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i Editions

The fifth volume of letters in the Mark Twain Papers series makes its appearance in a handsome, durable hardback edition with 309 letters presented in 543 pages of text and accompanied by nearly 400 pages of appendices, editorial guides, textual commentaries, and indexes. *Mark Twain's Letters, Volume 5: 1872–1873*, ed. Lin Salamo and Harriet Elinor Smith (Calif., 1997), gives us a Samuel L. Clemens who is married, often on the road lecturing, becoming the father to a daughter, traveling three times to London and back, and bringing out his first novel, *The Gilded Age*. Throughout this torrent of activities—and many others chronicled in the volume—Clemens kept up an indefatigable run of letters, except around the period when his young son, Langdon, died of diphtheria in 1872 and during a few additional weeks when his pen was occupied with other tasks. Nearly half the letters collected in this edition have never seen print before. Others deserve to be much better known, such as a droll message to the *Hartford Courant* in 1873, in which the former steamboat pilot complained of the incessant repairs on Forest Street, likening a drive down its surface to an arduous journey by ship (“there ought to be a chart of the street made, with the soundings marked on it”).

ii Biography

Lawrence I. Berkove fills in a few more gaps in the record of Twain's Western years in “The Comstock Matrix of Twain's Humor,” pp. 160–70 in *New Directions in American Humor*, informatively sketching “the lies and liars that flourished on the Comstock during its brief heyday.” Although probably inaccessible since it appears in the “English Number” of a journal published by the English Language and Literature Associa-

tion of Korea, *The Journal of English Language & Literature*, David E. E. Sloane's "Mark Twain and Race" (44: 869–85) is an insightful and detailed treatment of a thoroughly timely topic. Sloane reviews the cultural context of Clemens's attitudes toward race and slavery, rehearses his positions ("he seems reasonably outspoken" about racial issues), rechecks the biographical evidence, especially his abiding affection for Uncle Dan'l, a Missouri slave, and surveys the writings for examples of racial intent. Sloane observes in conclusion that Twain "has become one of the world's great spokesmen for those values of equality which unite all human beings in the aspiration for a better world."

In unlikely journals, and by an unlikely coincidence, Charles Alexander ("Writer in Residence: Mark Twain's Saranac Summer," *Adirondack Life* 29, v [August]: 16–24) and Richard L. Kellogg ("Mark Twain's Summer at Saranac Lake," *Adirondack* 62, v [August]: 34–36) examine the privacy and scenic splendor that the Clemens family sought during their sojourn on the east shore of Lower Saranac Lake in New York state in 1901. Alexander's is the fuller account, but both articles are informative.

iii General Interpretations

Lawrence Howe's *Mark Twain and the Novel: The Double-Cross of Authority* (Cambridge) posits that Twain "was attracted to the novel . . . as a genre that is inherently critical of authority but that also affords a writer the opportunity to assert one's own authority." To Howe's way of thinking, Twain's novels "invoke conservative reverence for authority almost as often as they clamor for subversion. The uneven and antithetical narratives that he produced within this conflicted process are complex expressions of a desire for power." Irrefutable is Howe's contention that Twain's career was "dialectic," that his narrative texts were often divided into "pairs," and that the most striking patterns were the result of his "compositional faltering." For both Mark Twain and his readers, however, the novel form itself "holds out a tantalizing promise of authority that it finally cannot deliver." (This ideological and aesthetic feature of the genre is what Howe means by the "double-cross" of his subtitle.) Howe draws widely on various sources—including Bakhtin, Foucault, and Freud as well as the regular commentators on Twain—in fashioning his critical approaches to *Life on the Mississippi*, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, *The American Claimant*, and

Pudd'nhead Wilson. His reconstruction of the links between "Old Times on the Mississippi" and *Life on the Mississippi* (a book "indispensable . . . for mapping Twain's distrust of and desire for authority") is particularly noteworthy, and he goes on to document their "complementary relationships" with *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, the second of which "ironizes the ideal return to nature." Howe concludes that "long before contemporary theory taught us its lesson about the dubiousness of unified discourse, the American novel was doing the same." There is more critical jargon in *Mark Twain and the Novel* than some people might prefer, but Howe's study also contains a series of perceptive, nuanced readings that should not be missed.

Reflections about Mark Twain's views of women and home life inevitably occur in Gregg Camfield's *Necessary Madness: The Humor of Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Oxford, 1997). Camfield intends "to reconstruct the humorous dialogue between men and women over their shared ground." To those who interpret the ending of *Huckleberry Finn* as a rejection of family and community, for example, Camfield answers, "I think Samuel Clemens would have been astounded at it. He was a committed family man, one who bought the idea of a woman's moral superiority to, and thus legitimate social control of, men." Numerous critics, Camfield argues, have ignored the fact that Huck's battle with his conscience "is based on sentimental ethics, and its development depends on many conventions of sentimental fiction. . . . Why have we not only suppressed so much sentimental literature from the canon altogether, but why have we also refused to see that it is a central feature of one of the books on which the canon is built?" Twain's name crops up frequently in Camfield's extended and engaging discussions of Irving, Fanny Fern, Melville, Stowe, Marietta Holley, George Washington Harris, and Mary Wilkins Freeman.

The odd title of Clark Griffith's *Achilles and the Tortoise: Mark Twain's Fictions* (Alabama) refers to an ancient Greek philosopher's proposition that, given a sizable head start, a tortoise could not be overtaken, even by Achilles. The implication in both the title and the text is that Mark Twain realized that movement is essentially illusory. Indeed, in Twain's fiction (Griffith leaves aside most of the travel narratives) a preponderance of the plots result "in repetition, fixity; a sense of standing stock-still—and . . . feelings of entrapment and frustration." The appeal of Griffith's idiosyncratic book lies partly in its very unpredictability: he takes up the comic impulse in Twain ("the notion of doubles and

doubleness so liberated his imagination that it is never far from the finest of his streaks of fine madness”), sick jokes, George Sumner Weaver (author of an obscure phrenological treatise Clemens read in 1855), romantic folly in *Tom Sawyer*, sheer coincidence in *Huckleberry Finn* (the odds that “the River delivers him to the one doorway . . . where Tom Sawyer is expected” are simply “preposterous—a coincidence so blatant . . . as to seem unworthy of any novel. . . . The River on which Huck and Jim appear to move has all along caused them to move in place”), and parallels between Twain and Melville. The tone of Griffith’s book is likewise unusual; parts of it are registered in a standard academic voice, but in other places the book switches to a much more personal attitude: “Let us honor the funniness of his vision of moral and social futility by joining to laugh *with* him,” the study exhorts at its conclusion. Stimulating, offbeat, wide-ranging, Griffith’s *Achilles and the Tortoise* raises a variety of engrossing topics.

A useful resource from almost 30 years ago—*Mark Twain: The Critical Heritage* (1971), ed. Frederick Anderson—makes a welcome reappearance in reprint form (Routledge, 1997). It contains Anderson’s brief but cogent introduction and a total of 88 notices of Twain and reviews of his works published between 1869 (when Twain’s first book was issued) and 1913. Anderson is especially penetrating in his comments about the crucial fact that Twain chose the subscription method of publishing, and he includes as an appendix George Ade’s observations about the status of the subscription book in that day and age. Twain scholars will recognize many favorite and essential reviews in the collection, including several by William Dean Howells and Andrew Lang as well as individual pieces by Brander Matthews, William Lyon Phelps, and Archibald Henderson. It is good to have this assemblage available again.

iv Individual Works Before 1885

Peter Messent produced a notable chapter on *Tom Sawyer* in his *Mark Twain* (see *AmLS* 1997, pp. 90–91), but he takes a different tack on reading the same novel in “Discipline and Punishment in *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*” (*JAmS* 32: 219–35). He starts from the work of Michel Foucault, G. M. Goshgarian, Richard H. Brodhead, and Steven Mailoux regarding the methods and costs of social regulation, but he also invokes Tom H. Towers and other Twain literary critics in arriving at a complicated but rewarding confirmation that “Tom will end up part of

the community, a product of its values, and adapting to its norms and boundaries: moral, social, and spatial.” Neither of Messent’s two treatments of Tom Sawyer’s story should be overlooked in future studies.

Jeffrey A. Melton’s valuable article, “Adventurers and Tourists in Mark Twain’s *A Tramp Abroad*” (*StAH* 3, v: 34–45), takes a careful look at Twain’s pose in one of his lesser-known books, paying special attention to his reliance on the accounts of the intrepid travel writer Bayard Taylor and the daring mountain climbers Edward Whymper and Thomas Hinchliff. As the successful author of travel books, Twain gave his readers “shared journeys, the early equivalent of virtual reality.” In *A Tramp Abroad*, he pretended to be “a strong, energetic, fearless traveler,” but usually switched back to the persona of a mere “tourist”—“a new breed of American traveler (a lover of leisure and comfort rather than excitement and danger).” Indeed, “Twain used laziness as a pose throughout his travel-writing career,” and he “feigned inveterate laziness” in *Tramp*, promising adventure but delivering leisure. Every participant in these adventures pays something: Twain hires Harris and others as his proxies, and in turn “readers buy the book.” Melton is especially astute in examining Twain’s hilarious “mock-epic adventure—the ascent of the Riffelberg.”

International scholars continue to find Mark Twain of interest. In “‘Truth Is Stranger than Fiction’: The Historiographical Hoax of Mark Twain’s ‘The Great Revolution in Pitcairn,’” pp. 141–58 in *Re-visioning the Past: Historical Self-Reflexivity in American Short Fiction*, ed. Bernd Engler and Oliver Scheiding (WVT), Gerd Hurm investigates the reasons why “Clemens’s burlesque dystopia was one of the first texts to challenge the myth of the Pitcairn ‘model Christian community.’” As the result of considerable historical research about Pitcairn’s problems, Hurm finds that “Clemens’s exaggerations are on target” and that his “tale self-reflexively questions facile claims to historical authenticity and truthfulness.” This article is worth the trouble required to obtain it. Hurm has also produced an analysis of Twain’s earliest well-known sketch, “American Phonocentrism Revisited: The Hybrid Origins of Mark Twain’s Celebrated Frog Tale” (*ArAA* 23: 51–68), meticulously exploring how Twain’s “great yarn . . . ultimately . . . transcends its Bohemian bias in its intricate fusion and open resolution of cultural conflicts.” And Hurm joins up with Adam Brooke Davis in a clever study, “At the Margins of Taste and the Center of Modernity: Mark Twain’s ‘Cannibalism in the Cars’” (*NLH* 29: 47–65). According to the

authors, "Toward the end of the tale . . . the readers' belief in the accuracy of words and sincerity of forms has been thoroughly gutted." Hurm and Davis contend that the text is "quintessentially modern" because "its strength lies in its openness and its uncontrolled, uncontrollable instability. It does not offer pat solutions or easy withdrawals."

v Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

Finally, a formidable reply to Jane Smiley, Jonathan Arac, and other recent detractors of Twain's most famous novel has appeared. Jocelyn Chadwick-Joshua, *The Jim Dilemma: Reading Race in Huckleberry Finn* (Miss.), presents a probing and unflinching defense that is sensitive to the nuances of Twain's language and alert to the formidable array of critics lined up against her position. She concludes that "to have avoided using 'nigger,' 'hell,' and 'poor white trash' would have been a denial, a lie, that would have undermined the novel's power to move readers. . . . Twain never meant for this novel to be painless. He uses humor as Jonathan Swift does. . . . Without the memory of what a word once meant and what it can continue to mean, we as a society are doomed only to repeat earlier mistakes." Twain's masterwork could not have a more apt or vigorous champion. As Chadwick-Joshua pointedly and effectively observes, "Many have deemed the work racist and unworthy to be read not just by themselves but by anyone. This predisposition to preclude critical thinking is rather reminiscent of Pap's telling Huck that because he, Pap, cannot read, Huck will not read."

Another substantial contribution to studies of this novel, Hugh J. Dawson's "The Ethnicity of Huck Finn—and the Difference It Makes" (*ALR* 30, ii: 1–16), assumes that when Mark Twain chose a surname for Huck and his father, he deliberately tapped into the prevailing view of Irish-Americans as "given over to drunkenness, violence, and lewdness." Indeed, young Huck's personality—his unruliness, small deceptions, pipe-smoking, and preference for lazing about—contains clues that it too is "heavy with the latent pathology of his people." Dawson produces a census of the 60 other family names mentioned in Huck Finn's narrative ("Thompson" and "Hightower" are typical ones), and shows persuasively that only Pap Finn and his son lack a recognizably Anglo-Saxon surname. Noting the "anti-Celtic prejudices of Clemens' boyhood," Dawson points out that "Twain's novel gives literary form to a central

concern of nativist social ideology, the fear of what immigration and Reconstruction together portended for the accustomed American way of life.” Pushing this idea further, Dawson proposes that in effect Huck shared “his ethnic group’s special kinship with American blacks,” especially slaves like Jim who entirely lacked a last name. “Huck’s racial otherness becomes an enabling life condition that . . . enables him to accept Jim.”

In “‘Quite Unclassifiable’: Crossing Genres, Crossing Genders in Twain and Greene,” pp. 129–47 in *New Directions in American Humor*, Karen L. Kilcup pays more attention to Sarah Pratt McLean Greene than to Mark Twain, but her comments on scenes of cross-dressing and gender confusion in *Huckleberry Finn* follow up on Laura Skandera-Trombley’s ideas and add useful perspectives to an ongoing discussion.

vi Individual Works After 1885

An overlooked aspect of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* (1889), Hank Morgan’s magical incantations over that dried-up fountain, undergoes assessment in Holger Kersten’s “Mark Twain and the Funny Magic of the German Language,” pp. 199–209 in *New Directions in American Humor*. Kersten demonstrates that “at the time he was working on *A Connecticut Yankee*, German matters were . . . very much on Twain’s mind.” He also establishes that the German language held what can be called a “magical quality” for the entire Clemens family, as well as “bawdy” implications for Clemens himself. All in all, “one can conclude that the ‘Awful German Language’ was not so awful to Mark Twain after all.”

Mark Twain’s “The Esquimau Maiden’s Romance” (1893) hardly qualifies as one of his more gripping tales, but Horst H. Kruse (“Mark Twain and the Other: ‘The Esquimau Maiden’s Romance’ in Context,” *EAS* 27: 71–82) traces so many facets of its composition that the story gains some interest. Kruse particularly points out its connections with Oliver Goldsmith’s *The Citizen of the World* as well as the *Memoirs of Hans Hendrik, the Arctic Traveler* (1878), a volume that Twain read and annotated in 1879, calling it “a very valuable book—& unique.” More decidedly, Kruse wants to demonstrate “how the notion of ‘otherness’ and the perception of ‘the other’ pervade much of what Mark Twain wrote.” Twain’s “parodic love story becomes a mere vehicle”; we can and should “read the

story as a deliberate and timeless plea against cultural dominance. . . . It may even mark the very point at which he was making the transition from an imperialist to an anti-imperialist position."

Louis J. Budd's "Mark Twain's Fingerprints in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*" (*New Directions in American Humor*, pp. 171–85) surveys the ironies, contradictions, flaws, virtues, and sidelights of that most problematical novel. Another study, this one by Robert Moss—"Tracing Mark Twain's Intentions: The Retreat from Issues of Race in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*" (*ALR* 30, ii: 43–55)—disputes the conclusions of Forrest G. Robinson and Susan Gillman regarding the novel's stance on racial matters. Following up on Hershel Parker's lead by minutely reexamining Twain's process of textual composition, Moss contends that "as the published version stands, the issue of environment versus heredity remains unresolved." Indeed, by removing crucial passages from his manuscript, "Twain backed away from the complex issue of racial characteristics and environmental conditioning." Moss remonstrates with Robinson and Gillman for their predetermined approach: "Doggedly seeking to impose a sense of coherence on a demonstrably incoherent work . . . is not only methodologically flawed but also dampens the breadth and richness of Mark Twain's work."

Relatively little of a scholarly nature has (understandably) been written about Twain's attacks on Mary Baker Eddy, but Cynthia D. Schrager, "Mark Twain and Mary Baker Eddy: Gendering the Transpersonal Subject" (*AL* 70: 29–62), undertakes a lengthy investigation of their literary relationship. Schrager observes that Twain, with his theory that minds can telegraph thoughts, which "demonstrates an optimistic faith in the progressive possibilities of nineteenth-century scientific positivism," thereby partly aligned himself with Eddy's "belief in mental healing." Nonetheless, "rather than identifying the tensions inherent in their conflicting beliefs and allegiances, both Twain and Eddy displace their anxieties generated by the anti-individualist implications of a transpersonal theory of consciousness onto the opposite sex." For instance, in "The Secret History of Eddypus, the World-Empire" (1901–02) and *Christian Science* (1907), Twain's "well-documented pessimism about the possibilities of democracy is displaced onto the figure of Mary Baker Eddy." For that matter, "for both Eddy and Twain, gendered narratives function to displace without really addressing the incompatibility of a transpersonal or collective theory of the self and a liberal democratic discourse based on autonomous individualism." Schrager argues that

their “line of criticism is marred by a tendency to denigrate the feminine, figured as an absence of both agency and politics, and by a nostalgia for the (white, male) self-reliant actor of a nineteenth-century America retrospectively imagined as a homogeneous community.” Her argument is more compelling than its theoretical language might suggest.

Joseph Csicsila has written two commentaries on Twain’s “The Mysterious Stranger” manuscripts that merit notice. In “Life’s Rich Pageant: The Education of August Feldner in Mark Twain’s *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger*” (*StAH* 3, iv [1997]: 54–67) Csicsila charts the stages of August Feldner’s intellectual and spiritual journey. Twain “very likely believed . . . that the enlightened individual, tragically, was far more susceptible to the inevitable, stark realization that mankind exists not as the adored child of a benevolent God but as an insignificant microbe in a random and unsupervised cosmos.” Moreover, “rather than being either uniformly pessimistic or completely optimistic, *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger* seems an enfolded blend of both, resisting neat resolution.” In an even more painstaking analysis, “Religious Satire to Tragedy of Consciousness: The Evolution of Theme in Mark Twain’s ‘Mysterious Stranger’ Manuscripts” (*EAS* 28: 53–70), Csicsila concludes that during a “decade of revision and reconsideration, Twain . . . evolved in his theories about the source of human suffering, coming to view the human race more sympathetically.” Around this time “his notions of God, humankind, religion, and (perhaps most crucially) who was to blame for the human condition—man, God, or a deterministic universe—underwent enormous transformation.” Thus, the “Mysterious Stranger” manuscripts “ultimately serve as a valuable and vital index to Mark Twain’s final years as a literary artist.” Csicsila’s is one of the most trenchant explications of these manuscripts since the probings of Shalom Kahn and William Macnaughton more than 20 years ago.

vii Reference Books and Research Recollections

Thomas A. Tenney’s *Mark Twain Journal* continues its fruitful labors. Especially deserving of notice is the arrival of its special issue devoted to “Mark Twain Secondary Bibliography, 1990–1999” (35, i [1997]), an updating of Tenney’s *Mark Twain: A Reference Guide* and of the subsequent supplements to that reference work. The entries are annotated, and the abstracts are very helpful.

One of the signal publications of the year did not issue from an

academic press. Kevin MacDonnell of Austin, Texas, an eminent rare book dealer and Mark Twain collector whose witty and erudite rare book catalogs have themselves become collector's items, received an invitation to produce a two-installment presentation on "Collecting Mark Twain" for *First: The Book Collector's Magazine* (8, vii–viii [July/Aug.]; 8, ix [Sept.]). The result is a profusely illustrated guide that will embarrass many academic Twain scholars with its degree of learning. The subtitles alone suggest some of the revelations that await those fortunate enough to obtain copies of these two magazine issues: "The Leap to Fame" (Twain's famous story about a frog), "A History of Twain Collecting," "The Primary First Editions," "Huck Finn Among the Issue-Mongers" (which takes up one of the most closely debated matters in Twain collecting—which is the true "first edition" of Twain's masterpiece?), "Some New Paths in Twain-Collecting" (Canadian editions, board games, cigars, statues, postcards, and various ephemera), and "A Mark Twain Reference Shelf" (MacDonnell describes and rates the standard references, declaring, for example, R. Kent Rasmussen's *Mark Twain A to Z* to be "essential"). All of these topics are treated with MacDonnell's patented cheekiness and candor. It is a development much to be desired that he has finally found a venue lengthier than his catalogs in which to elaborate on his favorite subjects and discoveries.

Deserving of an award of sorts in its own category is the exemplary catalog titled "Mark Twain at Large: His Travels Here and Abroad" accompanying an exhibition from the Mark Twain Papers of the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley. The exhibition was prepared by Lin Salamo, Harriet Elinor Smith, and Robert Pack Browning, and this inventory of its contents is brimful of perspicacious notes, little-known facts, and lively illustrations.

The leisure of retirement has allowed John C. Gerber in "The Iowa Years of *The Works of Mark Twain: A Reminiscence*" (*StAH* 3, iv [1997]: 68–87) to reflect upon the 14-year period when Iowa City was the official headquarters for this eminent series. He begins by recalling a meeting at the 1961 MLA convention in Chicago, at which the college editor for Harper & Row suggested the preparation of a new, carefully edited set of Mark Twain's works. (Harper owned the copyright to Twain's previously published writings.) After that publishing house put up close to \$20,000, a grant from the U.S. Office of Education added another \$182,000 to enable scholar-editors to visit the sites of the manuscripts and obtain research leaves and assistance. Optimistically, Gerber as-

signed the major titles to the major scholars. In February 1967, after various difficulties and the departure of the original college editor, Harper & Row withdrew as the publisher, and later that year the University of California Press replaced the firm. Frederick Anderson became the series editor, "and the die was cast" about a future shift of responsibilities from Iowa to California, especially inasmuch as the Bancroft Library at Berkeley was the chief depository for Mark Twain materials. The decision to solicit editorial approval from the MLA's Center for Editions of American Authors "delayed us probably more than all the other causes of delay combined. . . . Many texts were established only after bitter argument and a great waste of time" regarding textual principles. Gerber became chair of the Iowa English department and delegated the day-to-day operations of the edition. In 1970 student antiwar activists distracted and disrupted the programs, and thereafter volume editors resigned or moved away. The Iowa initiative began to collapse. In 1976, with only eight volumes produced, Gerber reluctantly turned over "all of my remaining responsibilities" to the Mark Twain Project at Berkeley. His recollections are candid and eye-opening, a document of historical interest in the field of Twain studies.

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