



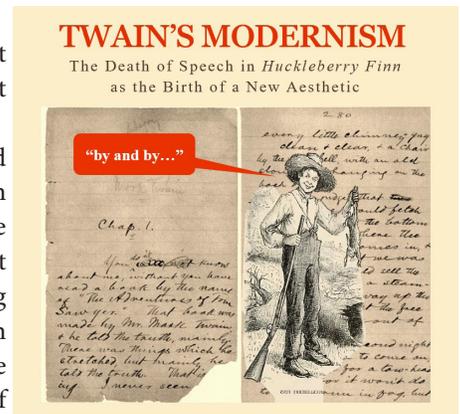
2021 PARK CHURCH SUMMER LECTURES

Wednesday, July 7 at The Park Church (7 pm)

“Twain’s Modernism: The Death of Speech in Huckleberry Finn as the Birth of a New Aesthetic”

Mika Turim-Nygren, *Bard High School Early College DC*

While critics may wrestle with Huckleberry Finn’s role in the American canon – including what Hemingway meant by singling it out for praise – they usually agree that Huck sounds as lifelike as “a real boy talking out loud.” Yet Twain himself believed that “the moment ‘talk’ is put into print” it turned into a “corpse.” His solution was a specifically written mode of ‘talk’: while Huck’s catchphrases derive from racialized speech, they have been severed from their origins so as to belong on the page rather than in anyone’s mouth. For Hemingway, then, Twain provides a model for overcoming the problem of artificial dialog not because his printed talk sounds just like the real thing, but because it’s no longer primarily trying to. When Hemingway himself starts composing dialog by replacing what was ‘really’ with obviously stilted translations, he reveals Twain as an unexpected source of American literary modernism. Huck’s voice transforms the kind of minority speech associated with the country’s deepest divisions into the kind of literary language that everyone could recognize as “purely American.”

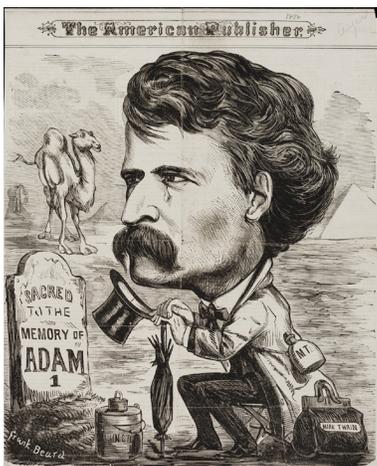


Mika Turim-Nygren is an American Literature Faculty member at Bard High School Early College DC, part of the Bard College network. Her current book project concerns 19th-century American dialect literature, and more broadly, the relationship between racialized dialect and the formation of national literatures worldwide. Published work related to this project includes “Twain’s Modernism: The Death of Speech in Huckleberry Finn as the Birth of a New Aesthetic,” in the Spring 2020 issue of *J19: The Journal of Nineteenth-Century Americanists*, and “Bret Harte’s Birtherism: Dialect Literature and the Fiction of Native-Born Citizenship,” forthcoming in the Spring 2021 legal issue of onsite.org.

Wednesday, July 14 at The Park Church (7pm)

“Material Sanctity: Salvaging the Sacred in *The Innocents Abroad*”

Merav Schocken, *University of California, Santa Barbara*



When Mark Twain traveled to the Holy Land in 1867, he was repeatedly disappointed by what he perceived to be a desolate scenery, devoid of divinity. At the time, Americans traveled to the Holy Land in hopes of validating their faith, escaping modernity, and connecting to an imagined point of origin through which they could understand their identity. My talk examines *The Innocents Abroad* within this context of burgeoning tourism. I suggest that self-deception played an important role in Twain’s depiction of Holy Land pilgrimage. While the travel narrative is known for its cynical portrayal of religion, I focus on Twain’s uncharacteristic attempt to safeguard the sanctity of material relics at traditional pilgrimage sites. Such strategies, I claim, constitute self-deceptive practices that aim to counterbalance disillusionment with the land and escape spiritual darkness. I consider Twain’s attempts at reconciliation as reflective of the broader nineteenth-century struggle between faith and doubt. Specifically, these attempts must be understood, I argue, in the context of American concerns over the materialization of the spiritual in an increasingly secular society.

Merav Schocken is a PhD candidate in English at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her research interests include nineteenth-century American literature with a particular emphasis on critical race studies and topics of space and place. Her dissertation explores practices of self-deception in nineteenth-century American literature.

Wednesday, July 28 at The Park Church (7pm)

“Memory-Building and Memorializing in Elmira: Mark Twain and John W. Jones in Relation”

Jillian Spivey Caddell, *University of Kent, Canterbury, United Kingdom*

When Mark Twain’s sister-in-law Susan Crane was asked in 1896 to contribute to a study of Elmira’s abolitionists, she turned to John W. Jones, the celebrated Elmiran who escaped slavery and became a leader of Black civic and religious communities, as the last living vessel of these local memories. This lecture will think about Jones’s contributions to Elmira’s collective memory and its memorial landscape, using geographical proximity as well as personal familiarity to place Jones and Mark Twain in conversation. Jones is most famous today for a remarkable act of care: burying 3,000 Confederate soldiers who died at Elmira Prison with respect during the Civil War. Yet Jones’s legacy extends far beyond this one act. By placing his life story in relation to Twain’s fictionalized portraits of memory and storytelling inflected by the vestiges of slavery, this lecture offers a study in how Elmira’s dynamic monumental landscapes illuminate post-Civil War intersections of race and memory that continue to be arbitrated today.



Jillian Spivey Caddell is a lecturer in nineteenth-century American literature at the University of Kent and a tutor at the University of Cambridge’s Institute for Continuing Education. She teaches and writes about Civil War literature, art and culture. Her work has appeared in *The New England Quarterly*, *J19*, *Apollo: The International Art Magazine*, the *C19 Podcast*, and a variety of edited collections, including a chapter in the forthcoming *Cambridge Companion to Literature of the Civil War and Reconstruction*, from which this lecture is drawn. She is also working with Kristen Treen of the University of St. Andrews on the *Civil War Monuments Database*, a digital map of American Civil War monuments with data, interpretive essays, teaching resources, and more.



Mark Twain (left of center with a light-colored coat) in front of The Park Church.

The Elmira College Center for Mark Twain Studies was founded in January 1983 with the gift of Quarry Farm to Elmira College by Jervis Langdon, Jr., the great-grand-nephew of Samuel Langhorne Clemens. The Center offers distinctive programs to foster and support Mark Twain scholarship and to strengthen the teaching of Mark Twain at all academic levels. The Center serves the Elmira community and regional, national, and international students and scholars of Mark Twain.

Founded in 1846 by a group of abolitionists, The Park Church has been a strong presence in Elmira’s history and some of its congregation were close friends and family members to Mark Twain. Known for its striking architectural features, The Park Church contained Elmira’s first public library and has a long history of charitable service to the Elmira community. Currently, it is a United Church of Christ open and affirming congregation, welcoming all people to worship and participate in its communal life, regardless of ethnic origin, race, class, age, ability, gender, or sexual orientation.

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Visit the “Trouble Begins Archives” at MarkTwainStudies.org for a downloadable recording of all these talks and other past lectures. You can also review past “Trouble Begins” programs and our quadrennial conference and symposia programs.