

Andrews University

Digital Commons @ Andrews University

Honors Theses

Undergraduate Research

12-12-2019

Where Was I Going? What Was the Point? Archetypes, Frame, and Social Transgressions in Ovid and Twain

Jessica Bates

Andrews University, batesj@andrews.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/honors>



Part of the [American Literature Commons](#), and the [English Language and Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Bates, Jessica, "Where Was I Going? What Was the Point? Archetypes, Frame, and Social Transgressions in Ovid and Twain" (2019). *Honors Theses*. 227.

<https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/honors/227/>

<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/honors/227>

This Honors Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Undergraduate Research at Digital Commons @ Andrews University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Andrews University. For more information, please contact repository@andrews.edu.

J. N. Andrews Honors Program
Andrews University


HONS 497
Honors Thesis

Where Was I Going? What Was the Point?
Archetypes, Frame, and Social Transgressions in Ovid and Twain

Jessica Bates

12 December 2019

Advisor: Dr. Douglas Jones

Primary Advisor Signature: 

Department: English

Abstract

The sound of a narrator telling a story can be difficult to depict in written prose, and yet both Ovid and Twain capture the effect of an old man telling a story: Ovid through Nestor's Story in *The Metamorphoses* and Twain in "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." They both use this framework to discuss the theme of social transgressions. I maintain that both Twain and Ovid use a variation on the *wise-mentor archetype* as a frame to discuss, through the use of satire, social transgressions which neither of their narrators condemn. I aim to explore Ovid and Twain's treatment of their subjects thematically within the context of the *wise-mentor archetype*.

Few classic and modern classic authors genuinely capture the effect of a rambling storyteller in prose, and yet somehow both Ovid and Twain were able to capture the effect of an old man telling a story; Ovid through “Nestor’s Story” in *The Metamorphoses* and Mark Twain in “The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County.” This similarity becomes more striking when viewed within the context of the dramatic differences between these authors. Ovid came from the upper-middle class of Roman society during the days of early imperialism while Twain came from a lower-middle class American family in the days of an expanding frontier. Over five thousand miles and almost two thousand years separate these two literary figures. They use different ways of capturing the idea of an old man rambling. Ovid’s method in *The Metamorphoses* involves several stories within a story and utilizes a more “chaotic” structure than other epics, allowing him the freedom to capture Nestor’s rambling and tell the story of a young woman-turned-man and his death during some centaurs’ attack on a wedding. Nearly two millennia later, Twain’s method employs a *frame story*, but unlike other contemporary works, he respects the subject’s style of speaking and represents both the dialect and the rambling way by which the narrator communicates to tell the story of a gambler who gets cheated. Both of these stories contain the theme of social transgressions and both utilize this frame to emphasize that theme. Such a similar approach is striking since Ovid did not have any direct influence over Twain¹. If two people from such widely different cultures and times could use such a similar way of telling a story, they quite likely employed an *archetype* in their works.

¹ While completely disproving influence from an earlier author to a later one is impossible, there is quite a bit of evidence that Ovid did not directly influence Twain, and certainly not in regards to storytelling style. The easiest bit of evidence for Ovid’s lack of influence on Twain comes from Twain’s own admission that he did not learn Latin in school. Additionally *The Metamorphoses* had fallen out of style as a Latin teaching technique some two hundred years earlier (Scharnhorst 41, Jameson 215-216, Fränkel 2). Twain, though an avid reader, favored dime novels and travelogues instead of works like *The Metamorphoses* (Scharnhorst 43). More direct influences on Twain’s works came from Southwestern humor, minstrel shows, and *The Spirit of the Times*, a magazine which would often feature frame stories, but the ultimate source of “Jumping Frog” comes from the style of a story Twain heard from Ben Coon (Lynn 145-146, Gibson 30; Wonham 47, Quirk 24). Since Twain’s idea to use the style came from a real-life experience of listening to someone ramble, Ovid sharing a similar frame is a coincidence and not a result of Ovid’s influence.

C. G. Jung defines the term *archetype* as a pattern that appears across multiple cultures and times connected to something he referred to as the “collective unconscious” (Jung, “Psychology” 161, Harmon 35). Northrop Frye revised this definition rephrasing the “collective unconscious” into “something that everyone considers an essential part of the literary experience” (Harmon 39). In order to find something truly universal, Jung compared dreams and myths from around the world, searching for patterns that defy the boundaries of individual cultures. Because they come from such widely different times and places what they hold in common, if not a result of direct influence, suggests something universal which is why I employ *archetype* to discuss Ovid and Twain’s shared use of the effect of an old man telling a story².

For the purpose of this paper I will focus on the closest *archetype* to what appears in these two stories, the *old man archetype*, specifically the *wise-mentor* aspect. Jung first defines this as part of a larger *spirit archetype*, which mainly encompasses characters more powerful or at least wiser, than the hero protagonist (Jung, “The Phenomenology” 86, 94). The *old man archetype* can range from a benevolent mentor, to an authority figure, to an evil magician, etc. (Jung, “The Phenomenology” 94, 105). The *wise-mentor* variant of this archetype appears to a hero in times of trouble to give advice, prevent him/her from making a decision, and test his/her morals, although not giving more advise than the hero already knows (Jung, “The Phenomenology” 94, 97,103). When the wise mentor discusses social transgressions he gives advice and establishes morals which the listening hero should be already familiar with, as he/she is familiar with his/her culture. To frame their stories, Ovid and Twain employ the *wise-mentor archetype* who imparts wisdom in the face of social transgressions. Each author deviates from

²For example, if I were to compare Chaucer to Ovid (as Richard Hoffman does) I would not use *archetype* as the framework since Ovid clearly influenced Chaucer’s themes and framing techniques; a comparison between the two studies Ovid’s influence on Chaucer, instead of *archetypes* (Hoffman vii, 19).

the original *wise-mentor archetype* because they assume the audience's familiarity with the conventional uses of this archetype. Then they utilize those deviations to draw attention to their respective points and even question the very nature of the social transgression they discuss.

Ovid mostly subverts the expectations of the *wise-mentor archetype* establishing social transgressions by questioning the narrator's legitimacy. In *The Metamorphoses* multiple stories appear within a larger story, or stories, each with its own narrator. For this particular tale Ovid chooses Nestor, the "prized bore" of *The Iliad*, as his mouthpiece because he frequently attempts to provide advice and corrective influence (Coleman 474). For example, Nestor attempts to break up the conflict between Achilles and Agamemnon before anyone else does, which would have solved one of the poem's main conflicts³ (Homer I.290-333). Because of how familiar people of Ovid's day were with these stories⁴, the audience expected Nestor's to use his status as narrator to provide corrective social influence on his fellow listening Greeks. Nestor begins his tale with strong social corrective influence - rape is terrible even if the gods do it - before switching unexpectedly to the tale of a group of centaurs interrupting a wedding and the resulting fight. The first story is far more in line with the other stories in *The Metamorphoses* and includes little to no interruption of the storytelling and themes of taboo love. However, it provides a greater social commentary to the work as a whole. Caenis' transformation to Caeneus while one of many transformations across established social lines⁵ in *The Metamorphoses*, but this moment finally acknowledges rape is a "serious wrong" for the first time in eleven books (*Ovid*.XI.196-197⁶). This subversion of an almost expected part of the book up to this point, exemplifies a corrective

³ Nestor also mentions Caeneus' battle with the Centaurs in passing; he maintains that because they had listened to him, Achilles and Agamemnon should listen too. He does not mention the wedding or Caeneus' transformation.

⁴ Homer was well known and his work was often used as the original example of the epic format (Fränkel 5, 47, 209).

⁵ Nor is this the first time a girl had transformed into a boy: Iphis transforms into a boy though the reason for the transformation is far less violent (*Ovid* IX.778-785).

⁶ I use the Slavitt translation for line numbers; as of the three translations it alone include line-by-line numbers.

social influence upon the book as a whole. Here Nestor plays the *wise old mentor archetype* without deviation, providing correct influence not only the in-story listeners but the text as a whole.

While the first story holds Nestor as the wise mentor who can critique even the work itself, the second story questions Nestor as a narrator and by extension his subject matter. In the story Nestor describes the “battle” in the epic style with emphasis on those who died and how they die, but unlike other battles, this battle is not glorious. People are killed in horrible and silly ways bludgeoned by ordinary objects as much as actual weapons: stag antlers on the wall gorge out eyes, a chandelier is used as an axe, a cauldron of wine bashes heads in, and all manner of cutlery flies about (*Ovid* XII.258,261, 242-243, 231-235, 238-239). The Slavitt translation makes the dark humor of these scenes even more apparent by adding the line “funny except for the cries on all sides of the injured and dying” (XII.240). The death of Aphidas who dies just because he slept under a table, further draws attention to the location and how the setting makes the fight even more horrific (*Ovid* XII.317-327). Sleeping in a battlefield would get a man killed, but Aphidas is not in a battlefield - he is at a wedding where this sort of behavior should not have led to his death. In fact, he alone displays appropriate behavior for a wedding, further drawing attention to the horror of his death and the deaths around him.

Ovid’s brutal descriptions of the battle appear in stark contrast with his distaste for gladiator arenas and the type of violence that he describes (Fränkel 108). Ovid employs this senseless violence to mock the epic tradition’s portrayal of such actions (Coleman 474). In this section, Ovid takes a detached tone, which does not reflect callousness on the behalf of the author but rather as a type of wit (Kenney “The Metamorphoses” 440). This section satirizes the glorification of war in the epic genre by drawing attention to the lack of glory surrounding this

incident, while the oblivious Nestor continues talking as if describing a battle from *The Iliad* itself. Throughout the battle, the descriptions of the deaths as references to the families left behind. This comes from the epic genre's tradition, which would frequently have moments where it would graphically describe a man's death before flashing to his blissfully unaware family⁷. Nestor explains the gory descriptions of death in detail no matter how odd the weapon, such as Gryneus' death by stag antlers or Eurgrus dying from a fiery torch (Ovid XII.258, 289). Here the attention to gruesome details of battle hardened warriors dying from ordinary household objects serves only to make the deaths seem absurd. While there are fewer references to left-behind family members in this narrative than in *The Iliad*, there two stories provide the same sense of loss. Crantor's death and how it affects Achilles' father and Cyllarus and Hylomome's romance both use this technique to convey the magnitude of a character's death and display the wider world typical in epic battles (Ovid XII.361-363, 388-341). The scarcity of this technique suggests that Ovid sought to avoid complicating his satire with serious topics. Through utilizing the story in the "mouth of the Homeric Nestor," a symbol of the original Homeric tradition that glorifies warfare in the fashion of the traditional epic and then twisting the details, calls not only the violence in this scene into question but the entire epic tradition (Coleman 474).

The satirical nature, most apparent in the detached tone in the face of senseless violence, arises from the historical context surrounding this moment and is not the first moment of parody in *The Metamorphoses*. An earlier story, where Apollo's son drives the sun, parodies the gods through its portrayal of them (Coleman 475). In that story Ovid satirizes the gods, who the new emperor Augustus utilized to solidify his power (Coleman 477). Religion was not the only aspect

⁷ For example, among the many descriptions in book 5 of *The Iliad* Diomedes brutally kills Astynous with a spear to the chest before moving on to Abas and Polyidus. Then the text jumps to the brothers' father for three lines, before moving on to the next pair of brothers and explaining how their father would grieve them, etc. (Homer 5.160-177).

of culture being turned towards glorifying the state. Epic became a genre of propaganda to the extent that poetry most people did not consider it useful unless it glorified the state, with the gold standard of Ovid's time being Virgil's *The Aeneid*, commissioned by Augustus himself (Fränkel 9, Coleman 477). Unfortunately, in Ovid's day no one considered writing a masterpiece in any genre other than epic. Since it was the *genus nobile* of the time and Ovid had to create his masterpiece utilizing the epic genre (Kenney "The Metamorphoses" 431). In order to create an epic without overly propagandic overtones Ovid used a unique approach in both its chaotic structure and its themes which revealed a thinly veiled critique of imperial power. Since Ovid disliked the propaganda present in the epic genre, it is not surprising that this spoof of the epic genre conventions conveys an example of the "anti-epic" sentiment (Kenney "The style" 119, Coleman 477). Ovid's satire of a popular genre that helped cement the power of a government, calls into question the validity of the oral story-telling tradition.

Ovid further mocks the epic genre and the violence that drives it through the frame of the story. Instead of being an infallible narrator, Nestor cannot be trusted. He deliberately leaves out Hercules from the tale because of an old grudge and admits to the omission when pressed (Ovid XII.359-541, 571-574). By questioning the very reliability of Nestor as a narrator, Ovid questions by extension the entire epic tradition that arose from an oral story-telling tradition. Nestor switches without warning between subjects, going into far more detail about Cyllarus and Hylonome's love story than the two or three lines typically allotted in a battle scene of this genre. This switching of subjects to create a disjointed effect reflected in the grammar itself where Ovid relies heavily upon "a succession of small surprises and detours even within the Latin and the

grammar such as ‘unexpected changes of subject, parenthesis, adversatives, antitheses...’⁸

(Kenney “The style” 119). He varies his sentences to keep the audience’s attention, to move the story, or to express a change in characters (Kenney “The style” 132). He also switches the subject from one point in the timeline to another, starting with Caeneus and then switching to a wedding without mentioning for about 200 lines Caeneus presence at the battle or that he will die (Ovid XII.388-417, 454-455, 519). The frame allows for the freedom to jump between timelines, which makes finding a connection between two subjects even more difficult (Kenney “The Metamorphoses” 432). And when Nestor finally does mention Caeneus, he only briefly mentions who Caeneus had kills without including any details. This contrasts the incredible detail of the deaths that came earlier. Nestor claims that this disparity arises out of his inability to remember how Caeneus killed them, which only further establishes him as unreliable (Ovid XII.457-460).

Ovid often overuses superfluous details to come off as “longwinded, even if musically so” and while very apparent in the graphic descriptions of numerous guests’ deaths, these details disappear when it comes to Caeneus (Kenney “The style” 132). For there to be so much detail before Caeneus’ appearance and so little when the story had reaches its supposed subject, leaves the narrator coming off as longwinded, unreliable, and unable remember the importance of that subject. While Ovid does not generally build up to a point, he still tries to keep a light and rapid meter to emphasize “story for stories’ sake” (Kenney “The style” 119, Mackail 141). The lack of details on Caeneus’ fight within the structure of the poem itself questions Caeneus’ status as the focal point of Nestor’s story.

This disjointedness mimics the work on a whole. Nothing holds the disjointed stories of

⁸ Kenney finds translators to be unable preserve this sense of “reading until the poet tells him,” which he then uses to disregard all translations (“The style” 128-30). I, however, cannot read Latin so I must rely upon articles like his to explain the finer details of Latin grammar.

The Metamorphoses together and it barely has any symmetry or visible patterns. All that remains constant is the theme of transformation (Kenney “The Metamorphoses” 432,435). But in this microcosm of a story, transformation only happens twice, both to Caeneus who transforms once to a man and once to a bird, with the vast majority of the poem in-between these two stories devoted to the battle (Ovid XII.197-204, 520-530). The lack of details on Caeneus’ kills suggests the center of this story lies elsewhere and even the transformations themselves provide evidence for this. When describing a transformation, Ovid focuses on the characters and how the transformation affects their internal state or the emotions of those around them (Kenney “The style” 145). In the first transformation this becomes apparent in Caeneus’ horror at the violence she has experienced and her joy in changing into something that can protect herself (Ovid XII.197-204). Here Ovid describes sexual assault as morally inappropriate for the first time in the entire poem and thus addresses a theme of social transgressions. Caeneus’ final transformation marks another instance of inappropriate violence. This transformation takes place at the end of the battle, or at least the end of Nestor’s story about the battle, where Caeneus transforms into a bird upon his death at the hands of the centaurs (Ovid XII.531-535). Here the men view Caeneus’ postmortem transformation into a bird as amazing but it does not stop them from realizing that Caeneus should not have died at all (Ovid XII.531-532). These two transformations, though both centering around Caeneus, focus on the broader theme of violence in inappropriate settings and holds Nestor’s disjointed story together.

By questioning Nestor as a narrator and Caeneus as the focal point of the story, Ovid questions not only the validity of the epic genre and its themes of glorious violence but also those themes as a whole. He does this through changing the context until the violence would be considered taboo and then offering that story in the words of someone who cannot seem to tell

the difference between the two scenarios, and through focusing not on Caeneus as a main character but the two acts of inappropriate violence that defined his life.

Unlike Ovid, Twain's old man does not appear, at first glance, to give out important life advice, to the dismay of his listener. In fact, he seems to do the exact opposite with his detailed account of the gambling habits of one Jim Smiley. His listener⁹ has asked Wheeler for information on a friend's friend, and Wheeler instead goes off on a long tangent about a complete stranger who just happens to have the same name, none of which the listener finds relevant (Twain 1, 5-6). This difference in values is not solely limited to the relevance of the story; Wheeler's rambling explores the social taboo of gambling but instead of condemning those who participated in this transgression, Wheeler admires his gambling characters (Twain 1-2, Quirk 25-26). Yet throughout the story the listener does not interrupt him, and once story is concluded the audience would undoubtedly prefer to hear more of Wheeler's story than the listener (Quirk 27). Ordinarily the archetypal frame would be used to enforce the contemporary social norms the author champions, but in "Jumping Frog" Twain validates stories that do not condemn a social transgression such as gambling. Twain does this by respecting his internal narrator Wheeler's style of speaking in both his dialect and rambling way of communicating. By respecting the narrator despite Wheeler's "backwater" tendencies, Twain forces the audience to see the value in what he has to say. And since Wheeler's story contains gambling, a social transgression of the time, Twain through Wheeler addresses how such a social transgression does not eliminate the worth of the story being told or the virtues, like persistence, of the gambler.

Wheeler and his hero Smiley both come from a rougher background than the

⁹ Who referred to as "Mark Twain" but not the "Mark Twain" persona Twain would later adopt (Lynn 145-146). To avoid confusion, this "Mark Twain" will be called "the listener" and "Twain" will be used exclusively for the author himself.

“gentleman” who listens to Wheeler. The story makes this clash of cultures clear in the differences within the vocabulary used in the two character’s viewpoints. The sections where the listener writes his side of the story relies on large words like “garrulous,” “hereunto,” and “dilapidated” (Twain 1). The listener also favors adjectives like “cherished” “tranquil” “interminable” (Twain 1). In contrast, Wheeler’s dialogue includes few adjectives, except when needed to emphasize an accent, like “uncommon lucky,” and instead focuses on character traits to describe others (Twain 2). This difference shows not only that Wheeler lacks the vocabulary of the listener, but also that Wheeler focuses on his characters’ personality trait instead of their physical appearance.

The vernacular, present throughout the whole section of Wheeler’s perspective, creates the most important distinction between the two sections. Twain captures this using ‘A little decayed grammar here, a little wise tautology there’ and misspelling words such as “warn’t” “feller’d” “solit’ry” and “ary” to preserve the sound of Wheeler’s accent (Gibson 19, Twain 2). Through the text alone, the differences between the two characters become obvious without outright stating them; Wheeler is a working-class frontiersman and his listener, who Twain does not describe, is a gentleman visitor. The differences between Wheeler and his listener are not just ones of class and language but also a different value system. The listener gains the impression that Wheeler holds both Smiley and his unnamed opponent in the highest regard as “men of transcendent genius in finesse,” both of whom the listener only views as “vagabond[s]” (Twain 1-2, 5). And while Wheeler does not fail to mention that Smiley loses, he does not condemn his addiction to gambling as anything more than an amusing quirk, nor does he condemn the stranger’s cheating to win the bet, even going out of his way to describe the stranger getting in the last laugh over Smiley (Twain 2-5). Clearly Wheeler does not consider

cheating and gambling as vices since he seems ignorant of the social transgressions he describes. Twain's narrator, like Nestor during his story of the centaurs, is unaware of the folly of his words. Instead, Twain structures the story so as not to condemn his narrator for holding different values. Through elevating Wheeler, Twain questions why people who partake in these transgressions are so often dismissed.

Southwestern humor, a popular nineteenth-century style, commonly included a frame story with a narrator who speaks in the vernacular and fails to see the error in his story or its comedic aspects. Southwestern humorists used the frame to show the difference between a Whig gentleman and the lower class vernacular of their Democrat countryman (Gibson 29). This style would later expand to include the western territories as evidenced by how such stories were framed when they returned east (Wonham 42-43). Frame stories allowed for the author to make fun of the poor 'democrat' or any vernacular storyteller while still telling a funny story without letting the vices present in the story reflect upon the 'gentleman' speaker (Lynn 64). The storyteller was as important as the story itself, and a comic internal narrator could be the entire focus of a work (Blair 235). To some extent Twain employs this technique, by preserving the differences between Wheeler and his listener and designing the text in Wheeler's sections to sound like an old man rambling. He captures Wheeler's rambling through the grammar where "clause follows co-ordinate clause with the tacit assumption that no one particular fact is worth more than any other fact" (Covici 57). Twain constructed the sentences and paragraphs to give the visual appearance of a long story; and included superfluous details, such as all of Wheeler's other gambling animals before even getting to the titular frog, to further give off that effect (Twain 4). Twain considered this framing technique so important he scrapped an earlier version of the story that did not include the frame and ran through at least three versions of this work

before he could develop the frame he wanted that balanced with the story he wanted to tell (Scharnhorst 298). But unlike other Southwestern humorists of the time, Twain goes out of his way to deliberately subvert the idea that Wheeler, not the content of his story, is the joke. He does this through the names of the animals within the story, respecting Wheeler, and turning the joke on the listening gentleman.

Twain deliberately subverts the idea that the frame takes out the importance of the speaker by ridiculing the whole Southwestern humor tradition through the names that he gives the animals. The name he chooses for his frog, Daniel Webster, belonged to the “arch-hero” to the Whigs¹⁰, and then has him lose to a random under-frog (Lynn 147). Having the Webster frog, the Whigs’ symbol of their party, lose to a stranger went against the entirety of the anti-pretentiousness the party had come to associate itself with (Covici 8-9) Twain does not just satirize the Whigs, he also ridicules their political rivals, the democrats. Andrew Jackson, who the Whigs hated and the Democrats loved, is the namesake of a bulldog unable to adapt to a new strategy (Lynn 146). And while Wheeler himself expresses sadness at the bulldog’s early death and believes it could have become something great, but the inclusion of lines such as “he was a genius and I know it, because he had not had no opportunities to speak of” seem more like ironic praise than sincere regret (Lynn 147 Twain 3). By poking fun not only at the Whigs who utilized the Southwestern tradition but also the Democrats they poked fun at, Twain sets his story up as something entirely new and not following either agenda, allowing his piece to stand out on its own.

Twain respects Wheeler as a narrator by not interrupting him and by portraying the vernacular not as a hallmark of a limited education but as a realistic aspect of Wheeler’s

¹⁰ Twain was raised a Wig but lost his faith in the party during the Civil War (Lynn 140).

character. When Wheeler starts speaking, the listener never interrupts him and the story only stops because an outside person calls out to Wheeler (Twain 2-5). This was unusual for Southwestern humor at the time. In general a listening gentleman would often interrupt the speaker to draw attention to a logical inconsistency that a clearly smarter gentleman would notice but the speaker would not (Quirk 4). Furthermore, this entire section is in the vernacular but unlike others at the time, Twain does not use it to ridicule his storyteller. Traditionally, Whig's utilized Vernacular English in frame stories to push their ideas and establish the foolishness or backwater tendencies of the character who spoke in such a dialect (Lynn 69). Here Twain stands out not for using the vernacular, but for using it without any other motivation other than letting someone sit down and tell their story in their own words (Quirk 4). By respecting the humanity of Wheeler, Twain subverts the idea of using the vernacular to make fun of a subject (Gibson 29). At no point in "Jumping Frog" does Twain portray Wheeler as a "buffoon" stereotype simply because of his dialect and instead employs the vernacular for the sake of realism because he believes Wheeler's way of speaking is "adequate to depict the world his characters inhabit" (Quirk 4). Allowing Wheeler to communicate in his own words without interruptions or derogatory comments lets him convey his story effectively and cements his position of a wise-mentor capable of laying out his own values even if they are different from those established by society.

Wheeler is never reduced to the "butt of the joke." Instead that honor falls to the listening gentleman who is incapable of seeing the value within the story he just heard (Quirk 24). Twain creates this effect in part by not interrupting Wheeler, in order to let the audience lose itself in his story. When they are interrupted the listener's perspective and grammar style return in an almost jarring fashion (Twain 5-6). Here the listener brushes off what he just heard about the

“vagabond” and makes a break for the door, dodging the attempts of Wheeler to draw him back into the conversation (Twain 5-6). According to the Oxford English Dictionary “Vagabond” in this context means worthless or good-for-nothing person, a sharp departure from Wheeler’s depiction of him as a persistent hero (“Vagabond”). The use of the word “vagabond” to describe Smiley has a jarring effect upon the reader, since he has been the protagonist for about two thirds of the story. For the listener to simply dismiss the protagonist for most of the story breaks the listener from the audience. This break between Twain’s listener and the reading audience continues in how the listener views this story.

Twain begins “The Celebrated Jumping Frog” with the listener complaining about the story that he is about to share (Twain 1). With no other point of reference, the listener becomes an audience surrogate, as both are listening to Wheeler’s tale. However once the story concludes, the audience can see the value in the story where the listener cannot. The listener cannot find any value in the story because it does not complete his objective and therefore, in his mind, wastes his time (Quirk 25 Twain 5-6). He cannot even be bothered to try to see the persistence Wheeler admires so strongly in Smiley (Quirk 26). Nor does he notice the cleverness displayed by the stranger. The audience, on the other hand, can see the value and humor of the story and wants to hear more, which places the listener, who cannot figure out that he is listening to “gold”¹¹, as the “butt of the joke” (Quirk 27). This further brakes the listener from the audience and transforms him from an audience surrogate to a character. The listener may be a gentleman, but Wheeler, the vernacular-using “Clown” is clever¹² (Lynn 146). Wheeler can see the value in a story about a “vagabond,” a value that the listener cannot. With the listener reduced to the “butt of the joke,”

¹¹ For Twain it was gold. This story kickstarted his literary career (Quirk 27).

¹² Lynn even maintains that Wheeler might even be “leading the listener on” mimicking the drollery on purpose to mimic the style of then-popular lecturer Artemus Ward (146).

the audience only has Wheeler's viewpoint to fall back on and his values are the ones that win this clash of values.

Twain considered the story itself as important as the frame and he took great pains to draw the reader's attention to both. "Jumping Frog" blends two types of humor, a humorous narration with its joke on the listener and the humor in Wheeler's story (Blair 235-236). The framing device sets up a creates a humorous effect, but there is little point in respecting a narrator if he has nothing to say. In order to draw the audience's attention to the main story of the frog, Twain deliberately slows down the narrative by including dialogue he glossed over in earlier stories. This pulls the audience's attention to the frog story and the characters of Smiley and his opponent as they engage in this activity. From their interactions the story establishes Wheeler's values of persistence and cleverness. Twain valued Wheeler's story and showed it when he scrapped "Angel's Camp Constable" which focused on the frame and not the story" (Wonham 67). But he also scrapped an earlier version, "The Only Reliable Account of the Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," which solely focused on the story did not use Wheeler's frame (Wonham 67). Since neither of these two versions worked, clearly Twain himself cared deeply about not only having Wheeler tell his story but having him tell it in his own way, conveying themes as important as the frame employed to tell them.

Wheeler might be a backwater frontiersman telling a story about a fellow frontiersman with a gambling addiction, but since Twain respects his status as the narrator, his ideas are respected. Twain demonstrates that people like Smiley, who speak in vernacular and take part in these social taboos, not only have relevant stories to tell but should be respected without interruption or judgement from those who listen. Here the *old man archetype* is being both subverted and utilized traditionally at the same time. Subverted in that Wheeler has no important

advice to give, but utilized traditionally in that he does have a story to tell, one that the audience can benefit listening to, even if only for a good laugh.

Both Twain and Ovid employ the *wise-mentor archetype* as the frame for stories about social transgressions. Ovid first uses the status of his narrator Nestor to critique certain practices found throughout *The Metamorphoses* and then twists the typical archetype by questioning that narrator's validity. He calls into question why excessive violence is permitted in some contexts and not in others. Twain plays with the idea of subverting the *wise-mentor archetype* by questioning the traditional dismissal of vernacular storytellers and their values. At first he appears to give his narrator, Wheeler, nothing of importance to say but then reveals Wheeler's status as a traditional wise-mentor who establishes his own social transgressions, questioning why such characters are often dismissed. Together frame and theme amplify their respective social commentary on how the oral stories of their time were recorded.

Works Cited

- Blair, Walter. "Mark Twain and the Mind's Ear." *The American Self: Myth, Ideology, and Popular Culture*, edited by Sam B. Girgus. University of New Mexico Press, 1981. pp 231-239.
- Coleman, Robert. "Structure and Intention in the Metamorphoses." *The Classical Quarterly*, vol.21, no.2, Classical Association, Nov., 1971, pp 461-477, *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/637802>
- Covici, Pascal Jr. *Mark Twain's Humor: The Image of a World*. Southern Methodist University Press, 1962.
- Fränkel, Hermann. *Ovid: A Poet Between Two Worlds*. University of California Press, 1945.
- Gibson, William M. *The Art of Mark Twain*. Oxford University Press, New York, 1976.
- Harmon, William and C. Hugh Holman. *A Handbook to Literature*, 7th edition, Macmillan Publishing Company, 1996.
- Hoffman, Richard L. *Ovid and the Canterbury Tales*. University of Pennsylvania, 1966.
- Homer. *The Iliad*, translated by Robert Fagles. Penguin Classics, 1990.
- Jameson, Caroline. "Ovid in the Sixteenth Century." *Ovid*, edited by J.W.Binns. Routledge, and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1973. pp 210-242.
- Jung, C.G. "Psychology and Literature" *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*. Harcourt Inc, 2009, pp.152-173.
- Jung, C.G. "The Phenomenology of the Spirit in Fairytales." *Four Archetypes*. Princeton University Press 1959. Pp 83-133. *la-serria eBook Collection (ProQuest Ebook Central)* <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/lasierra-ebooks/detail.action?docID=832709>
- Kenney, E. J. "The Metamorphoses." *The Cambridge History of Classical Literature: II Latin*

Literature, edited by E.J. Kenney. 1982 pp. 430-441

Kenny, E.J. "The Style of the Metamorphoses." *Ovid*, edited by J.W.Binns. Routledge, and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1973. pp 116-153.

Lynn, Kenneth S. *Mark Twain and Southwestern Humor*. Little, Brown and Company, 1959.

Mackail, J. W "Ovid." *Latin Literature*. Frederick Ungar Publishing Co. pp 132-144.

Ovid. *The Metamorphoses*, 2nd Edition, translated by Frank Justus. Miller Harvard University Press, 1984.

Ovid. *The Metamorphoses*, translated by David R. Slavitt. John Hopkins University Press, 1994.

Ovid. *The Metamorphoses*, translated by Rolfe Humphries. Indiana University Press, 2018.

Quirk, Tom. *Mark Twain: A Study in Short Fiction*. Twayne Publishers, 1997.

Scharnhorst, Gary. *The Life of Mark Twain: The Early Years 1835-1871*. University of Missouri Press, 2018.

Slavitt, David R, translator. *The Metamorphoses*, by Ovid. John Hopkins University Press, 1994.

Twain, Mark. "The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County." *The Complete Short Stories of Mark Twain*, edited by Charles Neider. Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1957. pp 1-6.

"Vagabond" Definition 3. *Oxford English Dictionary*, Oxford UP, 2019,

<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/220984?rskey=RCF1cJ&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

Wonham, Henry B. *Mark Twain and the Art of the Tall Tale*. Oxford University Press Incorporated, 1993. *la-serria eBook Collection (ProQuest Ebook Central)*

<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/laserria-ebooks/detail.action?docID=241496>