually titled "Our Fellow Savages of the Sandwich Islands" and, his lectures also showed changes in terms of details. In his original lecture quoted above, his representation of nature in the islands do not show the same degree of complexity as *The Hawaiian Letters* do. The character Mr. Brown is also missing in the lecture. Unlike the *Letters* in which the conceptual framework of sublime wilderness is both used and undermined, the lecture represents the volcano within the convention of the sublime:

The chief glory of the Sandwich Islands is their great volcano. The volcano of Kee-law-ay-oh is 17,000 feet in diameter, and from 700 to 800 feet deep. Vesuvius is nowhere. It is the largest volcano in the world; shoots up flames tremendously high. You witness a scene of unrivaled sublimity, [sic] and witness the most astonishing sights. When the volcano of Kee-law-ay-oh broke through a few years ago, lava flowed out of it for twenty days and twenty nights, and made a stream forty miles in length, till it reached the sea, tearing up forests in its awful fiery path, swallowing up huts, destroying all vegetation, rioting through shady dells and sinuous canons. Amidst this carnival of destruction, majestic columns of smoke ascended and formed a cloudy murky pall overhead. Sheets of green, blue, lambent flames were shot upward, and pierced the vast gloom, making all sublimely grand. (Twain, 1976, p. 12)

Twain's description of the volcano as the "chief glory of the Sandwich Islands" reiterates the nineteenth-century understanding of nature which represents sublimity as

the most important symbol of American nationalism. Since Americans neither had ancient ruins inherited from their ancestors nor the tales and myths surrounding them, they had to build their national identity and myths around the grandeur and sublimity of the “unrivaled” natural wonders in the New World. Likewise, for Twain, the great volcano, which is “the largest” in the world, is the “chief glory” of the Islands. Next, he compares it to Vesuvius and finds the former superior, which is again within the nineteenth-century conventions of travel writing in America. As Roderick Frazier Nash (2014) states in his book *Wilderness and the American Mind* originally published in 1967, American nationalists needed to find “an attribute unique to nature”, which led them to the concept of wilderness since “it was in the wilderness of its nature that their country was unmatched. While other nations might have an occasional wild peak or patch of woods, there was no equivalent to a wild continent” (p. 69). Indeed, in his description, Twain uses the phrases “unrivaled sublimity”, “sublimely grand” and “the most astonishing sights” and seems to contribute to the construction of the landscape as a national symbol of greatness. In the same lecture, he also considers the ocean that surrounds the islands as “wilderness”:

The land that I have tried to tell you about lies out there in the midst of the watery wilderness, in the very heart of the almost soilless solitudes of the Pacific. It is a dreamy, beautiful, charming land. I wish I could make you comprehend how beautiful it is. It is a land that seems ever so vague and fairy-like when one reads about it in books... (Twain, 1976, p. 14)

Twain’s imagery of “watery wilderness” surrounding the islands seems to extend the borders of wilderness from the West Coast to the Atlantic Ocean and beyond the Hawaiian Islands. It is similar to the nineteenth-century notion of wilderness that can be found in the works of Transcendentalists, such as Thoreau and Muir in that it is characterized by “solitude” and being far away from civilization. The vocabulary used in

Twain's picture of Hawaii, such as "dreamy", beautiful", "charming", "vague" and "fairy-like" reveals that he constructs the landscape within the framework of the American sublime, which brings the concepts "the sublime" and "beautiful" side by side in a harmonious, "dreamlike" atmosphere.

Gillman (2006) states that in the nineteenth-century, the picture of America as "a limitless expanse of wilderness" was gaining popularity (p. 223). She also claims that Twain made use of "conventional tropes" since he was writing for a popular audience (Gillmann, 2006, p. 219). She says, "[n]evertheless, the line sometimes appears to blur between Twain's treatment of nature as a violent reality and his treatment of nature as shaped by human perception" (Gillmann, 2006, p. 231). In his book *Mark Twain, The Development of a Writer*, Henry Nash Smith (1962) also notes the multiplicity of perspectives in Twain's works: "Mark Twain himself never made fully articulate what he was trying to affirm; any explicit statement would falsify his presentational mode of thought" (p. 52). In *Letters from Hawaii*, Twain makes use of the vocabulary of the popular conventions of nature at the time he was writing to appropriate, exploit and debunk them. However, there are also passages in the *Letters*, in which he presents a Romantic view of nature without any interruption whether by Mr. Brown or his own dual mind. In the sixth letter written in March 1866, he constructs a Romantic frame through which he imagines the past. Under the title "Ruins of an Ancient Heathen Temple", he writes about an old temple built of "rough blocks of lava" by the Hawaiians:

Its three altars and other sacred appurtenances have crumbled and passed away years ago. It is said that in the old times thousands of human beings were slaughtered here, in the presence of multitudes of naked, whooping, and howling savages. If these mute stones could speak, what tales they could tell, what pictures they could describe, of fettered victims, writhing and shrieking under the

knife; of dense masses of dusky forms straining forward out in the gloom, with eager and ferocious faces lit up with the weird light of sacrificial fires; of the vague background of ghostly trees; of the mournful sea washing the dim shore; of the dark pyramid of Diamond Head standing sentinel over the dismal scene, and the peaceful moon looking calmly down upon it through rifts in the drifting clouds! (Twain, 1966, pp. 53-54)

Twain imagines a scene in which masses of people are killed violently. In his imagination, nature is involved in the human drama: The stones are “mute”, but Twain exploits the proverbial pathetic fallacy “if these mute stones could speak”. The trees form a background and are “ghostly”, the sea is “mournful”, and the shore is “dim”. Diamond Head stands “sentinel”, and the scene is “dismal”. All these words create an atmosphere of mourning. Personification of nature in this scene brings to mind the question of whose desire nature represents in this description. Is a nature mournful because of the sacrifice of Hawaiians—which Twain seems to assume to be the case? Or, is it the narrator’s own projection which represents the desire and judgment of a nineteenth-century American subject? Is nature mournful because it does not approve of the natives’ act in the “Heathen Temple”? Even the word “heathen” in the title reveals something about the narrator’s approach to the temple. The last sentence, on the other hand, changes the atmosphere of the scene with the “peaceful moon looking calmly down”. Terror and tranquility coexist in the text, framing it with the convention of the sublime. Moreover, the personification of the landscape represents the American subject’s judgement of the natives’ act, although when the altars of the ancient temple were still there, and when they sacrificed humans, it was long before the Islands were “discovered” by the Europeans and populated by the Americans. In this scene, the representation of nature through the concept of the sublime allows for the cultural appropriation of the landscape. While Twain mentions the ruins of the temple, he

constructs a symbolic landscape in which nature and the native Hawaiians' traditions are at odds with each other. Nature reacts to the scene in the way the narrator would like it to react, and in a way, the symbolism created transforms and appropriates the cultural and historical landmarks.

The complexity of Twain's treatment of nature in the Hawaiian Letters also stems from the multiple tasks he was undertaking. One of these tasks was to inform the entrepreneurs in California about the business prospects in Hawaii, such as whaling and sugar industries, within the bigger project of U.S. expansionism across the Pacific. Rob Wilson's (2000) article "Exporting Christian Transcendentalism, Importing Hawaiian Sugar: The Trans-Americanization of Hawai'i" explores Twain's representation of the Hawaiian Islands as a newspaper reporter. He states, "Mark Twain ... was there in 1866 as an American writer to assure the industrial, cultural, and tourist linkages and evoke the spatial imaginary of the expanding U.S. Pacific" (p. 525). Twain participated in the expansionist discourse, Wilson (2000) argues, and helped the "cultural Americanization" and national appropriation of the Islands (p. 533).³ In his book *The Literary Apprenticeship of Mark Twain*, Edgar Marques Branch also notes the variety of the subjects Twain had to report on: "Hawaiian industry and trade, with particular reference to American commercial enterprise" and "the islands and their populations" were two main topics, but also "he wanted to amuse his readers with the personal, sensational, and fictitious" (p. 161). No wonder he felt the need to invent the character Mr. Brown in order to balance his serious persona as a reporter. Bird (2009) argues that "Twain's writing on Hawaii has been undervalued, his Hawaiian letters from the period seemingly

³ Towards the end of the nineteenth century, Twain completely abandoned any contribution to imperialistic discourse and became strongly anti-imperialist. See particularly his book *Following the Equator*, published in 1897, for his criticism of U.S. expansionism.

tacked on to the western exploits of *Roughing It* and usually treated by critics as an afterthought” (p. 143). Indeed, the Hawaiian experience and the lectures following it greatly helped Twain in shaping his relationship with the conventions. Regarding the *Letters from Hawaii*, West (1980-81) argues that “they reveal a young Mark Twain cautiously experimenting with techniques and themes” (p. 14). Another critic who emphasizes the importance of this period in Twain’s life is David Zmijewski. In his article, “Mark Twain’s Dual Visions of Hawai’i: Censoring the Creative Self”, he underlines the success Twain had in his lectures touring Nevada and California all through the Autumn the same year he returned from Hawaii and argues that the different towns he lectured in made him realize how different demands of the audiences can be (Zmijewski, 2004, p. 100). This variety he saw in town after town made Twain adapt his lectures and caused his own views to undergo a transformation, too, he argues (Zmijewski, 2004, p. 100). He claims that there is a difference between what Twain himself thought and what he wrote in the *Letters*:

The differences between his private opinions (basically those found in the journals of the trip) and the ones he made public verify that Mark Twain was holding back. His role as a “capitalist hero” required Twain to yield to the greater causes of regional and national interest, and this often prevented him from speaking his mind. (Zmijewski, 2004, p. 100)

In this passage, Zmijewski makes a distinction between the persona of Mark Twain the journalist and Mark Twain as it appears in the private journals. The multiplicity of Twain’s personas again makes it problematic to assume that the private journals truly represent Clemens’ ideas. Either way, this variety of perspectives shows how skillful Twain is as a writer. The fact that he makes use of the prevalent discourses and adapts according to the readers’/audiences’ expectations reveal the fact that he was well-versed in the popular literary conventions of nineteenth-century America. Melton (2002)

describes how well Twain balanced the use of conventions and his creativity: “Twain readily accepted and even embraced standard travel-book formulas. But he was by no means simply a conventional writer. Rather, he chose often to manipulate expectations for his readers’ entertainment and his own satirical interests” (p. 341). He also argues that for Mark Twain, travel writing was “a perfect fit”, since “[a] travel writer can hold forth on just about anything and still be within the bounds of the genre, a freedom highly suitable to Twain” (Melton, 2002, p. 342).

Perhaps it is Mark Twain himself who can best express his ability to look through changing frames in his works and expose the frames as constructions. In his travel book *Innocents Abroad*, Twain describes the landscape in his travel to the Holy Land:

To glance at the salient features of this landscape through the picturesque framework of a ragged and ruined stone window—arch of the time of Christ, thus hiding from sight all that is unattractive, is to secure to yourself a pleasure worth climbing the mountain to enjoy. One must stand on his head to get the best effect in a fine sunset, and set a landscape in a bold, strong framework that is very close at hand, to bring out all its beauty. One learns this latter truth never more to forget it, in that mimic land of enchantment, the wonderful garden of my lord the Count Pallavicini, near Genoa. You go wandering for hours among hills and wooded glens, artfully contrived to leave the impression that Nature shaped them and not man ... Right in this place the artist taxed his genius to the utmost, and fairly opened the gates of fairy land. You look through an unpretending pane of glass, stained yellow ... All of a sudden, through this bright, bold gateway, you catch a glimpse of the faintest, softest, richest picture that ever graced the dream of a dying Saint, since John saw the New Jerusalem glimmering above the clouds of Heaven ... The ocean is gold, the city is gold, the meadow, the mountain, the sky—everything is golden-rich, and mellow, and dreamy as a vision of Paradise. No artist could put upon canvas, its entrancing beauty, and yet, without the yellow glass, and the carefully contrived accident of a framework that cast it into enchanted distance and shut out from it all unattractive features, it was not a picture to fall into ecstasies over. Such is life, and the trail of the serpent is over us all. (Twain, 2010, pp. 336-7)

Twain sums up the conditions that create the beauty of the landscape in a Romantic picture: “the stained yellow glass” and “the carefully contrived accident of a

framework". Outside the framework, one faces the "unattractive" and cannot "secure" the pleasure worth climbing the mountain to enjoy". In his carefully chosen analogy, Twain exposes the willed act to see through a particular "framework" that makes it possible to create a particular effect. "Placing the "unpretending" "stained yellow glass" as a filter and putting a "framework" to keep out anything that could expose the constructed nature of the picture, "the artist taxed his genius to the utmost" and "fairly opened the gates of fairy land", he writes. Here he exposes his own artistic slights of hand that he uses in his works. One can imagine young Twain looking down the crater, playing with not one but many pieces of yellow glass in his hand and changing various frameworks to see what effect they have on his impression of this natural wonder. Accordingly, the volcano changes from a big cellar with a few spouts of fire to the infernal regions with devils, from an infinite continent stretching with camps of armies on it to the map of railways in Massachusetts, and from the Hawaiian goddess Pele's surfaces to the pillar of fire as a revelation showing God's way to those wanderers in wilderness. His main focus seems to be exposing the frame rather than constructing a coherent narrative of what he sees only through a particular frame. Cochran (2015) points out Twain's handling of the conventions: "Twain could both test boundaries and reside within the safety net of the travel narrative" (p. 110). As Susan Gillmann (2006) defines it, "it is that process of continual self-construction and destruction by someone who is both critic and child of his culture" (p. 116).

Twain's letters to *The Sacramento Union* operate on different levels, capturing the diversity of attitudes towards wilderness in the second half of nineteenth-century America. They articulate U.S. interests in the Hawaiian Islands and the rivalry between colonial powers over the Pacific Ocean while constructing and unsettling the prevalent

discourse of sublime wilderness as a sacred icon which became the symbol of the new nation's superiority to the Old World at the same time. This dual vision in his letters enables him to explore various perspectives through different personas, such as the serious newspaper reporter with his facts and numbers, the sentimental traveler who tends to romanticize wilderness, and the stereotypical American tourist who undermines any and all romantic sentiments with his pragmatic approach. This diversity of perspectives offers insight into the transformation of "wilderness" in a very critical historical period in which the sublime provided the paradigm for both the experience in wilderness and the national appropriation of it.

3.2 The frontier and the escape motif

The appropriation of the eighteenth-century Romantic sublime to the American sublime played a significant role in defining the new nation's symbolic landscape as a sacred icon. It also transformed the eighteenth-century understanding of wilderness as a barren, desolate, and inhuman place into a more domesticated and sacred place where one could feel the divine providence. The Americans considered the vast, sublime wilderness in their continent as the symbol of their nation's greatness and idealized it through sacred connotations. As Cronon (1996) states, equally important in transforming wilderness into a "sacred American icon" was the "powerful romantic attraction of primitivism", and in the United States, "this was embodied most strikingly in the national myth of the frontier" (p. 13). He defines the frontier myth as "wide open spaces and virgin land with no trails, no signs, no facilities, no maps, no guides, no rescues, no modern equipment" (Cronon, 1996, p. 20). By the second half of the nineteenth century, the frontier had been part of the American culture for three hundred years. As Ronald Wright (2008)

notes in his book *What Is America? A Short History of the New World Order*, the frontier had been “a westering zone of warfare and cultural exchange since the 1600s”, which contributed to the nation-building in America, and underlines that “[t]hat insight would await the great American historian Frederick Jackson Turner” (p. 6). Frederick Jackson Turner was the first to propose the frontier narrative. He starts his “frontier thesis”, which he presented in 1893, with the announcement that the last frontier in American continent had closed. In his seminal essay "The Significance of the Frontier in American History", he writes:

In a recent bulletin of the Superintendent of the Census for 1890 appear these significant words: "Up to and including 1880 the country had a frontier of settlement, but at present the unsettled area has been so broken into by isolated bodies of settlement that there can hardly be said to be a frontier line. In the discussion of its extent, its westward movement, etc., it can not, therefore, any longer have a place in the census reports." This brief official statement marks the closing of a great historic movement. (Turner, 1996, p. 1)

In his thesis, Turner explains the importance of the frontiers in shaping the characteristics of the American nation. It was the year when the Indian wars ended at Wounded Knee that marked the “closing of a great historic movement”. As Wright (2008) also states, the defeat of the Western Indians had brought an end to “three hundred years of warfare for free land” (p. 165).

In his thesis, Turner (1996) identifies three factors that “explain American development”: The existence of “free land”, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward (p. 1). He emphasizes that this advance did not follow a single line, but each time the settlers found themselves back in primitive conditions on a continuing frontier line. He defines this movement as “perennial rebirth” and “fluidity of American life” and argues that “its continuous touch with the simplicity of primitive society, [sic] furnish the forces dominating American character” (Turner, 1996, pp. 2-3).

In this sense, he considers the existence of the American frontier as a vital factor in moving the Americans away from the culture they brought from the Old World and creating a new nation with its own myths and distinct characteristics. He juxtaposes the American frontier and the European frontier and argues that the latter has “a fortified boundary line” that goes through dense populations whereas the former is at the “hither edge of the land” (Turner, 1996, p. 3). He also emphasizes the hardship posed by wilderness and the changes people had to adapt to in “winning a wilderness” to create the economic and political conditions to transform wilderness into a complex city life (Turner, 1996, p. 2). He argues the struggle in the frontier gave Americans their characteristics as a nation and marked their difference from Europe:

The frontier is the line of most rapid and effective Americanization. The wilderness masters the colonist. It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad car and puts him in the birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. . . . Before long he has gone to planting Indian corn and plowing with a sharp stick, he shouts the war cry and takes the scalp in orthodox Indian fashion. In short, at the frontier the environment is at first too strong for the man. He must accept the conditions which it furnishes, or perish, and so he fits himself into the Indian clearings and follows the Indian trails. Little by little he transforms the wilderness, but the outcome is not the old Europe . . . The fact is, [sic] that here is a new product that is American. (Turner, 1996, pp. 3-4)

While he uses the phrase “winning a wilderness” in another paragraph, here he argues that “wilderness masters the colonist”, implying that the transformation works both ways: While the European settlers “win” the wilderness and domesticate it with their European ways, wilderness also “strips off the garments of civilization”, leaving the settlers in primitive conditions again and again in each frontier. He defines the outcome as “a new product”—American. He explains how the frontier experience shapes the nation-building: “In the crucible of the frontier the immigrants were Americanized,

liberated, and fused into a mixed race, English in neither nationality nor characteristics” (Turner, 1996, p. 23). In this sense, he sees the frontier as a melting pot in which people from different races are united under the American nation. He also sees this transformation as “liberating”, as he considers the frontier as a key factor in moving away from “the influence of Europe” and showing “a steady growth of independence on American lines” (Turner, 1996, p. 4). He also celebrates the frontier experience for its promotion of democracy both in America and in Europe and finds it the “most important effect” of this experience. Turner (1996) emphasizes “individualism” as a final product of the frontier and argues that it produced “antipathy” to control by the state, since “a kind of primitive organization based on the family” replaced the complex society, which, in turn, promoted “democracy” (p. 30).

Turner’s thesis has been a significant work in understanding the founding myth of the American nation. As Cronon (1996) underlines, Turner’s thesis represents the wild country not only as a place of “religious redemption” but also as that of “national renewal”, which provided the ground for experiencing the meaning of being American (Cronon, 1996, p. 13). The civilization of the “Old Europe” and the primitivism of the new frontier created a dichotomy which favored the liberating nature of wilderness and represented it as a place where one could escape the burdens and confinements of civilization and become free. Cronon (1996) argues that by the time Turner had presented his frontier thesis, it had already been an important part of the American cultural traditions for over a century (p. 13). Indeed, the motif of escape and primitivism had found its place in literature, especially in the works of Romantics, such as Muir.

In 1869, Muir went to Sierra Nevada, about which he said, “No description of Heaven that I have ever heard or read seems half so fine” (Muir, 1997, p. 186). In his

writings, Muir describes nature as a place in which one can escape the “doleful chambers of civilization”, find freedom, and restore health:

Accidents in the mountains are less common than in the lowlands, and these mountain mansions are decent, delightful, even divine, places to die in, compared with the doleful chambers of civilization. Few places in this world are more dangerous than home. Fear not, therefore, to try the mountain-passes. They will kill care, save you from deadly apathy, set you free, and call forth every faculty into vigorous, enthusiastic action. Even the sick should try these so-called dangerous passes, because for every unfortunate they kill, they cure a thousand. (Muir, 2001, p. 5)

In this passage, Muir represents wilderness within the framework of spiritual redemption and makes a contrast between wilderness and civilization. In this comparison, wilderness is considered sacred—even a better place to die in than perhaps a church yard. He also recommends wilderness to the “sick” to be cured and promotes wilderness as a place which “saves” people, sets them free, and restores their vigor. In another description of wilderness, he presents how primitivism in wilderness brings spiritual redemption and health:

The forests, too, seem kindly familiar, and the lakes and meadows and glad singing streams. I should like to dwell with them forever. Here with bread and water I should be content. Even if not allowed to roam and climb, tethered to a stake or tree in some meadow or grove, even then I should be content forever. Bathed in such beauty ... I feel sure I should not have one dull moment. And why should this appear extravagant? It is only common sense, a sign of health, genuine, natural, all-awake health. One would be at an endless Godful play, and what speeches and music and acting and scenery and lights!—sun, moon, stars, auroras. Creation just beginning, the morning stars ‘still singing together and all the children of God shouting for joy’. (Muir, 2001, p. 29)

In this passage, Muir’s description echoes the view of wilderness as the Garden of Eden. His biblical imagery with God and the creation “just beginning” in an atmosphere of joy constructs an image of nature as a place where one finds oneself in harmony with the universe. It is “an endless Godful play”, which suggests that there is no sense or trace of time in wilderness. This state seems to refer to humans’ state in the Garden of Eden

before their “fall”. The primitive conditions—bread and water—and lack of a complex structure of society also refers to that state, one can argue. Muir sees this state as the natural state of humans as he considers it “common sense”. The adjectives he chooses to define the kind of health one finds in nature, such as “genuine, natural, all-awake”, are in line with the nineteenth-century dichotomy of wilderness and civilization. Wilderness is where “every day was a holiday”, as he writes about the famous Yosemite Valley (Muir, 2001, p. 14).

The mythical image of the West as a “virgin” land where one finds oneself in primitive conditions and shakes off the constrictions of civilization, discovering true vigor and restoring true health had already been a popular convention by the second half of the nineteenth-century in America. As Cronon (1996) argues, following the Civil War, wilderness came to represent “the elite passion for wild land”, and “wild land was not a site for productive labor and not a permanent home; rather, it was a place of recreation” (p. 15). The transformation of wilderness into a nostalgic place where they could project “their leisure time frontier fantasies” promoted the popular view of wilderness as a place where one frees oneself from the artificiality of urban-industrial civilization and meets the true, more natural self (Cronon, 1996, p. 14). In this sense, escaping to wilderness came to represent the reenactment of the frontier experience which contributed to the formation of the American myth with its national character.

Growing up in the frontier by the Mississippi River, Mark Twain knew the frontier experience well. He lived in a time when frontiers were still open and Indian wars were continuing. One year after the Civil War, he sat sail to the Sandwich Islands, to the middle of the Pacific Ocean, which he described as “watery wilderness” (Twain,

1976, p. 14). In his first letter titled “On Board Steamer Ajax, Honolulu (H.I.), March 18th”, he expresses his feelings within the Romantic convention of escapism:

Leaving all care and trouble and business behind the city, now swinging gently around the hills and passing house by house and street by street out of view, we swept down through the Golden Gate and stretch away toward the shoreless horizon. It was a pleasant, breezy afternoon, and the strange new sense of entire and perfect emancipation from labor and responsibility coming strong upon me, I went up on the hurricane deck so that I could have room to enjoy it. I sat down on a bench, and for an hour I took a tranquil delight in that kind of labor which is such a luxury to the enlightened Christian—to wit, the labor of other people. Captain Godfrey was “making sail” and he was moving the men around briskly. (Twain, 1966, pp. 4-5)

The passage begins with the contrast between the city and wilderness on the West. It is followed by “emancipation” and escape from labor, and it is a moment Twain seems to enjoy for a while. In a way, he puts the “stained yellow glass” in front of his eyes and frames it carefully to leave anything “ugly” outside. He calls his meditation “that kind of labor”. However, he makes his characteristic move and puts down the glass and the frame to see what is left outside in its true color. The result is an insight into the true nature of escapism. He seems to refer to the Puritan work ethic when he says it is a “luxury” to “the enlightened Christian” and exposes conditions which create the Romantic picture of escaping labor: It is “the labor of other people”. After exposing the fact that there is still labor going on around him, he continues with the example of it. He includes Captain Godfrey into the new, wider frame and writes “making sail” in quotation marks, which suggests that he wants to emphasize the action. In this sense, while he shows how it looks through the Romantic framework, he also exposes the conditions of such a romantic picture. He looks at the world with the yellow glasses on, through which Romantics like Muir “recreate[s] the world in the image of his desire”, as Lawrence Buell (1995) states in his seminal book *The Environmental*

Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture (p. 194).

Twain also enjoys the new picture; however, he seems more interested in how the picture changes with and without the glasses he plays with.

As discussed earlier, *Letters from Hawaii* reveals the complexity of Twain's representation of nature and his use of Romantic conventions. While he tends to enjoy unsettling the established conventions, he also makes use of them and participates in the construction of the nineteenth-century discourse of wilderness in America. There are many passages in the *Letters*, in which Twain uses and endorses the popular image of Hawaii as a paradise. In the fourth letter, titled "Honolulu, March, 1866, Our Arrival Elaborated a Little More", he compares Honolulu to San Francisco. Under the subtitle "New Scenes and Strong Contrasts", he writes,

[I]n place of the hurry and bustle and noisy confusion of San Francisco, I moved in the midst of a summer calm as tranquil as dawn in the Garden of Eden; in place of our familiar skirting sand hills and the placid bay, I saw on the one side a framework of tall, precipitous mountains close at hand, clad in refreshing green, and cleft by deep, cool, chasmlike valleys—and in front the grand sweep of the ocean; a brilliant, transparent green near the shore, bound and bordered by a long white line of foamy spray dashing against the reef, and further out the dead blue water of the deep sea, flecked with "white caps," and in the far horizon a single, lonely sail... (Twain, 1966, p. 31).

The description starts with the popular convention of making a contrast between the city in the East and wilderness in the West. However, this time, the West coast of America becomes the East instead, and further to the West, the landscape keeps improving in vastness and sublimity. In this sense, with this comparison, he moves the frontier from the West Coast to the Pacific. He also makes use of biblical imagery and represents this new frontier as a Garden of Eden. His phrase "summer calm" suggests the absence of labor. The vocabulary he uses to describe nature, such as "tall, precipitous mountains", "the grand sweep of the ocean", and "the far horizon" also represents the landscape as

superior to the East (West Coast of America). The point of comparison shifts again. Instead of the contrast between the Old World and the New World, which represented the latter as superior in terms of nature, now the comparison is between the New World and the islands whose discovery was more recent. Nature in the West Coast is already “familiar”. After establishing a Romantic picture of Honolulu in paradise image, Twain makes his characteristic move and undermines what he has been constructing:

At this moment, this man Brown, who has no better manners than to read over one's shoulder, observes:
"Yes, and hot. Oh, I reckon not (only 82 in the shade)! Go on, now, and put it all down, now that you've begun; just say, 'And more "santipedes," [sic] and cockroaches, and fleas, and lizards, and red ants, and scorpions, and spiders, and mosquitoes and missionaries'—oh, blame my cats if I'd live here two months.
(Twain, 1996, p. 32)

The comic interruption that unsettles the Romantic view comes with the character Mr. Brown. He shows the persona Twain what is left outside the frame he sees through. The place is a paradise, but it is also “hot” and full of “santipedes” and other sort of abject creatures. After Mr. Brown expresses his displeasure with the creatures, Twain goes on:

I remarked: “But Mr. Brown, these are trifles.”
“Trifles be—blowed! You get nipped by one of them scorpions once, [sic] and see how you like it! ... Oh, fill me up about this lovely country! You can go on writing that slop about balmy breezes and fragrant flowers, and all that sort of truck, but you're not going to leave out them sentipedes [sic] and things for want of being reminded of it, you know”. (Twain, 1966, pp. 32-33)

Using the reaction of the character Mr. Brown, Twain creates a duality in which he can keep the image of his persona as a sentimental, romantic journalist while making Mr. Brown express another perspective he sees the place from. He comments on this duality and how he sees Mr. Brown's view:

I am glad Brown has got disgusted at that murdered spider and gone; I don't like to be interrupted when I am writing—especially by Brown, who is one of those men who always looks at the unpleasant side of everything, and I seldom do.
(Twain, 1966, p. 34)

The narrative frame of the letters does not leave space to maintain a coherent discourse which represents nature in a symbolic framework. It keeps the reader alert, since usually when Twain presents a romantic picture, it is followed by the change of frame and Twain's exposure of the frame itself.

In the *Letters*, Twain borrows the vocabulary of the frontier myth of "virgin land", too. In the twenty-second letter, he writes about how the Hawaiians' relationship with their gods changed through war and other events and how the missionaries arrived:

"There is no power in the gods", said they; "they are a vanity and a lie. The army with idols was weak; the army without idols was strong and victorious!"
The nation was without religion.
The missionary ship arrived in safety shortly afterward, timed by providential exactness to meet the emergency, and the gospel was planted as in a virgin soil.
(Twain, 1966, p. 247)

While narrating the arrival of the missionaries, Twain writes about the historical conditions which made it easier to implement the new religion, too. Thus, his reference to the historical traces seems to imply that it was not "a virgin soil" but a land with its own history and religion. Besides this, he articulates the events in a comic narrative frame and ridicules the notion of divine providence. Another passage in which he criticizes the Romantic notion of being provided by divine providence in nature is his twenty-fourth letter. Under the subtitle "The Cistern Tree", he describes a specific tree whose crotch contains tanks of fresh water all the time; therefore, it is a significant tree for the natives since they suck the water out through a hollow weed which always grows near the tree. He writes:

As no other water exists in that wild neighborhood, within a space of some miles in circumference, it is considered to be a special invention of Providence for the behoof of the natives. I would rather accept the story than the deduction, because the latter is so manifestly but hastily conceived and erroneous. If the happiness of

the natives had been the object, the tanks would have been filled with whiskey.
(Twain, 1966, p. 286)

In his description, it is not clear who makes this deduction, whether the natives or the missionaries, but the idea of the existence of divine providence in nature, which provides people with their food and other needs was popular in the romantic discourse of nineteenth-century America. Muir's writings can be good examples of this discourse since he refers to nature's love towards humans and seems to believe that one is always provided with the basic needs in nature without labor. In this passage, Twain does not participate in this discourse, though. He presents a picture of wilderness in which nature is disinterested in humans and their needs. To think otherwise is a "erroneous" deduction, according to him. He finishes his judgement with a humorous tone by finding a correlation between the natives' happiness and whiskey. As Don Florence (1995) states in his book *Persona and Humor in Mark Twain's Early Writings*, Twain uses humor to unsettle "our notions of a fixed world" (p. 16). As his rejection of a quick deduction reveals, Twain does not readily accept explanations that are based on romantic sentiments.⁴

Hawaii's image as a paradise in which people can forget their daily responsibilities and cares of the world and restore their true health and vigor was popular back then as it still is. Twain's description of Kailua reinforces this romantic imagery of paradise in which people can cure their weariness:

⁴ Twain's humor results from his questioning absolute values or notions. See Manuel M. Davenport (1976), "Presidential Address: An Existential Philosophy of Humor" for ideas on the relationship between seriousness and humor. Arthur Schopenhauer also emphasizes the contrast between seriousness and humor: "The opposite of laughing and joking is seriousness. . . . The serious man is convinced that he thinks the things as they are, and that they are as he thinks them" (Schopenhauer quoted in Goldman (2017), p. 128). In this sense, it is in those passages in which Twain abandons the serious tone of American business and questions established notions that one finds the humor that unsettles any certainty and, in his phrasing, "quick deductions".

THE REFUGE FOR THE WEARY

We landed at Kailua (pronounced Ki-loo-ah), a little collection of native grass houses reposing under tall cocoanut trees—the sleepest, quietest, Sundayest looking place you can imagine. Ye weary ones that are sick of the labor and care, and the bewildering turmoil of the great world, and sigh for a land where ye may fold your tired hands and slumber your lives peacefully away, pack up your carpet sacks and go to Kailua! A week there ought to cure the saddest of you all. (Twain, 1966, p. 202)

Twain uses the vocabulary of wilderness as a place of escape from labor, borrowing language from Christian notions of the day of rest: “the sleepest, quietest, Sundayest looking”. The following sentences promote the place to those who are looking for such a place to escape. However, the tone of the text changes when he chooses to address people in archaic terms, “Ye weary ones”, parodying the New Testament rhetoric of peace and freedom from labor in the afterlife. He continues to address those people with the same word, which undermines the serious tone in the text, making this Romantic view of nature sound like a pulpit cliché. In a way, his ironical tone criticizes the transformation of wilderness into a recreational site for elite Protestant urban tourists. In his eighteenth letter, he describes the effect of the moonlight on him:

It was compensation for all my sufferings to come unexpectedly upon so beautiful a scene as met my eye—to step suddenly out of the sepulchral gloom of the cabin and stand under the strong light of the moon—in the center, as it were, of a glittering sea of liquid silver ... and the shadow of the broad mainsail lay black as a pall upon the deck, leaving Brown's white upturned face glorified and his body in a total eclipse. (Twain, 1966, pp. 197-8)

The beauty of the moonlight triggers his imagination, and he pictures it as “a glittering sea of liquid silver”. After he makes a long description of how beautiful the moonlight is and how clear the objects look under its light, Mr. Brown appears with his comic interruption of Twain’s sentimental mood. Now the Moon is not “a compensation” for his “sufferings” but only a strong source of light, light enough to illuminate even the dull visage of Mr. Brown in a kind of beatific glow. Another passage in which he

complicates this idea of spiritual redemption through nature can be found in his book *Roughing It*. In his description of Lake Tahoe, he makes use of the idea of spiritual redemption and physical health in nature:

There is no end of wholesome medicine in such an experience. That morning we could have whipped ten such people as we were the day before—sick ones at any rate. But the world is slow, and people will go to "water cures" and "movement cures" and to foreign lands for health. Three months of camp life on Lake Tahoe would restore an Egyptian mummy to his pristine vigor, [sic] and give him an appetite like an alligator. I do not mean the oldest and driest mummies, of course, but the fresher ones. The air up there in the clouds is very pure and fine, bracing and delicious. And why shouldn't it be?—it is the same the angels breathe. . . . He was a skeleton when he came, [sic] and could barely stand. He had no appetite, [sic] and did nothing but read tracts and reflect on the future. Three months later he was sleeping out of doors regularly, eating all he could hold, three times a day, and chasing game over mountains three thousand feet high for recreation. And he was a skeleton no longer, [sic] but weighed part of a ton. This is no fancy sketch, but the truth. His disease was consumption. I confidently commend his experience to other skeletons. (Twain, 1872, pp. 171-2)

Twain's play with the image of "Egyptian mummies" being restored to their vigor and having an appetite like an alligator undermines the symbolic landscape and the reliability of the Romantic convention he uses in the text. By expressing his preference for the "fresher ones" to "the oldest and driest mummies", he uses humor to unsettle the prevalent discourse on nature as a place of pure redemption. As Louis-Dimitrov (2012) suggests, the "redemptive vision of nature" is reduced to "the trivial realm of physical wellbeing", and the coexistence of these two realms humorously debunks the symbolism constructed (p. 12). Hobbs (1993) defines Twain's discussion of the medicinal effects of Lake Tahoe as an example of "comic masking" (p. 16). He points out the twist in the passage where Twain likens the "pure and fine" air up in the clouds to the same air angels breathe, suggesting that Twain expresses a dual vision (Hobbs, 1993, p. 16).

As Twain's *Letters from Hawaii* cover many topics from business opportunities and annexation to Hawaiian legends and traditions, one sees the complexity of the

persona of Mark Twain in his treatment of his subject matter. In passages in which he writes about serious business topics, his persona expresses the view of nineteenth-century American colonialism with its emphasis on the frontier ideals of the nation. In the twenty-third letter, he writes about sugar plantations, Hawaiian mills, and labor in detail, and gives suggestions to the businessmen in California, including the cheap Chinese labor, otherwise known as “coolies” in common terms. After he gives detailed numbers of production in Hawaii and compares it with those in California, he finishes the letter with a colonial tone:

To America it has been vouchsafed to materialize the vision, and realize the dream of centuries, of the enthusiasts of the old world. We have found the true Northwest Passage - we have found the true and only direct route to the bursting coffers of "Ormus and of Ind"—to the enchanted land whose mere drippings, in the ages that are gone, enriched and aggrandized ancient Venice, first, then Portugal, Holland, and in our own time, England—and each in succession they longed and sought for the fountain head of this vast Oriental wealth, and sought in vain. The path was hidden to them, but we have found it over the waves of the Pacific, and American enterprise will penetrate to the heart and center of its hoarded treasures, its imperial affluence. The gateway of this path is the Golden Gate of San Francisco; its depot, its distributing house, is California—her customers are the nations of the earth. (Twain, 1966, p. 274)

In his vision, America has the mission of “realiz[ing] the dream of centuries”, and this vision reflects the “entrepreneurial” character of the American nation. It also frames American history within a continuity with the Old World but establishes the New World’s superiority. It is the American nation who found the hidden path to “the fountain head of this vast Oriental wealth”, and it will “penetrate to the heart and center of its hoarded treasures”. In this picture, America is represented as a nation who fulfills the centuries-old mission inherited from the Old World, and California is portrayed as the center of this network of trade. Although Twain will harshly condemn American economic expansionism in his later writing, particularly his last collection of essays *On*

the Damned Human Race, in his earlier writing he still has a sense of humor where these issues are concerned.

While the journalistic passages in the *Letters* express the desires of the nineteenth-century businessmen in America, the passages in which he uses comic interruptions, especially those with Mr. Brown, provide a narrative frame in which the prevalent discourse of sublime wilderness and frontier ideals are debunked and parodied. Between the serious journalistic work and humorous comments, one can read the fate of the native Hawaiians in between the lines. While Twain makes use of the frontier ideology in his representation of Hawaii, he also includes the cultural and historical traces and puts the events in historical perspective. In his fourth letter, under the subtitle “Reflections”, he narrates his first arrival at Honolulu on the steamer *Ajax*:

Sunday morning, about church time, we steamed through the narrow channel to the music of six different church bells, which sent their mellow tones far and wide, over hills and valleys—peopled by naked, savage, thundering barbarians only 50 years ago. Christian churches within five miles of the ruins of a pagan temple, where human sacrifices were daily offered up to hideous idols in the last century. We were within pistol shot of one of a group of islands whose ferocious inhabitants closed in upon the doomed and helpless Captain Cook and murdered him, eighty-seven years ago; and lo! Their [sic] descendants were at church! Behold what the missionaries have wrought! (Twain, 1966, p. 26)

In his very first sentence, after his description of what he sees, immediately he goes back in time in his mind and imagines how it looked 50 years ago and who used to live there. Though his language reflects the native Hawaiians under a negative light, as he uses words like “savage, thundering barbarians”, “hideous idols”, and “ferocious inhabitants closed in upon the doomed and helpless Captain Cook and murdered him”, he nevertheless mentions the historical change and the decrease in the native Hawaiians’ population. His serious tone changes with the word “lo!”, and the achievements of missionaries are expressed in that ironical tone. Besides, in other passages, he calls the

native Hawaiian a “simple child of nature” and attributes “noble frankness” to them (Twain, 1966, p. 52). He also criticizes Captain Cook’s treatment of the Hawaiians and implies that he deserved his fate:

Plain unvarnished history takes the romance out of Captain Cook’s assassination and renders a deliberate verdict of justifiable homicide. Wherever he went among the Islands, he was cordially received and welcomed by the inhabitants, and his ships lavishly supplied with all manner of food. He returned these kindnesses with insults and ill-treatment. (Twain, 1966, p. 215)

Twain seems to criticize official *haoli* history and empathize with the Hawaiian people. He also reverses the meaning of Great Britain’s monument to Captain Cook by claiming that “this is not properly a monument, since it was erected by the natives themselves, and less to do honor to the circumnavigator than for the sake of convenience in roasting him” (Twain, 1966, p. 224). In his description, he includes the Hawaiians’ actions at this site and implies that it is a significant historical landmark for Hawaiians as much as it is for the British. He writes about “A Battleground Whose History is Forgotten” and mentions different stories from different historical sources, including the oral history of the Hawaiians and informs the readers about the pestilences which decreased the population of native Hawaiians dramatically (Twain, 1966, p. 59).

Twain’s *Letters from Hawaii* portrays the radical social, economic, cultural and political transformation that was going on in the Sandwich Islands in 1866. More importantly, it offers a wide range of perspectives on the process of nation-building in nineteenth-century America and the role of the transformation of wilderness in this process. Through the persona of Mark Twain with his keen observations and humorous debunking of the established conventions, the *Letters* presents a complex view of nature and resists the framing devices of popular discourse. As Harold Bloom (2015) claims in his book *The Daemon Knows: Literary Greatness and the American Sublime*, moving on

“two levels”, Twain’s works imply “deeper meanings” (“Why These Twelve” section, para. 13). Twain’s Hawaiian letters give the reader a portrayal of the changing scene of wilderness in nineteenth-century America by constructing a narrative frame which both articulates and undermines the frontier myth. It carries the colonial and pioneer narratives of progress to the middle of the Pacific—“watery wilderness”—while playing with and debunking these narratives at the same time. In this sense, Twain’s dual vision of Hawaii resists participating in the construction of a symbolic landscape through a narrative structure that renders any symbolism in the text unreliable.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Twain's visit to the Hawaii Islands took place at a historical turning point in terms of the transformation of the concept of wilderness. He witnessed its transformation from a barren waste into a sacred site of sublimity. Wilderness had become the national symbol of American identity, but it was also threatened by industrial development and growing tourism. He visited Niagara Falls when it had already been overburdened with clichés while he saw the emerging movement of wilderness preservation in the West, resulting in the foundation of national parks. Since then, the definition of wilderness has been much-debated, but its most famous definition was given by the Wilderness Act of 1964:

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. An area of wilderness is further defined to mean in this Act an area of undeveloped Federal land retaining its primeval character and influence, without permanent improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve its natural conditions and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) has outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least five thousand acres of land or is of sufficient size as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical value. (Harvey, 2007, p. iv)

While the Act was anticipated in the works of Thoreau and Muir with their emphasis on preservation, another influential figure whose work shaped the coming Wilderness Act was Aldo Leopold, who integrated wilderness appreciation with ecological data in his works. Leopold developed a land ethic which argued for a change in our ethical attitude toward nature so as to prevent it from human harm. His emphasis on the preservation of

biotic community changed the meaning of wilderness and defined it beyond hunting and recreational terms. He helped found the Wilderness Society in 1935, which worked for expanding and preserving wilderness areas in America. He argued that camping and woodcraft cannot be reduced to an activity of nostalgia for the frontier past in a recreational culture which had been mostly dominated by the elite. One of his most significant contributions to the movement of wilderness preservation was his insistence for a separate classification of land within the national forests to be protected from the automobiles and hotels whose numbers were increasing. Thus, he promoted both the types of recreation that were more primitive and the preservation of land and wildlife, which influenced the definition of wilderness in the coming Act greatly.

The Act recognizes the recreational characteristic of wilderness as well as the need to preserve it. It helped the foundation of The National Wilderness Preservation System and designation and protection of roadless areas within the federal lands. While it provided a standard for wilderness preservation, it also has been subject to much criticism. Its emphasis on the absence of human habitation and impact opened the debate on whether the areas where the “imprint” of settlers had been substantially noticeable, such as the eastern part of the continent, would also count as wilderness. As a result, in 1975, the Eastern Wilderness Act designated many areas which had not fallen into the wilderness category in the first act in 1964. Another discussion after the Wilderness Act of 1964 was how much of the wilderness area would be used for recreational purposes, since the number of campers desiring the experience of invasive forms of frontier nostalgia continued increasing in 1960s and 1970s. This question led to the “Leave No Trace” program (Turner, 2002), which promoted a low-impact hiking and camping style that aimed to reduce human traces on land designated as national wilderness.

Roderick Frazier Nash's seminal book *Wilderness and the American Mind*, which was published shortly after the Act, in 1967, has been a very influential work in documenting the history of the idea of wilderness from the ancient times through the Wilderness Act. In his book, Nash explains how wilderness came to be appreciated and promotes the idea of wilderness preservation. He argues that "since the middle of the nineteenth century the preservation issue has been the major vehicle for national discussion of wilderness" (Nash, 2014, p. 96). He emphasizes the significance of wilderness preservation for future generations and elaborates on how wilderness teaches people the importance of humility. In this sense, his book celebrates the wilderness tradition and the movement of preservation. Nash's seminal work has been followed by "the great new wilderness debate" (Callicott & Nelson, 1998; Callicott & Nelson, 2008) in which the critics either complemented his work (Lewis, 2007) or offered a criticism of the concept of wilderness (Guha, 1989; Cronon, 1995; Callicott, 1991). The 1990s witnessed a radical criticism of the concept of wilderness, and Cronon's (1996) seminal article "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" provoked a still ongoing debate on wilderness thinking and its sufficiency to protect the environment. Cronon emphasizes that his criticism is not directed at wild nature, and that he acknowledges the contributions of wilderness thinking as a vehicle to create more responsible behavior towards nature, saying nonhuman nature and large tracks of the world are worth protecting. His criticism rather problematizes certain ways of thinking that stem from "this complex cultural construction called wilderness" (Cronon, 1996, p. 17). He argues that wilderness is a cultural construct, which was produced by a particular culture at a particular time—nineteenth-century America. He states that the frontier nostalgia for a "virgin" land turned wilderness into recreational sites used

mostly by the elite, which created an ambivalence towards modernity and idealized wilderness. The irony, he says, lies in the fact that the well-to-do folks who most celebrated wilderness were also the ones who benefited from urban-industrial capitalism. In addition, he criticizes the definition of wilderness as a transcendent place where human beings are absent as it masks the history of forced removal of native Americans from sites which were turned into national parks to be preserved. He also points out the danger of repeating the same tragedy by applying the same ideology of wilderness preservation to other parts of the world where the natives may be forcibly removed from their homes for the sake of preservation. He finds the roots of such understanding of wilderness in the Romantic traditions of the sublime and frontier nostalgia and argues that these traditions privilege some parts of nature and dismiss others, creating an obstacle for a responsible environmentalism. He sees the solution in finding a middle ground which will illustrate how humans can use nature in a balanced, sustainable way and help create responsible behavior towards nonhuman nature, which in turn will help solve environmental problems rather than merely preserve large tracks of land. He prefers the concepts of “wildness” instead of “wilderness” and argues that we should not escape from our responsibility to the immediate nature around us, such as the tree in our garden, in which wildness is present.

During the 1990s, the notion of wilderness was historicized by a growing number of historians who argued for a new interpretation and revision of the meaning and history of wilderness, which led to a reconsideration of the relationship between wilderness and American culture. The new wilderness historians tended to emphasize the importance of the concepts of power, race, class, and gender in analyzing the history of wilderness, which was not the focus in 1960s. At the same time, they stressed U.S.

overconsumption and the inadequacy of wilderness preservation in answering the current environmental problems. As the works of Nash and his followers were born in a cultural context mostly influenced by the Wilderness Act of 1964 and the activist environmentalism of 1960s, wilderness historians like Cronon also had their cultural context in the 1990s: They had been informed by the rising postcolonial criticism of the concept of wilderness and its application in third world countries together with the environmental problems in the 1980s. The problem of toxic waste in the U.S.A. and the Sagebrush rebellion against the federal land management policies for its emphasis on favoring the interests of elites rather than the problems of the local communities were among the most challenging environmental issues in the 1980s. On the other hand, their criticism was also followed by an important dilemma: How to come to terms with wilderness as a cultural construct and come up with constructive criticism without damaging the viable parts of the movement of wilderness preservation at the same time. Some critics also argued for a criticism of the history of wilderness while keeping what is good for the preservation of nature, such as certain aspects of the tradition of the sublime (Hitt, 1999). While Cronon's criticism attracted as much criticism (Foreman, 1998) as favor, it was a turning point in the history of wilderness, which critics have been addressing for the past two decades.

Cronon (1996) points out the fact that most people still follow the conventions of the Romantic sublime and idealize certain landscapes while considering others as less important. Indeed, the modern environmental movement is the "grandchild" of Romanticism and post-frontier ideology, and environmentalist discourse has appealed to the Romantic framework of wilderness created in the nineteenth century, he argues (Cronon, 1996, p. 10). His emphasis on appreciating nature without confining it to the

Romantic framework of the sublime and the frontier nostalgia requires a reevaluation of the Romantic traditions in nineteenth-century America and the conditions in which they were born. This investigation brings us back to Twain's dual vision of nature in his early travel writings. They were produced at the center of a sea change that was underway regarding the appreciation of wilderness in America, and his multiple perspectives offer valuable insight into the conditions of constructing the Romantic framework, which he tapped into in his works. His mournful tone in losing the poetry of the river in *Life on the Mississippi*, for instance, implies that he could not sustain an idealized picture of the river after he had worked on a steamer and mastered the language of the river. He notes that its value was reduced to its usefulness. However, he does not look down on his previous experience but laments its loss. He further complicates his view by asking the question of whether he has gained most or lost most as a result (Twain, 2006, Chapter 9, para. 7). Similarly, his meditation on the stained yellow glass and "the carefully contrived accident of a framework" in *Innocents Abroad* do not make him despise the beautiful picture they create (Twain, 2010, p. 337). Indeed, he enjoys the scene with his imagination while exposing their impact on creating such a picture at the same time. The same dualism can be seen in his famous description of the sunrise on the river in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Twain, 2012a, p. 89). It is represented as a moment of sublimity in the beauty and tranquility of the scene, but he puts down the frame for a second and includes the presence of the ugly—the dead fish that stinks—which had been left outside the Romantic frame.

Similarly, his experience of nature in Hawaii is represented in passages in which he both borrows and undermines the vocabulary of the Romantic tradition of the sublime and the frontier. The passage in which he stops his "apostrophizing" when his horse sits

down to listen reveals his dual approach: He both enjoys the Romantic view and acknowledges it as a human construct, and this is followed by details of the historical traces of the landscape. In this wonderful passage, he constructs the Romantic framework of wilderness, and again, puts it down to reveal what it leaves outside—nonhuman nature and historical traces of native Hawaiians. Finally, his multiple perspectives on the great volcano of Kilauea include Hawaiian goddesses as well as biblical and national imagery, resisting the articulation of his experience through a single narrative framework based on Romantic conventions. However, even when he plays with Romantic and national symbolism, he expresses his shock at seeing a luxurious hotel by this natural wonder in the middle of watery wilderness and subtly criticizes those tourists who prioritize such convenience.

The theoretical framework of this thesis has been Cronon's criticism of wilderness with an emphasis on the sublime and the frontier. I have argued that Twain's dual vision rejects participation in the construction of the popular discourses of wilderness in the nineteenth-century America through parodying and subverting the conventions of the "sublime" and the "frontier". As the contemporary notion of wilderness still takes its bearings from the roots planted by cultural movements of nineteenth-century America, Twain's experience of the radical transformation of wilderness and his dual approach proves all the more relevant not only for understanding the conditions that gave rise to this transformation, but also for exploring ways to appreciate nature beyond the Romantic conventions of nineteenth-century America.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, B. R. O. (1991). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. New York, N.Y.: Verso.
- Bird, J. (2009). Mark Twain, journalist. *Studies in American Humor, New Series* 3(19), 139-145.
- Bloom, H. (2015). *The daemon knows: literary greatness and the American sublime* [EPUB]. Retrieved from <https://www.kobo.com>
- Brady, E. (2012). Reassessing aesthetic appreciation of nature in the Kantian sublime. *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 46(1), 91-109.
- Brady, E. (2013). *The sublime in modern philosophy: Aesthetics, ethics, and nature*. New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press.
- Branch, E. M. (1950). *The literary apprenticeship of Mark Twain*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.
- Buell, L. (1995). *The environmental imagination: Thoreau, nature writing, and the formation of American culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Burke, E. (1823). *A philosophical inquiry into the origin of our ideas of the sublime and beautiful*. Los Angeles, CA: H. E. Barker.
- Callicott, J. Baird. (1991). The wilderness idea revisited: The sustainable development alternative. *The Environmental Professional*, 13, 235-47.
- Callicott, J. B. & Nelson, M. P. (Eds.). (1998). *The great new wilderness debate*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.

- Callicott, J. B. & Nelson, M. P. (Eds.). (2008). *The wilderness debate rages on: Continuing the great new wilderness debate*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Cochran, D. (2015). Imagining boundaries: Visualizing space in Mark Twain's Following the Equator. *The Mark Twain Annual*, 13(1), 91-114.
- Coulombe, J. L. (2011). *Mark Twain and the American west*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press.
- Costello, B. (2003). *Shifting ground: Reinventing landscape in modern American poetry*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press
- Cronon, W. (Ed.). (1995). *Uncommon ground: Toward reinventing nature*. New York, N.Y.: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Cronon, W. (1996). The trouble with wilderness: Or, getting back to the wrong nature. *Environmental History*, 1(1), 7-28.
- Davenport, M. M. (1976). Presidential address: An existential philosophy of humor. *The Southwestern Journal of Philosophy*. 7(1), 169-176.
- Ergin, M. (2017). *The ecopoetics of entanglement in contemporary Turkish and American literatures*. Retrieved from <https://www.amazon.com>
- Florence, D. (1995). *Persona and humor in Mark Twain's early writings*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press.
- Foreman, D. Wilderness areas for real. In J. B. Callicott, & and M. Nelson (Eds.), *The great new wilderness debate* (pp. 395-407). Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Gillmann, Susan. (2006). Introduction: Mark Twain in context. In H. Bloom (Ed.), *Mark Twain* (2nd Updated ed.) (pp. 105-118). New York, N.Y.: Chelsea House Publications.

- Goldman, A. (2017). (ed.) *Mark Twain and philosophy*. Lanham, M.D.: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Guha, R. (1989). Radical American environmentalism and wilderness preservation: A third world critique. *Environmental Ethics*, 11(1), 71-83.
- Hartwell, R. (1983). Journey to Kilauea: Mark Twain and Frederick Jackson Turner. *Mark Twain Journal*, 21(3), 32.
- Harvey, M. (2007). *Wilderness forever: Howard Zhaniser and the path to the wilderness act*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.
- Henrickson, G. P. (2004). The missing landscapes of Mark Twain. *The Mark Twain Annual*, 2, 41-49
- Hitt, C. (1999). Toward an ecological sublime. *New Literary History*, 30(3), 603-623.
- Hoag, R. W. (2014). On Thoreau's trail in the Maine Woods: A photographic journey worth taking, critics howling in the wilderness. *The Thoreau Society Bulletin*, 285, 1-5.
- Hobbs, M. (1993). Mark Twain's infernal transcendentalism: The lake episodes in "Roughing It". *American Literary Realism, 1870-1910*, 26(1), 13-25.
- Kant, I. (1987). *Critique of judgment* (W. S. Pluhar, Trans.). Cambridge, IN: Hackett Publishing Company. (Original work published 1790).
- Kaplan, J. (1991). *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain: A biography*. New York, N.Y.: Simon & Schuster.
- Lewis, M. (2007). *American wilderness: A new history*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press. Princeton, N.J.: Clarendon Press
- Longinus. (1890). *Longinus on the sublime* (H. L. Havell, Trans.). Retrieved from <https://books.google.com.tr>

- Louis-Dimitrov, D. (2012). The unreliable traces of the west: Mark Twain's appropriation of a symbolical landscape in *Roughing It. Miranda*, 6, 1-17. doi: 10.4000/miranda.2834
- Marx, L. (1956). The pilot and the passenger: Landscape conventions and the style of Huckleberry Finn. *American Literature*, 28(2), 129-146.
- Melton, J. A. (2002). *Mark Twain, travel books, and tourism: The tide of a great popular movement*. Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press.
- Merchant, C. (2003). *Reinventing Eden: The fate of nature in western culture*. New York: Routledge.
- Messent, P. (2007). *The Cambridge introduction to Mark Twain*. Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press.
- Modiano, R. (1987). Humanism and the comic sublime: From Kant to Friedrich Theodor Vischer. *Studies in Romanticism*, 26(2)-231-244.
- Muir, J. (1997). *John Muir: Nature writings: The story of my boyhood and youth / My first summer in the Sierra / The mountains of California / Stickeen / essays* (W. Cronon, Ed.). Retrieved from <https://books.google.com.tr>
- Muir, J. (2001). *Meditations of John Muir* (C. Highland, Ed.). Berkeley, CA: Wilderness Press.
- Nash, R. F. (2014). *Wilderness and the American mind* (5th ed.). New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Poulsen, R. C. (1992). *The landscape of the mind: Cultural transformations of the American west*. New York, N.Y.: Peter Lang.
- Ryan, V. L. (2001). The physiological sublime: Burke's critique of reason. *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 62(2), 265-279.

- Sayre, G. M. (2001). If Thomas Jefferson had visited Niagara Falls: The sublime wilderness spectacle in America. *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 8(2), 141-162.
- Sears, J. F. (1998). *Sacred places: American tourist attractions in the nineteenth century*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press.
- Smith, H. N. (1962). *Mark Twain, the development of a writer*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Stoll, M. (2008). Milton in Yosemite: "Paradise Lost" and the national parks idea. *Environmental History*, 13(2), 237-274.
- Sumida, S. H. (1989). Reevaluating Mark Twain's novel of Hawaii. *American Literature*, 6(4), 586-609.
- Thoreau, H. D. (1975). *Early essays and miscellanies* (J. J. Moldenhauer & E. Moser & A. Kern, Eds.). Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Thoreau, H. D. (2010). *The Maine Woods* (J. J. Moldenhauer, Ed.). Retrieved from <https://books.google.com.tr>
- Thoreau, H. D. (2013). *Complete works of Henry David Thoreau* (E. Thoreau & E. H. Witherell & W. L. Howarth & J. Moser, Eds.). Retrieved from <https://books.google.com.tr>
- Turner, F. J. (1996). *The frontier in American history*. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com.tr>
- Turner, J. M. (2002). From Woodcraft to 'Leave No Trace': Wilderness, consumerism, and environmentalism in twentieth-century America. *Environmental History*, 7(3), 462-484.
- Twain, M. (1872). *Roughing it*. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com.tr>

Twain, M. (1897). *Following the equator*. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com.tr>

Twain, M. (1966). *Mark Twain's letters from Hawaii* (A. G. Day, Ed.). New York, N.Y.: Meredith Press.

Twain, M. (1976). *Mark Twain speaking* (P. Fatout, Ed.). Iowa City, IA: University of Iowa Press

Twain, M. (1988). *Mark Twain's letters, volume 1: 1853-1866* (E. M. Branch & M. B. Frank & K. M. Sanderson, Eds.). Retrieved from <https://books.google.com.tr>

Twain, M. (2004). *A tramp abroad, complete*. Retrieved from <https://www.gutenberg.org>

Twain, M. (2006). *Life on the Mississippi, complete*. Retrieved from <https://www.gutenberg.org>

Twain, M. (2010). *The innocents abroad*. Retrieved from <https://www.amazon.co.uk>

Twain, M. (2012a). *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com.tr>

Twain, M. (2012b). *Autobiography of Mark Twain vol 1* (H. E. Smith & B. Griffi & V. Fischer & M. B. Frank & S. Goetz, Eds.). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Twain, M. (2015). *Queen Victoria's jubilee*. Retrieved from <https://www.amazon.com>

West, G. V. (1980-1981). The development of the Mark Twain persona in the early travel letters. *Mark Twain Journal*, 20(3), 13-16.

Wordsworth, W. (1904). *The prelude*. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com.tr>

Wilson, R. (1991). *American sublime: The genealogy of a poetic genre*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Wilson, R. (2000). Exporting Christian transcendentalism, importing Hawaiian sugar: The trans-Americanization of Hawai'i. *American Literature*, 72(3), 521-552.

Wright, R. (2008). *What is America? A short history of the new world order*. Retrieved from <https://books.google.com.tr>

Zaller, R. (2012). *Robinson Jeffers and the American sublime*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Zmijewski, David. (2004). Mark Twain's dual visions of Hawai'i: Censoring the creative self. *The Hawaiian Journal of History*, 38, 99-119.