



# Mark Twain Circular

Newsletter of the Mark Twain Circle of America

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## The President's Letter

**Bruce Michelson**  
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

We were midway through partner-hire season, when ragged English departments can pick up new faculty as freebies, because such people happen to be playing House with someone that a campus really *does* want to bring in, like for instance a rising Accountancy professor or a grant-winning Bioengineer. In lean times for our trade (and when aren't they so?) we often snap such people up; but in this latest case, for various reasons we opted to pass. Disconcerted with our wide-open spaces and generic sprawl-malls (he'd been doing his adjunct gigs at New York metro-land colleges, and living in a shoebox flat convenient to the Brooklyn IKEA), our candidate was flogging, in all directions, a paradigm-busting book that he was about to finish, a politicized scolding of modern American literature, culture and apparently everything else—beginning (of course) with the moral imperfections of Mark Twain, and winding up with some literary phenom that was white-hot when the project began.

When the moment seemed ripe for our getting a word in edgewise, we asked him, sweetly as we could, exactly which Mark Twain texts he'd selected to rail at: "Oh, yes. *Pudding-head Wilson*" [really—just like that]—and no, he didn't see a need to delve into historical facts about how and why the novel was written, or to poke those mounds of in-

### Dates to Circle

**May 21-24, 2009.** American Literature Association Annual Conference. Boston, MA.

**August 6-8, 2009.** The Sixth Annual Conference on the State of Mark Twain Studies. Elmira, NY

**December 27-30, 2009.** Modern Language Association Annual Convention. Philadelphia, PA.

(See inside for ALA and MLA panel information.)

formed commentary that have accumulated since. A couple of theoretical formulations picked up in grad school were the only apparatus he required, to bounce himself merrily through a century of cultural turbulence and half a dozen idiosyncratic and complex American authors, including the vast and tumultuous Sam Clemens. So we fed him his well-deserved Candidate Lunch (grilled goat-cheese ponzu on a mulch, washed down with liters of Green Party iced tea), and wishing him luck we dropped him undamaged back at the local airport.

It's hard to know when our professions will get beyond this anomaly that lingers in our discourse, even as this "age of theory" supposedly wanes. As the biological and physical sciences whirl our civilization into a golden or terrible age of hyper-particular, an ecstasy or nightmare of the nano, sectors of the humanities still seem to favor a kind of fact-blurred and sky-high formulating that dates back to Hegel. Toilers in the rugged lowlands of ac-

(Continued on p. 2)

tual history might raise a muddy hand now and then to protest, for instance, that Bakhtin's pronouncements on the mind and mirth of the late Middle Ages are really a bit wobbly, that some of Foucault's thunderings on the history of sexuality and sanity and punishment won't stand up long under informed scrutiny—but so what? Scholastic humanism, after all, commonly wheezes along at least a generation behind the sciences; and if infatuation with the grand and the universal has given way, elsewhere on our campuses, to wonderment at the specific, the paradoxical, even the chaotic—well, if we stay in business (not a small 'if'), we will have time to catch up in due course.

Meanwhile, for members of our own cult—diehard acolytes of the specific—one consolation is that the Fates, for once, might have positioned us out ahead of an important intellectual trend rather than behind it. Perhaps that's a reason why the Mark Twain industry seems to be booming: the practice of looking closely before the surmise. The American Literature Association Convention this May features three panels totaling eight presentations (a record number for Twain action at this national meeting), plus a roundtable on "The Future of American Author Societies," a possibly -crucial conversation also initiated and organ-

ized by the Mark Twain Circle. For the Elmira College Quadrennial Conference in early August, the plans call for about eighty papers and literally hundreds of participants from the United States, Britain, and several other nations; and as the Circle's President Elect, Jim Leonard has two brisk sessions set up for the December 2009 MLA Convention in Philadelphia. Right now, the British magazine *The Strand* is making a fuss about publishing a "new" Mark Twain short story, and BBC's *Radio 4* is also breaking out the pom-poms about it; and as the centennial of Sam Clemens's death comes closer, we can expect to see more conferences, workshops, fresh books and compilations, and special events in Hartford, Hannibal, Columbia, and other locations.

So things are bumping. But beyond all that, what might we do—individually and together—to assure not only the vitality of our enterprises, but also their greater relevance, their connection to broader constituencies, both academic and public? In the last *Circular* there were a couple of suggestions; here are three more, gathered from our colleagues:

(Continued on page 3)

**To:** Prof. Kerry Driscoll  
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Please enroll me as a member of the **Mark Twain Circle of America** and subscriber to the *Mark Twain Circular* and *The Mark Twain Annual*. I enclose a check for \$25.00 (\$27.00 for a non-U.S. address) made out to "Mark Twain Circle of America."

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**ABOUT THE CIRCLE.** The Mark Twain Circle of America was formed at an organizational meeting held at the 1986 Modern Language Association convention in New York. Although many members are academic specialists, the Circle also includes many non-academic Twain enthusiasts.

**ABOUT THE CIRCULAR.** The *Mark Twain Circular* is the newsletter of the Mark Twain Circle of America. It is published twice per year (April and November) and is mailed, by the editor, to all members of the Mark Twain Circle. The *Circular* prints news of Mark Twain events and scholarship, directories of members, and current bibliography. Subscribers are distributed among 44 states and 14 foreign countries.

**ABOUT THE ANNUAL.** The Mark Twain Circle also publishes an annual volume titled *The Mark Twain Annual*, edited by Ann Ryan (Le Moyne College), featuring criticism and pedagogy related to Mark Twain and his works.

- With this centennial coming up, the time may be right for suggesting low-cost local events on our own campuses. At the University of Missouri, for example, the great and prolific Mark Twain scholar Tom Quirk has a plan underway for an open, freewheeling Saturday conversation on November 14, about “Mark Twain Now”—a dialogue among teachers, students, enthusiasts, and anyone else who wants to drop by. As you brainstorm about the coming year, you might consider something like that, for your own community.
- This summer, why not let your local media know that April 21, 2010, will be a notable day in American cultural history, and that shrewd newspapers and networks will want to have something ready to go on that morning—an article, an interview, some video footage or a couple of good stills? If a news-bureau staffer that you know has the day marked on a calendar, and a file started up comfortably in advance, these local media might have the time and initiative to do something creative and fun.
- If you can manage it, consider making an extra contribution, this year or next, to support the major Mark Twain sites—in Hartford, in Hannibal and Florida, Missouri, and at Elmira College—to help assure that important attractions like these are still with us next year, and ready to take full advantage of the occasion.

In the aftermath of a culture that chubbed itself for two decades on a diet of funny-money mortgages, *luxé* vacationing, humongous cars and ridiculous tricked-out wristwatches, author societies can look like a cheap, no-frills, and mercifully sane variety of self-indulgence; and in rougher economic weather they might be light and agile enough to float through it all, and survive. Times are indeed hard right now for many people that we know—but as professionals and fans of Mark Twain’s legacy, we still have blessings to count. □

### **The Mark Twain Circle at the Modern Language Association (MLA) Annual Conference, Philadelphia, PA, December 27-30, 2009**

#### **Mark Twain in the New Millennium**

Chair: Ann Ryan (Le Moyne College)

Presenters:

Jocelyn Chadwick (Discovery Education), “Staying Power: Twain’s Place in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Classroom and Beyond”

Anthony Berret (St. Joseph’s University), “The Reading Group on *Huckleberry Finn*”

Juliana Chow (UC, Berkeley), “Science Fiction’s Modest Witness: Ethical Consciousness and the Narration of Destruction and Creation in Mark Twain’s *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*”

#### **Mark Twain’s Nineteenth-Century Context**

Chair: Chad Rohman (Dominican University)

Presenters:

Philip Goldstein (University of Delaware), “Race, Liberal Realism, and *Huckleberry Finn*”

Richard Hardack (Independent Scholar), “Never the Twain Shall Meet: Travel and Double-Consciousness in the Works of Mark Twain and James Weldon Johnson”

Courtney Bates (Washington University in St. Louis), “The Persecution and Comfort of Mark Twain’s Fan Letters”

**Mark Twain Circle Sessions at the American Literature Association (ALA)  
Conference: May 21-24, 2009, Boston, MA**

**Session 8-D Family Experience and Public Literary Identity**

Organized by the Mark Twain Circle of America

Chair: John Bird, Winthrop University

1. "Friendship's Limits: Clemens, Howells, and the Deaths of Susy and Winny," Peter Messent, University of Nottingham
2. "Mark Twain Biography as Riddle, Mystery, Enigma: The Clemens Family Prince and the Pauper Play," John Bird, Winthrop University
3. "Mark Twain and the Anti-Doughnut Party," James S. Leonard, The Citadel

**Session 10-A Mark Twain and the California Gold Rush Legacy**

Organized by the Mark Twain Circle of America

Chair: Lawrence Howe, Roosevelt University

1. "Exhibiting Mark Twain in the Postmodern West: the Angels Camp Museum Experiment," Gregg Camfield and Charles Wormhoudt, University of California at Merced
2. "Out Here on the Edge of Sunset: The Life and Death of the Gold Rush West in Mark Twain's 'Jumping Frog'," Tony R. Magagna, University of California at Davis

**Session 14-H Huckleberry Finn and Pudd'nhead Wilson: Moral Dimensions, Interpretive Challenges**

Organized by the Mark Twain Circle of America

Chair: Bruce Michelson, University of Illinois

1. "Shifting Identity, Disguise, and Christian Typology in Pudd'nhead Wilson," Edward A. Shannon, Ramapo College of New Jersey
2. "The Moral Virtue of Dialect Narrative," Lawrence Howe, Roosevelt University
3. "Natural Born Killers: The Criminality and Criminology of Identical Twins in Pudd'nhead Wilson," Lynn Langmade, University of California, Davis

**Session 16-E Panel Discussion: The Future of American Author Societies**

Chair: Bruce Michelson, University of Illinois (Mark Twain Circle of America)

Panelists: John Bryant, Hofstra University (Melville Society)  
Gloria Cronin, Brigham Young University (Saul Bellow Society)  
Eric Savoy, Université de Montreal (Henry James Society)  
James Meredith (Ernest Hemingway Foundation and Society)  
Sandra Petrulionis, Pennsylvania State University (Thoreau Society)  
Derek Royal, Texas A&M University-Commerce (Philip Roth Society)  
Lisa West, Drake University (Catharine Maria Sedgwick Society, and Harriet  
Beecher Stowe Society)

## Current Mark Twain Bibliography

**James S. Leonard**  
**The Citadel**

*Current Mark Twain Bibliography* is a means of giving notice of what is new in Mark Twain scholarship. Where annotations are used, they are in most cases descriptive blurbs provided by publishers (or in some cases, by authors) with value judgments edited out. If you have recently published something that you would like to have included in this list, send it to the current *Circular* editor, **Chad Rohman**, by email (crohman@dom.edu).

### Books

**Benfey, Christopher.** *A Summer of Hummingbirds: Love, Art, and Scandal in the Intersecting Worlds of Emily Dickinson, Mark Twain, Harriet Beecher Stowe, & Martin Johnson Heade.* Penguin Press, 2008. 288 pages. Hardcover. \$25.95. ISBN 978-1-59420-160-8.

**Bird, John.** *Mark Twain and Metaphor.* University of Missouri Press, 2007. Cloth. 268 pages. Illustrations. \$39.95. ISBN 978-0-8262-1762-2. John Bird's study of Twain's use of figurative language tackles the core of Twain's writing and explores it with theoretical approaches that have rarely been applied to Twain, providing new insights into how he imagined his world—and the singular ways in which he expressed himself. Bird considers Twain's metaphoric construction over his complete career and especially sheds new light on his central texts: *Roughing It*; *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*; *Pudd'nhead Wilson*; and *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger*. He reconsiders "Old Times on the Mississippi" as the most purely metaphorical of Twain's writings, goes on to look at how Twain used metaphor and talked about it in a variety of works and genres, and even argues that Clemens' pseudonym is not so much an alter ego as a metaphorized self. By offering insight into how Twain handled figurative language during the composing

process, Bird reveals not only hidden facets of his artistry but also new aspects of works that we think we know well—including some new ideas regarding *Huck Finn* that draw on the recent discovery of the first half of the manuscript. In addition to dealing with issues currently central to Twain studies, such as race and gender, he also links metaphor to humor and dream theory. The book delves into the psychological aspects of metaphor to reveal the writer's attitudes and thoughts, showing how using metaphor as a guide to Twain reveals much about his composition process. Applying the insights of metaphor theorists such as Roman Jakobson and Colin M. Turbayne, Bird offers readers not only insights into Twain but also an introduction to this interdisciplinary field. [Text drawn from publisher's blurb.]

**Courtney, Steve.** *Joseph Hopkins Twichell: The Life and Times of Mark Twain's Closest Friend.* University of Georgia Press, 2008. Hardcover. 350 pages. ISBN 978-0-8203-3056-3. \$32.95. Bewilderment often follows when one learns that Mark Twain's best friend of forty years was a minister. That Joseph Hopkins Twichell (1838-1918) was also a New Englander with Puritan roots only entrenches the "odd couple" image of Twain and Twichell. This biography adds new dimensions to our understanding of the Twichell-Twain relationship; more important, it takes Twichell on his own terms, revealing an elite Everyman—a genial, energetic advocate of social justice in an era of stark contrasts between America's "haves and have-nots." After Twichell's education at Yale and his Civil War service as a Union chaplain, he took on his first (and only) pastorate at Asylum Hill Congregational Church in Hartford, Connecticut, then the nation's most affluent city. Courtney tells how Twichell shaped his prosperous congregation into a major force for social change in a Gilded Age metropolis, giving aid to the poor and to struggling immigrant laborers as well as supporting overseas missions and cultural exchanges. It was also during his time at Asylum Hill that Twichell would meet Twain, assist at Twain's wedding, and preside over a number of the family's weddings and funerals. Courtney

shows how Twichell's personality, abolitionist background, theological training, and war experience shaped his friendship with Twain, as well as his ministerial career; his life with his wife, Harmony, and their nine children; and his involvement in such pursuits as Nook Farm, the lively community whose members included Harriet Beecher Stowe and Charles Dudley Warner. This was a life emblematic of a broad and eventful period of American change. [Text drawn from publisher's blurb.]

**Fleischman, Sid.** *The Trouble Begins at 8: A Life of Mark Twain in the Wild, Wild West.* Collins, 2007. 224 pages. Hardcover. \$18.99. ISBN 978-0061344312. Illustrated. Sid Fleischman's ramble-scramble biography of the great American author and wit, who started life in a Missouri village as a barefoot boy named Samuel Clemens ... the story of a wisecracking adventurer who came of age in the untamed West; an ink-stained rebel who surprised himself by becoming the most famous American of his time. [Text drawn from publisher's blurb.]

**Pomplun, Tom, ed.** *Graphic Classics: Mark Twain* (Second Edition). Eureka Productions, 2007. Paperback. 144 pages. \$11.95. ISBN 978-0-9787919-2-6. This edition contains 38 pages of new material, including a never-done-before comics presentation of "Tom Sawyer Abroad," with adaptation by Tom Pomplun and George Sellas. Returning from the first edition are "The Mysterious Stranger" by Rick Geary, "A Dog's Tale" by Lance Took, "The Celebrated Jumping Frog" by Kevin Atkinson, and "The Carnival of Crime in Connecticut" by Antonella Caputo and Nick Miller. Also "Is He Living or Is He Dead?", "A Curious Pleasure Excursion," and eight women artists interpret Mark Twain's "Advice to Little Girls." [Text drawn from publisher's blurb.]

**Quirk, Tom.** *Mark Twain and Human Nature.* University of Missouri Press, 2007. Cloth. 305 pages. \$39.95. ISBN 0-7414-4410-0. Mark Twain once claimed that he could read

human character as well as he could read the Mississippi River, and he studied his fellow humans with the same devoted attention. In both his fiction and his nonfiction, he was disposed to dramatize how the human creature acts in a given environment—and to understand why. Tom Quirk takes a closer look at this icon's abiding interest in his fellow creatures. In seeking to account for how Twain might have reasonably believed the things he said he believed, Tom Quirk has interwoven the author's inner life with his writings to produce a meditation on how Twain's understanding of human nature evolved and deepened, and to show that this was one of the central preoccupations of his life. Quirk charts the ways in which this humorist and occasional philosopher contemplated the subject of human nature from early adulthood until the end of his life, revealing how his outlook changed over the years. His travels, his readings in history and science, his political and social commitments, and his own pragmatic testing of human nature in his writing contributed to Twain's mature view of his kind. Quirk establishes the social and scientific contexts that clarify Twain's thinking, and he considers not only Twain's stated intentions about his purposes in his published works but also his ad hoc remarks about the human condition. Viewing both major and minor works through the lens of Twain's shifting attitude, Quirk offers a detailed look at the travel writings, including *The Innocents Abroad* and *Following the Equator*, and the novels, including *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, as well as a review of works from Twain's last decade, including fantasies centering on man's insignificance in Creation, works preoccupied with isolation—notably *No. 44*, *The Mysterious Stranger* and "Eve's Diary"—and polemical writings such as *What Is Man?* [Text drawn from publisher's blurb.]

**Shapiro, Fred.** *The Yale Book of Quotations.* Yale University Press, 2006. Cloth. 1104 pages. ISBN 978-0300107982. The first ma-

major quotation book to emphasize modern and American sources, including popular culture, children's literature, sports, computers, and politics, and the first quotation book to use state-of-the-art research methods to comprehensively collect famous quotations and to trace quotations to their accurate origins. Shapiro devotes particular attention to Mark Twain; Twain is third after Shakespeare and the Bible in number of quotations. For some Twain quotations, particularly pseudo-Twain quotations popularly attributed to him, he gives better information than has been previously documented. [Text provided by the author.]

**Smith, Thomas Ruys.** *River of Dreams: Imagining the Mississippi before Mark Twain.* Louisiana State University Press, 2007. 232 pages. \$38.00. ISBN 978-0-8071-3233-3. Even in the decades before Mark Twain enthralled the world with his evocative representations of the Mississippi, the river played an essential role in American culture and consciousness. Throughout the antebellum era, the Mississippi acted as a powerful symbol of America's conception of itself—and the world's conception of America. As Twain understood, "The Mississippi is well worth reading about." Thomas Ruys Smith's *River of Dreams* is an examination of the Mississippi's role in the antebellum imagination, exploring its cultural position in literature, art, thought, and national life. [Text from dust jacket.]

**Zwick, Jim.** *Confronting Imperialism: Essays on Mark Twain and the Anti-Imperialist League.* Infinity Publishing, November 2007. 246 pages. 57 illustrations. *Confronting Imperialism* is history for our times. Created in 1898 to oppose U.S. annexation of Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines at the close of the Spanish-American War, the Anti-Imperialist League was the first national anti-imperialist organization formed in the United States. Within months it became the primary organized opposition to the Philippine-American War. The country's first protracted war in Asia and the first that involved subjugation of a Muslim population, it remains one of the most controversial wars in U.S. history.

Until his death in 1910, Mark Twain was a vice president of the League and the most prominent literary opponent of the war. In a statement that would be repeated by critics of later wars in Vietnam and Iraq, he described the war in the Philippines as "a mess, a quagmire from which each fresh step renders the difficulty of extrication immensely greater." Drawing upon his childhood in the pre-Civil War South, an early trip to Hawaii, and a lecture tour through the British Empire, he linked imperialism with racism and domestic repression in both the United States and Europe. In this book, Jim Zwick, editor of the first collection of Mark Twain's writings on the war, explores the history of the Anti-Imperialist League, Twain's anti-imperialist writings, and their continuing influence and relevance today—including Twain's objections to the "water-cure," which Zwick identifies as what is now called "waterboarding." He demonstrates that anti-imperialism did not end with the dissolution of the Anti-Imperialist League in 1921. Leaders of the first anti-imperialist organization influenced non-interventionist and solidarity organizations throughout the 20th century. Zwick's essays add depth to our understanding of the American anti-imperialist tradition and Mark Twain's prominent place within it. [Text drawn from publisher's blurb.]

## Articles

**Seville, Catherine.** "Authors as Copyright Campaigners: Mark Twain's Legacy." *Journal of the Copyright Society of the USA* 55.2-3 (Winter-Spring 2008): 283-360.

**Trombley, Laura Skandera.** "Mark Twain's *Annus Horribilis* of 1908-1909." *American Literary Realism* 40.2 (Winter 2008): 114-36. An extensively researched account of Mark Twain's dealings with daughter Clara, Isabel Lyon, et al. in 1908-09 that takes issue with prior accounts by Twain, Clara, Albert Bigelow Paine, and, more recently, Karen Lystra. □

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**SERIAL LIBRARIANS:** The *Mark Twain Circular* is entered selectively in the annual bibliographies of the Modern Language Association and the Modern Humanities Research Association, and in the *American Humanities Index*, the *Literary Criticism Register*, *American Literary Scholarship*, and "A Checklist of Scholarship on Southern Literature" (which appears annually in the Spring issue of the *Mississippi Quarterly*).

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