

MARK TWAIN AND NATURE



OCTOBER 4 | 5 | 6 | 2019



1. Hamilton Hall*
2. Fassett Commons*
3. Cowles Hall*
4. Mark Twain Study*
5. Hamilton Hall*
6. Alumni Hall
7. Carnegie Hall*
8. Kolker Hall
9. Watson Fine Arts
10. Harris Hall
11. McGraw Hall
12. The College Store
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 in Emerson Hall
23. Gibson Theatre in Emerson Hall
24. Tompkins Hall*
25. Perry Hall
26. The Office of Admissions & Financial Aid
27. Campus Field

*Listed on the National Register of Historic Places

“Mark Twain and Nature”

A Quarry Farm Weekend Symposium

Symposium Chair

Ben Click, St. Mary’s College of Maryland

Keynote Speaker

Michael P. Branch, University of Nevada, Reno

Presenters

- J. Mark Baggett**, Samford University
- Katherine E. Bishop**, Miyazaki International College
- Charles C. Bradshaw**, Brigham Young University - Hawaii
- Ryan Heryford**, California State University, East Bay
- Barbara Ladd**, Emory University
- Delphine Louis-Dimitrov**, Catholic University of Paris
- Don James McLaughlin**, University of Tulsa
- Lisa Vandebossche**, College of Coastal Georgia
- Emily VanDette**, State University of New York at Fredonia

Moderators

- Michael P. Branch**, University of Nevada, Reno
- Lawrence Howe**, Roosevelt University
- Ann M. Ryan**, Le Moyne College



SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

Friday, October 4 in Cowles Hall on the Elmira College Campus

6:00 p.m. Opening Reception

Enjoy hor d'œuvres, and assortment of drinks, and conversation with old and new friends in proximity to the Mark Twain Study and the Mark Twain Exhibit

7:00 p.m. Opening Dinner

*Elmira College Welcome
Dinner*

*Keynote Introduction
Keynote Address*

Joseph Lemak, Director, Center for Mark Twain Studies

Ben Click, Professor of English, St. Mary's College of Maryland
Michael P. Branch, University Foundation Professor of English,
University of Nevada, Reno

“Made in Nevada”

Many places lay claim to Samuel Clemens, including Hannibal, Angel's Camp, Jackass Hill, Buffalo, Hartford, Lake Saranac, Redding, and, of course, Elmira. However, any Nevadan will tell you that Virginia City was Clemens's most important home, for it was there that he invented Mark Twain, and perfected many of the literary techniques of hyperbolic and observational humor that would distinguish his inimitable style. While readers often associate Twain with the Mississippi, it was Clemens's contact with the sparse beauty of the western Great Basin Desert that helped to inspire and shape the emergence of Mark Twain. But if Nevada invented Mark Twain, there is a fascinating sense in which Mark Twain also invented Nevada. To a surprising degree, Nevadans today think of their high desert home landscape and their place-based regional culture in ways first explored and celebrated by Twain. As a high desert rat and a writer of creative nonfiction that is both environmental and comic, Mike Branch will consider Twain's legacy in Nevada, and reflect on Twain's influence on his own work. In particular, how did Twain lead the way in showing us that writing about the natural world could also be funny? As part of his presentation Mike will share several pieces from his recent books—*Raising Wild* (2016), *Rants from the Hill* (2017), and *How to Cuss in Western* (2018)—pieces that owe a great deal to Twain's legacy as a nature writer, a humor writer, and a one-time Nevadan. In recognition of the importance of place in understanding Twain's accomplishment, it is likely that substantial parts of Mike's talk will have been composed on his laptop while at the bar of the historic Bucket of Blood Saloon in Virginia City (constructed in 1876).

Michael P. Branch is University Foundation Professor of English at the University of Nevada, Reno. He is co-founder and past president of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment and series co-editor of the University of Virginia Press book series *Under the Sign of Nature: Explorations in Ecocriticism* (36 titles). He has published nine books and more than 200 articles, essays, and reviews and has given 350 invited lectures and readings. Mike is the recipient of the Western Literature Association awards for both creative writing and humor writing, the Ellen Meloy Desert Writers Award, and the Nevada Writers Hall of Fame Silver Pen Award. His four most recent books are *Raising Wild* (2016), *The Best Read Naturalist: Nature Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (2017), *Rants from the Hill* (2017), and *How to Cuss in Western* (2018). Mike is currently working on a new book about jackalopes.



Saturday, October 5 at Quarry Farm

8:30 - 9:00 a.m. Breakfast

9:00 - 10:30 a.m. Session One: Traditions and Extensions, Part 1: Environmentalism, Wildness, Wilderness, and Art

- Moderator: Michael P. Branch
- Barbara Ladd, “Night after Night and Day after Day’: Mark Twain and the Natural World”
- J. Mark Baggett, “Practicing the Wild’: Twain and Thoreau at the Lakes”
- Katherine E. Bishop, “A Wilderness of Oil Pictures’: Reframing Nature in *A Tramp Abroad*”

10:45 - 12:15 p.m. Session Two: Traditions and Extensions, Part 2: Pastoralism, Animal Welfare, and Myth

- Moderator: Ann M. Ryan
- Delphine Louis-Dimitrov, “Nature in Mark Twain’s *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc: Pastoralism Revisited*”
- Charles C. Bradshaw, “Animal Welfare and the Democratic Frontier: Mark Twain’s Condemnation of Bullfighting in *A Horse’s Tale*”
- Emily E. VanDette, “A Dog’s Tale’ in Context: Twain & the Transatlantic Anti-Vivisection Campaign”

12:15 - 1:00 p.m. Lunch

1:00 - 2:30 p.m. Session Three: Exterior/Interior Landscapes

- Moderator: Lawrence Howe
- Ryan Heyford, “the breath of flowers that perished’: Imperial Ecologies in Mark Twain’s Early Letters”
- Lisa Vandenbossche, “Nature as Travel Guide: Mark Twain and Hawaii in Writing the American Frontier”
- Don James McLaughlin, “Microphobias: Medicine after Miasma in Twain’s *3,000 Years among the Microbes*”

2:45 - 4:00 p.m. Session Four: Where Do We Go From Here?

- Overview of the day’s papers and further thoughts by Ben Click
- Followed by a roundtable discussion for all presenters and audience members

6:00 - 7:00 p.m. Closing Reception

The gathering will begin on the Porch at Quarry Farm where people can discuss the day’s events, take in the view of the Chemung River Valley, and enjoy an assortment of refreshments.

7:00 p.m. Closing Remarks and Toast by Ben Click, followed by Dinner

Sunday, October 6 at Quarry Farm

8:00 a.m. Farewell Breakfast Buffet

MARK TWAIN AND NATURE

A Quarry Farm Weekend Symposium

ABSTRACTS

(in alphabetical order by last name)

J. Mark Baggett, *Samford University and Cumberland School of Law*
jmbagget@samford.edu

“Practicing the Wild”: Twain and Thoreau at the Lakes”

Mark Twain’s depiction of Lake Tahoe in chapters 22-23 of *Roughing It* --“the fairest picture the whole earth affords” -- has embedded him within Tahoe’s history and culture. His descriptions of pristine waters of the lake echo the transcendental phrasings of Thoreau in “The Ponds” chapter of *Walden* and fit securely within the 19th century Romantic tradition of wilderness writing. The lakes become important measures of the authors’ conceptualizations of the natural world—their “practice of the wild,” in the poet Gary Snyder’s terms. Using theoretical applications of wildness, including Thoreau’s essay “Walking,” I argue that neither author’s literary imagination reconciles the presence of wildness, ultimately appropriating it as a setting where human activity takes place, and resisting the representation of nature as an organism in a state of constant change. Even Thoreau, after his disorienting climb to the summit of Mt. Ktaadn, vows to settle for a more orthodox assimilation of wildness.

J. Mark Baggett is Associate Professor of English and Law, Samford University and Cumberland School of Law. His teaching and research concentrates on American humor; American language and literature, particularly Mark Twain; Southern literature; and law and literature. His recent research on Twain’s use of legal rhetoric is an outgrowth of his teaching legal writing, now “Lawyering and Legal Reasoning,” at Cumberland since 1987. He contributed articles on legal issues in the *Mark Twain Encyclopedia* and is working on a book-length project on Mark Twain and the law, building on interdisciplinary research on Twain’s broad appropriation of legal rhetoric.



“The Restored” from *Roughing It*,
Chapter 22 (1872)

Katherine E. Bishop, *Miyazaki International College*
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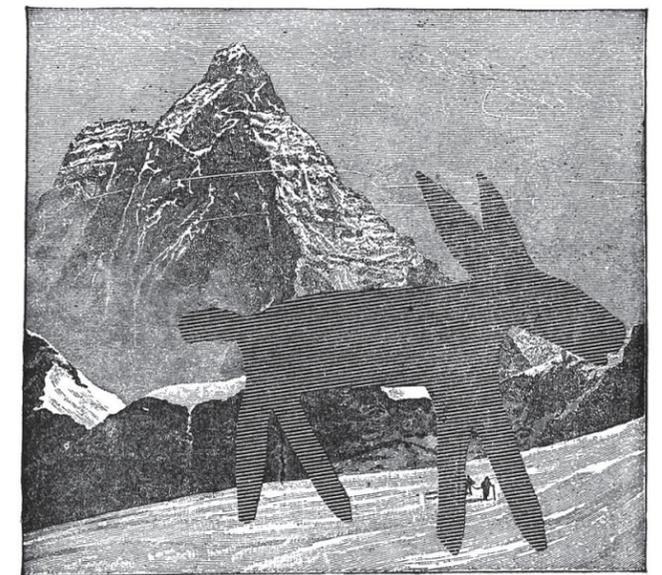
“A Wilderness of Oil Pictures”: Reframing Nature in *A Tramp Abroad*”

Twain begins his 1880 travelogue, *A Tramp Abroad*, with the ostensible goal of studying art. Early on, he describes inserting his own paintings into a gallery’s “wilderness of oil pictures,” calling attention to the text’s complicated relationship to environmental aesthetics and complicating the textual intersection between literature and art. Quite often, Twain approaches art as a reflection of human hubris, his own included: his consideration of the overblown reputations of Old Masters who owe time more than skill for their veneration is a case in point. But it is notable that throughout *A Tramp Abroad*, Twain perseverates on the imagistic and physical imposition of the human over the landscape, questioning what goes into, and comes out of, anthropocentric visions of the environment. Rather than perpetuating the split between human and nature, so prominent in nineteenth-century picturesque and sublime art, and common uses thereof, he reorients himself and his reader so that we are off to the side, no longer blocking the view of the Matterhorn and no longer chasing after dominance but coexisting, even minimized. Considering *A Tramp Abroad* from the perspective of ecoaesthetics allows us to reconsider Twain’s work, reflections on ‘wilderness’ and ‘nature,’ and connection to the art world. To borrow from James Elkins, in *A Tramp Abroad*, “seeing alters the thing that is seen and transforms the seer”: in this case, the art of nature and the nature of art.

Katherine E. Bishop is an Assistant Professor of Literature at Miyazaki International College. She is an active member of the Japan Mark Twain Society. Her current research interests gravitate toward ecology, aesthetics, and speculative fiction. These are typified in *Plants in Science Fiction: Speculative Vegetation*, a volume she co-edited, which is forthcoming from the University of Wales Press. Her most recent publications have appeared in *Green Letters*, *Fafnir*, and *Polish Journal for American Studies*.



“Painting My Great Picture” from *A Tramp Abroad*,
Chapter 11 (1880)



“My Picture of the Matterhorn” from *A Tramp Abroad*,
Chapter 38 (1880)

Charles C. Bradshaw, *Brigham Young University-Hawaii*
cbradshaw@utm.edu

“Animal Welfare and the Democratic Frontier: Mark Twain’s
Condemnation of Bullfighting in *A Horse’s Tale*”

One of Mark Twain’s last complete works was written by request. *A Horse’s Tale* (1907) had its beginnings in a letter from stage actress and animal welfare activist Minnie Maddern Fiske asking him to write a story that could be used to decry bullfighting. Twain enthusiastically did so, but he set the story on the American frontier, with Buffalo Bill and his horse as heroic American counterparts to the violence of the Spanish bullring. This paper looks at the implications of Twain’s use of Cody and the American frontier to further the cause of animal welfare at the turn of the 20th century.

Charles C. Bradshaw is an Associate Professor of English at Brigham Young University—Hawaii, having recently moved there from The University of Tennessee at Martin. He has written on a variety of American literary topics and is currently working with the Papers of William F. Cody and the University of Nebraska Press on publishing a scholarly edition of Mark Twain’s *A Horse’s Tale*.

Ryan Heryford, *California State University, East Bay*
ryan.heryford@csueastbay.edu

“‘The breath of flowers that perished’: The Imperial Ecologies of Mark Twain’s Early Letters”

This article will trace Mark Twain’s early notes and letters to the *Sacramento Union* and *Alta California* during his four-month stay on the Hawaiian islands in 1866 and his subsequent trip down the Rio San Juan in Nicaragua later that year, considering his poetic meditations on a diversity of flora and fauna alongside his occasionally direct and sometimes elusive commentaries on territorial annexation, missionization and settler-occupation in the Pacific and beyond. Reading across a colonial archive of nineteenth century environmental surveys of the Pacific atolls and the Central American isthmus, this article will highlight Twain’s alignment toward and departure from a tradition of writing about non-European ecologies as bearers of disease and decomposition, dangers to the legibility and coherence of a traveler’s corporeality. Twain’s ambivalent, non-Western ecologies, I argue, mark a politics that extends well beyond his familiar satires and pointed expositions, offering pathways for re-imagining the place of non-human environments throughout his subsequent literary canon.

Ryan Heryford is an Assistant Professor of Environmental Literature in the Department of English at California State University, East Bay, where he teaches courses in nineteenth and twentieth century American literature, with a focus in eco-criticism and cultural narratives of environmental justice. He has published works on environmental thought in the writings of William Faulkner, Herman Melville, and Édouard Glissant. His current book-length project, *The “Snugness of Being:” Nineteenth Century American Literary Vitalisms*, explores the influence of nineteenth century environmental and bio-medical philosophy on constructions of self and subjectivity in Thoreau, Poe, Dickinson, and Melville.



Rosa Bonheur (1822-1899). Col. William F. Cody. 1889. Oil on canvas. Whitney Western Art Museum.

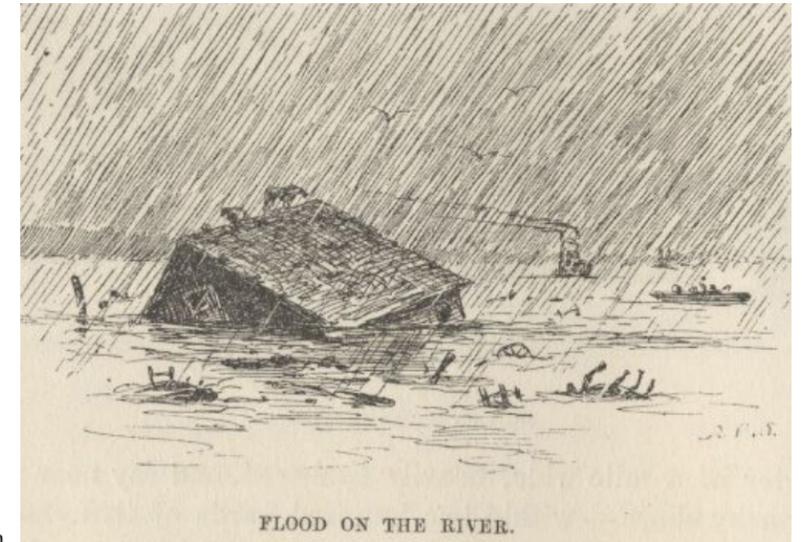


Martin Johnson Heade (1819-1904) *Sunrise in Nicaragua*. 1869. Oil on canvas. Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza.

Barbara Ladd, *Emory University*
bladd@emory.edu

“Night after Night and Day after Day:
Mark Twain and the Natural World”

Although Mark Twain was not himself an environmentalist, he was deeply sensitive to the interdependence of humankind and the natural world, to the conditions, often difficult, under which we inhabit the natural world, and to its ultimate indifference to our desires—issues that continue to preoccupy environmentalists and ecocritics, whether they are inclined toward public policy or philosophy. This article argues that the Mississippi River is touchstone for Twain’s relationship to the natural world and that *Life on the Mississippi*, a record of his return to the river in the aftermath of the great flood of 1882, demonstrates the power and meaning of its indecipherability in Twain’s imagination.



“Flood on the River” from *Life on the Mississippi*, Chapter 26 (1883)

Barbara Ladd is Professor of English at Emory University. She is the author of *Nationalism and the Color Line in George W. Cable, Mark Twain, and William Faulkner* (1996), *Resisting History: Gender, Modernity, and Authorship in William Faulkner, Zora Neale Hurston, and Eudora Welty* (2007) and is co-editor of the recent *Oxford Handbook of the Literature of the U.S. South* (2016). Her essays have appeared in *American Literature*, *PMLA*, *Mississippi Quarterly*, and elsewhere.

Delphine Louis-Dimitrov, *Catholic University of Paris*
delphine.louis@gmail.com

“Nature in Mark Twain’s *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*:
Pastoralism Revisited”

In its full range, the presence of nature in Mark Twain’s *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* has remained largely unexplored. As a site of fictionalization in a narrative that otherwise strongly relies on historiographical material, the treatment of nature nonetheless proves central to the characterization of the heroine, to the construction of a timeless aesthetic sphere in which her childhood is set, and to the understanding of her relationship with history. It also bears the stamp of Mark Twain’s imagination and reveals the oft-denied proximity of his 1895–96 historical romance with his other writings. Focusing on the articulation of nature with spirituality and history, I argue that the narrative reinterprets the myth of the divinely inspired shepherdess and thereby defines an original form of pastoralism that not only fuses existing traditions, but also reaches beyond the tension of nature and history that the genre commonly involves. Through the treatment of Joan’s mystic union with nature, the text defines a form of pastoralism in which the retreat into the natural world turns out to be the principle of a renewed commitment to history.



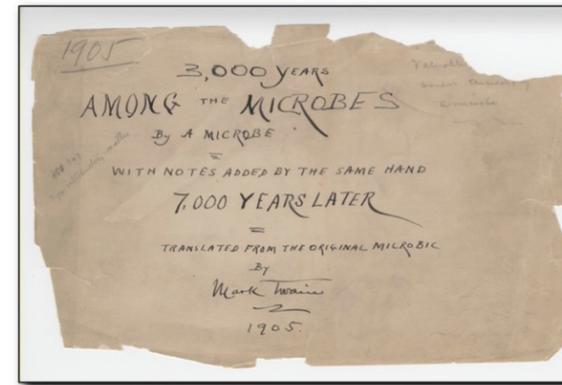
“Joan of Arc” from “*Saint Joan of Arc*” (1904).
Illustration by Howard Pyle

Delphine Louis-Dimitrov is an Assistant Professor at the Catholic University of Paris and a former Quarry Farm Fellow. She holds a doctorate in American literature from the Sorbonne-Nouvelle University in Paris. Her thesis dealt with the writing of history in Mark Twain’s fiction. She is now studying American medievalism, with a special focus on the persistence of the figure of Joan of Arc in literature. With Ronald Jenn, she coordinated a special issue on *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc in American Literary Realism* (Winter 2019, Vol. 51, No. 2) and is now co-editing a special issue on “Joan of Arc through American Eyes” to be published in the *Revue Française d’Etudes Américaines* (RFEA) in Fall 2019.

Don James McLaughlin, *University of Tulsa*
donjamesphd@gmail.com

“Microphobias: Medicine after Miasma in Twain’s *3,000 Years among the Microbes*”

This talk examines Mark Twain’s unfinished manuscript *3,000 Years among the Microbes*, written in Dublin, New Hampshire in 1905. More precisely, I provide a historical backdrop for the manuscript by putting it in dialogue with two major shifts in medical thought at the end of the nineteenth century: (1) the rise of microbiology, introducing a new discourse for articulating the relationship of bacteria and viruses to infectious disease, established largely by Louis Pasteur’s successes in vaccination; and (2) the emergence of an international psychiatric discourse revolving around mysophobia, meaning a dread of filth and contamination. Written from the perspective of a cholera germ named Huck who has infected a tramp named Blitzowski, *3,000 Years* meditates on both discourses, exploring microbiology’s ramifications for human understandings of life, agency,



Manuscript page, 3000 Years among the Microbes,
Thomas J. Dodd Research Center,
University of Connecticut

Lisa Vandenbossche, *Georgia Southwestern State University*
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“Nature as Historian in Mark Twain’s Letters from Hawaii”

In 1866 Mark Twain was sent to the Kingdom of Hawaii as a traveling correspondent for the *Sacramento Union* to assess the potential of the islands for future American economic development. These accounts were eventually reformatted, becoming the basis for Twain’s early lectures and the second half of Twain’s 1872 full-length account of the American West, *Roughing It*. They thus shaped perceptions of the Hawaiian Islands for readers both in the United States and western territories.

This paper traces the evolution Mark Twain’s travel writing in these different accounts of Hawaii by comparing intersections between recorded history and nature writing in Twain’s early letters and later full-length narratives. In the twenty-five letters that Twain produced, (documenting the islands of Oahu, Maui and Hawaii) Twain creates a fictitious travel companion, Mr. Brown, whose dialogue gives voice to a theoretical model for travel writing that blends historical documentation with descriptions of the natural world. In these letters, Twain uses Brown to critique “mush-and-milk preacher travels” that distract readers from what is in front of their eyes and obscure the natural world. When Twain condenses the narration of his Pacific travel for *Roughing It*, he removes Mr. Brown and much of the dialogue from these earlier letters. As a result, the theoretical model offered in the *Sacramento Union* letters becomes more fully developed; nature takes on an even more prominent interpretive role, often punctuating Twain’s depictions of historic spaces and imbuing emotion into the history of the islands. In doing so, they present the natural world as an active participant, which protects and shapes the human history. In *Roughing It* nature serves as a witness that preserves stories, as well as phenomena that punctuates Twain’s experiences uncovering these stories, evoking emotions from him and his fellow travelers that frame their accounts of human action. In insisting on the importance of natural descriptions in writing a travel narrative, Twain’s later work illustrates the impossibility of telling human experiences while ignoring the environment that surrounds those experiences.

Lisa Vandenbossche received her doctorate in English from the University of Rochester in 2019. She is an Assistant Professor of English at the College of Coastal Georgia. Her scholarship, which focuses on maritime labor, Pacific exploration and advocacy in the nineteenth century, will be included in the forthcoming collection *Cultural Economies of the Atlantic World: Objects and Capital in the Transatlantic Imagination*. Her current book project, “Sympathetic Seas: Sailors, Writing and Reform in the Anglo-Maritime World, 1750-1865,” has been supported by fellowships from the Folger Shakespeare Library, The Social Science Research Council, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

and subjectivity, while also pursuing a mysophobic aesthetic: a state of readerly repugnance generated by the landscape of infection and bodily functions Huck and his microbe friends inhabit. I use *3,000 Years* to argue that we cannot understand the evolution of mysophobia (as a diagnosis and aesthetic) without also understanding its historical relationship to the triumph of medical microbiology.

Don James McLaughlin is Assistant Professor of Nineteenth-century American literature in the English Department at the University of Tulsa and the 2018–2019 Hensch Post-dissertation Fellow at the American Antiquarian Society. He is writing a book on the history of phobia as a medical diagnostic, political metaphor, and aesthetic sensation in American liberalism. His writing has appeared in *American Literature*, the *New Republic* and *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists*.



“Going into the Mountains” from *Roughing It*, Chapter 69 (1872)

Emily E. VanDette, *State University of New York at Fredonia*
 Emily.Vandette@fredonia.edu

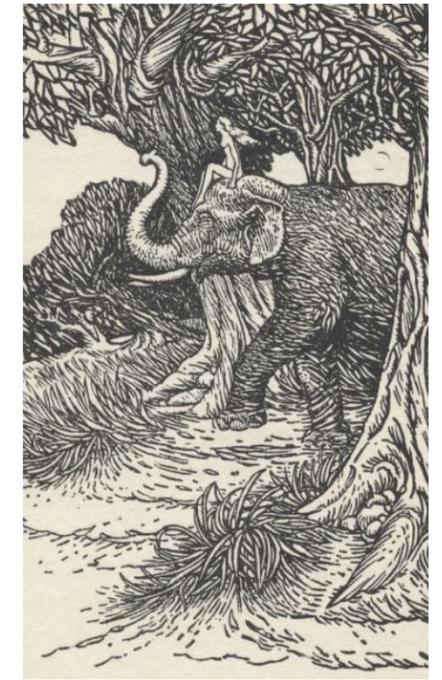
“‘A Dog’s Tale’ in Context: Twain & the Transatlantic
 Anti-Vivisection Campaign”

With its complex treatment of animal subjectivity, Twain’s 1903 story “A Dog’s Tale” was ahead of its time. But also, Twain’s stance about vivisection and the status of animals in society was a part of a larger conversation that was taking place at the time on both sides of the Atlantic. This paper will situate Twain’s stance in the context of the vivisection controversy, including some leading voices who directly networked with the famous author to solicit his support for the cause, and it will connect Twain’s prescient portrayal of animal voice and identity to modern-day animal rights activism and post-humanist philosophy.

Emily E. VanDette is Professor of English at the State University of New York at Fredonia, where she teaches courses in 19th-century American literature and women’s writing. As a Quarry Farm Fellow in July 2017, she conducted research for a scholarly monograph about the literature of the early animal welfare movement in the U.S. Her critical edition of the 1904 anti-vivisection 1904 *Trixy* by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps is forthcoming from Northwestern University Press in October 2019, and it includes Twain’s “A Dog’s Tale” in its entirety.



Frontispiece from “A Dog’s Tale” (1903)



Images from “Eve’s Diary” (1906). Illustrations by Lester Ralph



Susan Crane on the Quarry Farm Porch (August 1900)



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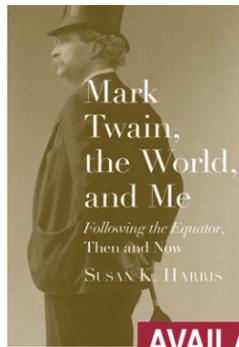
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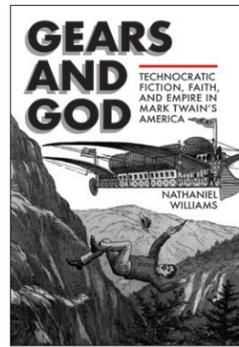
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Susan K. Harris

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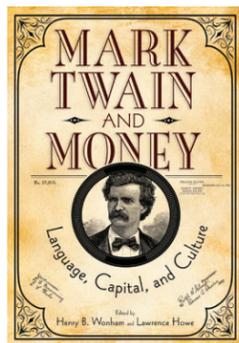


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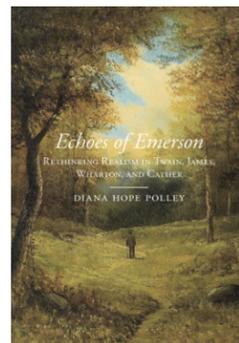


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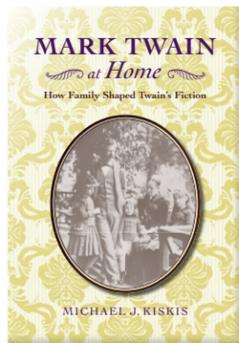


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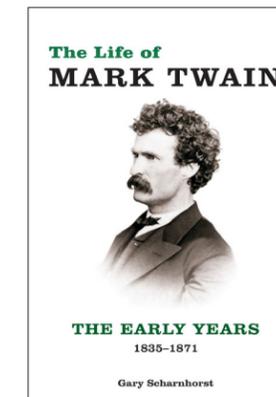


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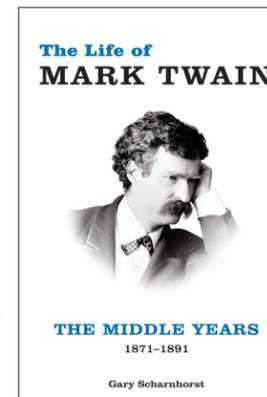
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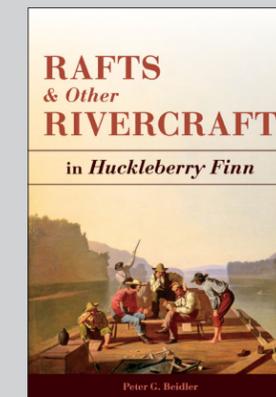
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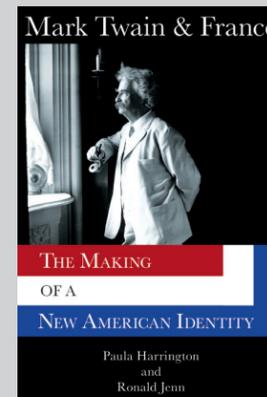
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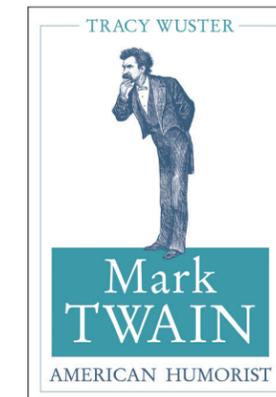
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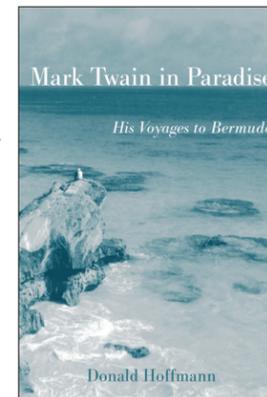
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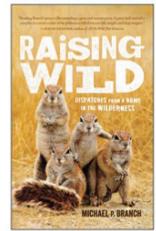
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MICHAEL P. BRANCH is a writer of creative nonfiction, a humorist, a desert rat, a husband, and a father. He has published nine books and more than 200 essays and reviews, and his essays have received Honorable Mention for the Pushcart Prize and been recognized as Notable Essays in *The Best American Essays*, *The Best American Science and Nature Writing*, and *The Best American Nonrequired Reading*. He is the winner of the 2017 Ellen Meloy Desert Writers Award and the Western Literature Association Frederick Manfred Award. Mike lives with his wife and daughters in the high desert of northwestern Nevada, where the Great Basin Desert and the Sierra Nevada Mountains meet.

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