MT at ALA 1995

Mark Twain was, as usual, a conspicuous presence at the American Literature Association’s 1995 "Conference on American Literature," The three Twain sessions reported in the January-March Mark Twain Circular all took place as predicted, and Twain loomed large in an additional session titled "Humor and Violence," chaired by Joseph Alvarez (Central Piedmont Comm. Coll.). That gathering featured Louis J. Budd (DuKe U), presenting "A (Better-Humed) Retrial for Hank Morgan, Convicted Mass Murderer," and Everett Emerson (U of North Carolina), presenting "A Connecticut Yankee: Meaning and Significance Revisited."

At the Circle’s business meeting, Howard Baetzhold, Alan Gribben, and Hamlin Hill were feted as the Circle’s newest Honorary Members, joining the august company of Thomas A. Tenney, Louis J. Budd, Everett Emerson, William Linn, and George Meenaghan.

—J.S.L.

The Circle at SAMLA 1995

The Mark Twain Circle will sponsor a session titled "Mark Twain as Letter Writer" at the 1995 SAMLA convention in Atlanta (Marriott Marquis Hotel, Nov. 3-5). The session will be chaired by Alan Gribben (Auburn U, Montgomery), and James S. Leonard (The Citadel) will serve as secretary. There will be four presentations:
2. "Mark Twain’s Unsent Letters"—Thomas H. Brown (U of Alabama-Birmingham)
4. "Writing Metaphor in the Mark Twain-Howells Letters"—John Bird (Winthrop U)

Following the presentations, there will be a 10-minute business meeting.

"A Tip of the Hat . . ."

As a personal note, I’d like to call attention to Stan Brodwin’s retirement from teaching at Hofstra University.

Probably none of us ever fully know—really know—another person’s career. But I do know that Stan has written on authors as diverse as William Cullen Bryant, Melville, Cather, Du Bois, Boswell, Whitman, Sholem Asch, as well as Emerson,
The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. It brings us up to speed, so to speak, and smoothly inserts us into the action of Huckleberry Finn.

The introduction is a brief recounting of The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. It provides context and prepares the reader for the upcoming events.

The exposition presents us with the principal theme of freedom, the secondary theme of the supernatural, and a closing theme centered on family. Although this final theme could be subsumed under the principal one. Freedom—and its polar opposite, constraint—is manifest in black slaves versus white free whites, the "sivilization" of the bourgeois family as typified by the Widow Douglas, Miss Watson, and Tom Sawyer versus the river and Pap's cabin. The supernatural—and the concrete image of Huck's encounter with the "whiskey ride" and oracular, hairball, and the imagination of Tom Sawyer versus Huck's pragmatism. Family is manifested not only as blood relations (Huck and Pap), but also as adoptive (Huck and Widow Douglas) and as a community of non-blood related people who must choose to care for one another (Tom, Huck, and Jim). Furthermore, the exposition presents the principal characters in an order which has some relevance to the narrative. They are the Widow Douglas and Miss Watson, Tom Sawyer, Jim, Judge Thatcher, and Pap. This will be of some significance in the recapitulation. The development is sectionalized, a common occurrence in the musical form. The first of these sections, which emphasizes the freedom theme, concerns Huck and Jim and their exploits along the raft. The important events here are discovering the dead man in the house (Pap), Huck meeting Judith Loftus, the wreck of the "Waggoner" and the meeting of the other big raft, Huck and Jim's raft being run down by the steamboat, and Huck encountering the Grangerford family. The second of these sections, which emphasizes the supernatural theme, adds the King and Duke and is comprised of the camp meeting, the Boggs-Sherburn incident, the circus, the Royal Nonesuch, and Huck meeting the body. Both of these subdivisions offer many and various transformations of the exposition's themes. It is significant also that each section ends with Huck encountering a family which attracts him greatly, but which ultimately he must leave behind.
of each other: both are professional men, "old," kindly, and altruistically helpful to Huck and Tom. The last character is not an individual but a composite: the mob of armed men who shoot at Huck and Tom.

This mob functions as an analogue to Pap in the exposition. With the introduction of each character in the recapitulation, we find ourselves in a remarkable similarity, if not identical, to its parallel in the exposition, providing some justification for the sonata-allegro form hypothesis.

The coda provides at least partial closure. Jim is freed and can go to search for his family. Tom Sawyer has the bullet taken from his leg as a memento of a real adventure instead of an imaginary one. Only Huck is left, still pondering whether "civilization" is worth it or not. But then, that's where he was in the beginning of the book; so if we can't have full closure, at least we have come full circle.

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Joseph T. Cook
Assoc. Professor, Music
Elmira College

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Life Bids Farewell to Mark Twain

[Thanks to Louis J. Budd for sharing the following article from the May 5, 1910 issue of Life.]

Uncle Mark Twain has retired permanently from this life, fairly full of years and abundantly embellished with popularity and honors. For forty years Uncle Mark has been widely known as an amusing writer, but not until the last fifteen years or so has his eminence in literature been realized. The truth is that when one goes to enumerate his rivals for pre-eminence in American literature there is not need of more than half the fingers of one hand to count on.

Mark Twain's chief literary asset was the talent he was born with. But he had wonderful advantages in developing it. Even while he was getting the rudiments of a literary education in a district school in Missouri his chief study was boys, caves and rivers. Becoming proficient in these subjects, he began the wander years that carried him to Nevada and California, to newspaper offices where he had to practice writing, and then around the world with the Innocents.

He was a free man from his youth, tied to no formulas of respectability, cramped by no artificial standards of taste or deportment, but devoted to seeing what he could, learning what he might, and thinking it over and writing about it in the best words he could find.

An untrammeled man, instinctively honest, diligent and temperate (except with cigars, which didn't seem to hurt him much), Dr. Wilson may include him with Lincoln in the list of men to whom it was probably an advantage that they never had to go to college. But he was born remarkable, and would probably have worked out remarkable whatever the processes might have been.

Born to different sights and associations and to a less haphazard system of education, he might perhaps have turned a still more remarkable writer than he was. Working out as he did, however, he saw aspects of American life that there were few good writers to tell about, and it is his record of them that contributes his chief cause to permanent distinction.

It is a happiness to record that Uncle Mark was a man faithful and upright in every relation of life. He jolted a great deal, and there was plenty of the artistic temperament in him, but he paid his debts and loved his women-kind with a fidelity less common than it should be among humdrum men.

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Dates to Circle

Nov. 3-5, 1995. SAMLA Annual Convention; Atlanta. The Mark Twain Circle will present a session titled "Mark Twain as Letter Writer." See "Mark Twain at SAMLA 1995," above.

Dec. 27-30. Modern Language Association Annual Convention (Chicago), featuring Mark Twain Circle conference sessions, breakfast sessions, and cocktail hour sessions.

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ABOUT THE CIRCULAR. The Mark Twain Circular was launched in January 1987 by Thomas A. Tenney (Editor of the Mark Twain Journal), who edited the first issue, then passed the Circular baton to the present editor. An individual who pays dues to the Mark Twain Circle and/or subscribes to the Mark Twain Journal receives one subscription (four issues per year) to the Circular.

ABOUT THE CIRCLE. The Mark Twain Circle of America was formed at an organizational meeting held at the December 1986 Modern Language Association convention in New York; the membership has since grown to approximately 400. Current officers are: President—Victor Doyon; Vice President—Michael J. Kiskis; Executive Director—Laura Skandra-Trombley; Executive Committee—David E. Slaone, Susan K. Harris, and Jennifer Rafferty. Past Presidents: Louis J. Budd, Alan Griiben, Pascal Covics, Jr., David E. Slaone. Past Executive Directors: Everett Emerson, James D. Wilson, Michael J. Kiskis. Although many members are academic specialists, the Circle also includes many non-academic Twain enthusiasts. The Circle is in communication with other Mark Twain organizations, including those associated with sites important in his life, and cooperates with them.

ABOUT THE JOURNAL. Founded in 1936 by Cyril Clemens, the Mark Twain Journal is the oldest American magazine devoted to a single author. In 1982 Mr. Clemens retired, and the Journal moved to its present home in Charleston, S.C., under the editorship of Thomas A. Tenney. There are two issues per year, Spring and Fall, with a new volume each year (rather than every second year, as in the past). The Journal tends to appear late, and begs your patient indulgence. New subscribers may wish to begin with the 1992 issues (to be mailed in summer 1994) rather than the 1994. Although the Mark Twain Circle and the Mark Twain Journal are separate entities, Circle members enjoy a reduced subscription rate for the Journal (see coupon below for prices). Most back issues from 13:1 to the present are available at $5.00 each, postpaid ($2.50 on orders for ten or more; pre-1983 issues are thinner than modern ones, and some are badly reprinted). An index 1936-83 counts as a back issue.

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FULFILLMENT NOTICE: Both 1992 issues (30:1 and 30:2) and the Spring 1993 issue (31:1) of the Mark Twain Journal were mailed to subscribers in early September 1994. We hope to mail the Fall 1993 issue (31:2) and possibly the Spring 1994 issue (32:1) soon; we ask libraries not to claim these before September 1995. We're doing our best to catch up!

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