

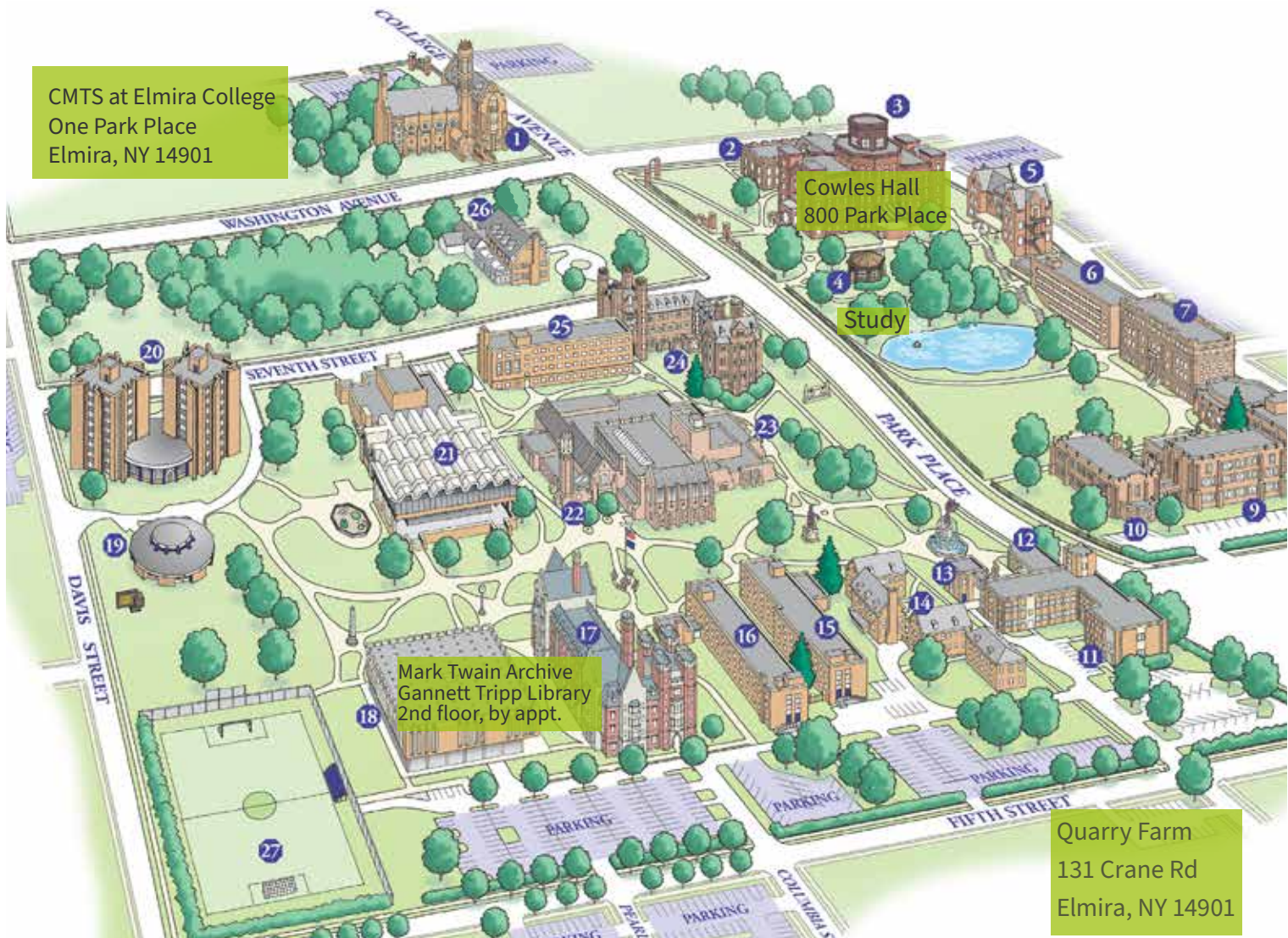
THE 10TH ANNUAL QUARRY FARM SYMPOSIUM

MARK TWAIN:

INVENTION, TECHNOLOGY, AND SCIENCE FICTION

OCTOBER 6 & 7, 2023

CMTS at Elmira College
One Park Place
Elmira, NY 14901



1. Hamilton Hall

2. Fassett Commons

**3. Cowles Hall - FRI OPENING RECEPTION,
DINNER & KEYNOTE**

4. MARK TWAIN STUDY

5. Gillett Memorial Hall

6. Alumni Hall

7. Carnegie Hall

8. Kolker Hall

9. Watson Fine Arts

10. Harris Hill

11. McGraw Hall

12. College Store

13. College Post Office

14. The College Cottages

15. Anderson Hall

16. Columbia Hall

17. Meier Hall

18. Gannett Tripp Library - MARK TWAIN ARCHIVES

19. Clarke Health Center

20. Twin Towers

21. Campus Cneter

22. Speidel Gymnasium, Emerson Hall

23. Gibson Theater, Emerson Hall

24. Perry Hall

26. Office of Admissions & Financial Aid

27. Campus Field

MARK TWAIN: INVENTION, TECHNOLOGY, AND SCIENCE FICTION

10TH ANNUAL QUARRY FARM SYMPOSIUM

Keynote Speaker:

SHEILA WILLIAMS

Symposium Organizer:

NATHANIEL WILLIAMS

Presenters:

NICOLE AMARE

MAX CHAPNICK

EDWARD GUIMONT

ANJALEE GUNARATMAN

JAMES D. KEELINE

RONNY LITVACK-KATZMAN

ALAN MANNING

BRUCE MICHELSON

PATRICK PROMINSKI

MATT SEYBOLD

CHANDER SHEKHAR

TODD NATHAN THOMPSON



NATHANIEL WILLIAMS is the author of *Gears and God: Technocratic Fiction, Faith, and Empire in Mark Twain's America* (University of Alabama Press, 2018). He is Associate Editor for *The Mark Twain Annual* and on the editorial board of *The Incredible 19th Century* (I19). His articles have appeared in *American Literature*, *Utopian Studies*, and elsewhere. He is a continuing lecturer for the University Writing Program at the University of California, Davis.

SYMPOSIUM SCHEDULE

FRIDAY October 6
COWLES HALL, Elmira College Campus

OPENING RECEPTION 5:00 PM

DINNER & KEYNOTE ADDRESS 6:00 PM

SHEILA WILLIAMS Keynote Speaker



This keynote covers science fiction publishing and its audience, particularly through the lens of a contemporary science-fiction magazine. While authors such as Mark Twain wrote speculative fiction in novels and periodicals that were not exclusively marketed as “science fiction”, the past 100 years have seen the genre become a well-defined industry that has reinvented itself multiple times. SF publishing today is meeting new challenges, including AI-produced literature and a readership that is increasingly diverse and at times divided. And yet, many of those core aspects of storytelling and reader engagement have stayed the same. What elements of science fiction have persisted since Twain’s time? How have transformations in publishing changed the way science fiction is consumed? If writers are concerned with how their work is presented to the public (as Twain certainly was), what role does the editor play in that process?

SHEILA WILLIAMS is the multiple Hugo-Award winning editor of *Asimov’s Science Fiction* magazine. She is also the winner of the 2017 Kate Wilhelm Solstice Award for distinguished contributions to the science fiction and fantasy community.

Sheila started at *Asimov’s* in June 1982 as the editorial assistant. Over the years, she was promoted to a number of different editorial positions at the magazine and she also served as the executive editor of *Analog* from 1998 until 2004. With Rick Wilber, she is also the co-founder of the Dell Magazines Award for Undergraduate Excellence in Science Fiction and Fantasy. This annual award has been bestowed on the best short story by an undergraduate student at the International Conference on the Fantastic since 1994.

In addition, Sheila is the editor or co-editor of twenty-six anthologies. Her newest anthology, *Entanglements: Tomorrow’s Lovers, Families, and Friends*, was published as part of the MIT Press Twelve Tomorrow series.

SATURDAY

October 7
QUARRY FARM, 131 Crane Road, Elmira

BREAKFAST **8:30 - 9:00 AM** **QUARRY FARM MAID'S COTTAGE**

SESSION ONE **9:00 - 10:30 AM** **TWAIN IN THE CONTEXT OF SCIENCE FICTION**

- P.9 **EDWARD GUIMONT**, "Shadow of the Comet: Celestial Speculation in Twain's Lifetime"
- P.12 **JAMES D. KEELINE**, "The Real World Inspiration Behind *Tom Swift and His Photo Telephone*"
- P.14 **BRUCE MICHELSON**, "Compositors, Duplicates, Dream Selves, Dictations: Mark Twain's Adventures in Replicating Mind"

SESSION TWO **10:45 - 12:15 PM** **TECHNOLOGY IN TWAIN'S NOVELS**

- P.17 **CHANDER SHEKHAR**, "Navigating Whites' Utopia: An Active Reader's Response to *Pudd'nhead Wilson*"
- P.18 **TODD NATHAN THOMPSON**, "Weapons of Mass Distraction: A Comic Genealogy of *A Connecticut Yankee's* Speculative Esceptionalism"
- JUDITH YAROSS LEE** (respondant)

LUNCH **12:30 - 1:00 PM** **QUARRY FARM MAID'S COTTAGE**

SESSION THREE **1:15 - 2:45 PM** **SCIENCE FICTION FROM TWAIN'S ERA**

- P.15 **PATRICK PROMINSKI**, "'The Diamond Lens' and Fitz-James O'Brien's Imagined Order"
- P.13 **RONNY LITVACK-KATZMAN**, "Science Fiction and Boundary of Genre"
- P.10 **ANJALEE GUNARATNAM**, "Aliens of Our World: Nineteenth-Century Naturalists in H.G. Wells's *The Time Machine* and John Clare's *Bird Poems*"

SESSION FOUR **3:00 - 4:30 PM** **TWAIN, SCIENCE, AND RELIGIOUS FAITH**

- P.6 **NICOLE AMARE and ALAN MANNING**, "Twain to Twilight: Latter-day Saint Motifs in Fantasy and Science Fiction Writing"
- P.8 **MAX CHAPNICK**, "Mark Twain vs. Christain Science and Empire"
- P.16 **MATT SEYBOLD**, "The World-Empire"

ROUNDTABLE **4:45 - 5:30 PM** **RECAP / Q&A**

SHEILA WILLIAMS, JUDITH YAROSS LEE, MATT SEYBOLD, and NATHANIEL WILLIAMS (moderator)

CLOSING RECEPTION **6:30 PM** **QUARRY FARM PORCH**

DINNER & REMARKS **7:30PM** **QUARRY FARM BARN**

ABSTRACTS

in alphabetical order

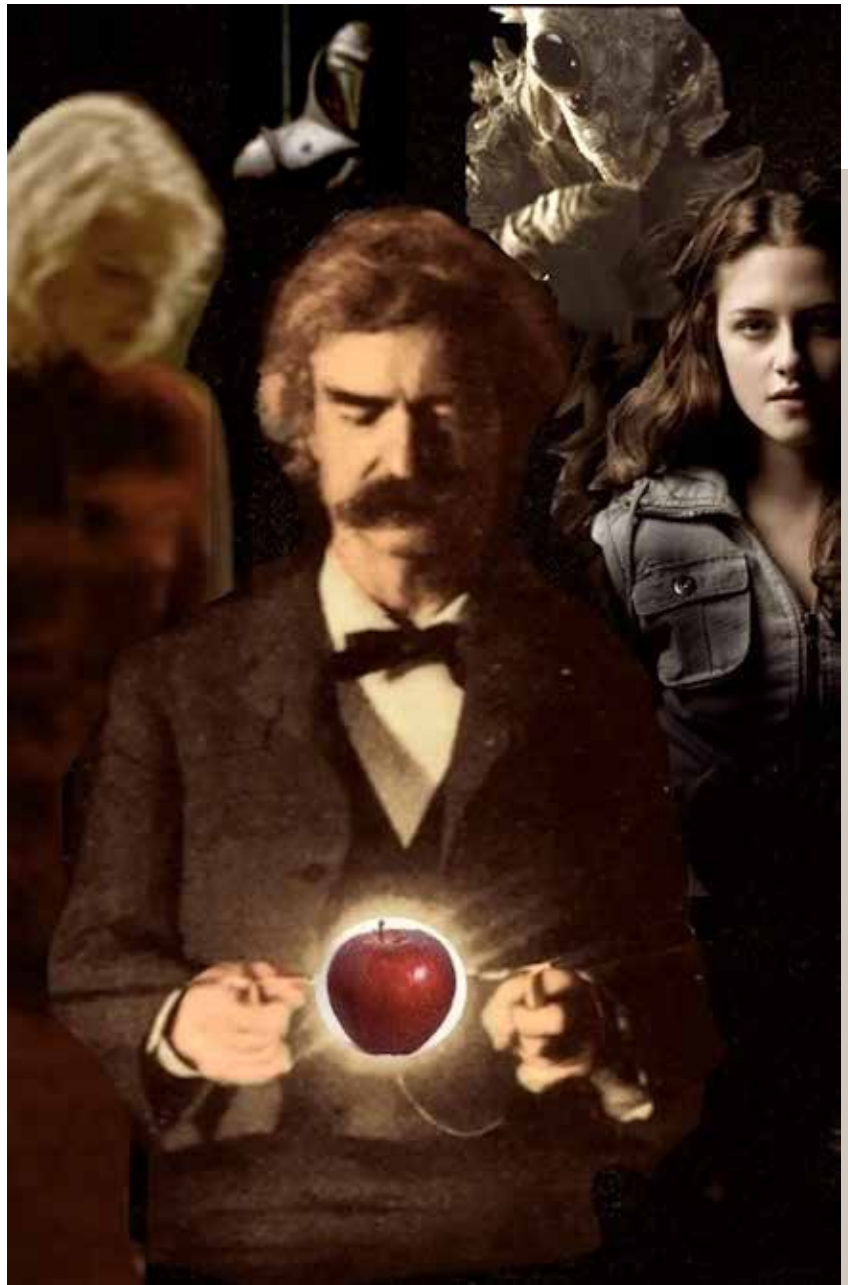
NICOLE AMARE
& ALAN MANNING

“Twain to Twilight: Latter-day Saint Motifs in Fantasy & Science Fiction Writing”

Mark Twain's writing often shares traits with contemporary fantasy and science fiction (henceforth F&SF), particularly stories written by authors affiliated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, historically referred to as "Mormons" due to Latter-day Saints' use of *The Book of Mormon* (1830) a putative translation of ancient writings by Church founder Joseph Smith. Several Book of Mormon plot elements are mirrored, for example, in Twain's *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, generally recognized as an early example of science fiction. Both books tell stories in which the author himself is presented with an ancient book by a mysterious stranger. In both cases, the book tells of an ancient civilization unknown to modern scholars. In both cases, that ancient civilization had (briefly) a democratic-republican form of government, and in both cases that ancient civilization is destroyed by war, and in both cases, the written record which contains a history of

that dead society is hidden in the earth for centuries, and eventually delivered to the modern "author" by an actual author, returned as it were, from the dead. *Connecticut Yankee* represents just one instance of this overlap between Twainian and Latter-day Saint storytelling. In this presentation, we explore motifs common to Twain's early fantasy and science fiction writing and stories by prominent Latter-day Saint authors (e.g. Card, Meyer, Sanderson, Dashner, and others). Twain shared with the Latter-day Saint community an impulse to work out symbolically the quest for transcendent solutions as opposed to unworkable compromises (between, e.g., the sacred and the profane, between belief and unbelief, or between nature and technology). Such a quest might arguably define the essence of all fantasy and science fiction writing.

NICOLE AMARE is a Professor of English at the University of South Alabama. With Alan Manning, she has published research on Mark Twain's wrestle with the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.



Mark Twain's early fantasy/sci-fi writing shares several motifs in common with contemporary fantasy/sci-fi written by Latter-day Saint authors, in particular Meyer, Larson, and Card. Image by Alan Manning.

ALAN MANNING taught linguistics, editing, and writing courses for 35 years at various institutions: Louisiana State University, Stephen F. Austin University, Idaho State University, and Brigham Young University. Though formally retired since 2022, he continues to advise and mentor the student editors of *Leading Edge: A Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction*, published by the editing program in the Department of Linguistics at Brigham Young University. He has written two fantasy/sci-fi novels himself and has co-authored several research articles (with Nicole Amare) on Mark Twain's complicated interactions with Latter-day Saints and Restored-Gospel theology.

MAX CHAPNICK

“Mark Twain vs. Christian Science and Empire”

In the context of Mark Twain’s literary projects in realism: what happens over the subsequent decades—especially after *Connecticut Yankee* (1889)—as Twain’s skepticism toward disciplinary science, expanding empire, and scam religions deepens? A reading of the understudied *Christian Science* (1907), demonstrates how Twain brings this interest in literary realism (close attention to representations of character and of social organizations) to the mundanity of the Church’s monopoly-like structure as articulated in its bylaws. What little work does exist on the book, for example by Peter Stoneley, often comes from a feminist tradition—and notices

the gendered way Twain deals negatively with the powerful leader, Mary Baker G. Eddy. Twain’s misogyny certainly appears here; but the complex critique of Church organization structure reveals broader abstract points about Twain’s sophisticated attack on monopoly and empire as in *King Leopold’s Soliloquy* (1905). Specifically, Twain’s realist sensibilities facilitate a critique of the way these figures and corporations—from electric companies to the Belgian monarch and Eddy herself—accumulate power via knowledge systems to the detriment of their publics.



MAX CHAPNICK is a Postdoctoral Teaching Associate at Northeastern University where he is teaching First-Year Writing and Advanced Writing in the Disciplines for Science. He recently defended his dissertation *Wild Science: Radical Politics and Rejected Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Fiction* at Boston University. His academic writing appears or is forthcoming in *J19*, *Studies in Romanticism*, *American Periodicals*, *Configurations*, *ESQ*, and *PMLA*.

“The First Church of Christ, Scientist, Boston, Mass., Known as The Mother-Church.” Photograph from *Christian Science* (1907)

EDWARD GUIMONT

“Shadow of the Comet: Celestial Speculation in Twain’s Lifetime”

Mark Twain was born on 30 November 1835, only a few weeks after the appearance of Halley’s Comet. Throughout his life he believed he was destined to die when the comet next returned. His prediction was born out, as he died at his Stormfield residence on 21 April 1910, a day after Halley’s closest approach. Twain named his mansion after the last story published in his lifetime, “Captain Stormfield’s Visit to Heaven,” in which comets are depicted as the spirits of the dead. In between, comets prominently feature in two of Twain’s less well-known stories, “A Curious Pleasure Excursion” (1874) and “A Letter from the Comet” (c. 1880s).

Twain was far from the only author interested in comets during his lifetime. In 1877, Jules Verne wrote *Off on a Comet* (with several parallels to *A Curious Pleasure Excursion*), in which various people are swept up onto the fictional comet Gallia; this has been identified as the “first vision of a human community surviving in a small, self-sustaining Earth-like environment far from the Earth itself.” In 1883, Ignatius L. Donnelly wrote the ostensibly-nonfiction *Ragnarok: The Age of Fire and Gravel*, where he proposed that a comet impact had destroyed Atlantis and caused mass extinction; while a direct influence on modern conspiracy theorist Graham Hancock, Donnelly’s proposal also anticipated the 1980 Alvarez hypothesis of dinosaur extinction. Twain himself died in the midst of a mass panic caused by the Earth’s passage through the tail of Halley’s Comet. Thousands believed traces of cyanogen detected in its gasses would kill all life on Earth, with some committing suicide as a result, anticipating the Heaven’s Gate cult at the opposite end of the century.

Reproduction of ‘comet pills’ sold in 1910 to protect against the supposedly poisonous effects of the tail of Halley’s Comet, which the Earth passed through a month after Mark Twain’s death.

During Twain’s lifetime, therefore, writing about comets originated modern scientific notions of celestial mass extinction and space colonization, as well as modern pseudoscientific notions of imminent apocalypse and ancient fallen super-civilizations, developments which the well-read Twain was familiar with, and in some

cases contributed to. This talk will explore those issues, along with other space-related concepts that were prominent in Twain’s life, such as the 1896-97 and 1909-10 “mystery airship” waves (predecessors to modern UFO sightings); the belief in Martian canals; and the search for new planets.



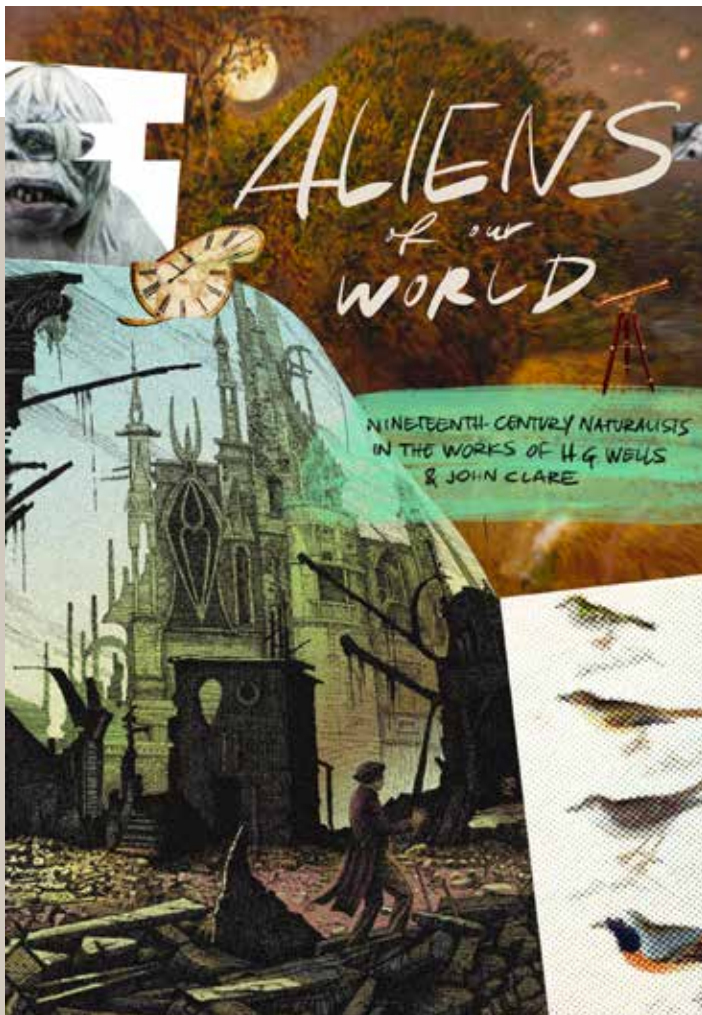
EDWARD GUIMONT received his PhD in history from the University of Connecticut, and is currently Assistant Professor of world history at Bristol Community College in Fall River, Massachusetts. His first monograph, *H. P. Lovecraft and Astronomy: When the Stars Are Right* (coauthored with Horace A. Smith) will be published by Hippocampus Press in Fall 2023. He is currently writing a political history of the Flat Earth movement. His work has appeared in *Contingent Magazine*, *The Lovecraft Annual*, *Quest: The History of Spaceflight*, and *Interdisciplinary Science Reviews*.

ANJALEE GUNARATNAM

“Aliens of Our World: Nineteenth-Century Naturalists in H.G. Wells’s *The Time Machine* and John Clare’s *Bird Poems*”

“Aliens of Our World” investigates the science-fictional habitus of nineteenth-century naturalists, particularly in regards to their search for creaturely “otherness.” It draws an unlikely comparison between the works of Romantic poet John Clare and fin-de-siècle novelist H.G. Wells, whose characters’ movements as natural historians lead to their antithetical perceptions of the world. While Clare’s

represented personae in *Bird Poems* engage with the environment in ways that are humbly futuristic, even ahead of their time, Wells’s Time Traveller in *The Time Machine* interrupts future ecologies with a dated, imperialistic restlessness. There is a science-fictional edge to Clare’s poetry. Likewise, there is an old-world penchant for storytelling in Wells’s science fiction.



The alien life forms these characters encounter are precisely *ordinary* in their natural context. Clare’s speaker and the Time Traveller do not venture into lunar landscapes or other extraterrestrial environments, but instead gather information on the unseen or the *unable-to-be-seen* on Earth alone. The former glimpses fleeting, illusory fowl, while the latter launches through an imperceptible fourth dimension to meet descendants of the human race.

Propelled by the methods of the Victorian era’s preliminary biologists — who fused their scientific sense with poetic sensibility — this article seeks to probe questions surrounding the modern loss of ‘literary’ naturalism and the unearthing of a scientific writing that is poetic to its core. Therefore, along with performing an ecocritical examination of the methods with which these characters study, interact with, and theorize about extraordinarily ordinary life forms, this paper also analyzes the authors’ textual methods themselves. Clare and Wells approach their ‘literary’ naturalism quite differently, one through poetic verse, the other through the myth-laden, popular prose of the scientific romance. Both still allude to the grand

“Aliens of Our World.” Image created by Anjalee Gunaratnam

ABSTRACTS

in alphabetical order

Victorian paradox of scientific naturalism in their art. To demonstrate their investment in this paradox, this paper draws from the works of literary critics like George Levine, Barbara T. Gates, and Bruce Beehler, all of whom have written about Huxley, Darwin, and other nineteenth-century scientists who aimed, historically, to combine the power of literature with the clarifying lens of science.

Epistemic boundaries — and the ability to acknowledge them without a desire to transcend — serves as an overarching theme within “Aliens of Our World.” The ornithologically-accurate impressions featured in Clare’s poetry, paired with his agricultural presence, lend to refreshing, quasi science-fictional insights that emphasize birds’ confounding behaviors. Stripping his feathered friends of all fabulistic attachments, Clare hones in on avian beings that are both undetectable to the naked eye and often passed over in the Romantic poetry of Keats and Shelley. Instead of nightingales and skylarks, he approaches elusive snipes and pettichaps. He does this with a wondrous, tentative estrangement, and it is this perceptual reorientation that brings the Time Traveler’s endeavors into sharp relief. Wells’s protagonist, instead, brushes past his own confusion surrounding his alien-descendants and paints over it with an anthropocentric arrogance. Instead of dwelling in the productive grey area between the known and the unknown, he chooses to impose his own restrictive classifications on the Eloi and Morlocks, thereby robbing the future of its wondrousness and rendering himself an unsuccessful naturalist. Despite these scientific failings, he nevertheless produces a fantastic story — one that transforms fact into fiction.

ANJALEE GUNARATNAM recently completed her M.A. in English at McGill, where she also graduated with a double B.A. in Philosophy and English Literature. As a literary scholar with a philosophical edge, she finds the intersections between literature, history, and the philosophy of science and metaphysics to be the most fascinating. She has spent most of her graduate degree specializing in nineteenth-century British literature, focusing on the fiction of H.G. Wells. She has given a guest lecture on Wells’s *The Time Machine*, won the James McGill Graduate Award for her colloquium presentation on John Clare, and has completed a research project under the supervision of Professor Michael Nicholson in which she investigated SF’s use of linguistics. In her thesis, she wrote about spatial estrangement, the figurative use of philosophies of time, and the significance of perspectival shifts in fin-de-siècle scientific romances. Her work has recently been accepted for publication in *The Wellsian*. She aims to pursue a PhD that explores the language of energy - from its poetic and ecocritical uses to its role in Victorian thermodynamics and industry - in the works of George Eliot, H.G. Wells, Anne Brontë, Charles Dickens, and more.



A comparison between the Ernst Ruhmer Telephot (1909) and Tom Swift's Photo Telephone (1914). This dust jacket design was first published in 1918 based on the 1914 frontispiece illustration by Walter S. Rogers.

JAMES D. KEELINE

“The Real-World Inspiration Behind *Tom Swift and His Photo Telephone*”

The Tom Swift series was one of the Stratemeyer Syndicate's most popular series from the first third of the Twentieth century. The adventures with inventions to exotic locales inspired many readers to enter fields of science, engineering, aviation, and even writing. One of the more innovative inventions from the series was a “photo telephone,” a phone booth device that let someone talking on one end with receiving equipment see a person on the other side with sending equipment. Although analogs are common today with many names such as Skype, Facetime, or Zoom, it took Bell Telephone approximately fifty years to create a system that could be

demonstrated at the 1964 New York World's Fair and Disneyland – the Picture Phone.

This fictional invention, like many in the Tom Swift series, had inspirations in the popular science literature of the day. In this case, an invention by Ernst Ruhmer called a “Telephot” was described by futurist Hugo Gernsback in the December 1909 issue of his magazine, *Modern Electrics*. The invention had several similarities with what was described in the story. Of course the Tom Swift version was more advanced than what Ruhmer had been able to achieve.

JAMES D. KEELINE has researched and written about the history of juvenile series books for about 35 years. As an independent scholar, he has published dozens of articles and given presentations since 1992, including nearly annual presentations for the Popular Culture Association. He was area chair of the PCA section devoted to series books and dime novels for two terms totaling 13 years.

His long-term projects nearing completion include a *Series Book Encyclopedia* which gives basic information on hundreds of series and people who created them. After twelve years (1988-2000) managing an antiquarian bookstore specializing in collectible children's books, James returned to the IT world where he is a Linux system admin for a small company, managing more than three dozen servers for their applications.

ABSTRACTS

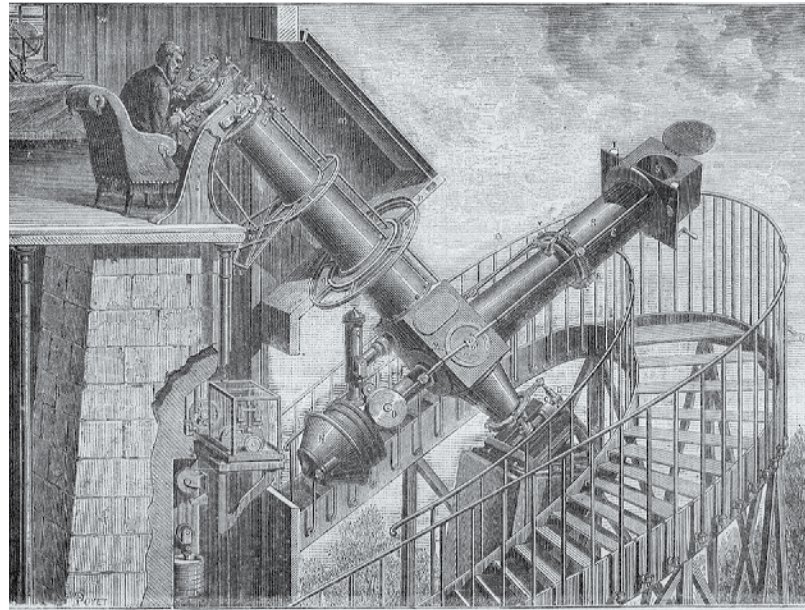
in alphabetical order

“Science Fiction and Boundary of Genre”

In his 1894 essay “The Science of Fiction,” Thomas Hardy decries the desirable “fallacy” of attempting realism in the wake of industrial-era science. Finding it impossible to faithfully reproduce “the phantasmagoria of experience with infinite and atomic truth,” Hardy laments the “perception that with our widened knowledge of the universe and its forces, and man's position therein, narrative, to be artistically convincing, must adjust itself to the new alignment.”

Taking Hardy’s claims as a point of departure, this paper imagines science fiction as a set of counter aesthetics that emerge in response to the perceived deflation of realism’s objectivity. I take as objects the so-called quasi-science fiction novels of the late nineteenth century, George Eliot’s *The Lifted Veil* (1859) and Hardy’s *Two on the Tower* (1882). Both are illustrative examples of generic boundary crossings, wherein elements of the scientific fantastic are imposed on an ostensibly realist narrative. As early examples of SF, these novels are all the more interesting for their irregularity in both authors’ largely realist oeuvres. I imagine the turn toward SF not as a liberation from the demands of Hardy’s “new alignment” but as an extension of the realist project under a different aesthetic mode. Emerging aesthetic categories question the subsistence of high realism, namely in its attention to the particular and the everyday. Unable to rely on the stability of its

aesthetic objects, I trace in the ebb of realism a process of generic becoming, wherein realist aesthetics become subject to self-critique and remodelling and ultimately give rise to the generic markers of science fiction. In charting a lineage between realism and science fiction, this paper attempts to map the changing literary sensibilities of the late nineteenth century while also exploring how different authors responded to the perceived demands and limitations of genre.



Engraving of the bent equatorial telescope at the Paris Observatory, c. 1857. Published in Frank Leslie's Illustrated, March 1884.

RONNY LITVACK-KATZMAN recently graduated with a MA in English from McGill University, from where he also holds a Bachelor of Arts and Science. His SSHRC-supported thesis project used narratological approaches to explore interdisciplinary questions in nineteenth-century science and its literary manifestations. His current work on gendered narrative dynamics in early science fiction lies at the confluence of gender studies, genre studies, and the history and philosophy of science – research he plans to pursue at the PhD-level.

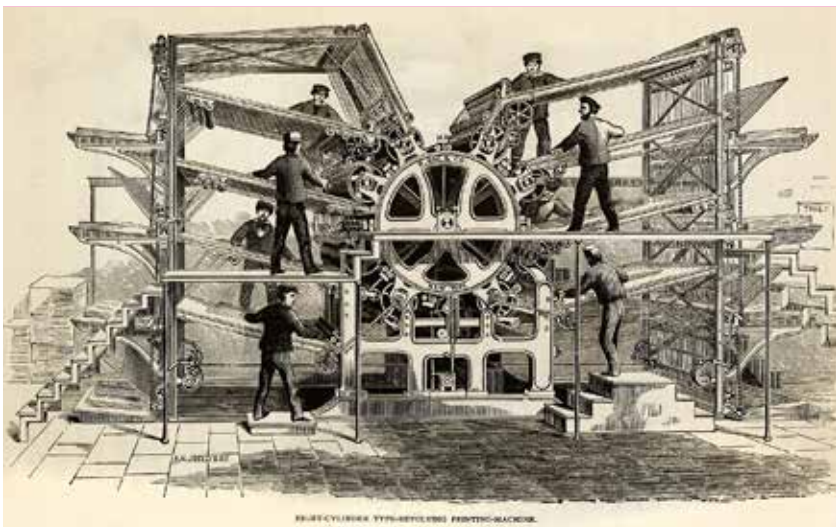
BRUCE MICHELSON

“Compositors, Duplicates, Dream Selves, Dictations: Mark Twain’s Adventures in Replicating Mind”

As science fiction gained recognition as a literary category, one summary idea about it – paradoxical, and also largely true -- has caught on: that the most provocative works in this mode have centered thematically on possibilities and discontents of the present. Current predicaments, hopes, and anxieties loom large in SciFi works that achieve high critical praise and market staying-power. Ever since Kubrick’s *2001* the promise and threat of artificial intelligence has been front-burner, and recent attention-grabbing developments – Google’s BARD, Bing’s SYDNEY, Open AI’s ‘CHATGPT’ – can draw us back to Stanley Kubrick’s HAL, Philip K. Dick’s Replicants, James Cameron’s Terminators, Ronald D. Moore’s Cylons, the neuro-net called Helen in Richard Powers’s *Galatea 2.2*, Isaac Azimov’s *I, Robot*, and even to stories by Oscar Wilde, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Mary Shelley, as prescient works about duplicating, transfiguring, or surpassing human intelligence and consciousness. Though the technological breakthroughs that caught

Mark Twain’s eye were largely Machine-age and not yet electronic or digital, several of his now-published-texts should, be included in a history of speculations not only about automation of discourse and creative effort, but also about real and synthetic human identity -- including dilemmas taking shape in our own moment, involving patterns of social programming and discourse, and the authenticity and sanctity of consciousness.

Professor Emeritus at the University of Illinois, **BRUCE MICHELSON** has been President of the Mark Twain Circle of America and the American Humor Studies Association. Author of *Mark Twain on the Loose*, *Printer’s Devil: Mark Twain and the American Publishing Revolution*, *Literary Wit*, and other books, he has received John S. Tuckey and the Louis J. Budd Awards for his scholarship on Mark Twain, and a Charlie Award for his contributions to the study of American humor.



“Eight-Cylinder Type-Revolving Printing Machine” from *Industrial History of the United States* by Albert Sidney Bolles (1878)

PATRICK PROMINSKI

“‘The Diamond Lens’ and Fitz-James O’Brien’s Imagined Order”

On its face, Fitz-James O’Brien’s (1826-1862) short story “The Diamond Lens” (1858) tells a rather simple, if gruesome, tale of deception and murder in the pursuit of science. Though it shares some of the same characteristics of the later genre of boy inventor dime novels, “The Diamond Lens” is a somewhat darker story. O’Brien’s protagonist, gripped by an obsession to create the most advanced microscope of his time, will stop at nothing to see his vision become reality. For his character, murder, theft, and the supernatural are all simply stepping stones to a goal. The story contains elements of early science and supernatural fictions – from its blending of real-world science to its revelation of a microscopic world – that would become standard in later examples of the genre.

Entertaining as it may be, O’Brien leans on the anxiety his readers feel about technological advance and how that might upend established beliefs in order to create tension. Further, his untrained protagonist interrogates the role of the amateur in the increasingly specialized role of the scientist. This essay makes use of literary and cultural critics, nineteenth century reading habits, and archival research to make the case that O’Brien is not simply working in science fiction. Instead, “The Diamond Lens” works precisely because it sits at the intersection of scientific discourse – professional and amateur – and a growing popular readership for the fiction that projects what these advances mean for their understanding of the world. In doing so, it exposes conflict between nineteenth century readers and an increasingly complex community of scientific professionals.



Rendering of Fitz-James O’Brien by William Winter from The Poems and Stories of Fitz-James O’Brien (1881)

PATRICK PROMINSKI is an Assistant Professor of English and the composition coordinator at Grand Rapids Community College. At GRCC, he teaches first-year writing, literature classes, and mentors in the honors program. Research interests include Charles Brockden Brown, physicians and medicine in 19th century American literature, and the professionalization of the sciences in fiction. His most recent publication is “Samuel Thomson’s Crusade: Populism, Folk Remedy, and Tradition in Timothy Flint and Catharine Maria Sedgwick,” which appeared in the Spring 2020 issue of *Literature and Medicine*.



MATT SEYBOLD

“The World-Empire”

Taking inspiration from Mark Twain's unpublished manuscript, "The Secret History of Eddypus, the World-Empire," this paper examines how the premise Twain was playing with, the suppression of history by Christo-fascist imperialism, anticipates dystopian SciFi and CliFi narratives in the era of "Too Late Capitalism," as Anna Kornbluh has dubbed it. In addition to Twin's work, I will be considering series produced for HBO and AppleTV.

MATT SEYBOLD is Associate Professor of American Literature & Mark Twain Studies, as well as director of the Media Studies program at Elmira College. He is the resident scholar at the Center for Mark Twain Studies, where he edits MarkTwainStudies.org and produces *The American Vandal Podcast*. He is co-editor of *The Routledge Companion To Literature & Economics* and a 2019 special issue of *American Literary History* on "Economics & Literary Studies in the New Gilded Age." Other recent and forthcoming work can be found in *American Literary Realism*, *Leviathan*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Mark Twain Annual*, *The Cambridge Companion to Literature & Economics*, and the *John Hopkins Guide to Critical & Cultural Theory*.

A selection of images generated by entering the text of Immanuel Wallerstein's "The Rise and Future Demise of the World Capitalist System" into Adobe Firefly.

ABSTRACTS

in alphabetical order

CHANDER SHEKHAR

“Navigating Whites’ Utopia: An Active Response to *Pudd’nhead Wilson*”

This study investigates how Samuel Clemens sheds the liberal skin of Mark Twain in *Pudd’nhead Wilson* (1894) to achieve whites’ utopia. He alters the past of pre-Civil War society to create future remembrance of the past without showing commitment to the truth. It reveals the author’s struggle to conceptualize the narrative style as a blend of ‘historical realism’ and ‘minstrel tradition’ to deride the rituals of blacks’ imitating whites. He repudiates the historical reality to debunk narrative fallibility; however, it persists in the difference between the actual and the textual reality. Through Tom’s narrative, Clemens counters Roxy’s desire for blacks’ utopia to realize whites’ utopia. In the broad spectrum of reader-response theory, the active reader’s response discourse aims to bring forth the implications behind Clemens’ writing style, and how through the science of fingerprint, he created a paradigm to achieve eugenics (whites’ utopia). It paved the path to restoring whites’ status quo by eliminating the scope of blacks’ dissent.



“Roxy and The Children.” Illustration by Louis Loeb. *Century Magazine* (January 1894)

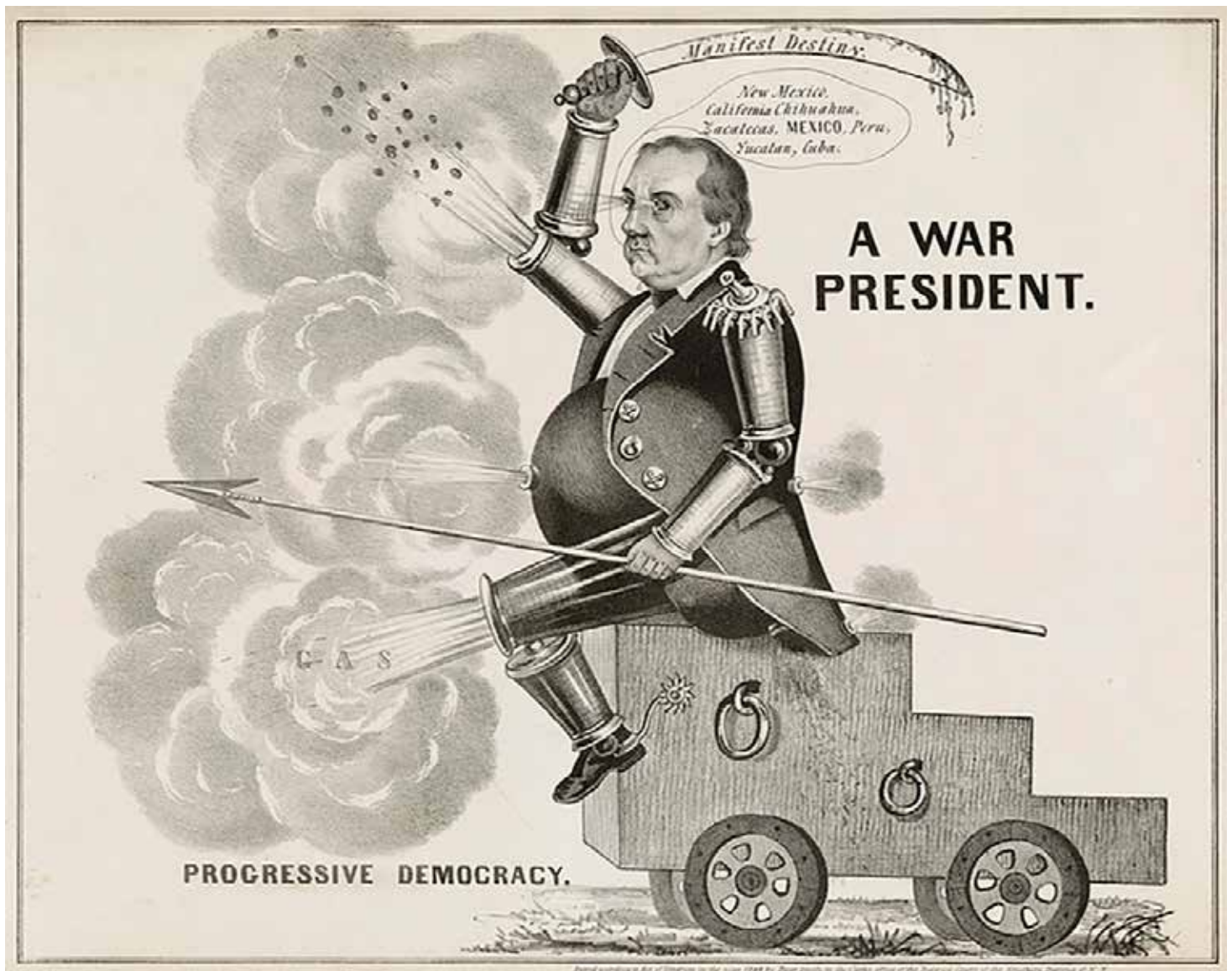
DR. CHANDER SHEKHAR is an Assistant Professor of English, Department of English and Foreign Languages, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Uttar Pradesh, India. He received his PhD in American literature from the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee, India in May 2023. His research interests include Historical Fiction, Memory Studies, Reader-response, the Role of Reader, Narrative Techniques, Utopian Studies, Dystopian Studies, Protopia, Violence, and Technology. He also has a keen interest in Future Studies, Dalit Studies, and Environmental Studies. He has published articles on utopian/protopian thinking and its relation to technology and society. His articles appeared in *Forum for World Literature Studies* and *Pertanika: Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*.

TODD NATHAN THOMPSON

“Weapons of Mass Distraction: A Comic Genealogy of *A Connecticut Yankee*’s Speculative Exceptionalism”

Near the end of Mark Twain’s *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* (1889), Hank Morgan infamously uses nineteenth-century technology and know-how to commit war crimes in the Battle of the Sand Belt, in which he murders 25,000 men with Gatling guns, land mines, and, most devastatingly, an electrified fence in his attempt to wipe out knights in particular and feudalism in general, all in the name of American-style progress. Several scholars have

interpreted *Connecticut Yankee* as a satire on the dangers of imperialism that anticipates Twain’s more pronounced anti-imperialist writings a decade later in response to the US-Philippine War and predicts the violence of 20th and 21st-century US nation-building. In my talk, I will situate Twain’s speculative militarism not as the beginning of this tradition but as an inheritor of it.





ABSTRACTS


in alphabetical order

Locating the onset of the US as an imperial nation in 1846, at the outset of the US-Mexico War (or even earlier, following Judith Yaross Lee, in 1787 with the Northwest Ordinance) leads us to seek a tradition of speculative comic treatments of advanced weaponry used for empire building that precedes Twain's imagination of Hank Morgan's WMDs. Certainly, some scholars have read *Connecticut Yankee* as continuing or critiquing an extant ethos of American exceptionalism as articulated in the concept of Manifest Destiny. I will link *Connecticut Yankee* not

just to these ideologies but to comic commentaries on them in nineteenth-century print culture. In connecting Twain's prescient account of the violent ends inherent in the twinned projects of American exceptionalism and expansion to earlier examples of comic, speculative fiction and illustrations that imagine the convergence of techno-determinism, imperialism, and war, I hope to historicize Twain's satire within an emergent lineage of pre-1898 comic art that addresses (whether to critique, celebrate, or merely laugh at) US imperialism.


Todd Nathan Thompson is Professor of English at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and a Contributing Editor to *Studies in American Humor*. Todd is author of *A Laughable Empire: The US Imagines the Pacific World, 1840-1890* (Penn State University Press, 2023) and *The National Joker: Abraham Lincoln and the Politics of Satire* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2015). Todd has earned research fellowships through the Center for Mark Twain Studies, the American Antiquarian Society, the Library Company of Philadelphia, and the Lilly Library. His work on political satire and pre-1900 American literature has also appeared in *American Periodicals*, *Scholarly Editing*, *Early American Literature*, *ESQ*, *Nineteenth-Century Prose*, *Teaching American Literature*, and elsewhere. At IUP, Todd teaches graduate and undergraduate literature and writing courses, including classes on humor and satire, literature and activism, and pre-1900 American literature.

"A War President. Progressive Democracy" Lithograph by
N. Currier, c. 1848.



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session 1



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session 1

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session 2

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session 3



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SHASTI O'LEARY SOUDANT

DESIGNER / ARTIST

10th Annual Quarry Farm Symposium Artwork

www.shastiolearysoudant.com

Shasti O'Leary Soudant is a multidisciplinary artist, sculptor, designer and writer whose colorful public art is inspired by philosophy, ideology, and scientific and/or mathematical concepts. This work is developed in collaboration with community, designed to invite engagement and interaction, and involves hidden systems, power dynamics, human relationships, balance and hegemony.

Shasti's work is in the collections of the Buffalo AKG Museum (formerly The Albright-Knox Art Gallery), The Rockwell Museum (A Smithsonian Affiliate), the Burchfield Penney Art Center, Savarino Companies' 500 Seneca project, The Albright-Knox Public Art Initiative in partnership with the NFTA, the Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center, the City of Jacksonville, Florida, the Arts Council of Midland, Texas, the City of Erie, Pennsylvania, and the University of Nebraska Medical Center.

Her Augmented Reality Experience, *Burden of Conquest*, presented by The Rockwell Museum, is on view in Fallbrook Park in Corning, NY through October 29, 2023.

In addition to being a sculptor, she designs and/or illustrates book covers for some of the world's best-selling authors, including Stephen King, James Patterson, Danielle Steel, Jodi Picoult, John Grisham, Sandra Brown, Caleb Carr, Jeffery Deaver, E.L. Doctorow, Catherine Ryan Hyde, Laura Lippman, Rhys Bowen, Lee Goldberg, Patricia Cornwell, Dan Brown, Nelson DeMille, Jacqueline Mitchard, Walter Mosley, Marisha Pessl, Anna Quindlen, and Gore Vidal.

Shasti teaches at University of Buffalo.

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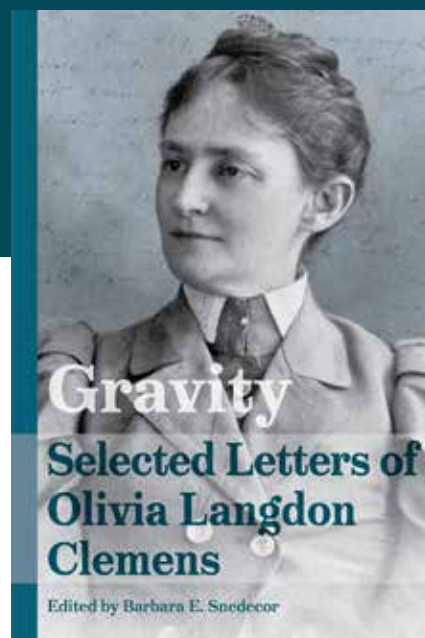
THANK YOU

GRAVITY - A Conversation

Thursday, November 30th*

7:00 PM Cowles Hall, Elmira College

Join Barbara Snedecor in conversation with Matt Seybold as they discuss a new volume of selected Olivia Langdon Clemens letters, edited by Barbara E. Snedecor.



Readers are invited to meet Olivia Louise Langdon Clemens on her own terms, in her own voice—as complementary partner to her world-famous spouse, Mark Twain, and as an enduring friend, mother to four children, world traveler, and much more. The frail woman often portrayed by scholars, biographers, and Twain himself is largely absent in these letters. Instead, Olivia (who Twain affectionately referred to as “Gravity” in their early correspondence) emerges as a resilient and energetic nineteenth-century woman, her family’s source and center of stability, and a well of private and public grace in an ever-changing landscape. Mark Twain’s biography recounted in Olivia’s letters offers new insights, and her captivating voice is certain to engage and enlighten readers.



Barbara E. Snedecor served for many years as Director of the Center for Mark Twain Studies at Elmira College. In addition to editing the second edition of *Mark Twain in Elmira*, she has contributed pieces to the *Mark Twain Annual* and *American Literary Realism*.



*This special November 30th event takes place on Mark Twain's birthday. It is a free lecture made possible through the generous support of **Katherine Roehlke** and **The Mark Twain Foundation**.

This presentation and all Trouble Begins and Park Church lectures are available online. Visit www.marktwainstudies.org. Please allow 24 - 48 hours for new lectures to be posted



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Eleven Quarry Farm Fellowships will be offered in 2024:

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- At least three fellowships will be reserved for graduate students, contingent faculty, independent scholars, and faculty three or fewer years removed from completion of their Ph.D.
- At least one fellowship will be reserved for creative writers.
- At least one fellowship will be reserved for creative visual artists.



Applications are due November 30, 2023
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**COWLES HALL and MARK TWAIN STUDY
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The symposium's opening reception, dinner, and keynote address take place Friday evening in historic Cowles Hall. All attendees have an opportunity to view Twain's iconic writing Study and an exhibition in Cowles Hall dedicated to Twain's legacy in Elmira.

2024 marks the 150th anniversary of Mark Twain's study. Visit marktwainstudies.org for updated information on celebrations.



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