



# Mark Twain Circular

Newsletter of the Mark Twain Circle of America

Volume 16

April-June 2002

Number 2

## Mark Twain at ALA

**Ann Ryan**  
**Lemoyne College**

Members of the Mark Twain Circle participated in a series of panels and roundtable discussions during the annual conference of the American Literature Association held this year in Long Beach, CA. The Circle sponsored two panels, both of which considered recent visions and revisions of Twain's life and his fiction.

The first, "Adventures of *Huckleberry Finn*, Pedagogy and Critical Editions," examined the implications of various editorial reframings of *Huck Finn*, efforts which panelists celebrated to widely varying degrees. Joseph Csicsila of Eastern Michigan University began the panel with an analysis of the relative disconnect between the anthologized *Huckleberry Finn* and its incarnations in a variety of critical editions. Dr. Csicsila argued that while scholars wrangle over the legitimacy and pedagogical value of certain editions of the novel, anthologies which include *Huckleberry Finn* continue to offer students a text that is remarkably similar to the 1885 edition. Common editorial exclusions, for example the elimination of the Raftsmen's Passage and the Kemble illustrations, have often diminished the experience of reading the novel. As anthologies continue to define, and in this case limit,

student experience of *Huckleberry Finn*, Dr. Csicsila suggested in his paper that the sound and fury surrounding critical editions has yet to significantly inform or influence our students or our pedagogy.

Equally skeptical about the efficacy of recent critical editions of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*—and undaunted by sound and fury—John Bird of Winthrop University questioned the value of the Norton's third edition in his paper, "The Norton Critical Edition *Huckleberry Finn*, Edition 3.1." Although Dr. Bird praised the inclusion of several new essays, particularly Toni Morrison's "This Amazing, Troubling Book" and selections from Victor Doyno's *Writing Huck Finn: Mark Twain's Creative Process*, he suggested that overall the new Norton Critical Edition suffered from a form of editorial myopia. In an effort to focus attention upon issues of racism and racial identity in Twain's fiction, the editors have in fact divorced these issues from a variety of other contexts and historical sources. Dr. Bird's complaint was not that the editors chose to focus upon race, but that they do so to the exclu-

### What's Inside?

<i>Circle Officers for 2002-2003</i>	2
<i>Mark Twain's Birthday</i>	4
<i>MT and Amadeus</i>	4
<i>Current Mark Twain Bibliography</i>	5
<i>Dates to Circle</i>	5
<i>Everything You Need to Know . . .</i>	7

sion of so much else, from Jim Cox's analysis of the ending of the novel, to samples from the work of Twain's fellow regional humorists, to the essays of Kenneth Lynn, Ralph Ellison, Henry Nash Smith, Judith Fetterley and Walter Blair. According to Dr. Bird, the editors have constructed a text which could suggest to students that discussions of race take place in an historical and critical vacuum. The editors have succeeded less in updating the critical tradition surrounding the novel, than in making their text simply and narrowly topical.

Victor Doyno concluded this panel by providing members of the audience with a glimpse of the future. In his presentation, "A Report from Cyberspace: The *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* CD-ROM Project," Professor Doyno shared with us some of the stunning capabilities of this technology. Not only will the CD-ROM allow scholars to engage Twain's editorial process with an immediacy not previously imagined, for example, deciphering emendations and illuminating details of the manuscript, it will also make possible an extraordinary level of interaction between scholars, students, and the text. Professor Doyno described the scope of the project, which will allow users to access research on historical contexts as well as scholarly criticism from a variety of theoretical orientations and traditions. Furthermore, the CD-ROM will also be adaptable to a number of different classroom situations, from secondary education to graduate instruction. Professor Doyno suggested in his concluding remarks that this technology promises to invigorate historical approaches to Twain scholarship by introducing Twain scholars—of all degrees—to the previously ignored or recently forgotten facts, influences, and circumstances that have informed this work.

The second panel sponsored by the Mark Twain Circle, "After Ken Burns, What is Left to Say?", concerned itself less with debates between scholars than with the

## Circle Officers for 2002-2003

The business meeting of the Mark Twain Circle at the American Literature Association Annual Conference in Long Beach, CA included election of officers, as follows:

- Tom Quirk (University of Nebraska), after serving a two-year term as Vice President, becomes President for another two-year term.
- Ann Ryan becomes Vice President for a two-year term.
- Joseph Csicsila becomes Executive Coordinator for a three-year term.
- Laura Skandera Trombley, with thanks from the Circle membership for her excellent service as President for 2000-2002, becomes Chair of the Executive Commit-

extent to which many scholarly attitudes and approaches to Twain may be eclipsed or marginalized by the recent Ken Burns documentary. Not surprisingly, panelists concluded that there was a great deal left to say. Michael Kiskis of Elmira College began the panel with an imaginative, witty, and somewhat terrifying association of high performance race-car driving and the ideal life of a Twain scholar. Dr. Kiskis developed his own recent experiences on the raceway at Watkins Glen, N.Y.—cruising at up to 100 mph, taking corners at high speeds, anticipating the moves of other drivers as well as the complexities of the track—into a metaphor that prescribed the proper attitude for anyone studying the life and fiction of Mark Twain. Implicit in his talk was a critique of the Burns' documentary, which suggested that the filmmaker had, to some extent, taken a safe path. Dr. Kiskis appreciated the necessary limits of a project which does not aspire to reach a scholarly audience; nevertheless, he invited scholars and researchers to resist those necessary limits and to represent a Twain who is far more dangerous than the film indicates. In his talk, Dr. Kiskis suggested that

the road less traveled for those who study Mark Twain is, in effect, a fast track, requiring a great deal of precision and not a little bit of nerve.

Kerry Driscoll of St. Joseph College presented for the audience some of her discoveries concerning Twain's responses to philanthropic efforts in the Hartford community specifically relating to Native Americans. Dr. Driscoll's paper, "Ongoing Excavations: The Curious Tale of Mark Twain and the Connecticut Indian Association," revealed elements of Twain's biography that disturb popular images of Twain as a benevolent humanist. Dr. Driscoll's research into various archival sources reveals that Twain may have vacillated in his willingness to support humanitarian efforts directed toward Native Americans. Furthermore, Dr. Driscoll's paper raised questions concerning the extent to which Twain's identity as Westerner, Wild Man of the Washoe, was more intimately threatened by the possibility of Native American citizenship than has been previously documented. In her continuing excavations, Dr. Driscoll illustrates how Twain acted out Native American stereotypes and reacted to Native American politics and spiritual beliefs. The portrait of Mark Twain produced by this research is fraught with contradictions and inconsistencies, which Dr. Driscoll suggests resist any simplistic or necessarily sympathetic rendering.

Like my fellow panelists, I also felt that the Burn's documentary failed to give a complete picture of Twain, yet I also feel sheepish about making a criticism that—in response to most Twain biographies—seems almost *de rigueur*. In my paper, "Biography and Photography: The Problem of Picturing Twain," I appreciate how the Burns' documentary reveals and represents Mark Twain as a visual text. Yet Burns nonetheless avoids those images (pictures of Twain with little girls, disheveled in bed, mugging for the camera) that challenge

popular perceptions of Twain. In as much as Twain sought out photography as a mode of self-expression, he nonetheless manipulates and resists the processes by which he will simply become a photograph. In almost every picture of Mark Twain—even in the wide array of publicity shots where Twain is presumably crafting his image—he remains a profoundly changeable subject. Twain uses photography to both make and unmake himself as an historical artifact, and this is particularly evident in the visual record he leaves behind.

Members of the Mark Twain Circle also took the opportunity while at ALA to meet and to review some of the business we will be facing in the coming year. John Bird began the meeting with some housekeeping issues: a summary of the Circle's finances, an update on the Circle's Non-Profit Status (which seems to be within our grasp), and a reminder that Joseph Csicsila will take over as Executive Coordinator sometime this summer.

There were several other agenda items of a more significant nature. First, members discussed centrally locating the archives for the Mark Twain Circle at Elmira College. At present the archives have no permanent home. Members hoped that the archives could become more than simply a holding tank for the business documents of the Circle. We also discussed making it known that Twain scholars could donate to the archive whatever papers, notes, or documents they thought might be of interest to present or future members.

Next, we proposed establishing a journal devoted to Mark Twain Studies, as well as to critical treatments of Twain. Although such a move would obviously affect our finances, we felt that it would also be an important tool for expanding membership and broadening the scope of the Mark Twain Circle.

Also, we discussed the need for updating our email and membership lists. It was suggested that a Website might help the flow of information as well as simplifying membership processes and mechanics; however, we did not reach any conclusions concerning these propos-

als.

Finally, we discussed the coming MLA, and it was suggested that we find a space for interested members to gather for a dinner to celebrate Twain's life in New York—or to simply celebrate. I am currently searching for a venue and I will post the details at some future date. If, however, you feel certain that you would enjoy the prospects of some fine wining and dining in New York City, and you do not need anything more than this general invitation to attend, please e-mail me (Ryanam@mail.lemoyne.edu) and I will contact you directly with information.

.....

## Mark Twain's Birthday

The 9th Annual Mark Twain Birthday Party & Symposium will be held on November 2nd, 2002 at 7 p.m. at the Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society (25 Nottingham Court, Buffalo NY 14216)—featuring Mike Randall as Mark Twain (one of the country's preeminent Mark Twain impersonators, he IS Mark Twain!).

Fun, fascinating, and food—what better way to celebrate the birthday of America's best-known and best-loved author?! If you've attended in the past, you'll have the best yet in this year's edition. And if you've never attended, well—are you in for a treat!

This is a preliminary announcement, so there are more Twain scholars and afi-

cionados we are adding to the program.

Mike Randall as Mark Twain ... you'll be rubbing your eyes and pinching yourself, thinking the ol' boy has really come back for a visit!

The voice, the shuffle, the facial expressions, the overall look: all become a wonderful frame as Mike presents the comedic, sarcastic, and thoughtful observations and stories on life. You will be transfixed as you are taken back to the 19th century when America was much younger yet still with its societal and political complexities, problems, and triumphs. And who but Mark Twain can relay them in a manner that can have you both laughing and crying at the same time. Mike Randall IS Mark Twain: make no mistake about it!

Tickets are \$15 each and seating will be limited. Yes, you can reserve seats now by purchasing tickets in advance. For more information, call (716) 882-3456, or write marktwain-party@aol.com.

[Text from Errol Craig Sull's *Mark Twain Forum* message—June 6, 2002.]

.....

## MT and Amadeus

According to the web site of the Aesthetic Realism Foundation (141 Greene Street, New York, NY 10012), the foundation sponsored a performance on May 19, 2002 (2:30 p.m.) titled *Huckleberry Finn and Mozart: A Critical Jamboree*. The performance, including “A dramatic presentation of Eli Siegel's glorious 1951 lecture ‘Evil on the Mississippi; or, Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*.’”

# Current Mark Twain Bibliography

**James S. Leonard**  
The Citadel

*Current Mark Twain Bibliography* is a means of giving notice of what's 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 me by e-mail (leonardj@citadel.edu), or by other means.

## Books

**Fishkin, Shelley Fisher.** *A Historical Guide to Mark Twain.* Historical Guides to American Authors Series. Oxford University Press, 2002. Cloth \$39.95. Mark Twain (born Samuel Clemens), a former printer's apprentice, journalist, steamboat pilot, lapsed Confederate soldier, and miner, remains to this day one of the most enduring and beloved of America's great writers. Combining cultural criticism with historical scholarship, *A Historical Guide to Mark Twain* addresses a wide range of topics relevant to Twain's work, including religion, commerce, race, gender, social class,

and imperialism. Like all of the Historical Guides to American Authors, this volume includes an introduction, a brief biography, a bibliographic essay, and an illustrated chronology of the author's life and times. [Text from advertising copy.]

**Michelson, Bruce.** *Literary Wit.* University of Massachusetts Press, 2000. Cloth \$35.00; paperback \$15.95. Includes a chapter on *Pudd'nhead Wilson's Calendar*.

**Twain, Mark.** *The Innocents Abroad.* Penguin Classics. Introduction by Tom Quirk and Notes by Guy Cardwell. Penguin Books, 2002. Paperback \$14.00.

## Videos

*Ken Richters as Mark Twain, America's First Stand-up Comedian.* Connecticut Public Broadcasting, 2002. 58 min. 48 sec., VHS. Pricing information not available. [Reviewed for the *Mark Twain Forum* by Joseph B. McCullough on March 30, 2002.]

*Mr. Twain's Neighborhood Nook Farm.* Connecticut Public Broadcasting, 2002. 54 min. 56 sec., VHS. Pricing information not available. [Reviewed for the *Mark Twain Forum* on April 7, 2002 by Larry Howe (Roosevelt University).]

## Dates to Circle

- **October 9-12, 2002.** Western Literature Association Conference. Tucson, AZ.
- **November 2, 2002.** Mark Twain Birthday Party. Buffalo & Erie County Historical Society (25 Nottingham Court); 7:00 p.m. Buffalo, NY.
- **November 15-17, 2002.** South Atlantic Modern Language Association Annual Conference. Wyndham Baltimore Inner Harbor Hotel. Baltimore, MD.
- **December 27-30, 2002.** Modern Language Association Annual conference. New York, NY.

# Everything You Need to Know . . .

**ABOUT THE CIRCULAR.** The *Mark Twain Circular*, newsletter of the Mark Twain Circle of America, was launched in January 1987 by Thomas A. Tenney (Editor of the *Mark Twain Journal*). James Leonard (The Citadel) assumed editorial responsibility with the February 1987 *Circular* and has continued in that capacity until the present. The *Circular* is published four times per year (Jan.–March, April–June, July–Sept., and Oct.–Dec.) 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, short biographical articles and critical commentaries, and current bibliography. Subscribers are distributed among 44 states and 14 foreign countries.



**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; the membership has since grown to approximately 350. Current officers are displayed on p. 8. Past Presidents are Louis J. Budd, Alan Gribben, Pascal Covici, Jr., David E. E. Sloane, Victor A. Doyno, Michael J. Kiskis, Shelley Fisher Fishkin, and Laura Skandera Trombley. Past Executive Coordinators: Everett Emerson, James D. Wilson, Michael J. Kiskis, Laura Skandera Trombley, Joseph A. Alvarez, and John Bird. 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 MARK TWAIN JOURNAL.** Founded in 1936 by Cyril Clemens, the *Mark Twain Journal* is the oldest American magazine devoted to a single author. In 1982, 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 2001 issues rather than the 2002. 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.

**To:** Prof. Joseph Csicsila  
Exec. Coordinator, Mark Twain Circle  
English Department  
Eastern Michigan University  
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Please enroll me as a member of the **Mark Twain Circle of America** and subscriber to the *Mark Twain Circular*. I enclose a check for \$15.00 (\$16.00 for a non-U.S. address) made out to "Mark Twain Circle of America."

\_\_\_\_\_  
(printed name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(address)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(city, state, zip code)

**To:** Thomas A. Tenney, Editor  
*Mark Twain Journal*  
English Department  
The Citadel  
Charleston, SC 29409

Please enter my subscription to the *Mark Twain Journal* for the year(s) circled: 2001, 2002, 2003

Subscription rates for individuals are \$10 for one year, \$18 for two years, \$25 for three years, or \$30 for four years. Libraries: \$18.00/year, no discount. Foreign: Add \$2.00/year for postage.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(printed name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(address)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(city, state, zip code)