



# 2022 Park Church Summer Lectures

Wednesday, June 22 at The Park Church (7:00 p.m.)

“There was Eden’: Eve in the Time of Twain”

Ariel Silver, *Author*



Illustration from *Eve's Diary* (1906)

Twain's treatment of Eve in *Eve's Diary* (1906), published shortly after the death of his wife, Olivia Langdon Clemens, combines a triptych of ideas: a loving homage to his beloved spouse, a reflection on religious debates about evolution relative to ecclesiastical and social order, and an expression of the political concerns of women, called “suffragettes” for the first time that year to mark their direct engagement in their quest for the vote. Composed in tandem with *Adam's Diary* (1904), Twain suggests that the fortunes of Adam and Eve are inextricable. If “original sin” was committed, they both bear responsibility. If their fall was fortunate, then they proceed together on that path of human possibility. Twain deftly combines the serious and satirical to produce a wholly new view of Eve. Even as the historical-critical method is applied to the Bible, Twain comically attempts his own textual deconstruction and reconsideration of the Genesis text, giving space for a female voice and perspective even as he reflects cleverly on his own multi-faceted engagement with the “woman question.”

**Ariel Silver** is the author of *The Book of Esther and the Typology of Female Transfiguration in American Literature* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2018) and a contributor to *Esther in America* (Maggid, 2020). She wrote on Esther in the work of Louisa May Alcott in “Queen Aster and Queen Esther” for *The Lehrhaus* (2021). Her work on Margaret Fuller and May Alcott has just been published in *The Forgotten Alcott* (Routledge, 2022). Ariel writes on women, literature, and religion in nineteenth-century American culture. She currently serves as President-elect of the Hawthorne Society and is a Quarry Farm Fellow for 2022.

Wednesday, July 6 at The Park Church (7:00 p.m.)

“Twain's Connecticut Yankee and Pseudo-Scientific Socialist Utopias”

Max Chapnick, *Boston University*

Mark Twain's *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889), appeared between two politically-minded time travel utopias, Edward Bellamy's *Looking Backward* (1888) and H.G. Wells's *Time Machine* (1895). Most criticism reads each of these novels as using science to reimagine the economy: the novels are optimistic about science but pessimistic about capitalism. But while the three authors emerge from a broad field of “scientific socialists,” in each narrative an anti-scientific element remains. In the context of Twain's later interest and disdain for pseudo-science as in *Christian Science* (1907) and his critique of imperial projects as in *King Leopold's Soliloquy* (1905), I will investigate to what extent that engagement with science and empire, and the relationship between those two, began in earlier decades during the writing of *Connecticut Yankee*. These three technology-minded writer's dys/utopic time travel narratives, and in particular *Connecticut Yankee*, ask: what if the increasing consolidation of science into disciplinary and elitist projects, and its uptake as an engine of state, empire, and war, undermined science's more populist promise?

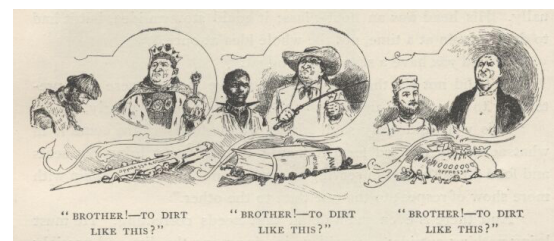


Illustration from *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (chpt.28)

**Max Chapnick** is a PhD candidate in English and American literature at Boston University, where he is writing a dissertation called “Wild Science: Radical Politics and Rejected Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Literature.” A chapter from his dissertation on Pauline Hopkins appears in latest issue of *New England Quarterly*, and shorter essays appear in *PMLA*, *Configurations*, and *Current Affairs*. At Boston University, he teaches English and first-year writing courses on the nineteenth-century, modernism, science fiction, and environmental literature.



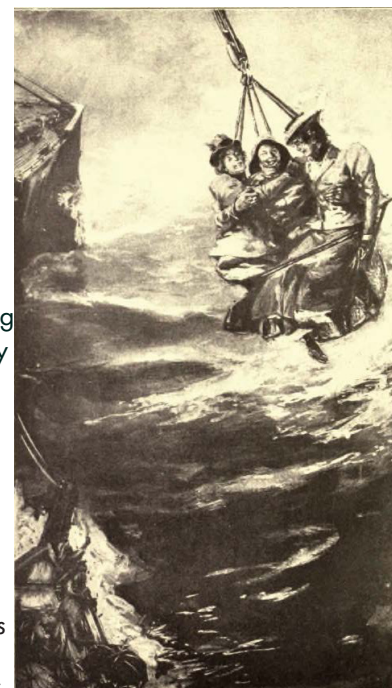
Wednesday, July 20 at The Park Church (7pm)

“Mutiny on the Ballot: Coersion Narrative in Mark Twain’s “The Great Revolution in Pitcairn””

Bill Hunt, *Barton College*

Despite ample sources for potential inspiration in the vicinity of Elmira, Mark Twain looked abroad to examine the cultural and political merits of women’s franchise. He would turn to the tiny, South Pacific island of Pitcairn, which, in 1838, became the first sovereignty on Earth where women exercised the right to vote. Twain’s “The Great Revolution in Pitcairn” (1875) entertains doubts about the large-scale feasibility of universal adult suffrage—just before embarking upon a scenario in which it emerges as an existential imperative. The short story fictionalizes the historical invasion of one Joshua W. Hill, an American grifter and filibuster, who erroneously instituted his own absolute rule over Pitcairn in the 1830s. As islanders fend off the dictatorial predations of “Emperor Butterworth Stavely” (Twain’s stand-in for Hill), voting rights manifest as a means of anti-colonial resistance. The formation of a self-determining body politic becomes essential to the deposition of a genocidal tyrant. Uncoupling the association of maleness and political representation, the narrative mirrors Twain’s own biographical conversion to the cause of women’s suffrage in the 1870s.

**Bill Hunt** is assistant professor of American Literature at Barton College in Wilson, North Carolina. He holds a B.A. and M.A. from the University of Virginia. A James B. Duke fellow, he received his Ph.D. from Duke University in 2016. Of late, he has published pieces in *The Nathaniel Hawthorne Review* and in an edited book collection, *American and Muslim Worlds before 1900*. His scholarship is often impelled by the notion that the American Suffrage Movement was essentially literary in character, as much as it was social and political. In 2017, he began a digital humanities experiment, [www.100signersproject.com](http://www.100signersproject.com), which utilizes archival records to create recuperative biographies for the 100 signers of the Declaration of Sentiments at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848.



PROTECTING THE LADIES  
“Protecting the Ladies”  
from *Following The Equator*  
(chpt.34)



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** maintains its strong social justice presence in Elmira. Founding congregants, including the Langdons, were close friends and family members to Mark Twain. It is known for its striking architectural features and fervent pastor, Rev. Thomas K. Beecher, who opened his study as Elmira’s first public library in 1876. Today it is a vibrant, progressive United Church of Christ congregation - open and affirming, 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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