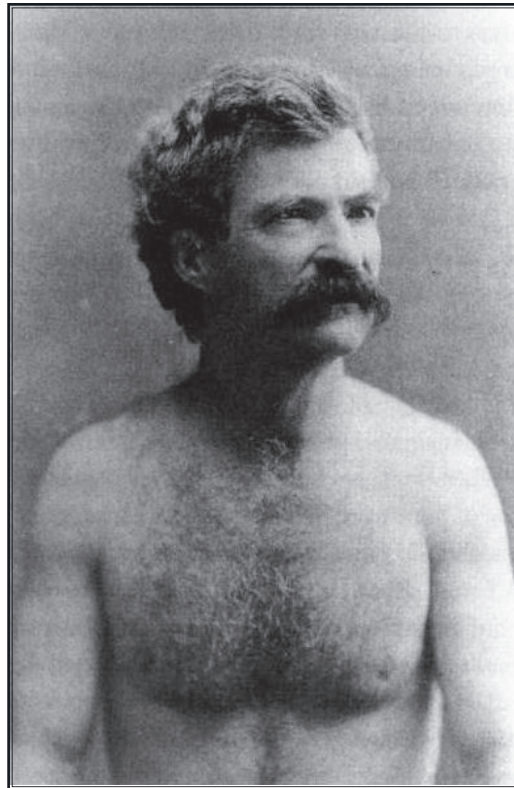


Complicating Twain

Biography, Autobiography, and the Personal Scholar

Remembering Michael J. Kiskis



A Weekend Symposium

Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies
October 19th and 20th, 2012

Elmira College Campus Map



1. Hamilton Hall*
- Office of Admissions
2. Fassett Commons*
3. Cowles Hall*
4. Mark Twain Study*
5. Gillett Memorial Hall*
6. Alumni Hall
7. Carnegie Hall*
8. Kolker Hall
9. Watson Fine Arts
10. Harris Hall
11. McGraw Hall
12. Curtis McGraw Bookstore
13. College Post Office
14. The College Cottages

15. Anderson Hall
16. Columbia Hall
17. Meier Hall
18. Gannett-Tripp Library

19. Clarke Health Center
20. Twin Towers
21. Campus Center
22. Speidel Gymnasium
23. Gibson Theatre
24. Tompkins Hall*
25. Perry Hall
26. The President's Home
27. Campus Field

**Listed on the National Register of Historic Places*

COWLES HALL
Friday Evening;
Saturday Morning and Afternoon

TOMPKINS HALL
On-Campus Housing

DIRECTIONS TO QUARRY FARM (Saturday Evening)

From Elmira College, head east on Washington Avenue across the Clemens Center Parkway to Sullivan Street. Turn right on Sullivan. Turn left on East Avenue. Turn left on Crane Road. Quarry Farm will be on your left. Please park on the grassy area behind the Barn. For GPS: 131 Crane Road Elmira, NY 14901

Complicating Twain

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Remembering Michael J. Kiskis



Friday, October 19th, 2012

Cowles Hall Rotunda

6 - 7 p.m.



REGISTRATION

Please pick up Symposium registration packet in Cowles Hall.

COCKTAILS

Enjoy a sampling of Finger Lakes wine, beer, and hors d'oeuvres.

7 p.m.

WELCOME

Barbara Snedecor
Elmira College

Presidential Greetings

Ronald Champagne
Elmira College

7:15 p.m.

DINNER

Crab Bisque Soup; Stuffed Tenderloin of Beef (Roasted Red Peppers, Spinach, and Asiago Cheese); Roasted Baby Whole Potatoes and Pearl Onions; Warm Grape Crumble with Fresh Cream

8:15 p.m.

Keynote

Peterson Chapel

OPENING REMARKS

Ann Ryan
Le Moyne College
Symposium Co-Chair

KEYNOTE

Come Back to the Raft Ag'in,
Michael Honey

Laura Skandera Trombley
Pitzer College



8 - 8:40 a.m.

BUFFET BREAKFAST
(Food and drink allowed in lecture hall)

Cowles Hall Rotunda

8:45 - 10:30 a.m.

Autobiography
Mark Woodhouse *Elmira College*
Panel Chair

Peterson Chapel

What Does the 'Temporal Turn' mean for Autobiography?
Mark Twain, Memory, and the Failures of Historicism
Jed Dobson *Indiana University*



"The Hour of Lead": Mark Twain and Grief
Linda Morris *University of California, Davis*

Real Property and Fictional Land: The Fact and the
Fiction of the Tennessee Land
Lawrence Howe *Roosevelt University*

Real and Imagined Guilt in "The Facts Concerning the
Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut"
Barbara Snedecor *Elmira College*

10:30 - 10:40 a.m.

BREAK

Cowles Hall Rotunda
Refreshments available

10:45 - 12:30 a.m.

Twain and Others
Kerry Driscoll *Saint Joseph University*
Panel Chair

Peterson Chapel



Mark Twain and Julian Hawthorne
Gary Scharnhorst *University of New Mexico*

Suffering Shelley's Missionaries: Mark Twain and the Cult of Personality
Alex Effgen *Boston University*

"Like Real Chums": Twain's Relations with African Americans
in Elmira's Domestic Circle
Sharon McCoy *University of Georgia*

Fear and Loathing: The Gothic Fate of Jim
Ann Ryan *Le Moyne College*

12:30 - 1:25 p.m.

LUNCHEON BUFFET

Cowles Hall Rotunda

Saturday afternoon

Cowles Hall

1:30 - 3:15 p.m.

Traveling In (and with) Twain

Ann Ryan *Le Moyne College*
Panel Chair

Peterson Chapel

Twain and Realism in the First Virtual Age

Bruce Michelson *University of Illinois*

The "Slandered Dogs" and "Forgettable Birds" of Mark Twain's Travel Books

Thomas Wilmeth *Concordia University Wisconsin*

Running with Coyotes

Jeffrey Steinbrink *Franklin and Marshall College*

Mark Twain and the Maori

Kerry Driscoll *University of Saint Joseph*

3:15 - 3:25 p.m.

BREAK

Refreshments available

3:30 - 4:30 p.m.

Roundtable

The Scholarly Legacy of Michael Kiskis

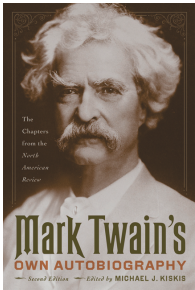
Ann Ryan *Le Moyne College*

Kerry Driscoll *University of Saint Joseph*

Bruce Michelson *University of Illinois*

Laura Skandera Trombley *Pitzer College*

Gary Scharnhorst *University of New Mexico*



Saturday evening

Quarry Farm

6 p.m.

COCKTAILS

Enjoy a sampling of Finger Lakes wine, beer, and hors d'oeuvres.

On the Porch at Quarry Farm

DINNER

Mixed Greens Salad with Apples, Cranberries, and Walnuts and Raspberry Vinaigrette Dressing; Bourbon Apricot Glazed Chicken with Roasted Sweet Potato and Bacon and Warm Portuguese Rolls.

CLOSING COMMENTS

OVER DESSERT

Remembering Michael

Apple Dumpling with Rum Caramel Sauce

Kerry Driscoll
Saint Joseph University
Symposium Co-Chair



Complicating Twain

Abstracts

What does the “Temporal Turn” mean for Autobiography?:

Mark Twain, Memory, and the Failures of Historicism

Jed Dobson *Indiana University*

Two major trends mark the self-writing of the late nineteenth century as different from self-representation prior to the 1870s: the breakdown of linearity or narrative within a single text and the phenomenon of an author returning to their past to publish multiple editions of their own autobiography. The wide-spread, popular interest in the 2010 publication of the first volume of *Mark Twain's Autobiography* by the University of California Press offers an opportunity to reexamine this nonlinear, fractured, and notoriously difficult to read text. My paper argues that Twain, like several other authors of the “generation of 1870,” through his formal changes to self-representation ~ his multiple false starts, digressions, and retelling ~ suggests that something remains alive within the past that has yet to be properly addressed or acknowledged. Twain turned to autobiography for what we might term “recreative” possibilities in the last decades of the nineteenth century reimagine and redefine his past alongside that of the nation. Although one might understand his repeated returns to the material of the past as giving up on any sense of history along with subjectivity, we might consider this move as less of an ahistorical evasion of history ~ as has been the critical consensus for sometime ~ as much as an awareness of a radical cut, a rupture. In treating his memory of the past as a collection of self-differing temporalities Twain offers a reading of history that might be richer and more historical than that offered by traditional, linear autobiographical accounts. jadobson@indiana.edu

Mark Twain and the Maori

Kerry Driscoll *Saint Joseph University*

On his 1895-96 world lecture tour, Mark Twain visited the far-flung outposts of the British Empire ~ Australia, New Zealand, India, and South Africa. As recounted in *Following the Equator*, he contemplated the fate of colonized indigenous peoples at every stop along his journey, describing their dispossession and diminishing populations largely in terms of the ethnocentric myth of “vanishing primitive races” who were inevitably vanquished by progress and technology. Although Twain encountered no aborigines in Australia ~ relying instead on books and the personal anecdotes of the “Old Settlers” as his primary sources of information ~ that was not the case in New Zealand, which he toured from November to early December 1895. On both the North and South Islands, he toured museums and private collections of Maori artifacts, met a number of prominent colonial settlers who regarded the Maori with great esteem, and was introduced to several Maori politicians. These experiences challenged many of the writer's categorical assumptions about the inferiority of so-called “savages.” In my paper, I will argue that Twain's brief exposure to the Maori represents a watershed in the development of his thinking about all indigenous peoples ~ particularly in terms of his recognition of native land rights. Using Twain's unpublished notebooks and letters, as well as the manuscript of *Following the Equator* (housed in the Berg Collection of the New York Public Library), I will attempt to reconstruct the extent of the writer's first-hand contact with the Maori, with a specific focus on an intimate dinner given in his honor on December 11, 1895 at the Club Hotel in Wellington, attended by only eight other people, mostly prominent Maoris (Shillingsburg 178), and examine the ways in which these experiences contributed to the liberalization of his racial views. kdriscoll@usj.edu

Suffering Shelley's Missionaries: Mark Twain and the Cult of Personality

A. B. Effgen *Boston University*

I have committed sins, of course; but I have not committed enough of them to entitle me to the punishment of reduction to the bread and water of ordinary literature during six years when I might have been living on the fat diet spread for the righteous in Professor Dowden's *Life of Shelley*, if I had been justly dealt with.

"In Defence of Harriet Shelley," Mark Twain

When the Irish literary scholar Edward Dowden (1843-1913) published the official biography of British Romantic poet and essayist Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822), Dowden's work became the target for two vicious literary sharpshooters: Matthew Arnold (1822-1888) and Mark Twain (Samuel L. Clemens, 1835-1910). Published in the July through September 1894 issues of the *North American Review*, "In Defence of Harriet Shelley" is Mark Twain's legal brief to salvage the reputation of Percy Shelley's first wife.

"Suffering Shelley's Missionaries" summarizes the history and relationship behind Arnold's review of Dowden's *Life of Shelley* and Mark Twain's "In Defence of Harriet Shelley." In spite of their many differences, Arnold and Twain agree that Dowden besmirched the honor of Shelley's first wife, Harriet, and downplayed Shelley's part in her suicide (deserting her in favor of William Godwin's young daughter, Mary). Through their published works, unfinished manuscripts, extant notebooks and correspondence, the motives behind Twain, Arnold, and Dowden reveal the impact sudden death, financial panic, and personal obligation held on their perspectives, their family relationships, and their literary reputations. abeffgen@bu.edu

Real Property and Fictional Land: The Fact and the Fiction of the Tennessee Land

Lawrence Howe *Roosevelt University*

Mark Twain's *Autobiography* makes several references to his family's stake in Tennessee Land. This paper focuses specifically on the discrepancy between Twain's 1870 account of his father's investment and the Tennessee records of his land transactions. The documents show that John Clemens made multiple, scattered purchases and sales over a period of several years rather than the single purchase of a 75,000-acre tract described in the *Autobiography*, suggesting that the story grew over the years to become part of a larger family myth.

My interest in the facts of the land holdings is secondary to assessing how the myth affected Twain's relation to what has lately been called America's ownership society. The land, and the expectations that it inflamed or extinguished, served the Clemens family's dream of material well-being and, more importantly, Twain's own literary purposes. In his writing, Twain converted the land to fictional use affording him considerable professional value, first, in *Roughing It* (1872) tangentially and, then, centrally in *The Gilded Age* (1873). Despite this latter text's marginal status in the Twain canon, I will argue that the myth of the Tennessee Land was crucial in establishing his confidence both in this collaboration with Warner and in his emerging identity as a novelist.

The meanings embedded in the actual and mythical land holdings lead us to understand how Twain was invested in the concept of ownership, a right central to American identity. Twain's tangled experiences with ownership place him squarely within a cultural pre-occupation. But his writing does not naively endorse the possession of property but rather interrogates the terms, implications, and difficulties of asserting and maintaining ownership. freihowe@sbcglobal.net

"Like real chums": Twain's Relations with African Americans in Elmira's Domestic Circle

Sharon D. McCoy *University of Georgia*

Considering the complex and ambivalent realities of Twain's relationships with Mary Ann Cord and John T. Lewis can help avoid over-romanticization not only of published works such as "A True Story" or *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, but also of Clemens's personal writing, most notably his letters and notes of admiration for Lewis. Further, they complicate our ideas of Clemens's own attitudes and actions in regard to race and toward individual people of color with whom he professed close ties. While Twain allowed Cord, as "Aunt Rachel," to tell her moving experiences in "A True Story," there is little evidence that the relationship developed beyond the level that he ironically mocks there, and his responses to Cord's illness and death disrupt a more romantic interpretation of any personal growth that "A True Story" might seem to represent. Further, Clemens's willingness to use Lewis to play a practi-

cal joke on Henry Rogers ~ in spite of the dire extremity of Lewis's personal circumstances ~ resonates with both Clemens's fundamental ignorance about basic facts of Lewis's life and his professed admiration and friendship for him. As Twain scholars and critics, sometimes we over-emphasize his role and importance in the lives of others. Looking more closely at Lewis and Cord de-centralizes Clemens: though on some level proud of their relationships with Mark Twain, both considered him to be tangential to their lives and concerns. While Clemens's relationships with Lewis and Cord were central in his own shifting perspectives on race during key years, they were often mediated by the women in his life ~ Livy, Susan Crane, and even Emilie Rogers, wife of H. H. Rogers ~ and his (sometimes ironically acknowledged) distance from their lives and concerns reveals complex, ambiguous, ambivalent, and sometimes disturbing relationships that deserve close and critical attention. sdmccoy@uga.edu

Young Realists in a New Virtual Age

Bruce Michelson *University of Illinois*

As Realism was struggling to gain traction and respect as a American literary mode, technological and industrial breakthroughs, as well as architectural projects on a massive scale, were fostering a revolution in virtual experience not only in the British and European metropolis but all over the countryside~ complicating the young American writer's quest to sort out the genuine from the artificial. In the shops, the theaters, the churches, the new and magisterial railroad stations, and even the layout and embellishment of entire neighborhoods, the contrived and the outright faux were everywhere ~ providing a new and special challenge for mimetic representational narrative.

To center an inquiry into the rise of American realism and this early heyday of the virtual, I concentrate on narratives of excursion, specifically to London, Paris and other Western European sites from 1867 through 1875, with special attention to early travel writings of Mark Twain, William Dean Howells, and Henry James. In their accounts from those years, we can see the impact of the Ecclesiological Society and George Gilbert Scott in England, and also of Haussmann in Paris and Viollet-le-Duc in that city and elsewhere in France, as well as the urgent cleanup and restorations after the massacres and widespread destruction in the heart of Paris in the Spring of 1871 ~ to turn the city back into the Second Empire theme park that new waves of visitors were looking for. How to see and describe the new truth of England and the Continent: we can compare the experiments of these three authors, their insights and also their evasions, as they write about the world as found. brucem@illinois.edu

"The Hour of Lead": Mark Twain and Grief

Linda A. Morris *University of California, Davis*

I take the title of my paper from a line in Emily Dickinson's poem, "After great pain." I have set out to try to understand how Sam Clemens made his own way through the great pain of the deaths of two daughters and his beloved wife, Livy, relying extensively on letters he wrote to intimate friends in the days immediately following the deaths of Susy and Livy, and the conclusion of his Autobiography written while Jean's body still lay in her room at Stormfield. I contrast this writing to "A Family Sketch" written with the distance of time, that is dedicated to the memory of his daughter Susy. The paper explores to what extent Clemens moved through his grief through the act of writing ~ "as freezing persons recollect the snow"~ and the limitations of that strategy.

What fascinates me most is how Clemens spontaneously created metaphors in his letters to try to express the depth of his feelings. Most he uses only once, as in defining himself as a man without a country after Livy died, for "she was my country." There is one set of metaphors, however, he returns to in different language with each death: metaphors relating to money and wealth, or more accurately, to wealth and poverty. Because (with one exception) these metaphors were all written in letters to intimate friends, I take them to be especially revealing of the true state of his mind and the sheer impossibility of fully expressing his grief.

I also explore those moments in this writing when he uses unusually personal language as opposed to more conventional language to express his grief. He never rails against a cruel and unfeeling god ~ he almost never invokes any religious or quasi-religious language ~ and he declares forcefully that no matter how pained he is by his daughters' deaths, he would never wish them back to life. For Clemens, death really seemed to be a gift, a terrible one, but a gift nonetheless. lamorris@ucdavis.edu

Fear and Loathing: The Gothic of Jim

Ann Ryan *Le Moyne College*

Mark Twain consciously adopts and adapts the functions of the gothic to mark the tensions between the history that white America wants to believe and the truths that it actively represses. Thus, like the most canonical gothic fictions, *Huckleberry Finn* creates a monster to embody cultural fears and anxieties and then slays that monster in an effort to mediate them. Jim is infantilized, feminized, castrated to prevent the more terrifying spectre of an autonomous figure of black masculinity from emerging. Yet, predictably, this conservative gesture of the gothic simultaneously awakens a more disruptive counterpoint. When we attempt to contain, rationalize, or destroy these fears—when the mob chases the monster, what we evoke is the truth those fears struggle to bury. The claim of Frankenstein’s creature is “I’m not a monster; I’m a man.” Beneath Nat Turner’s ecstatic prophesies and the bloody revolt they inspire, after Frederick Douglass beats Mr. Covey into submission, we hear this same claim. Through Jim’s association with these two historical figures, Twain positions him within the vicinity of this revolutionary violence. RyanAM@alumni.lemoyne.edu

Mark Twain and Julian Hawthorne

Gary Scharnhorst *University of New Mexico*

The son of the author of *The Scarlet Letter*, Julian Hawthorne (1846-1934) and Mark Twain were friends for nearly forty years. They met in 1872, but they were best known to each other as members of the Authors’ Club of New York in the mid-1880s. They cooperated in support of the poet Will Carleton, who had been nominated for membership in the Club, and they occasionally socialized during the mid- to late-1880s. They stayed in touch even after Twain returned to the U.S. in November 1900 after spending most of the previous decade in Europe. Hawthorne visited him at his home, probably the house on Fifth Avenue in New York where Twain lived from 1904 until 1908, and as late as 1909 they signed the same petition on behalf of women’s suffrage. When Hawthorne began to tout investments in worthless silver mines in Canada during the summer of 1908, he contacted Twain, who was tempted to buy stock in the venture. While there is no record that he actually invested, he may have done so. After all, he had earlier invested in such boondoggles as a carpet-pattern machine and the egg-product plasmon. As he indicated, he did not gamble “on the mines” but “on Julian Hawthorne’s integrity & levelheadedness.” That is, Twain misjudged the potential of the mine just as, in the end, he misread the man. If he did invest, the money he spent was never a cause of friction between them; they remained friends until Twain’s death in 1910. “I knew him well and loved him; I have laughed and grieved with him; he was as genuine and simple as an honest boy,” Julian attested after he attended Twain’s funeral at the Brick Church in New York. gscharn@unm.edu

Real and Imagined Guilt in “The Facts Concerning the Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut”

Barbara Snedecor *Elmira College*

In June of 1876, Mark Twain published “The Facts Concerning the Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut” in the *Atlantic Monthly*. Before publication, Twain read this story to the members of Hartford’s Monday Evening Club, an exclusive association of local professional men that included clergymen, attorneys, politicians, editors, and publishers ~ and their wives. The story appears to be at least partly autobiographical, and connections to people in Clemens’ life add intrigue to the account. With its seriocomic plot and themes, “Carnival” generates interest in two directions. First, the story appears to draw on guilt that Clemens felt over actual events ~ the death of his younger brother, Henry, and the death of his firstborn son, Langdon. “Carnival” also initiates Twain’s exploration of conscience ~ a theme that will appear in his writings throughout the rest of his life. In this context, the account of Aunt Mary in “Carnival” is particularly interesting. In his characterization of “the person I loved and honored most in all the world,” Clemens may be acknowledging his matronly and amorous feelings towards Mary Mason Fairbanks, the slightly older, married, and adoring female friend whom he met on the *Quaker City*. The surrealism of the story gives Twain a venue for exploring taboos. bsnedecor@elmira.edu

Running with Coyotes

Jeffrey Steinbrink *Franklin and Marshall College*

The talk begins with a glimpse of Twain scholars in the wild ~ at a conference in Mexico coordinated by Michael Kiskis ~ by way of making the point that *Roughing It*, for example, can be read as a kind of conduct book, and that its rendition of an episode involving a coyote and a town dog is a case in point. People at the conference familiar with *Roughing It* were much less likely to exhibit town-dog behavior during, say, an evening at a cantina, than other literary types. Perhaps they had come away from the book with this simple caution: in situations that might call out certain town-dog aspects of a person's character, it's best to embrace one's inner coyote. The coyote, after all (spoiler alert), wins.

Or does he (the remainder of the talk goes on to ponder)? Mark Twain's town dog doesn't fare well in head-to-head competition with the coyote. Nor, for that matter, do his counterpart town dogs in the cantina, as we'll observe. And so the episode is conventionally read as an essential endorsement of the coyote and of what might be called, in this political season, Coyote Values. Some critics understandably imagine the coyote as epitomizing the charismatic Western "vernacular" (they claim) the book goes on to celebrate.

We'll see. Running with coyotes, at any rate, certainly seems smarter than running against them. This talk asks: where, according to Mark Twain, does either strategy get you. jeff.steinbrink@fandm.edu

The "Slandered Dogs" & "Forgettable Birds" of Mark Twain's Travel Books

Thomas L. Wilmeth *Concordia University Wisconsin*

This paper examines Mark Twain's varying attitudes toward the animals he encounters during his travels. More specifically, it focuses upon the author's thoughts about and relationships with birds and dogs ~ both of which he discusses frequently while recounting his world travels.

The primary autobiographical sources for this presentation and paper consist of three books ~ *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), *A Tramp Abroad* (1880), and *Following the Equator* (1897). Using the first and the last of the author's travel books offers an opportunity to address Mark Twain's varied and often changing views on animals. These works also allow the author to expound upon his own place within the animal kingdom.

A few additional sources from the Twain canon will be addressed, including the *Autobiography* (vol. 1, 2010). The thrust of this paper, however, remains on the travel books. Birds and dogs were chosen as the focus for this project in order to discuss the author's views on one domesticated and one undomesticated animal. Mark Twain himself, I believe, falls somewhere between.

While the tone of the presentation will remain light, reflecting the joyful nature of the symposium's honoree, the late Dr. Kiskis, certain realities concerning animals will necessarily be addressed. Chief among these are the examples Mark Twain uses for his condemnation of animal abuse, such as those that led to his 1903 work "A Dog's Tale."

Twain often wrote with an attitude which demonstrated the animal kingdom's moral and intellectual superiority over its human counterpart. While the author was able to be strikingly funny when probing this topic, these passages are also marked by sad observations concerning both humans and animals. The humor as well as the pathos in Mark Twain's writings about animals will be at the heart of this paper. Thomas.Wilmeth@cuw.edu

Hank Morgan's Asylum: A Connecticut Yankee and Records of Loss

by Michael J. Kiskis

Let me begin with a story.

On June 25th, 2003 my dissertation director, John C. Gerber, died. John was 95 years old. He had been in ill health for some time. I felt his loss keenly. Since 1986, I wrote longish letters to him a few times each year; he always remembered me on holidays with a card (most recently signed by his caregiver in his name). I dedicated my edition of Mark Twain's autobiography to him; I sent him copies of essays that I wrote. I am sure that some of my ideas distressed him; I am just as sure that he accepted our differences with grace. He was notorious for his bow ties and quiet confidence but even more for his openness and compassion. At a dinner he hosted for several of his graduate students toward the end of our time together in graduate school he told stories about his twin terriers, Tom and Becky. He was my mentor and, I like to think, my friend.

In August after John's death, I was contacted by Mary Uhl who directs the honors program at the University of Iowa in Iowa City, John Gerber's home since 1944 when he joined the faculty there. He was brought out of retirement to chair the department of English at the State University of Albany (where I found him as I began my doctoral work in 1981). He returned to Iowa City after he was forced into a second retirement when the SUNY system would not exempt him from mandatory retirement in 1984. Mary told me there would be an estate sale, and she asked me if I could think of anything that I might want to buy as a keepsake. She would go to the sale and make the purchase on my behalf.

When I visited with John in his office now so long ago, I was always captivated by the books that lined the walls (I actually own some of them now; he allowed me to search through the shelves as he was preparing to move ~ I got books I could not otherwise afford; he got to lighten the load he would drag back to Iowa). I was particularly smitten, however, by a large poster of a pen sketch of Sam Clemens that John had framed and hanging above his desk. I told Mary about that sketch and tried to describe it as well as I could. I had no real hope that it would still be among the possessions for sale. I was sure he had deeded ownership to some friend long ago. Mary, however, searched among the things left in the house, found the sketch, bought it (after an altercation with a bargain hunter who tried to claim it after she had asked that it be set aside as sold), and had it carefully wrapped and shipped. It now hangs in my office. Karma.

Literary scholars are trained to be dispassionate analyzers of texts. In one course I took from John, he required us to read a mid-19th century sentimental novel (I read Susan Warner's *The Wide, Wide World*); he argued that the pathos that characterized such novels or stories makes them inherently inferior art. But this sketch of Twain strikes me as filled with sentiment.

What, I now ask myself, possessed John to hold on to this sketch of Clemens for so very long (the copyright on the sketch is 1906; I know that John did his graduate work in the 1930s through early 1940s. I suspect his ownership of the sketch dates from those days). How could John, on the one hand, argue so eloquently and effectively against sentiment and, on the other hand, actively encourage such feeling in himself and provoke it in others. It's



a mystery to me. What is so compelling about Clemens that certain scholars are driven to break discipline. Not everyone, it seems, is willing or capable of such a sympathetic relation to the subject of their intellectual work. Walter Blair, a contemporary of John's, did his own sketches of Clemens; I recall watching a short film shot and edited by Sandra Bradley in which Hamlin Hill, who died in 2002, one of the truly gifted and honestly cantankerous Twain scholars, unexpectedly tears up, his voice getting husky with emotion, when speaking of why Clemens means so much to him. Not everyone risks such exposure. Why did Ham? And what might all this tell us (or at least tell me) about what it means to devote so much time to studying a writer long dead, exploring the impact his writing had and has on readers now almost a century after his death. In recent years, I have been less constrained in my reactions to Clemens, more open to talking and writing about how he affects me personally. Are such reactions perhaps more common (maybe even more appropriate?) for scholars of a certain age or at a certain mid- or late- point in their career? And what does that say about the ways of my profession and its abiding suspicion and suppression of emotion as an interpretive tool?

There is a practice in Zen Buddhism that concentrates individual attention on walking the right path, on creating and embracing an overarching awareness that allows us not to confuse a temporary stay in the journey with the final destination, a mindfulness of where we are and what we are doing and a deep and thorough sense of our place within the experiences in life and of the world. A simple statement of this awareness is "the raft is not the shore." An apt metaphor for anyone familiar with the works of Samuel Clemens, it argues against the simple comparison/contrast or plot driven juxtaposition that has inspired scholars to focus on Clemens' social philosophy; for example, in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, critics continue to emphasize a philosophy that underscores the variations of freedom as defined by Huck and Jim during their experiences on raft and on land. We are still captives of the argument made by Leo Marx in 1953 in "Mr. Elliot, Mr. Trilling, and *Huckleberry Finn*":

That theme [which forms the skeleton of the novel] is highlighted by the juxtaposition of sharp images of contrasting social orders: the microcosmic community Huck and Jim establish aboard the raft and the actual society which exists along the Mississippi's banks. The two are separated by the river, the road to freedom upon which Huck and Jim must travel. Huck tells us what the river means to them when, after the Wilks episode, he and Jim must once again shove their raft into the current: "It did seem so good to be free again and all by ourselves on the big river, and nobody to bother us." The river is indifferent. But its sphere is relatively uncontaminated by the civilization they flee, and so the river allows Huck and Jim some measure of freedom at once, the moment they set foot on Jackson's Island or the raft. Only on the island and the raft do they have a chance to practice the idea of brotherhood to which they are devoted. "Other places do seem so cramped and smothery," Huck explains, "but a raft don't. You feel free and easy and comfortable on a raft." The main thing is freedom. (HF: *A Case Study in Critical Controversy*, 297)

In 1953 the "main thing" was freedom. The United States was pre-eminent in the world and faced both its own internal and external demons, each of which challenged citizens to define and take a stand for or against differently construed rights. Marx was giving voice to an idea that helped to solidify Huck as a new hero for the American century. The raft became an utopian, egalitarian icon, John Winthrop's "Citty upon a Hill" as floating refuge and model of brotherhood (though a brotherhood that is theoretical rather than actual, taken out of any racial and class-bound ~ and therefore real ~ context). The problem, of course, is that this contrast of raft and shore communities canonizes a particular reading and, therefore, suspends our search for meaning. Identifying the contrast becomes an end unto itself; it becomes *the* end and not a means to understand the dynamic of being in the world. Critics found (and many still do find) that a comfort easy to pour into waiting minds, a lesson peculiarly shaped to focus on the metaphor of the journey but which fails to take into account the passing world. Critics need to widen their view, to access their peripheral vision.

If that seems daunting, it is.

What cracks the closed analysis is acknowledging the value of sympathy. Not empathy. Empathy, contrary to its present-day popularity, pulls us immediately away from the center of another's experience and locks us into

our own sense of being. It generates a soothing kind of self-pity since we are most concerned with our reaction. Sympathy, on the other hand, generates compassion not for our own or its own sakes but for the sake of another. The other remains separate from us and our focus is outward not inward. Our emotions trill as we become invested and identify with another being: someone not me.

The sympathy that draws scholars and critics and readers to Clemens as a man and as an artist is, I think, related to his awareness of the world and to questions about our reactions to the world. It depends on our willingness to set aside the cold intellectualism of our training so that we can gain and understand and prize an emotional response to reading. That willingness has been anathema to literary studies since the early 20th century when the discipline hardened in a quest to develop an analytical approach that both celebrates allusion as the essence of high literary art (thanks in part to T. S. Eliot) and aligns literary studies with scientific or “objective” analysis. Proscribing emotional responses to reading has created problems for both critics and readers; in fact, most readers choose to ignore the proscription and think of critics as damaged goods because we are unwilling to admit an affective response.

That problem came back to me as I read James Elkins’ *Pictures & Tears: A History of People Who Have Cried in Front of Paintings*. Elkins’ argument is, very simply, that academic training prevents critics from connecting with an object affectively. That training, he argues, binds us and prevents us from honest and deep emotional reaction:

Art historians are really to blame for the desiccated museum pedagogy. University departments of art history and criticism, where many of the people who make labels are educated, contribute to painting’s cold public face by parading the knowledge of past cultures in front of their dazzled students. Students are taught to comb through archives and old books to see how the original viewers once responded. Their own reactions are typically ruled out of court. Such scholarship is necessary to build a sense of history and to avoid solipsism, but it is bloodless pursuit. The original viewers... are examined with professional detachment, as one pries at a frog’s intestines to see how it is put together.

...Our tearless condition is our chosen state....It is probably comforting to know that a guild of experts guards and interprets our cultural treasures...The vast apparatus of art historical knowledge always stands ready to step in and tell us what ought to be thought, and the vast gleaming halls of museums are always there to nudge us along if we become entranced by an image. We’re in a prison, in short, of our own making. (208-209)

What Elkins writes of art history can easily be applied to literary education: his conclusions are valid for literary critics who have been trained to disdain emotion in favor of cool (even cold) analysis. We critics regularly and unthinkingly pass such coldness on to our students. We regulate the readings students are allowed to discuss in our classrooms; we admit very little of the jolt readers often feel when confronted by the mix of a writer’s and their own emotions.

I think that denial of emotion, in other words, a lack of sympathy, has a lot to do with how we read and how we teach the writings of Samuel Clemens: we are limited by our reluctance to embrace the lasting emotion that permeates his writing. We gladly analyze Clemens; we categorize and critique; we historicize. Though emotion is often basic to meaningful reading, we are suspicious of feeling – especially our own. An example: when I read “The Death of Jean,” the essay that Clemens wrote during the four days immediately following the tragic death of his daughter, I cry. When my students realize this they plead with me to read the essay aloud in class. They do not have a prurient interest in seeing me weep (well, some do). They are, I think, drawn by the honest expression of emotion, something that seems to them so out of place in a literature class. I remain dry eyed only when I force an emotional distance, when I interrupt the reading with commentary and break the rhythm and the cumulative effect of Clemens’ grief and heartbreak. Discomfort with honest sentiment has led critics to dismiss that essay.

Such reactions to Clemens demonstrate our inability to step into and our unwillingness to confront the emotion of the subject. In *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature*, Martha Nussbaum argues that our indifference separates us from readers:

...it is not ordinary readers, but theorists, who have sometimes felt that the pressure of a practical question would, rather like a sweaty hand on exquisite leather binding, sully the text's purity of finish. We do "read for life," bringing to the literary texts we love...our pressing questions and perplexities, searching for images of what we might do and be, and holding these up against the images we derive from our knowledge of other conceptions, literary, philosophical, and religious. And the further pursuit of this enterprise through explicit comparison and explanation is not a diminution of the novels at all, but rather an expression of the depth and breadth of the claims that those who love them make for them. (29)

Many of us have forgotten what "reading for life" means.

On other occasions and elsewhere, I have talked about confronting the emotion on display in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Here, I want to sharpen my focus on *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* and consider how Hank Morgan's autobiography comes alive when we take an interpretive leap and sympathize with the be-reaved and exiled yankee. Clemens' rage in *Connecticut Yankee* is often ascribed to his interest in and commitment to justice ~ both political/institutional and racial; or to the chaos of his life in the late 1880s as financial worries over the Paige typesetter and/or the Charles L. Webster Company took a strangle hold. I think that is too simple a reading. We have gilded Sam Clemens as social sage and anti-imperialist champion and have been deliberate about and very successful at installing that image of him as a part of United States cultural iconography.

Reading Hank Morgan as ironic has been key; demonizing him as a self-deluded confidence man makes us feel better about ourselves and reinforces our own superiority as we correct (that is analyze and therefore diminish) the potential for sympathy formed in the maelstrom of readers' emotions. Our perspective is too limited by our not fully considering the role of class in Clemens' design (especially his ambivalence toward his rise to membership in the late 19th century American oligarchy). More important, and more to my purpose here, is the critical blindness to the deeply personal pain that forms the center of this novel. Many critics fail to understand (or choose to ignore) that at the heart of literary work is emotional recognition. But what do we recognize in Hank Morgan? What possibility for sympathy exists for a character that so deliberately refuses to admit his complicity in oppression and his particularly potent (perhaps even virulent) tendency toward violence and despair.

Perhaps it is better to back into this discussion. Consider the case of Kurt Vonnegut's Billy Pilgrim. Aptly named, Pilgrim, the protagonist of *Slaughterhouse Five*, is a wanderer. His story begins simply:

Listen:

Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time.

Billy has gone to sleep a senile widower and awakened on his wedding day. He has walked through a door in 1955 and come out another one in 1941. He has gone back through that door to find himself in 1963. He has seen his birth and death many times, he says, and pays random visits to all the events in between.

He says.

Billy is spastic in time, has no control over where he is going next, and the trips aren't necessarily fun. He is in a constant state of stage fright, he says, because he never knows what part of his life he is going to have to act in next. (23)

Vonnegut's narrator gives his tale over to an essentially unreliable witness. Note the repeated admonition, "He says" in the above introduction. Skeptical. Uncertain. The narrator steps back to allow the character to give shape to ~ or to introduce a shapelessness into ~ the tale.

When Mark Twain encounters Hank Morgan for the first time, this is how we see him:

It was in Warwick Castle that I came across the curious stranger whom I am going to talk about....As he talked along, softly, pleasantly, flowingly, he seemed to drift away imperceptibly out of this world and time, and into some remote era and old forgotten country; and so he gradually wove such a spell about me that I seemed to move among the specters and shadows and dust and mold of a gray antiquity, holding speech with a relic of it! Exactly as I would speak of my nearest personal friends or enemies, or my most familiar neighbors, he spoke of Sir Bedivere, Sir Bors of Ganis, Sir Lancelot of the Lake, Sir Galahad, and all the other great names of the Table Round ~ and how old, old, unspeakably old and faded and dry and musty and ancient he came to look as he went on! Presently he turned to me and said, just as one might speak of the weather of any other common matter ~

“You know about transmigration of souls; do you know about transposition of epochs ~ and bodies?” (11)

We are more than slightly tempted to add “He says” to the comments.

Both characters are in deep trouble. Billy is a complete mess. Unable to come to terms with his experience during World War II, especially his being bombed by the allies during the fire bombing of Dresden, Billy escapes in his slide through time. A manifestation of Vonnegut’s own fears and anxieties (Vonnegut was a POW and was a prisoner in one of the underground lockers during the Dresden bombing), Billy is damaged beyond repair and has given himself over to illusion as a way to cope with his despair. When I first taught *Slaughterhouse Five* with a colleague, we argued in front of our class. He insisted that the tale was classic science fiction ~ a story of time travel and aliens (Trafamadorians) and the usual human worry over the fate of the planet. I remained (and remain) unconvinced and insisted (and insist) that Billy is psychologically a wreck; he is most likely an alcoholic unable to focus on a reality that offers so clearly incontrovertible evidence of man’s brutality toward the innocent. Billy is desperate because of his unquenchable feeling of loss. He has experienced death first hand and feels guilt for having survived.

Hank is similarly marked with the guilt of the survivor. His conscience is his enemy. He writes:

If I had the remaking of man, he wouldn’t have any conscience. It is one of the most disagreeable things connected with a person; and although it certainly does a great deal of good, it cannot be said to pay, in the long run; it would be much better to have less good and more comfort....I have noticed my conscience for many years, and I know it is more trouble and bother to me than anything else I started with. I suppose that in the beginning I prized it, because we prize anything that is ours; and yet how foolish it was to think so. If we look at it another way, we see how absurd it is: if I had an anvil in me would I prize it? Of course not. And yet when you come to think, there is no real difference between a conscience and an anvil ~ I mean for comfort. I have noticed it a thousand times. And you could dissolve an anvil with acids, when you couldn’t stand it any longer; but there isn’t any way you can work off a conscience ~ at least so it will stay worked off; not that I know of anyway. (116)

One way that Hank attempts to “work off” his conscience is to convince himself that man is the product of his training. Training driven to the extreme removes the need of reflection and regret (though there is still the nagging worry of redemption). The most heinous crimes, the most troublesome memory is washed clean once you believe that there is no power ~ physical or moral ~ that challenges training. In one of the more often quoted passages, Hank explains away the possibility of human responsibility:

Training ~ training is everything; training is all there is to a person. We speak of nature; it is folly; there is no such thing as nature; what we call by that misleading name is merely heredity and training. We have no thoughts of our own, no

opinions of our own; they are transmitted to us, trained into us. All that is original in us, and therefore fairly creditable or discreditable to us, can be covered up and hidden by the point of a cambric needle, all the rest being atoms contributed by, and inherited from, a procession of ancestors that stretches back a billion years to the Adam-clan or grasshopper or monkey from who our race has been so tediously and ostentatiously and unprofitably developed. And as for me, all that I think about in this plodding pilgrimage, this pathetic drift between the eternities, is to look out and humbly live a pure and high and blameless life, and save that one microscopic atom in me that is truly me: the rest may land in Sheol and welcome for all I care. (114)

Hank's chaotic response to life and memory and his willingness to slide into cynicism and despair are the result of losing his wife and child. We are not told of that loss until the end of his tale, but it overhangs the whole of his manuscript and is at the heart of his unease. When we reflect on the whole of Hank's story, the most emotionally charged scenes involve parents and children, often ending with the deaths of both. One disturbing reality here is that parents are often unable to protect their own children from brutality: the multiple scenes of slave gangs, the beating of a mother whose child is taken from her grasp (140). In a way, Hank's "man factories" are an attempt to answer the threat to families (think of his stepping in to save Hugo from the Queen's dungeon). He travels through the kingdom and confronts the fact of helplessness. His story ~ a story that is told as reminiscence seasoned with the images of loss ~ is an attempt to reclaim an emotional connection to the past and to those he has left ~ or, perhaps, those who have left him. Or who have been taken from him.

Perhaps no episode is as filled with sentiment as Arthur's unabashed courage as he carries a peasant woman's dying daughter from the small pox hut (203-209; ch.29). Hank stands in awe and is struck with the juxtaposition of his own self-image as "boss," an image that contrasts his intellectual and mechanical acumen and power, which is noticeably lacking in genuine heart-felt compassion, with Arthur's bearing and compassion:

He came forward into the light; upon his breast lay a slender girl of fifteen. She was all but half conscious; she was dying of smallpox. Here was heroism at its last and loftiest possibility, its utmost summit; this was challenging death in the open field unarmed, with all the odds against the challenger, no reward set upon the contest, and no admiring world in silks and cloth of gold to gaze and applaud; and yet the king's bearing was as serenely brave as it had always been in those cheaper contests where knight meets knight in equal fight and clothed in protecting steel. He was great now; sublimely great. (2-6)

Arthur here is the manifestation of masculine emotional power. Hank does not measure up. He has spent his time, in fact, running away from any real emotion. His behavior toward Sandy demonstrates his uncertainty and his inability to confront genuine affection. At least initially. We might argue, in fact, that Hank is trying throughout to ignore his emotions. To repress. To deny.

There is an early suggestion that Hank has landed in an asylum: he pledges, "if it was still the nineteenth century and I was among lunatics and couldn't get away, I would presently boss that asylum or know the reason why" (23). Given the whole of the tale, this throw-away comment deserves more respect. I believe that, like Billy Pilgrim, Hank is in psychological distress. He is, in fact, insane. The writing he does is an attempt to recreate a world for himself, a world that still has the potential for the human connection he once had with his family. In the end, however, he is unable to re-integrate his emotional life. And the resulting chaos at the penultimate horror of the Battle of the Sand Belt is the work of a conscience at war. Hank is no longer able to hide behind arrogance and mechanical and political ingenuity. And he can no longer ignore or deny the depth of his own misery. His attempt to shy away from only reinforces his loss.

Clemens' Hank Morgan is an exceedingly complex man who struggles against myriad personal demons. While those demons are enlivened by ethnocentrism and imperialist beliefs, they are fueled especially by Hank's aloneness. Sandy and Hello Central figure prominently in the closing scene as Hank loses his always tenuous hold on sanity and falls into a deep despair. In bed and facing (and embracing) death, Hank finally is forced to peel away the layers of denial and confront the genuine loss that is the center of his emotional life:

O, Sandy, you are come at last ~ how I have longed for you! Sit by me ~ do not leave me ~ never leave me again, Sandy, never again. Where is your hand ~ give it me, dear, let me hold it ~ there ~ now all is well, all is peace, and I am happy again ~ we are happy again, isn't it so, Sandy? You are so dim, so vague, you are but a mist, a cloud, but you are here, and that is blessedness sufficient; and I have your hand; don't take it away ~ it is only a little while, I shall not require it long...Was that the child? ...Hello Central!...She doesn't answer. Asleep, perhaps? Bring her when she wakes, and let me touch her hands, her face, her hair, and tell her good-bye....Sandy! Yes, you are there. I lost myself a moment, and I thought you were gone.... Have I been sick long? It must be so; it seems months to me. And such dreams! Such strange and awful dreams, Sandy! Dreams that were as real as reality ~ delirium, of course, but so real!...I seemed to be a creature out of a remote unborn age, centuries hence, and even that was as real as the rest! Yes, I seemed to have flown back out of that age into this of ours, and then forward to it again, and was set down, a stranger and forlorn in that strange England, with an abyss of thirteen centuries yawning between me and you! between me and my home and my friends! between me and all that is dear to me, all that could make life worth the living! It was awful ~ awfuler than you can ever imagine, Sandy. Ah, watch by me, Sandy ~ stay by me every moment ~ don't let me go out of my mind again; death is nothing, let it come, but not with those dreams, not with the torture of those hideous dreams ~ I cannot endure that again....Sandy? (319-320)

Hank dies knowing what is more important. It is not physical or technological prowess; it is not profit; it is not power. It is human companionship; it is compassion; it is recognition that we can not live alone whatever the profit.

Clemens, however, always the master of misdirection insists on a final word. The narrator Mark Twain himself misses the lesson. With the death rattle rasping his throat, the Yankee finds his voice: "A bugle?...It is the king! The drawbridge, there! Man the battlements ~ turn out the ~" Death takes Hank. And Twain's final comment? "He was getting up his last 'effect'; but he never finished it" (320). We miss the lesson if we think that Hank's death throws mitigate the sentiment in his plea. Perhaps in the end, the reality of loss was too heavy again for the frail mind and it let in the chaos yet again. There is much comfort in the cold mechanics of the effect, though it is a false comfort and a cheat.

Slaughterhouse Five ends with an emotional armistice, a provisional reintegration. It is a pause before the next time shift:

And somewhere there was springtime. The corpse mines were closed down. The soldiers all left to fight the Russians. In the suburbs, the women and the children dug rifle pits. Billy and the rest of his group were locked up in the stable in the suburbs. And, then, one morning they got up to discover that the door was unlocked. World War Two in Europe was over.

Billy and the rest wandered out on to shady street. The trees were leafing out. There was nothing going on out there, no traffic of any kind. There was only one vehicle, an abandoned wagon drawn by two horses. The wagon was green and coffin-shaped.

Birds were talking.

One bird said to Billy Pilgrim, "Poo-tee-wee?" (215)

A Connecticut Yankee, though it ends with a death, also offers readers a look at the salvation that is possible in human companionship: Hank is more human because of his companions (Clarence, Arthur, Sandy); Mark Twain is

more human because of Hank's reaching out to him. In this way Clemens held out a good deal more hope than Vonnegut: Hank's salvation is finally finding the reason for his personal chaos; Billy Pilgrim continues to wander in time uncertain of the path and letting the potential for resolution and redemption waste.

And how does all this tie together.

Critics revel in complexity. We read and find pathways into a story or a poem that can leave our listeners breathless. But the effect is cheap if we do not open ourselves to the deeper experience of human emotion. In Palm Sunday, Kurt Vonnegut has this to say:

Most of my adult life has been spent in bringing to some kind of order sheets of paper eight and half inches wide and eleven inches long. This severely limited activity has allowed me to ignore many a storm. It has also caused many of the worst storms I ignored. My mates have often been angered by how much attention I pay to paper and how little attention I pay to them.

I can only reply that the secret to success in every human endeavor is total concentration. Ask any great athlete.

To put it another way: Sometimes I don't consider myself very good at life, so I hide in my profession. (293)

As I type these few last words, I stop often. And I look up to study the sketch of Clemens that was John Gerber's and is now mine. My attention is drawn to the center of the image. The periphery is unfocused, the lines break apart into individual tracings. As my eyes follow the flow toward the center, the image of Clemens becomes more coherent and more real. He appears. He takes shape. And I see his eyes. Eyes that, created of pen and ink, shine with intensity and watchfulness and bemusement and rage. They are the eyes of an older Clemens: he has seen both the love men and women are capable of showing as well as the stupidity and waste men and women are prone to. He challenges me. "If you think all I wrote was merely to serve as fodder for your intellectual games," he says, "you are a goddamned fool. If you step aside and ignore the pain in the lives of the people around you, the stories of Huck or Hank will have done no good. If you settle for the life on the raft and ignore the pain and loss so present on the opposing shores, you deserve to be held with contempt. And our race will be damned. And well it should." The key, I think, is not to settle for the facile interpretation. Risk is life. And critics are not especially good at choosing life over interpretation.

*"Hank dies knowing what is more important.
It is not physical or technological prowess;
it is not profit;
it is not power.
It is human companionship;
it is compassion;
it is recognition that we can not live alone whatever the profit."*

Urban Poverty, Christian Nurture, and Mark Twain's *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*

Michael J. Kiskis

All society is organic ~ the Church, the state, the school, the family...a pure, separate,
individual man living wholly within, and from himself, is a mere fiction.

Horace Bushnell (CN, 28)

Prologue

Samuel Clemens and his family (his wife Olivia, pregnant with their third child, and his daughter Susy) spent the summer of 1874 comfortably settled in his sister-in-law's summer home on East Hill in Elmira, New York. Elmira was far away from the intensity of urban life, a life Clemens stayed connected to by reading widely in national magazines and the Hartford, Connecticut, and New York City newspapers, and he took full advantage of the octagonal study Susan Crane had recently built for him some yards from her summer home. The family arrived in Elmira in late April and moved to the farm in May (Clara would be born in Elmira on June 8). Children ~ the birth of and caring for them ~ must have been on the Clemenses' minds. Two years earlier they had lost their first born, Langdon, only three months after their daughter Susy was born. Livy's confinement in 1874 could only spark both joy and trepidation.

On the way to Elmira, Clemens spent several days visiting New York City; his older brother Orion was at the time working as a proofreader for the *New York Evening Post*. Samuel Clemens was working on a play based on his novel *The Gilded Age*, which he hoped to see produced in New York, and that summer he would return to his first solo novel, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Amidst that creative binge, and during April 1874, New York and its environs faced a turning point in the social politics of child welfare when the case of nine year old Mary Ellen Wilson, a child who¹ was kept a prisoner by her foster mother and used daily as a whipping post, came to light and generated the first meaningful movement for child protection: the court proceedings were widely reported in the *New York Times*, *New York Herald*, the *New York Evening Post* (Orion Clemens' employer), and the *New York Daily Tribune*. The papers ran headlined stories about the case during April of 1874 as well as updates through June and into December of that year. The coverage of April 10 through 14 was especially thick with descriptions of the child's physical bruises and her living conditions and beatings. The facts of the case may have jogged Clemens' memories of the Hannibal Blankenships as well as pricked his sensitivity to the small voice echoing through the Clemenses' Farmington Avenue house in Hartford (Susy's at two; perhaps also the memory of his dead son Langdon). The combination and the contrast would have been a potent mixture.

Here is what we know of Mary Ellen Wilson. Her father Thomas Wilson was killed in service of the Union during the Civil War; her mother Frances (Connor) Wilson eventually handed over her daughter to the care of Mary Score. In July 1865 Score handed the girl to the Department of Public Charities and Corrections after support payments from Fanny Wilson stopped: on July 10, 1865 Mary Ellen was placed in one of the children's wards at Blackwell's Island (now Roosevelt Island in New York). According to Eric Shelman and Stephen Lazoritz, "Mary Ellen was one of the fortunate survivors of New York orphanages, which experienced average death rates of 85 percent during this period of rampant disease and unsanitary conditions" (MEWCAC, 23). [[[note: On April 14, 1874 the *New York Times* and the *New York Daily Tribune* reported that 500 children passed through the Department of Charities during 1873.]]] Mary Ellen was "adopted" from Blackwell's on January 2, 1866 by Mary and Thomas McCormack, who claimed the child without evidence of filial connection but with a promise to care for her physically and (to some small extent) spiritually. On February 13, 1866 the McCormacks signed an agreement of indenture that placed Mary Ellen in their home until she was eighteen years old. On April 9, 1874 the child was rescued by agents of Henry Bergh, president of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (NYSPCA), and New

York City police officers at the urging of Etta Angell Wheeler, a Methodist caseworker. Elbridge Gerry, the lawyer for Bergh's NYSPCA, claimed that section 65 of the Habeas Corpus Act gave the State the duty to invade a home to wrest a child from a guardian when the child faced certain injury from abuse or neglect.² Coverage of the trial in the New York papers offered descriptions appropriate for a sentimental novel. [[[note: as an example, on 10 April the *New York Herald* reported: "Her face was pale and the features molded into line of rare and exquisite beauty. Such eyes were rarely seen in a child ~ so large, so dark, and so wondering in their expression. In every lineament of the face could be read suffering, and its infantile freshness was marred by marks of fresh cuts and bruises; but as she smiled and with her tiny hands smoothed back from her forehead her wealth of brown hair one almost forgot these and the feeling of roused indignation burning within at thoughts of possible cruelty to one so young and fair and fragile (MEWCAC, 71)]]]] The *New York Times* reporter went so far as to suggest that the child may have been a victim of some kind of class-tainted violence: "taken together with the intelligent and rather refined appearance of the child, [the evidence offered] tends to the conclusion that she is the child of parents of some prominence in society, who, for some reason, have abandoned her to her present undeserved fate" (MEWCAC, 70).³ Here was a life lived on the margins and a symbol both of individual sins of abuse as well as of a society's acceptance of violence when practiced by the least of its members.

The public hearing drew attention to a system that not only did not prevent violence but also, because of callousness and willful blindness, relegated the defenseless to the whims of legal guardians. The *New York Herald* of 10 April reported that Mary Ellen Wilson testified:

My father and mother are both dead. I don't know how old I am...I have never had but one pair of shoes, but I can't recollect when that was. I have no shoes or stockings this winter...I have never had on a particle of flannel. My bed at night is only a piece of carpet, stretched on the floor underneath a window, and I sleep in my little undergarment, with a quilt over me. I am never allowed to play with any children or have any company whatever. Mamma has been in the habit of whipping and beating me almost every day. She used to whip me with a twisted whip, a raw hide. The whip always left black and blue marks on my body. I have now on my head two black and blue marks, which were made by mamma with the whip, and a cut on the left side of my forehead, which was made by a pair of scissors in mamma's hand. She struck me with the scissors and cut me. I have no recollection of ever having been kissed, and have never been kissed by mamma. I have never been taken on mamma's lap, or caressed or petted. I have never dared to speak to anybody, because if I did I would get whipped...Whenever mamma went out I was locked up in the bedroom...I have no recollection of ever being in the street in my life. (MEWCAC, 73)

The description is suggestive of Samuel Clemens' *Huckleberry Finn*. And it is likely that young Mary Ellen Wilson is one of *Huckleberry*'s antecedents. Her story and the national outrage it sparked (there was even a popular song dedicated to the child *** Note) is part of the cultural context within which Clemens created his own version of the abused child as he completed *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and prepared the way for its sequel.

I

Huckleberry Finn's Antecedents

Samuel Clemens could not have written *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* without being introduced to the social chaos that overshadowed his visits to New York City during 1853 and 1867. In 1853, seventeen-year-old Samuel Clemens left his home and family in Hannibal, Missouri, and traveled to New York City. Unlike a good many that looked west for new experiences, young Clemens turned east where he knew that he could more easily support himself as a typesetter.⁴ He embarked on a journey that took him from the growing ~ but parochial ~ Hannibal, Missouri, to the metropolis of New York City. In 1890, after the death of his mother Jane Lampton Clemens, an experienced and worldly Clemens looked back to the Hannibal of his childhood and resurrected a past in which poverty was a virtue and not a threat, a past in which the demarcations of class were innocent of lasting harm and did not interfere with the opportunities available to those confined to Hannibal's geographic and social space. He recollected a town caught between egalitarian desire and class-conscious reality:

In the small town of Hannibal, Missouri, when I was a boy, everybody was poor but didn't know it; and everybody was comfortable, and did know it. And there were grades of society; people of good family, people of unclassified family, people of no family. Everybody knew everybody, and was affable to everybody, and nobody put on any visible airs; yet the class lines were quite clearly drawn, and the familiar social life of each class was restricted to that class. It was a little democracy that was full of Liberty, Equality and Fourth of July; and sincerely so, too, yet you perceive that the aristocratic taint was there. It was there, and nobody found fault with the fact, or ever stopped to reflect that its presence was an inconsistency. (HHT, 46)

This conflict shaped young Clemens.

In 1853, and unaffected by a nostalgic lens, Clemens acknowledged the deep reality of class lines. While he was eager to leave behind his rural roots for the bluster of urban New York, he was immediately appalled by the class chaos that he found wandering the city's streets. The vagabond Clemens discovered that all was not milk and honey in the east: along with his youthful brush with abolitionists and his racist reaction to the north's seemingly coddling of African-Americans,⁵ he was also shocked by the sights of urban poor and by the crush of bodies on the New York streets and boulevards. In an early letter home to his mother, penned in New York on 31 August, Clemens, much closer to the rabble, was easily offended by and dismissive of the poor. The experience did not spark any interest in social justice. It sparked annoyance and contempt:

Of all the commodities, manufacturers ~ or whatever you please to call it ~ in New York, trundle-bed trash ~ children I mean ~ take the lead. Why, from Cliff street, up Frankfort to Nassau street, six or seven squares ~ my road to dinner ~ I think I could count two hundred brats....In going to and from my meals, I go by the way of Broadway ~ and to cross Broadway is the rub ~ but once across it, it is the rub for two or three squares. My plan ~ and how could I choose another, where there is no other ~ is to get into the crowd; and when I get in, am borne, and rubbed, and crowded along, and need scarcely trouble myself about using my own legs; and when I get out, it seems like I had been pulled to pieces and very badly put together again. (MTL1: 10)

Clemens' tone underscores (at best) his ambivalence to urban sprawl and stress. The poor here were ubiquitous and decidedly urban, and Clemens was especially contemptuous of the "brats" swarming in the streets.

No sentimentalist, nor even much given to compassion, young Clemens is most remarkable in his disgust with the urban crush of "trundle-bed trash," shown in the description of the variety and number of children encountered on his daily trek from his lodgings to the print house:

Niggers, mulattoes, quadroons, Chinese, and some the Lord no doubt originally intended to be white, but the dirt on whose faces leaves one uncertain as to that fact, block up the little, narrow street; and to wade through this mass of human vermin would raise the ire of the most patient person that ever lived. (MTL1, 10)

Clemens is in physical distress because of the proximity of these children and is incapable of any real compassion for their plight. Some of his physical repulsion is sparked by his racist and parochial assumptions about the nature of the children he encounters. There is much here that assumes a qualitative difference between rural and urban poverty: urban poverty was more emphatic, more sense driven, more physically threatening. And there is much in Clemens' response that suggests a deep antagonism toward and anxiety over the potential physical and spiritual strain when touched by "trash." His list of characteristics is unified by a deep disdain for any number of "others" represented in the population. Clemens is a white kid (he is 17) who has been brought up to think of quality, of

place in society, and of status in a community as carefully protected by a race-based and wealth-based aristocracy. For young Clemens the exotic quality of the population failed to generate sympathy (or even interest). It would, in fact, be years before he would return to these sights in his fiction and use them to season his novels of social reform.⁶

In 1853 young Clemens arrived in New York amid growing public concern over the dire effects of poverty and slum living. Much of the public outcry focused on the teeming populations in New York's Five Points district:

According to the census [of 1850], the typical two-room dwelling held on average 'only' five people per apartment. Yet 46 percent of these apartments housed six or more people, and one in six accommodated eight or more.

With so many people per apartment, and so many buildings per lot [due to the boom in tenement housing], the population density of the Sixth Ward in the 1850s (310.4 per acre) exceeded that of any other district in the city.

With the possible exception of one or two sections of London, antebellum

Five Points was the most densely populated neighborhood in the world. (*Five Points*, 75).

The social response to such dire levels of poverty was multifaceted and never completely productive. It is a primary concern in Solon Robinson's *Hot Corn: Life Scenes in New York Illustrated* (1853), a novel that complemented and complimented the social ministries of Charles Loring Brace and Lewis M. Pease. Several of the sketches that shape Robinson's novel were published in the *New York Tribune* during the summer of 1853, coinciding with Clemens' several months' visit.⁷

The ministerial work of Lewis M. Pease and Charles Loring Brace tallied some successes in addressing poverty and its moral shabbiness. Pease became known for his social work among the poor. In contrast to traditional missionary work that emphasized religious conversion, his work in the Five Points neighborhood focused on bringing the poor, destitute, and addicted into his workhouse so that they might gain from spiritual and economic reform. His innovation was to establish both work and housing for his laborers, which he later extended to a mission school for adults and children. In 1852, the year prior to Sam Clemens' arrival, Pease established the Five Points House of Industry (in many ways a precursor to the late 19th and 20th Century Settlement House movement).⁸ Pease's efforts were broadly advertised in the New York press and formed the basis for much of Robinson's descriptions in *Hot Corn*. Pease's work can also be said to have paralleled the foundation for Charles Loring Brace's Children's Aid Society. It is more than reasonable to assume that Clemens did not miss the on-going controversies.

As the nineteenth century progressed, there was only limited easing of the problems related to urban poverty. [note: One estimate by the New York City Chief of Police suggested that, in 1849, some 3000 children lived on the city streets. Charles Loring Brace estimated that homeless children inhabiting the streets of New York City during the 1870s ranged from 20,000 to 30,000 (*Dangerous Classes*, 31).] In *The Dangerous Classes of New York and Twenty Years' Work Among Them*, Charles Loring Brace laid out his belief that poverty and addiction and their affect on children were supreme threats to a stable society.⁹ Brace believed in the organic quality of familial, social, and institutional relationships, which echoed the theological teachings of Horace Bushnell, the Hartford minister and thinker whose *Christian Nurture* (1847; 1861) and well-distributed sermon "Unconscious Influence" (1852) influenced a generation of ministers, parents, and social workers.¹⁰ Brace's idea was simple: "The older persons commit unnatural crimes; the younger grow up with hardly a sense of personal dignity; the girls are corrupted even in childhood; and the boys become naturally thieves, vagrants, and vicious characters" (*Dangerous Classes*, 223; for a discussion of Brace's ideals see *Orphan Trains*, 30-31). The cure for such pain and moral degradation was to move the child out of the offending atmosphere and provide opportunity for physical labor (most often farm labor), which would bring the child out of the rot of the city to the cleansing environment of nature. An argument can certainly be made that Brace's practice was not ideal ~ in all, the Children's Aid Society moved some 100,000 children to new homes, almost half of whom were not orphans ~ at the very least, the record is ambiguous, and the reality became a series of broken promises.¹¹ All told, various Five Points charities removed thousands of children out of dire conditions, almost 60 percent of whom were *not* orphans. Those numbers speak to the drive to place children in healthier environments ~ mostly homes ~ and to the debate over the community's (and, to an extent, the family's) responsibility for the physical and spiritual lives of children. Pease and Brace worked tirelessly though the 1850s and 60s (Brace died in 1890, but the New York Children's Aid Society and various offshoots continue today).

The ministry, however, did not fully blunt the stress of poverty on the urban landscape, and “trundle-bed trash” were still wandering the streets when Sam Clemens returned to New York in 1867 as a writer and reporter.¹² As he waited to leave on the Quaker City cruise, Clemens spent time wandering in New York City, again coming to terms with the mass of people and, at times, reuniting with images of his 1853 visit. In letters Clemens wrote for the San Francisco *Alta California* during 1866 and 1867, a now older and more experienced Clemens describes his visits to many of New York’s neighborhoods and, at times, Court Houses. In the letter dated from New York 18 May 1867, Clemens describes an alcoholic woman, a resident of Five Points:

[She] said she used to have a husband, but he had drifted off somewhere, and so she had taken up with another man; she had a child, also ~ a little boy ~ but it took her all her time to get drunk, and keep drunk, and he starved, one winter’s night ~ or froze, she didn’t know which ~ both, may be, because it snowed in ‘horrible’ through the roof, and she hadn’t any bedclothes but a window-shutter.¹³ ‘But it was a d--d good thing for him, anyway,’ said she, ‘because he’d have had a miserable rough time of it I he’d a lived’; and she chuckled a little, and asked me for a chaw of tobacco and a cigar” (MTTWMB, 189).

Clemens here faces the reality of poverty and addiction. Clemens’ mature voice echoes throughout his comments on the lives he observes. Many of those lives are harsh; individuals ~ and especially children ~ cling only uncertainly to basic needs. No longer is he worried about being “rubbed” during his walk about town. Now he steps back to report on the reality of poverty and the callousness that comes from pain.

Clemens’ observations eventually broaden to include the affect of poverty on the young and their need to make a living. In his Letter from New York dated 23 May 1867, Clemens offers a description of a squadron of “bootblacks” (MTTWMB, 221-225): “Sometimes, down about the City Hall Park, it does seem to me that every little ragamuffin in New York has bought a brush and a foot-box, and gone in the boot-blackening business, ‘Blackin’, sir, blackin’! ‘Shine, sir? – nice shine, sir, only five cents!’ So they assail a man at every step, and persecute him from the rising of the sun till the going down thereof” (MTTWMB, 221).¹⁴ The exchange here can be tied with Clemens’ early sketch “The Story of Mamie Grant, the Child-Missionary” (c. July 1868; CTSSE, 262-268), which was likely influenced by his wanderings through New York City. Such wanderings also sparked harsh descriptions of cholera producing tenements (MTTWMB, 235-236) as well as a summation of the paucity of words in the face of genuine urban blight: “I have been through the dens of poverty, crime, and degradation that hide from the light of day in the Five Points and infinitely worse localities – but I, even I, can blush and must decline to describe them...” (MTTWMB, 277).¹⁵

Clemens boarded the *Quaker City* in June 1868. He escaped the city, but his experience there had laid the foundation for his concern with class and the affects of urban poverty on the lives of children.¹⁶ When he returned to New York in November, however, he turned his attention to Olivia Langdon, the sister of Charlie Langdon, a companion on the Holy Land tour. Sam Clemens married Olivia (Livy) Langdon on 2 February 1870 and his focus turned to domestic concerns. His post-1870 writing is fueled by the early experiences with the moral issues of poverty and nurture and, more intimately, the world of children and their moral development.

II

Horace Bushnell and Child Nurture

Clemens’ discovery of the progressive ideas of theologian Horace Bushnell had a profound affect on his thinking and on his writing.¹⁷ On June 25, 1870, Clemens sat down to pen a brief note to Charles Scribner and Company: “Dr Sirs,” he wrote, “Please send me Dr Bushnell’s volume entitled ‘Christian Nurture,’ to the above address, & charge to Yrs Truly, S. L. Clemens” (MTL4: 158). The Clemenses were then in Elmira to help care for the dying Jervis Langdon, Livy’s father. Livy was at the time pregnant with the Clemenses’ first child: Langdon Clemens was born on 7 November 1870. It is possible that they turned to Bushnell’s volume while both looked to the future of their own family and searched for solace at the coming and certain loss of Livy’s father: Bushnell’s liberal brand of congregationalism both influenced and was a reminder of the progressive ideals the Langdons had instilled in Livy; Bushnell’s lessons spoke to Clemens’ spiritual interest and to his broadening social awareness.¹⁸

While Sam and Livy looked to Bushnell's advice for their parenting, for Clemens, Bushnell's small volume furnished insights that would eventually affect the spiritual character of the boy Huckleberry Finn (we will come to that later). In his chapter "What Christian Nurture Is" Bushnell sets out the focus for his spiritual and cultural concern. He writes:

We hold a piety of conquest rather than love. A kind of public piety that is strenuous and fiery on great occasions, but wants the beauty of holiness, wants constancy, singleness of aim, loveliness, purity, richness, blamelessness, and ~ if I may add another term not so immediately religious, but one that carries, by association, a thousand religious qualities ~ wants domesticity of character. (CN, 11)

False piety crushes domestic virtue in its purest and most spiritual and redemptive form. For Bushnell, home was the focal point for spiritual instruction, and parents carried a heavy responsibility as models and arbiters of Christian values, values not contained within rituals or externally prompted acts; for Bushnell, "virtue still is rather a state of being than an act or series of acts" (CN 28). Home was the place that shaped that "state of being."

Bushnell's Christian household is characterized by intimate relations between parent and child: "if we narrowly examine the relation of parent and child, we shall not fail to discover something like a law of organic connection, as regards character, subsisting between them" (CN, 24). This leads to a consideration of "whether a child is born in depravity, or whether the depraved character is superinduced afterwards" (CN, 24). For Bushnell, the prevailing embrace of individualism by mid-nineteenth century American simplifies, perhaps over-simplifies, the idea that it is possible for the lone being (in this case the lone child) to create him or herself. It is a denial of organic relations and fails to see "that character may be, to a great extent, only the free development of exercises previously wrought in us, or extended to us, when other wills had us within their spheres" (CN, 26). Bushnell questions a hyper-individualism or simplistic self-reliance that removes the individual from a social, and especially familial, context. The proper response to such a limiting view is Christian education that "begins with nurture and cultivation" (CN, 27). And the affect of environment is lasting: the child will be shaped not by the verbal or doctrinal teachings of the household but by the atmosphere in which he or she lives and grows. That atmosphere is inescapable. And it is complete, for "The odour of the house will always be in his garments, and the internal difficulties with which he has to struggle will spring of the family seeds planted in his nature" (CN, 89).

Nurture and cultivation encourage the child to virtue and piety. The assumption is that villainy is neither natural nor spontaneous and neither is inclination or disinclination to piety, "everything depends upon the organic law of character pertaining between the parent and the child, the Church and the child, thus upon duty and holy living and gracious example" (CN, 43). External ritual, rote lessons, and insisting that a child replicate outward or symbolic religiosity have no lasting affect on a child's spiritual development, neither does emphasizing the child's need to embrace conversion lead to redemption [[[note ~ (think here of Miss Watson's constant complaints against Huck Finn's behavior and lack of interest in heaven that serves as her only attempt to "save" him).]]] For Bushnell,

Simply to tell a child, as he just begins to make acquaintance with words, that he 'must have a new heart before he can be good,' is to inflict a double discouragement....he is told that he must have a new heart before he can be good, not that he may hope to exercise a renewed spirit, in the endeavour to be good ~ why, then, attempt what must be worthless till something previous befalls him? Discouraged thus on every side, his tender soul turns hither and thither, in hopeless despair, and finally he consents to be what he must ~ a sinner against God, and that only" (CN, 46-47).

Children are easy prey for facile and relentless definitions of sin. If this is true of children embraced by parents and family and community, how much truer will this be for those who either have been cut off (for whatever reason) from real moral instruction or denied honest affection and care.

Often the parent (or adult acting in place of the parent) transfers his or her own spiritual despair to the child: "They propagate their own evil in the child, not by design, but under a law of moral infection" (CN, 95). That

infection grows not by explicit teaching but instead, by the models presented. Organic relationships are hotbeds of moral and immoral lessons: "The spirit of the house is in the members by nurture; not by teaching, not by any attempt to communicate the same, but because it is in the air the children breathe" (CN, 95). In the end, moral disease is easily transmitted and, without some kind of intervention, the child will succumb to the tendency toward evil and break with the moral community: "the moral disease of the family he assuredly will take, and that, probably without even a question, or a cautious feeling started" and less some person or institution intervenes "the organic spirit of the house will infallibly shape and subordinate his character" (CN, 102).

In the chapter titled "Parental Qualifications," Bushnell argues for the organic influence of parents and the dire consequences of a soured home. Parents may demonstrate traits that lead to vice. Among their "vices" are sanctimony, bigotry, Christian fanaticism, censoriousness, disowning authority (especially God's authority), and anxiousness, "And nothing will so dreadfully torment the life of a child as to be perpetually teased by the anxious words, and looks, and interferences of this unhappy superintendence" (CN, 251). Households that embrace such vices offer children little or no spiritual or even physical protection. An atmosphere so poisoned leads only to destruction, and the path to that destruction is cobbled with lies: "No truth is really taught by words, or interpreted by intellectual and logical methods; truth must be lived into meaning, before it can be truly known" (CN, 351). From dissipation comes dissipation; from mercy come redemption and reconstruction.

III

Huckleberry Finn and Child Nurture

The trope of the destitute child whose natural appreciation of and sensitivity to nature ministers to the forlorn, the heart-sick, or more commonly the drunken and destitute, holds firm in the social commentary and fiction of the 1840s and 1850s. As the nineteenth century progressed, however, the ministrations of the fictional child become more complex and, at times, less prized as writers concentrate on the realities of an increasingly harsh world (the ascendancy of literary realism washes away the romanticism of moral reform).** This can be seen in Clemens' work as he shifts his focus from romantic notions of children as models of moral purity to the realistic rendering of a world that incites a child's skepticism and self-interest, a world most clearly described in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Horace Bushnell's ideas shaded this dark and forbidding tale of marginal lives. Bushnell's theology combined with contemporary tales of urban poverty and vice to reassert for Clemens the connection between urban poverty and the children it deeply affected: after some twenty years, "trundle-bed trash" came back into his vision.

Few readers acknowledge the deep and abiding spiritual emptiness that colors *Huckleberry Finn*'s anger toward the world. While Clemens softens that anger when Huck finds small bits of peace on the river, the boy has too often been the butt of a community's prejudice and too often been on the receiving end of paternal death threats to forgive adults bent on inflicting physical pain and spiritual suffocation. Huck's anxiety prompts questions regarding the nature of family and a community's responsibility to the poor and the need to recognize and to address social and domestic abuse. These are questions of charity and the possibility of redemption. Huck reminds readers of their complicity in a society that disposes of people ~ and of children especially ~ in service to financial stability, material comfort, and spiritual laziness. The basic inspiration of *Huckleberry Finn* may have come from Clemens' childhood and Clemens' childhood friend Tom Blankenship; however, the fictional child Huck is shaped and shaded by a swirl of contemporary concerns, from child abuse to alcoholism, from the tide of immigration to the dire urban poverty and slum tenements. While most approaches to Clemens' interest in children emphasize his nostalgia and childhood experience as the germ for the character and the tale, the whole of the novel may have been influenced more by Clemens' experience of urban poverty and his contemporary concerns over family and the worries of child rearing. Placing the novel within a larger context of American realism brings the tale in line with mid-19th century worries over the status of the disenfranchised and especially with concerns over the status of children turned out into the streets (or held in bondage) as the result of economic stress. What seems an historical novel based on the experiences of an ante-bellum child is, in actuality, a contemporary tale about a boy who chooses exile from a broken domestic life and a community that ignores his pain by insisting on the sanctity of parental rights, even when the exercise of those rights raises welts on a child's back.

What began for Clemens as a memory of Hannibal's Finns and Blankenships and of a boy as a seemingly benign, if neglected and ostracized, village pariah became after 1874 something much more potent. By the time Huck came back to tell his own story, his had become a voice affected by a complete breakdown of village and family sentiment. The questions of virtue and worth and the organic bond between the child and the home and community brought Clemens eventually to a sharper focus on Huck, and Bushnell's thinking about home and the organic quality of sin (or grace) influenced Clemens as he shifted at the end of *Tom Sawyer* to the more realistic and problematic version of Huck's spiritual history, which ultimately becomes *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.¹⁹ In "Chapters from my autobiography" Clemens' memory vacillates as he identifies Frank Finn and Tom Blankenship as the sources for Huck (MTOA, 191 and 212); however, his late recollection is tinged with the description of Huck from *Tom Sawyer*:

He was ignorant, unwashed, insufficiently fed; but he had as good a heart as every any boy had. His liberties were totally unrestricted. He was the only really independent person ~ boy or man ~ in the community, and by consequence he was tranquilly and continuously happy, and was envied by all the rest of us. We liked him; we enjoyed his society. And as his society was forbidden us by our parents, the prohibition trebled and quadrupled its value, and therefore we sought and got more of his society than any other boy's. (MTOA, 191)

In *Villagers of 1840-3*, notes on Hannibal composed around 1897, Clemens recalled the Blankenships: "The parents paupers and drunkards; the girls charged with prostitution ~ not proven. Tom, a kindly young heathen. Bence, a fisherman. These children were never sent to school or church. Played out and disappeared" (HH&T, 31). "Played out and disappeared" seems in line with the Huck's lighting out for the territories and underscores the lack of responsible compassion in a community. Domestic violence is background in *Tom Sawyer*: Huck responds to Tom's plan to marry saying, "Well, that's the foolishest thing you could do. Look at pap and my mother. Fight! Why, they used to fight all the time. I remember, mighty well" (TS, 177).

As Clemens describes him during the chapters written during 1876, Huck Finn is sibling to Mary Ellen Wilson: as we have seen, Mary Ellen's beatings with a cowhide were highlighted in newspaper reports and played a prominent role in depositions and testimony. Clemens' Huck reports: "But by and by pap got too handy with his hick'ry, and I couldn't stand it. I was all over welts. He got to going away so much, too, and locking me in. Once he locked me in and was gone three days. It was dreadful lonesome" (HF, 30-31). In chapter five, Pap warns Huck, "I'll give you a cowhide" (HF, 24), and he threatens the boy, "He said he'd cowhide me till I was black and blue if I didn't raise money for him" (HF, 26).²⁴ Mary Ellen's description, especially of the whippings and being locked away for extended periods, may have been fodder for Clemens' version of Huck's story that concentrates on Pap's callousness and violence. Huck, like small Mary Ellen Wilson, is isolated and beaten, and the primary actor in the violence aimed at his body and spirit is a parent.

Huck's story, though poignant, is unremarkable for many 19th century children. Huck's mother is dead and only a shadow memory. She is, perhaps, the catalyst for the boy's drive to find some place of comfort and peace in a community that seems at times hostile and often indifferent to him. His father, a violent drunk and an opportunist, returns only after he hears about Huck's fortune (attained in the final chapters of *Tom Sawyer*) and sees a chance to claim a prize. Pap is especially abusive (and here the verbal abuse is built upon a foundation of long-practiced physical intimidation) when he faces the possibility that his son will have opportunities that were never his own:

You've put on considerable many frills since I been away. I'll take you down a peg before I get done with you. You're educated too, they say; can read and write. You think you're better'n your father, now, don't you, because he can't? I'll take that out of you. Who told you you might meddle with such hifalut'n foolishness, hey?...And looky-here ~ you drop that school, you hear? I'll learn people to bring up a boy to put on airs over his own father and let on to be better'n what he is. You lemme catch you fooling around that school again, you hear? Your mother couldn't read, and she couldn't write, nuther, before she died. None of the family couldn't, before they died. I can't; and here you're swelling yourself up like this. I ain't

the man to stand it ~ you hear?...Now looky-here, you stop that putting on frills.
I won't have it. I'll lay for you, my smarty; and if I catch you about that school
I'll tan you good. First you know you'll get religion, too. I never seen such a son. (HF, 24).

Pap's phobia about reading and writing runs in tandem with his hatred of government, of any display of social acceptance of Blacks, and of religion. His mention of Huck's dead mother is unnerving because he accuses Huck of disloyalty to his mother and of leaving behind his family for physical comfort and intellectual gain. Pap is bitter because of the destruction of his own life's chances. He conjures the memories of the dead (the reference to others of the family who supposedly died illiterate may mean dead brothers or sisters) to scare Huck back under his control. Pap's hatred of religion pushes Huck further into a spiritual darkness and sets a clear expectation that no one should influence a child's faith in place of his family, or in this case his father. It is an insane paternalism. And it is the primary lesson that Huck is taught within his biological family.

Pap is a prime influence on Huck and on Huck's ways of thinking about and living in the world. The main lesson Huck learns as he confronts his father's teaching is that when faced with superior strength and absolute blind self-interest, it is always better to disappear, to not call attention to yourself. Huck voices this first commandment of the abused when he says first of Miss Watson, who is a practitioner of her own form of fundamentalist abuse by insisting that Huck aim for heaven: "Well, I couldn't see no advantage in going where she was going, so I made up my mind I wouldn't try for it. But I never said so, because it would only make trouble, and wouldn't do no good" (HF, 4). When confronting the Duke and the King, Huck says:

It didn't take me long to make up my mind that these liars warn't no kings or dukes, at all, but just low-down humbugs and frauds. But I never said nothing, never let on; kept it to myself; it's the best way, then you don't have no quarrels, and don't get into trouble. If they wanted us to call them kings and dukes, I hadn't no objections, long as it would keep peace in the family; and it warn't no use to tell Jim, so I didn't tell him. If I never learned nothing else out of pap, I learnt that the best way to get along with his kind of people is to let them have their own way. (HF, 165)

Silence is the key to physical survival (though, in the end, it may result in spiritual malaise and depression).

Overwhelming silence shuts off the possibilities either of conventional religion or of social behavior marked by a sense of ethics and justice. Pap's ostrich approach to child nurture (a practice that is very much part of Bushnell's criticism of conventional child rearing) is a repudiation of robust social Christianity and a direct refusal of the ideals of any spiritual (and even social) compact. Pap is interested only in the physical world and only in his own comfort in that world. It is a lesson that Huck internalizes, and one that keeps him in a constant state of apprehension that primes his hyperactive skepticism when considering the motives and the conduct of adults. It is a lesson that is only reinforced by Miss Watson (and a complicit Widow Douglas) who provides only conventional piety and religious cant.

For Huck, "home" means life with Pap. Nothing that comes later is able to cancel the lessons learned at the hands of Pap (mostly because the lessons not much different ~ only, perhaps, less vocal). The absence of genuine and Christian compassion and nurture is determinant. Clemens creates a story that is centered on belief in the discipline of Christian nurture and the reality of Huck's lessons from an impious, surely blasphemous, and selfish father. Huck may be innately good (perhaps he is and perhaps he is not); however, he has been schooled to identify with and see himself as a product of the sins of the world. Clemens, critics argue, held no spiritual foundation that would inform this critique and state more-or-less confidently that Clemens embraces charity spawned by secular compassion. That argument is wrong. There is a spiritual darkness manifest in Huckleberry Finn's aloneness and isolation as he struggles with and chafes against domestic abuse and alcoholism and desperate and soul-sick loneliness. Huck gives voice to existential loneliness:

Miss Watson she kept pecking at me, and it got tiresome and lonesome....
Then I set down in a chair by the window and tried to think of something cheerful, but it warn't no use. I felt so lonesome I most wished I was dead.
The stars was shining, and the leaves rustled in the woods ever so mournful;

and I heard an owl, away off, who-whooping about somebody that was dead, and a whippowill and a dog crying about somebody that was going to die; and the wind was trying to whisper something to me and I couldn't make out what it was, and so it made the cold shivers run over me. Then away out in the woods I heard that kind of sound that a ghost makes when it wants to tell about something that's on its mind and can't make itself understood, and so can't rest easy in its grave and has to go about that way every night grieving. I got so down-hearted and scared, I did wish I had some company. Pretty soon a spider went crawling up my shoulder, and I flipped it off and it lit in the candle; and before I could budge it was all shriveled up. I didn't need anybody to tell me that was an awful bad sign and would fetch me some bad luck, so I was scared and most shook the clothes off me. I got up and turned around in my tracks three times and crossed my breast every time; and then I tied up a little lock of my hair with a thread to keep the witches away. But I hadn't no confidence. You do that when you've lost a horse-shoe that you've found, instead of nailing it up over the door, but I hadn't ever heard anybody say it was any way to keep off bad luck when you'd killed a spider. (HF, 4)

Clemens is attuned to the cadence of spiritual loneliness and the desperation of the dispossessed. And the damned.

Huck's tale is seasoned with the faithful works of Pease and Brace and moral persuasion of Bushnell's treatise, a treatise that formed the basis for a Christian social vision. Stephen O'Connor sums up Bushnell's central place in this work. Discussing Bushnell's influence on Charles Loring Brace, O'Connor writes:

As Horace Bushnell had taught him, no overt influence could shape character as effectively as the unconscious influence of truly virtuous people whom one truly wants to please. The only way to help these desperate and lonely children, Brace thought, was to place them in an environment where their most basic physical needs could be met and their own most healthy and virtuous impulses would make them want to improve themselves, to become the very best men and women they could be. (OT, 82)

Bushnell's focus on the Christian household also has a direct influence on Clemens' exploration of domestic relations and especially of children forced to make their way alone. One clear difference is that Clemens' dedication to realism made it impossible for him to direct Huck toward salvation. There is no environment in the novel that would allow for Huck's physical comfort and some potential for self-improvement. Even the Phelps farm ~ edenic as it might seem ~ is the site of prejudice and abuse. And while Huck claims that he will "light out," there is no indication in the novel that this will happen or that it will offer better results.

Ultimately, the mix of the history of social ministry and the reality of starting his own family pushed Clemens to write stories focused on the demands of moral education. There is more to Clemens' story than an exclusive interest in race-driven social issues. There is local concern. There is family hope and family pain. Personal experience, a life of loss, uncertainty and anxiety both over the health and well being of his own children and an ability to see in their lives both promise and potential for loss pushed Clemens to write fiction that demanded that readers consider the plight of his child characters and, therefore, the plight of children facing down an antagonistic world. As a father, Clemens could not help but wonder what the world would offer his daughters. As a writer, Clemens could not help but write stories with "a pen warmed in hell." Clemens' social critique was energized with the hope that telling a story could influence readers to act for good and moral purpose. And it is Huck's shredded hope that is never far from the surface of Clemens' tale. In the end, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is about the failure of a father to properly nurture his son and about the failure of a community to understand the depths of that father's and that son's physical and spiritual ruin. If Clemens thought that *Tom Sawyer* was a hymn, he offers *Huck Finn* as a dirge, a lament for the socially and spiritually dead.

Notes

** In *Letters From New York: A portrait of New York on the cusp of its transformation into a modern City* (1842) Lydia Maria Child describes a street urchin facing down watchmen and constables: “He tried the universal resort of weakness against force; if they are too strong for him, he will be too cunning for them. Their cunning is roused to detect his cunning: and thus the gallows-game is played, with interludes of damnable merriment from police reports, whereat the heedless multitude laugh; while angels weep over the slow murder of the human soul” (*Ltrs from New York*, 60). A quarter of a century later, Samuel L. Clemens (Mark Twain) offered his own description of such an encounter in “Colloquy Between a Slum Child and a Moral Mentor” (c. May, 1868; CTSSE, 253-256). That sketch begins,

“Who made the grass?”

“Chief Police.”

“No, no ~ not the Chief of Police. God made the grass. Say it now.”

“God made the grass.”

“That is right. Who takes care of the beautiful grass and makes it grow?”

“Chief Police.” (253)

Ultimately, despite (or perhaps because of) this emotional gamesmanship, Child embraced the street child as symbol of a natural morality and spirituality: “...I saw a very little, ragged child stooping over a small patch of stunted, dusty grass....I felt humbled before that ragged, gladsome child....I returned home a better and wiser woman, thanks to the ministry of that little one” (*Ltrs from New York*, 103). Clemens, however, used the confrontation as fuel for his own battle with Sunday School teachings. He ends his tale with this note: “A little girl sleeping in an upper room of a New York tenement house on a cold night, with a dilapidated window-shutter for a coverlet said, ‘Mother, I am so sorry for poor little girls that haven’t got any window-shutter! I ought to be very thankful.’ (Respectfully recommended for the Sunday School Books.)” (256). This is not a tale aiming at moral and spiritual uplift. It is a satire on the state of poor and the ways moral teachings are used to reinforce class status and, ultimately, a primer on how to use moral lessons to make the poor satisfied with their place in the world.

¹ The note ties this sketch to several others that Clemens created to poke at the moral tales presented in books for children. The two most clearly connected are “The Christmas Fireside” (CTSSE, 191-194) and “The Story of the Good Little Boy Who Did Not Prosper” (CTSSE, 374-378).

² See Albert E. Stone, *The Innocent Eye: Childhood in Mark Twain’s Imagination* as well as Roberta Seelinger Trites’ *Twain, Alcott, and the Birth of the Adolescent Reform Novel*.

³ In chapter five of *Huckleberry Finn*, Judge Thatcher and the Widow Douglas go to court to remove Huck from Pap’s control. The judge in the case, however, rules against them, “he said courts mustn’t interfere and separate families if they could help it; said he’d druther not take a child away from its father. So Judge Thatcher and the widow had to quit on the business” (HF, 26).

⁴ Clemens was apprenticed to local printer Joseph Ament in 1848 roughly a year after the death of his father. He spent the next several years learning the trade, ultimately working for his brother Orion off and on until Sam decided to leave printing to become a steamboat pilot. He trained as a “cub” pilot during 1857 and was awarded his license in 1859 only to leave the Mississippi with the start of the Civil War in 1861.

⁵ See Clemens’ 24 August 1853 letter to his mother Jane Lampton Clemens (MTL1: 3-9). For a discussion of this letter in the context of Clemens’ developing ideas about race and the influence of New York City on those ideas, see Ann M. Ryan’s “Mark Twain and the Mean (and Magical) Streets of New York” in *Cosmopolitan Twain*.

⁶ One of the echoes of Clemens’ experience among the poor is the image of Offal Court that sets the scene for Tom Canty’s life in chapter two of *The Prince and the Pauper*. The bedlam of the Canty household seems to be especially tied to Clemens’ 1868 experience of New York City’s Five Points neighborhood.

⁷ Robinson’s tale of “Wild Maggie,” which begins in chapter three and winds its way through a substantial portion of the novel, sets the moral spine of the work – and reinforces the image of the righteous waif who ultimately brings temperance and moral clarity to her alcoholic parent. While there is some doubt whether Robinson’s Maggie is the same child that Pease reportedly ushered toward adoption by a farm family outside of the city (Five Points, 259) ~ an instance of the out-placement practice made famous (or infamous) by Brace’s *Children’s Aid Society and the later Orphan Trains* ~ the tale is clearly aimed at solidifying the child’s role as agent of moral reform.

⁸ For an account of Abraham Lincoln's visit to the House of Industry in 1860 see *Five Points*, 235-240.

⁹ The book was published in 1880; a similar message was sounded by Jacob Riis in *How the Other Half Lives*, published in 1890, and *The Children of the Poor*, published in 1892.

¹⁰ Brace was from Hartford. Bushnell had a profound affect on a cast of socially minded ministers: Brace, Pease, and Joseph Twitchell among them. Twitchell was, in turn, influential in the continued moral development of Sam Clemens who considered the Hartford minister his closest friend (after Olivia, Clemens' wife). During Clemens' early years in Hartford, Twitchell introduced Clemens to Hartford's poor neighborhoods and social welfare institutions.

¹¹ See *Orphan Trains: The Story of Charles Loring Brace and the Children He Saved and Failed* and *The Orphan Trains: Placing Out in America*.

¹² Clemens was preparing to depart as a member of the first Mediterranean luxury cruise. That trip, aboard the *Quaker City*, would range from New York to France, Spain, Italy, Turkey, and Palestine. Clemens would tell the tale in his first book, *The Innocents Abroad* (1869).

¹³ The reference here connects to Clemens' note at the end of "Colloquy Between a Slum Child and a Moral Mentor" (c. May, 1868; CTSSE, 253-256), which is written after this experience.

¹⁴ For a broader discussion of the street society see Timothy J. Gilfoyle's "Street-Rats and Gutter-Snipes: Child Pickpockets and Street Culture in New York City, 1850-1900."

¹⁵ These comments echo those of Charles Loring Brace in an earlier 1873 article published in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, "The Little Laborers of New York City." Brace also commented on the street culture of newsboys in Chapter 9 of *The Dangerous Classes*. Clemens' comments are also similar to Jacob Riis' tenement descriptions in *How the Other Half Lives*. They also echo comments made by William Dean Howells when he describes his early 20th century visits to New York City tenements (*Impressions and Experiences*, 1909).

¹⁶ Clemens' chapters on Palestine in *Innocents Abroad* demonstrates his continued interest in the lives of the poor and some of the images of old world poverty seem to recapitulate new world urban experience.

¹⁷ Clemens met Bushnell during his visits to Hartford in the late 1860s; Bushnell was a founder (along with Calvin E. Stowe and James Hammond Trumbull) of the Monday Evening Club, a group of Hartford's intellectual elite. Clemens joined the group in 1873 after his taking up residence in Hartford. Joseph Twitchell was also a member.

¹⁸ For a discussion of the influence of Bushnell and Twitchell, see Harold K. Bush, Jr.'s *Mark Twain and the Spiritual Crisis of His Age* and Steve Courtney's *Joseph Hopkins Twitchell: The Life and Times of Mark Twain's Closest Friend*. Also see Robert Bruce Mullin's *The Puritan Yankee: A Life of Horace Bushnell*.

¹⁹ Clemens wrote *Huck Finn* over eight years beginning in the summer of 1876 and ending in the summer of 1884. During those years, Clemens also wrote and published *The Prince and the Pauper*, *A Tramp Abroad*, and *Life on the Mississippi*. A portion of *Prince and the Pauper* recapitulates the story of Huck as both Tom Canty and Edward VI learn the value of compassion.

²⁰ Clemens wrote *Tom Sawyer* during three periods: the winter of 1872-73, the spring and summer of 1874, and spring and summer of 1875.

²¹ Interestingly Clemens writes supportively of its work on behalf of animals while in New York during 1868. See MTTWMB, 226.

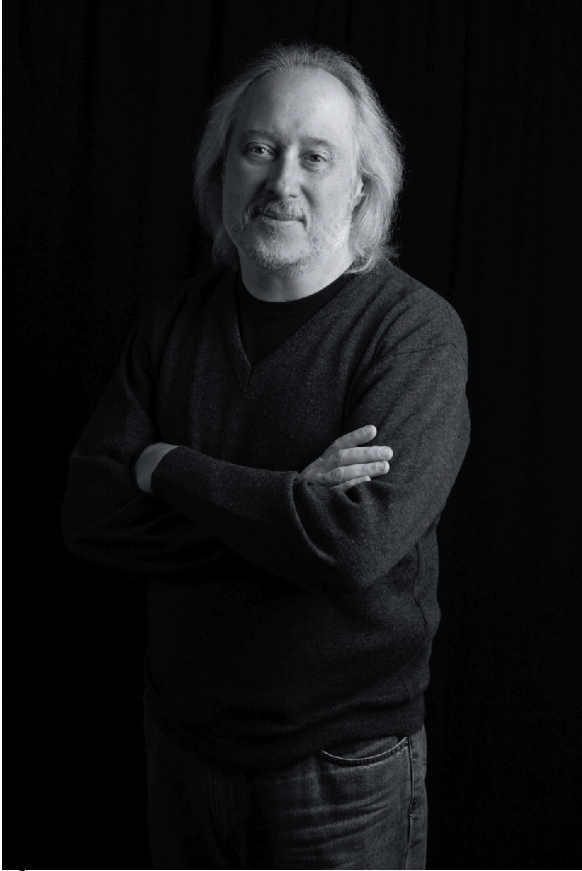
²² Bergh was under pressure to extend his work on behalf of animals to the protection of children soon after the founding of the NYASPCA in 1866 (MEWCAC 52-65). In 1871 Bergh's attorney Elbridge Gerry attempted to remove eight year old Emily Thompson from an abusive household. That attempt was unsuccessful because Emily refused to cooperate (MEWCAC, 60-61). Eventually, the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children was founded in 1874.

²³ While we know this to be false, the language and tone speak to both a bias against the higher classes as well as an intention to stoke the controversy over the child's condition.

²⁴ Clemens, in fact, changed his manuscript mention of a "rawhide" into the infamous "cowhide" for the First American Edition.

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Michael J. Kiskis

Scholar, Teacher, Beloved Husband, Friend

July 4, 1954 - May 8, 2011

“Reading through the prism of my own life experience has taught me...that none of us can turn away from who we are. We are our parents; we are our families and friends and lovers. How and how much we value our emotional lives, how we live with or apart from those we love shapes and constructs our identities.”

Michael J. Kiskis, *Samuel Clemens and Me:
Class, Mothers, and the Trauma of Loss*

Contributions in Michael's memory may be made to:
Michael J. Kiskis Memorial Fund
Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies
One Park Place Elmira, New York 14901

I am sitting on the side deck of the faculty club at U.C. Berkeley. I have been on campus for three days and will be here for seven more. I have been spending eight to nine hours each day sitting at a hardwood table in the suite of offices that houses the Mark Twain Project reading through the collection of manuscript and typescripts that are filed away as the means of Mark Twain's autography. I am still in East Coast time: up at four a.m., dead tired by nine p.m. It has been heady and tiring. And if I had to explain the satisfaction I feel after a day's reading to my family, I could fail miserably. Let me explain.

The sitting here on Rio deck speaks memories. No, that's not quite right. It speaks conversations. The strongest of these recalls a conversation I had more than 20 years ago while leaning back on the front porch and talking with my mother. We were talking about my plans for college. What I might major in. What I wanted to do when I got out and moved out of the protective cover of dormitory and library. As so all very distinct to me. It was a warm night - the mosquitoes had not yet swarmed in. My mother had a habit of leaning back so that the two front legs of her cloth yard chair came up off the floor. Her back rested against the wall of the house. Usually she draped a dish towel across her lap - a fitting symbol that her housework was complete. She ~~was~~ kept the porch and spent hours looking out over our street. During the day she would often pass bread crumbs - sometimes ketchup - into the yard for sparrows. We'd clasp our hands to chase off invading black birds.



ties on hand of a sort to make privacy desirable.

I remember the 'coon and 'possum hunts, nights, with the negroes, and the long marches through the black gloom of the woods, and the excitement which fired everybody when the distant bay of an experienced dog announced that the game was treed; then the wild scramblings and stumblings through briars and bushes and over roots to get to the spot; then the lighting of a fire and the felling of the tree, the joyful frenzy of the dogs and the negroes, and the weird picture it all made in the red glare—I remember it all well, and the delight that everyone got out of it, except the 'coon.

I remember the pigeon seasons, when the birds would come in millions and cover the trees and by their weight break down the branches. They were clubbed to death with sticks; guns were not necessary and were not used. I remember the squirrel hunts, and prairie-chicken hunts, and wild-turkey



*A nice example of the power of the
"Moths of the night" to kill over T—
has up, it was to his best work—
now much we have from it was—*

was fresh and dewy and fragrant, and life was a boon again. After three hours of tramping we arrived back wholesomely tired, overlaid with game, very hungry, and just in time for breakfast.

JANE LAMPTON CLEMENS

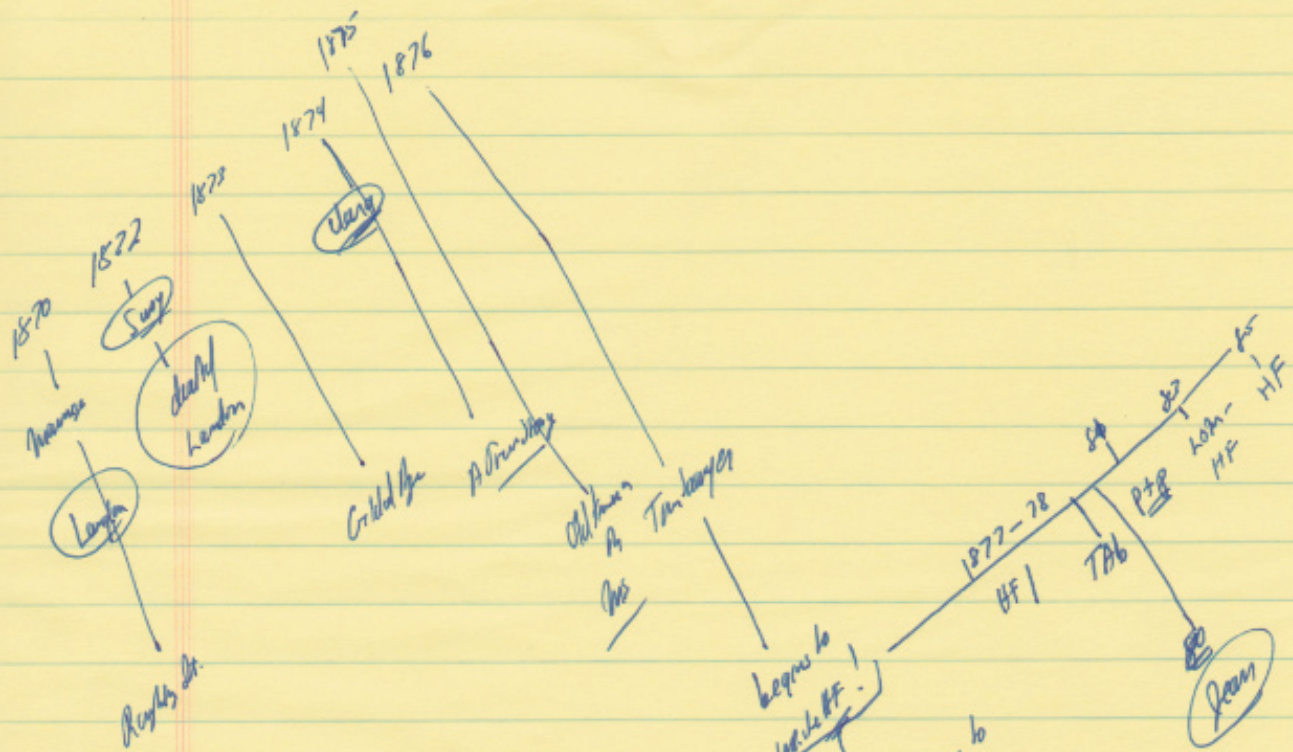
This was my mother. When she died, in October, 1890, she was well along in her eighty-eighth year, a mighty age, a well-contested fight for life for one who at forty was so delicate of body as to be accounted a confirmed invalid and destined to pass soon away. I knew her well during the first twenty-five years of my life; but after that I saw her only at wide intervals, for we lived many days' journey apart. I am not proposing to write about her, but merely to talk about her; not give her formal history, but merely make illustrative extracts from it, so to speak; furnish flashlight glimpses of her character, not a processional view of her career. Technically speaking, she had no career; but she had a character, and it was of a fine and striking and lovable sort.

What becomes of the multitudinous photographs which one's mind takes of people? Out of the million which my mental camera must have taken of this first and closest friend, only one clear and strongly defined one of early date remains. It dates back forty-seven years; she was forty years old then, and I was eight. She held me by the hand, and we were kneeling by the bedside of my brother, two years older than I, who lay dead, and the tears

*It shows a strong sense
of responsibility of my idea
to be independent of any idea
of the other—
in the story—*

It is a story—

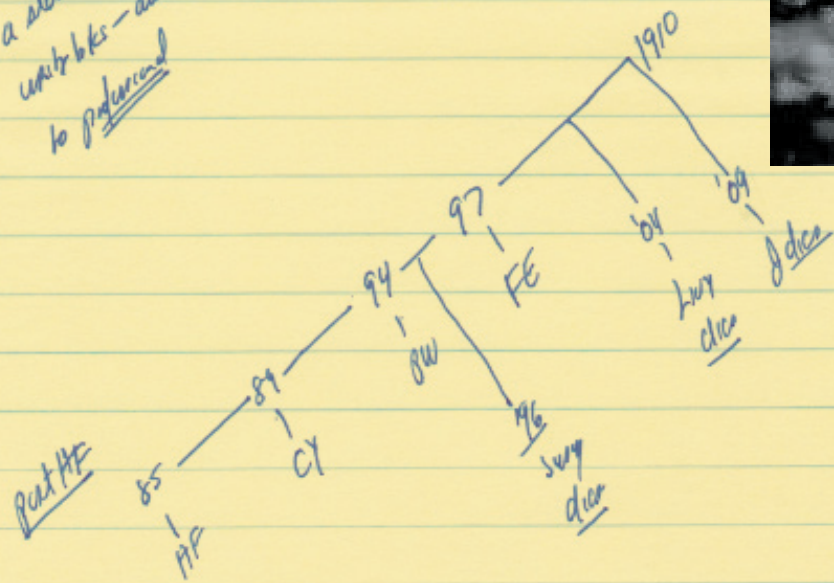
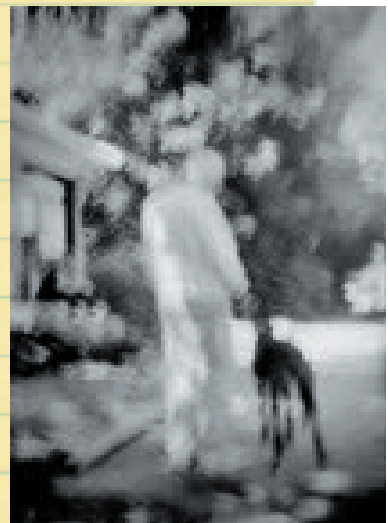
*It is a story—
it is a story—
it is a story—
it is a story—*



a slow dev an number - shifts to
units bks - away from conf problem
to professional

begins to write HF!

what happens to
put for 20
different activities -
creative work?



"Chapters from my autobiography" -NAR

I

Sept 7, 1906 - 321-330

- ① Introduction to method + form [321] MTA.2.245ff
- ② section on ancestry - from "Early Days" fragment [322-330:MTAp82-93]

II

Sept. 21, 1906 - 449-460

- ① begins of Literary hist - from earliest "JF" to sketches - [449-451]
- ② Innocents Abroad [451-453]
- ③ "Playing Bear" [453-456]
- ④ Louis Stevenson [456-459]
- ⑤ article + comment on Ltr of MT sdd [459-460]
-and on value of T's death to editor -

III

October 5, 1906 - 577

- ① first tale
-con
- ② marriage + move to Buffalo [577-580]
- ③ children- and Suzy's death [580-583]
- ④ Suzy ^{as a child} [583-589]



links
Living + Suzy -
a kind of
memorial to
both

IV

October 19, 1906 : 705-716

- ① cont. of Suzy [705-707]
-The biography -
- ② on to reviewers - and reviews - and fixing reviews [707-709]
-GA: personal appearance - the biography
- ③ story telling -The biography [710-711]
- ④ T's children- and torques [711-713]
-burthen alarm-[712-715]
- ⑤ series of vignettes -cats - lamp - talk [716]

more later...

Notes

Notes



Complicating Twain

Biography, Autobiography, and the Personal Scholar

Remembering Michael J. Kiskis

Symposium Co-Chairs

Kerry Driscoll *Saint Joseph University*

Ann Ryan *Le Moyne College*

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