

Mark Twain and “Shake-Speare”: Soul Mates

James Norwood

One of the hallmarks of Mark Twain was irreverence. His first major publication, *The Innocents Abroad*, called into question the high culture of Europe, which he had experienced first-hand during an extended trip. Following his days as a prospector and journalist in Nevada and California, Twain moved to New York City and soon received a commission to write about Europe and the Holy Land as part of a religious-oriented “great European pleasure excursion.”¹ Twain set sail from New York aboard the *Quaker City*, a former Civil War steamship, in June, 1867, and he returned in late November. His fellow tourists wanted to worship the idols of European culture; Twain wanted to bury them. The experience set Twain on a lifelong mission of challenging the status quo, of questioning cherished beliefs, and attacking sacred cows.

In assessing Michelangelo, for example, Twain wrote the following:

I wish to say one word about Michael Angelo Buonarotti (sic). I used to worship the mighty genius of Michael Angelo—that man who was great in poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture—great in everything he undertook. But I do not want Michael Angelo for breakfast—for luncheon—for dinner—for tea—for supper—for between meals....In Genoa, he designed every thing; in Milan he or his pupils designed everything....in Padua, Verona, Venice, Bologna, who did we ever hear of, from guides, but Michael Angelo? In Florence, he painted every thing, designed every thing, nearly, and what he did not design he used to sit on a favorite stone and look at, and they showed us the stone. In Pisa he designed every thing but the old shot tower, and they would have attributed that to him if it had not been so awfully out of the perpendicular....He designed St. Peter's; he designed the Pope; he designed the Pantheon, the uniform of the Pope's soldiers, the Tiber, the Vatican, the Coliseum, the Capitol, the Tarpeian Rock, the Barberini Palace, St. John Lateran, the Campagna, the Appian Way, the

Seven Hills, the Baths of Caracalla, the Claudian Aqueduct....the eternal bore designed the Eternal City, and unless all men and books do lie, he painted every thing in it!.... 'Say no more!....Say that the Creator made Italy from designs by Michael Angelo!' I never felt so fervently thankful, so soothed, so tranquil, so filled with a blessed peace, as I did yesterday when I learned that Michael Angelo was dead.²

Twain's satirical writing may have anticipated the shrill cries in academe in the late twentieth century, as university professors attacked with even greater venom the "Dead White European Male."

But unlike his satirical treatment of Italy, Twain had great respect for England. He claimed that some of his Clemens ancestors were pirates in the Elizabethan era, noting that during the reign of Elizabeth, piracy was "a respectable trade."³ He first traveled to England in 1872, and he later lived for extended and joyous periods in the English countryside with his family. The culmination of his English travels came in June, 1907, with the awarding of an honorary doctorate from Oxford University. During his visit, Twain was treated like royalty, and he relished every moment of it.

And yet, from his earliest experiences as a cub reporter in Nevada, Twain had doubts about the traditional view of Shakespeare. In the 1860s, Sam Clemens was hired by newspaper owner and editor Joseph T. Goodman as a writer for the Virginia City *Territorial Enterprise*. This young, failed prospector had finally hit the mother lode at the moment when he adopted the pseudonym Mark Twain and began the career of a writer.

On April 22, 1864, Twain wrote a piece for the alleged three hundredth anniversary of the birth of the Bard. Published in the *Territorial Enterprise*, the article sought to present a biographical sketch of Shakespeare. Twain recalls in his autobiography that "I got the Cyclopedia and examined it, and found out who Shakespeare was and what he had done....There wasn't enough of what Shakespeare had done to make an editorial of the necessary length, but I filled it out with what he hadn't done—which in many respects was more important and striking and readable than the handsomest things he had really accomplished."⁴ It is not unusual for conventional Shakespearean biographers to embellish the known facts of the life of William of Stratford. In this regard, Twain was anticipating by 150 years Stephen Greenblatt's fanciful biography *Will in the World*.

As early as 1870, Twain began work on an ambitious autobiography. But it was not until January, 1906, that he formally began his "Autobiographical Dictations," recording the majority of the massive autobiography currently being released in installments by the University of California Press. Twain insisted that the work not be published until after his death. He claimed famously that, "I think we never become really and genuinely our entire and honest selves until we are dead—and not then until we have been dead years and years. People ought to start dead and then they would honest so much earlier."⁵ It has taken more than a century for the autobiography to be fully prepared and edited by the dedicated

scholars at the Bancroft Library in Berkeley. The work is ongoing with two of the three projected volumes of Twain's autobiography having been published, respectively, in 2010 and 2013. This meticulously edited text provides an expansive window into the creative process of Twain as a writer. It is instructive to weigh the author's perspectives in his autobiographical writings to understand why Twain felt a spiritual bond with the author "Shake-Speare." Scattered through Twain's autobiography are insights about the true nature of literary genius.

In his "Autobiographical Dictations," Twain wished to avoid a straightforward chronological life story. Instead, he wrote selectively and with free association, connecting his present experience with past moments of his life. He described his goal in the loftiest of terms: "I intend that this autobiography shall become a model for all future autobiographies when it is published, after my death, and I also intend that it shall be read and admired a good many centuries because of its form and method—a form and method whereby the past and present are constantly brought face to face, resulting in contrasts which newly fire up the interest all along like contact of flint with steel."⁶

Twain's goal was to tell his life story in a non-linear fashion in the same way that Arthur Miller's memoir *Timebends* filters a myriad of past events in a mosaic of impressions and experiences. In the author's dictated words, it becomes clear that Twain was driven to write in response to personal loss and tragedy. Twain used his autobiography to find comfort after the deaths of his wife and two of his three daughters. Following the death of his wife, Livy, in 1904, he simply poured himself into writing. He was dictating to his secretary, Isabel Lyon, while simultaneously providing insights to his biographer, Albert Bigelow Paine, who was virtually in residence with Twain for many years. This was an author using the act of dictation as a way to cope with his grief. In the process, Twain revealed insights about himself as a creative artist.

A theme that emerges from the autobiography is that in his literary creations, Twain wrote from direct, personal experience in order to evoke the human realities of his fictional characters. In his autobiography, Twain reminisced about his formative years in Missouri, "I can call it all back and make it as real as it ever was, and as blessed."⁷ He once wrote in a notebook the following creed of himself as a literary artist:

If you attempt to create & build a wholly imaginary incident, adventure or situation, you will go astray, & the artificiality of the thing will be detectable. But if you found on a fact in your personal experience, it is an acorn, a root, & every created adornment that grows up out of it & spreads its foliage & blossoms to the sun will seem realities, not inventions.⁸

Harold Bloom has credited Shakespeare with the "invention of the human" in literature. To be more exact, Shakespeare was at the literary forefront of a new artistic vision of the "self" that was part of the broader cultural phenomenon of Renaissance humanism. The new aesthetic focusing on the individual was

ushered in by Petrarch, who was crowned poet laureate in Rome on April 8, 1341. Michelangelo painted his face as the likeness of the martyred St. Bartholomew in his *Last Judgment* fresco in the Sistine Chapel. The early Renaissance artist Donatello sculpted biblical images in his own likeness. Art historian John Hunisak writes of Donatello's *David* that, "with Donatello, we discover the first modern instance of the fusion of art and autobiography."⁹ It is not surprising that in painting, the forms of portraiture and self-portraiture are essential inventions of the Renaissance.

Perhaps the most complete depiction of the ideal individual in the Renaissance is articulated in the dialogues of Baldassare Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano* (The Book of the Courtier). Drawing upon his experience in the civilized world of Urbino, Castiglione describes a nearly divine image of the "self" for young men and women, wherein their characters are molded by education, culture, and courtly manners, while expressed effortlessly through *sprezzatura*. Castiglione genuinely believed in the perfection of the human being in body, mind, and soul. For Oxfordians, it comes as no surprise that Edward de Vere wrote in a polished Latin a dedicatory letter to Bartholomew Clerke's 1571 English translation of *The Courtier*.¹⁰ In Spain, Miguel de Cervantes was clearly modeling his most famous literary creation, Don Quixote, on his own life and character. Twain articulates precisely how Shakespeare conceived human truths by grounding the works of literature in the author's "personal experience." When Stratfordians like Jonathan Bate and Stanley Wells stress the importance of "imagination" in literature, it is the exact opposite of what Twain or any artist knows from the process of starting with the "acorn and root" of personal experience.

Recalling his years as a riverboat pilot, Twain remarked that "the face of the water, in time, became a wonderful book."¹¹ That book was *Life on the Mississippi*. The Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899-1986) came to the United States at age 83. Professor Shelley Fisher Fishkin recounts the moving story of the visit of Borges to Hannibal, Missouri:

Borges agreed to lecture at Washington University in St. Louis on the condition that his hosts take him to Hannibal. Twain's writings — particularly *Huckleberry Finn* — had captured his imagination as a child and sustained him as an adult. Frail and nearly blind, Borges insisted on making the two-hour trip to Twain's hometown. When he got there, it became clear that there was really only one thing he wanted to do: put his hand in the Mississippi River. He reached down and did just that. The river, he said, was the essence of Twain's writing. He had to touch it.¹²

The experience of the river had been communicated across time from one literary genius to another.

Huckleberry Finn is arguably Twain's greatest literary achievement, and it was written almost entirely out of Twain's personal experience. It drew upon the townspeople of Hannibal, Missouri, such as Tom Blankenship, who was the model for Huck. The recollections of a slave belonging to Twain's uncle and known to Twain

as “Uncle Dan’l” were the basis for the character of Jim. “Uncle Dan’l” was a man in his 30s at the time when little Sam Clemens knew him virtually as a father figure. From Twain’s autobiography, we learn that:

All the Negroes were friends of ours, and with those of our own age we were in effect comrades....We had a faithful and affectionate good friend, ally and adviser in Uncle Dan’l, a middle-aged slave whose...sympathies were wide and warm and whose heart was honest and simple and knew no guile...I have not seen him for more than half a century and yet spiritually I have had his welcome company a good part of that time and have staged him in books under his own name and as ‘Jim’, and carted him all around—to Hannibal, down the Mississippi on a raft and even across the Desert of Sahara in a balloon—and he has endured it all with the friendliness and loyalty which were his birthright.¹³

Twain’s fictional works are peopled with individuals exactly like “Uncle Dan’l”. Twain moved effortlessly among genres, including journalism, satire, the novel, short stories, memoir, travelogue, historical writing, plays, and children’s books. The list of styles enumerated by Polonius in describing the vast repertoire of the company of actors arriving at Elsinore could serve as a catalogue of Twain’s literary canon. He seemed to master any literary style. But at its core, the Twain corpus was autobiographical.

Ernest Hemingway famously wrote that “all modern American literature comes from one book by Mark Twain called *Huckleberry Finn*.”¹⁴ The history of that novel has been filled with controversy, including the initial banning of the book by the Concord Public Library at the very location that marked the beginning of the Revolutionary War in the eighteenth century and the home of Emerson and Thoreau, as well as a center of abolitionism, in the nineteenth. In the twenty-first century, it might be added that *Huckleberry Finn* is the greatest American novel that is no longer read. Sadly, the reason why this work is infrequently assigned in colleges and universities stems from those exclusive members of the professoriate who are the guardians of the curriculum.

But what is considered “offensive” language in the novel today was the exact intention of Twain, as apparent in his explanatory note to *Huckleberry Finn*. Twain advises the reader that “In this book a number of dialects are used....The shadings have not been done in a hap-hazard fashion, or by guess-work; but pains-takingly, and with the trustworthy guidance and support of personal familiarity with these several forms of speech.”¹⁵

Twain’s goal was to faithfully reproduce the rhythms of speech, including the colloquial expressions and class-based dialects from the Midwest of the antebellum era. Like Shakespeare, Twain began with the spoken word that was deeply engrained in his personal experience and turned it into art. His stated purpose was to discover the soul of the people. This was achieved not from the world of the imagination, but from the roots of his experience in the culture of the Mississippi River. The “soul” of Mark Twain lay in the experience of that little river town.

The moral center of *Huckleberry Finn* lies in Huck's relationship with the fugitive slave Jim, who becomes both a father figure and a buddy to the young man during their quest for freedom on the Mississippi. Twain began writing the book in 1876, but the setting is clearly in 1840s. The novel telescopes the action from the end of Reconstruction back to the antebellum world of slavery.

But Twain then placed the project on hold at the point in the novel when Jim and Huck are fleeing the South and approaching the Northern free states. When he returned to the novel nearly a decade later, he chose to have Jim and Huck double back and head south on the river. Of course, this makes no sense in the context of Jim's search for freedom, as he is heading in the opposite direction of the free state of Illinois. But Twain was not comfortable in his attempt to depict the Northern dialect, and so his characters drifted south where the author was able to convey in the vernacular he knew best the antics of such colorful characters as the con artists, the Duke and the King. Thus, the final chapters of the novel turn into an episodic sequence of vignettes that showcase the diverse patterns of speaking along the southern portion of the Mississippi.

The turning point of the novel arrives when Huck is about to send a letter to Miss Watson, the owner of the slave Jim. The moral position engrained in Huck is not to steal other people's property, and so, he feels obligated to return Jim to Miss Watson. Huck's considered analysis of whether or not to send the letter takes on the gravitas of a Shakespearean soliloquy: "I got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself: 'All right, then, I'll go to hell' — and tore it up."¹⁶

In deciding to defy the conventional definition of "conscience" and refuse to return the "property" of a slave to its lawful owner, Huck as a hero has defined a higher moral authority in recognizing Jim as a human being. It was in this internal struggle of Huck Finn that Hemingway knew that Twain had discovered the essential voice of America—in both its worst and best ways.

In the words of author Toni Morrison, "elitist censorship"¹⁷ has kept *Huckleberry Finn* out of the curriculum in higher education. Those same elitist censors have kept an open disclosure of the Shakespeare authorship question out of our classrooms. Twain knew that the "soul" of Shakespeare belonged to the world of Tudor aristocracy—not to the community of Stratford-upon-Avon. Elitist censorship works in insidious ways like the elitist educators who proclaim that those who doubt the traditional Shakespeare authorship story are...elitists! To graduate from adolescence to adulthood, the public must understand that historical truth matters, that the original story of Shakespearean authorship is a lie, and that the same authority figures who have suppressed the masterpieces of Mark Twain have dictated the teaching of a Shakespearean biography that is a myth.

Twain always placed himself at the center of his writing. His greatest literary works, *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*, draw upon his personal experience in Hannibal. Twain wrote *Tom Sawyer* in the wake of the loss of his nineteen-month-old son Langdon to diphtheria. The novel was not only an ode to childhood, but, in this case, to one specific child. In capturing the efflorescence of youth, Twain was

meditating on the life that could have been lived by his boy and that Twain himself could have experienced vicariously if Langdon had lived. Thus, Twain himself is an omnipresent figure hiding in the shadows of *Tom Sawyer*. Twain also appears as the eponymous title character in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*. He is the wily Yankee Hank Morgan in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. He even appears as the autobiographical Stranger who exposes the rampant small-town mendacity of "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyberg," which arguably is the finest storytelling of his late writing career.

The truth about Mark Twain is, according to his own admission, more detailed in his literary works than in his autobiography. To Twain's friend William Dean Howells, Twain confessed that though his intent was to write an autobiography that was "a perfectly veracious record of his life," he later admitted that "as to veracity it was a failure; he had begun to lie, and that if no man ever yet told the truth about himself it was because no man ever could."¹⁸ The author himself realized that a more profound truth about the soul of Mark Twain is memorialized in his own literary works.

In the first volume of his autobiography, Twain describes in almost Proustian fashion his sensory experience of a watermelon:

I know how a prize watermelon looks when it is sunning its fat rotundity among pumpkin vines....I know how to tell when it is ripe without 'plugging' it; I know how inviting it looks when it is cooling itself in a tub of water under the bed, waiting; I know how it looks when it lies on the table in the sheltered great floor-space between house and kitchen, and the children gathered for the sacrifice and their mouths watering; I know the crackling sound it makes when the carving knife enters its end, and I can see the split fly along in front of the blade as the knife cleaves its way to the other end; I can see its halves fall apart and display the rich red meat and the black seeds, and the heart standing up, a luxury fit for the elect; I know how a boy looks, behind a yard-long slice of that melon, and I know how he feels; for I have been there. I know the taste of the watermelon which has been honestly come by, and I know the taste of the watermelon which has been acquired by art. Both taste good, but the experienced know which tastes best.¹⁹

It is this kind of sense memory work that Twain used to perfect his great literary works, which he accomplished not by artifice or the imagination, but by lived experience and memory. Twain drew upon the farm of his uncle for the meaningful details of his novels. In the autobiography, he provides a colorful description of Southern cuisine:

My uncle, John A. Quarles, was a farmer, and his place was in the country four miles from Florida....In "Huck Finn" and in "Tom Sawyer Detective"

I moved it down to Arkansas...It was a heavenly place for a boy, that farm of my uncle John's....In the summer the table was set in the middle of that shady and breezy floor, and the sumptuous meals—well, it makes me cry to think of them. Fried chicken; roast pig; wild and tame turkeys, ducks, and geese; venison just killed; squirrels, rabbits, pheasants, partridges, prairie chickens; home-made bacon and ham; hot biscuits, hot batter-cakes, hot buckwheat cakes, hot 'wheatbread,' hot rolls, hot corn pone; fresh corn boiled on the ear, succotash, butter-beans, string beans, tomatoes, peas, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes; buttermilk, sweet milk, 'clabber;' watermelons, musk melons, canteloups (sic)—all fresh from the garden—apple pie, peach pie, pumpkin pie, apple dumplings, peach cobbler....The way that the things were cooked was perhaps the main splendor—particularly a certain few of the dishes. For instance, the corn bread, the hot biscuits and wheatbread, and the fried chicken. These things have never been properly cooked in the North—in fact, no one there is able to learn the art, so far as my experience goes. The North thinks it knows how to make corn bread, but this is gross superstition. Perhaps no bread in the world is quite as good as Southern corn bread, and perhaps no bread in the world is quite so bad as the Northern imitation of it. The North seldom tries to fry chicken, and this is well; the art cannot be learned north of the line of Mason and Dixon, nor anywhere else in Europe. This is not hearsay; it is experience that is speaking.²⁰

In this lengthy description of the foods, Twain is telling us how he wrote his masterwork, *Huckleberry Finn*: through the sensory recall of his own experience. He is soulfully describing the world of his childhood, and in looking for the soul of the experience of the author "William Shakespeare," Mark Twain had the laser-like vision to perceive a void in the biographical record. Twain published his final book in 1909. It was neither a novel nor a memoir. Rather, it was a work of literary criticism that cast doubt on the traditional view of authorship of Shakespeare's plays. *Is Shakespeare Dead?* has confused Twain scholars for over a century. Twain's first biographer and confidant, Albert Bigelow Paine, urged Twain not to publish the work for fear that he would be ridiculed. Speaking for countless English literature professors, Paine asserted that "the romance of the boy, Will Shakespeare, who had come up to London and began by holding horses outside of the theater, and ended by winning the proudest place in the world of letters, was something I did not wish to let perish."²¹ But Twain disagreed with his friend Paine and insisted on the publication of his manuscript. As with so many of the untruths he sought to expose, Twain was convinced that the conventional Shakespearean biography was a lie.

Twain's book on Shakespearean authorship was inspired from a personal visit paid to him at his home by Helen Keller. Twain had first met Keller at a time when she was fourteen years old and appeared at a small gathering at the home of the critic and editor of *Harper's* magazine, Laurence Hutton. Twain was deeply moved by the sensitivity of Helen, who was able to identify the names of every one

of the dozen or so men and women present simply by touching their hands. As recounted in Twain's autobiography,

The guests were brought one after another and introduced to her. As she shook hands with each she took her hand away and laid her fingers lightly against Miss Sullivan's lips, who spoke against them the person's name. When a name was difficult, Miss Sullivan not only spoke it against Helen's fingers but spelled it upon Helen's hand with her own fingers—stenographically apparently, for the swiftness of the operation was suggestive of that.²²

Poet Margaret Sangster observed Twain's emotional reaction to Helen as he "impetuously dashed the tears from his eyes as he looked into her sweet face."²³ At the end of the evening, Twain patted Helen on the head and was amazed that she recognized him. He later wrote, "Perhaps someone else can explain this miracle, but I have never been able to do it. Could she feel the wrinkles in my hand through her hair?"²⁴ When Helen later visited Twain at his Stormfield home in Connecticut, Twain asked her about the "miracle." She simply said that she recognized him by his scent. Perhaps Helen was being polite in declining to say that he reeked of tobacco. But what is truly remarkable was how Helen Keller was able to perceive Twain's voice. She recalled that "his voice was truly wonderful. To my touch, it was deep, resonant. He had the power of modulating it so as to suggest the most delicate shades of meaning, and he spoke so deliberately that I could get almost every word with my fingers on his lips."²⁵ Of course, Helen Keller was deaf, yet she was able to provide possibly the most detailed description ever written of Twain's vocal quality simply through touch.

For inclusion in his autobiography, Twain insisted on publishing a letter he received from Helen Keller, dated March 27, 1906. Twain recounted that "if I know anything about literature, here was a fine and great and noble sample of it; that this letter was simple, direct, unadorned, unaffected, unpretentious, and was moving and beautiful and eloquent; that no fellow to it had ever been issued from any girl's lips since Joan of Arc, that immortal child of seventeen, stood alone and friendless in her chains, five centuries ago, and confronted her judges—the concentrated learning and intellect of France."²⁶ In the letter, Helen writes the following to Clemens about his support of the blind:

You once told me you were a pessimist, Mr. Clemens; but great men are usually mistaken about themselves. You are an optimist. If you were not, you would not preside at the meeting. For it is an answer to pessimism. It claims that the heart and the wisdom of a great city are devoted to the good of mankind, that in this the busiest city in the world no cry of distress goes up, but receives a compassionate and generous answer. Rejoice that the cause of the blind has been heard in New York: for the day after, it shall be heard round the world. Yours sincerely, Helen Keller.²⁷

The letter speaks volumes about Helen Keller as much as it does about Samuel Clemens.

When she visited Twain at his Stormfield home, Helen was accompanied by her mentor, Annie Sullivan, as well as Annie's husband, John Macy. It was at this time that Twain coined the phrase "miracle worker" to describe Annie Sullivan. Fifty years later, that image became the title of William Gibson's play *The Miracle Worker*, which was later adapted into a film with the same title and featured Anne Bancroft as Annie. Sullivan's husband, John Albert Macy (1877-1932), was a Harvard instructor and literary critic. When he arrived at Stormfield, he brought along the galley proofs for a new book on the Shakespeare authorship question. The 600-page volume by William Stone Booth was titled *Some Acrostic Signatures of Francis Bacon*. As Twain had been troubled for decades by the traditional Shakespearean biography, he devoured Booth's book, staying up at all hours to complete the reading.

Like so many who have attempted to decode Baconian ciphers, Twain was confused by the complexity of the acrostics, which sought to make the case for Francis Bacon as the author of the Shakespeare canon. Twain thereby resolved to write his own book to set forth the evidence in a way that "he who merely skims a book might grasp it."²⁸ Twain complained about "that third-rate actor who never wrote a line in his life" and was especially troubled by the absence of a literary paper trail linking the man from Stratford to the great plays and poems. For Twain, "it always seemed unaccountable to me that a man could be so prominent in Elizabeth's little London...yet leave behind him hardly an incident for people to remember him by....Not even a distinguished horse could die and leave such biographical poverty behind him."²⁹ For Twain, the Stratford man's legacy was "a vague file of chipmunk-tracks stringing through the dust of Stratford."³⁰ During the visit from Helen Keller, Twain's secretary, Isabel Lyon, overheard Twain and Macy denouncing the Stratford man in the strongest terms imaginable. Lyon recounted that, "You'd think both men had Shakespeare by the throat...strangling him for some hideous crime."³¹ Miss Lyon did not grasp that the "crime" being discussed by Twain and Macy was identity theft!

Twain spent only two months in writing *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, which was published one year before his death in 1909. Parts of the book were dictated, and others were written in longhand. Twain set a daily word count as a goal, which was in keeping with his traditional discipline of writing. He was fully aware of the resistance to overcome in changing minds of those wedded to the deeply entrenched myth of the Stratford man. He wrote that "I am aware that when even the brightest mind in our world has been trained up from childhood in a superstition of any kind, it will never be possible for that mind, in its maturity, to examine sincerely, dispassionately, and conscientiously any evidence or any circumstance which shall seem to cast a doubt upon the validity of that superstition."³² His *Harper's* publisher did not want to print the book, but was at the time under contact to publish anything Twain wrote. Twain wanted his short volume to appear before Stone's book on acrostics was published, and so, Twain's book was rushed into print on April 8, 1909.

Twain was never a stranger to controversy, and, following his death, Twain scholars have been embarrassed by *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, casually dismissing the work as a “semi-autobiographical” study.³³ But Twain’s treatise has rarely been examined in mainstream critical studies to understand what it might be saying about the traditional view of Shakespearean authorship. In fact, *Is Shakespeare Dead?* is consistent with Twain’s long-held skepticism about the author of Shakespeare’s works. In 1880, Twain published a short, fictional dialogue among various members of the nobility at the court of Queen Elizabeth I. This ribald, scatological sketch was entitled *1601*. Perhaps the most Rabelaisian writing of Twain’s career, the sketch was prepared for the amusement of Twain and his close friend Joe Twichell, the fun-loving father of nine children and pastor of the Asylum Hill Congregational Church in Hartford, Connecticut. The jokes would be appropriate to any number of teenage locker room-style situations in today’s Hollywood films. While Samuel Clemens wrote under the pseudonym of Mark Twain, the author chose to publish *1601* anonymously in 1880. Composed between the time Twain had completed *Tom Sawyer* and was working on *Huckleberry Finn*, the *1601* dialogue reveals how the rascally side of Twain was emerging right along with the development of two of his most famous literary creations.

In *1601*, characters who converse with Elizabeth I include Francis Beaumont, Walter Raleigh, Ben Jonson, Francis Bacon, and a small coterie of aristocratic women. William Shakespeare makes an appearance with the name spelled “Shaxpur” (S-H-A-X-P-U-R), which is the correct phonetic spelling of the name of the man from Stratford. Twain sensed that the human realities of Shakespeare’s literary canon did not correspond to the facts of the life of the man from Stratford: there was a mismatch wherein Twain observed no evidence of notoriety even at the time of the death of William of Stratford. As he observed in *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, “If Shakespeare had really been celebrated, like me, Stratford could have told things about him; and if my experience goes for anything, they’d have done it.”³⁴

In 1986, Oxfordian Ruth Loyd Miller wrote a paper entitled “Mark Twain: Muzzled By Petrified Opinion” as part of her course work for a Masters degree at the University of Southwestern Louisiana.³⁵ In her twenty-two page essay, Miller offered commentary on Twain’s *Is Shakespeare Dead?* One of her themes is the silent treatment Twain received following the publication of *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, and the silence has continued to the present day. In June 2001, Miller appended a note to her paper, indicating that “this is now being updated to include the current group of ‘scholars’ who seek to ‘sanitize Twain’ (i.e.—keep the image pure by concealing his long-time & vibrant interest in the Shakespeare authorship issue)—the woman editor of the Oxford Twain & Ken Burns.”³⁶

Miller inserted into the paper a detailed fact sheet of the primary source references for the life of the Stratford man, as compiled by E. K. Chambers, R. Roland Lewis, Giles Dawson, and Samuel Schoenbaum—none of whom were able to adduce concrete evidence that he was a writer. She also prepared a detailed critique of the scholarly shortcomings of Shakespeare’s preeminent nineteenth century biographer, James Orchard Halliwell-Phillips, whom she described as “a young man

in a hurry”³⁷ and Sir Sidney Lee, the principal authority in the early twentieth century, who, in the words of Miller, “succeeded, more or less, to the high priesthood of Bardology.”³⁸ At the end of the paper, an extensive set of appendices offers a robust argument against the Stratford man as the author of Shakespeare’s literary works.

Miller also discusses how Twain was influenced by Sir Granville George Greenwood’s *The Shakespeare Problem Restated* (1908). The noted Twain scholar Alan Gribben concluded that the Greenwood volume “became the most heavily annotated and underscored book in Twain’s library.”³⁹ From the Albert A. Berg Collection of the New York Public Library, Miller acquired photocopies of Twain’s personal copy of Greenwood’s book with Twain’s holograph notes, which served as the final portion of her appendices. In his annotations, Twain refers to the Stratford man as “the Arthur Orton of literary ‘claimants.’”⁴⁰ One of the most revealing of Twain’s marginal notations comes in Greenwood’s discussion of the early works of Shakespeare, including “Venus and Adonis” and *Titus Andronicus*: “It is environment, & environment alone, that develops genius or strangles it.”⁴¹ Twain clearly recognized that the environment of Stratford did not provide the creative impetus for the author’s narrative poem and the early Senecan revenge tragedy. Alongside Greenwood’s summary of Ben Jonson absorbing Greek and Roman classics and “studying the humours” of London, Twain simply wrote in the margin, “Huck Finn”!⁴²

In her paper, Miller describes the intense pressure placed on Twain not to publish *Is Shakespeare Dead?* Twain’s secretary, Isabel Lyon, wrote with dismay about the widespread “chagrin” expressed by those closest to Twain when, against the wishes of his family and associates, he proceeded with the publication. Miller argues that “the community of Shakespearean scholars is filled with Shaksper worshipers who like Miss Lyon defended the religious belief that Shaksper was Shakespeare. *Is Shakespeare Dead?* was Twain’s last attempt to unlock closed minds—to crash the barrier of petrified opinion.”⁴³ Although Twain’s final book publication has been marginalized by Twain specialists, it may nonetheless be one of his most important long-term literary contributions.

Along with his success as a writer, Twain wrestled with a dual identity of the Midwesterner of humble origins, Sam Clemens, and the international celebrity, Mark Twain. In his lecturing, Twain frequently told his audiences that he had a twin brother named (interestingly) William. One of the twins died at age two, but it was never known for certain which one of the twins had drowned. In his lectures, even Twain himself seemed uncertain! The interplay of binary opposites is a motif throughout his literary works. Huck Finn has his shadow side in Tom Sawyer. Hank Morgan is split between two worlds, toggling between the modern industrial age of New England and the feudal world of King Arthur in *A Connecticut Yankee*. Tom Canty, the commoner, switches places with young Edward VI, the Prince of Wales, in *The Prince and the Pauper*.

On December 31, 1906, Twain welcomed in the New Year by entertaining guests at his rented home at 21 Fifth Avenue in New York City. Twain suddenly

appeared along with a friend at the top of the stairs. Both men were dressed in white suits and informed the group that they were Siamese twins about to deliver a lecture on the evils of alcohol. One of the twins was a teetotaler and the other was constantly sipping from a flask. The more that the one brother denounced the spirits, the more that the other consumed the drink, sending them both into bouts of slurred speech and inebriation.⁴⁴ In the late 1860s, Twain had written a short comic work called “Personal Habits of the Siamese Twins.” In the 1890s, his story “Those Extraordinary Twins” featured a pair of conjoined brothers, one a Democrat and the other a Whig. *Pudd’nhead Wilson* of 1893 features the two colorful characters of Thomas à Becket Driscoll and Valet de Chambre as the switched babies in the culturally-driven narrative of one of Twain’s greatest literary achievements.

A lifelong obsession for Twain was his intent to expose false claimants. For this reason, he was the wily autobiographical Pudd’nhead Wilson, who makes use of modern forensic science to serve justice in the Dawson’s Landing community through the use of fingerprints. But he also wrote about the Tichborne Claimant (Arthur Orton), Satan, Louis XVII, the Veiled Prophet of Khorassan, and Mary Baker Eddy—all of whom he considered pretenders. His 1892 novel *The American Claimant* tells the story of an eccentric American inventor seeking a claim on an English earldom. Twain even joked that through his wife’s genealogical tree, he had personally become the Earl of Durham.⁴⁵ The pretender “William Shaxpur” was the culminating act of a lifelong passion to peel away the layers on usurpers, con artists, and charlatans.

A nearly exact contemporary of Twain was the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Twain and Nietzsche were responding critically to troubling issues in modernity. Both writers were deeply concerned about growing industrialization, militarism, secularism, and the erosion of spirituality. Both were sensitive authors who saw themselves as prophets during the waning of the nineteenth century. But Nietzsche and Twain were also a pair of binary opposites. Twain yearned for the academic credentials and pedigree of Nietzsche. Labeled a pariah and a madman, Nietzsche craved the celebrity status of Twain. Twain wanted to be taken seriously, but was labeled a humorist — the wry and eccentric jokester in the white suit entertaining large crowds in lecture halls. Nietzsche was at heart a humorist who was branded a nihilist. Twain had at best an elementary school education, having reached no level higher than the sixth grade. One of the greatest moments of his life was in receiving an honorary doctorate from Oxford University. But Twain never really looked the part of the scholar. Dressed in his academic robes and attempting to balance a mortar board that would not stay in place, he was a comical figure oddly out of place in an academic procession.

But Twain’s vision is relentless Nietzschean. The apocalyptic ending of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* anticipates the great wars to come in the twentieth century, just as Nietzsche had prophesied in his learned philosophical works. Hank Morgan’s skills acquired in a nineteenth-century American factory eventually are used to bring down the sixth-century knights on horseback, but in the process they destroy the idealistic world of Camelot. All great artists are

prophets of their ages. Shakespeare saw the security of the old feudal order giving way to the chaotic early modern age. He had depicted the new mercantile ethic in the Italian comedies, especially *The Merchant of Venice*. It was as if Shakespeare was embarking on a ship that had just left port and the old world was slowly receding in the distance.

In a more accelerated world in transition, Twain and Nietzsche were warning of the dangers of the new and terrifying military-industrial age. Nietzsche observed first-hand the rise of Bismarck; Twain reacted with horror to nineteenth-century imperialism, denouncing the policies of King Leopold of Belgium, as well as American adventurism in the Spanish-American War. He was adamantly opposed to the missionaries who sought to Christianize foreign lands while ignoring social problems at home. He exposed the corruption of the robber barons and satirized the daily hypocrisy of small-town America in “The Man That Corrupted Hadleyville”—citizens of Twain’s “gilded age” who were treading the thin veneer of affluence while clothing their greed in phony virtue. Twain was especially intolerant of the hypocrisy of the era of emancipation. His greatest novel of his later years, *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, covertly attacked the abhorrent ruling of *Plessy v. Ferguson* in attempting to define race through biological determinants. Above all, Twain wanted to challenge people in the area of critical thinking—to not merely accept what they are told, but to think for themselves. This was a pattern since the time he first questioned sacred cows in *The Innocents Abroad*.

The most Nietzschean of Twain’s writings is his prose poem, “The War Prayer.” Twain was especially incensed over the war in the Philippines, and, written in the final decade of his life, “The War Prayer” combines Twain’s anti-war sentiments with his zeal against missionaries. As a prophet, Twain foresaw future international wars that would consume the soul of America. Like Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, the Stranger in “The War Prayer” warns of the horrors to emerge in the modern age. The setting is a church service with a congregation praying for divine intervention for victory. Twain was unable to find a publisher for the “The War Prayer.” At the urging of friends and family, he gave up on his quest to publish it, saying, “I have told the whole truth in that, and only dead men can tell the truth in this world. It can be published after I am dead.”⁴⁶ It was finally published posthumously in 1923, but only at a time when an isolationist climate had returned temporarily to America.

In Teddy Roosevelt, Twain discovered another pretender, as he believed America was moving closer to monarchy, and he forecast the period when the United States would become the equivalent of the Roman Empire. While Roosevelt’s iconic image eventually was etched in stone on Mount Rushmore, the serious side of Mark Twain is often forgotten. In fact, Twain was a “truth teller.” In his lifetime, he observed the transformation of America from an agrarian society into an industrially based world power. And he did not like what he saw. In his own words, Twain referred to his craft as a writer as “the deriding of shams, the exposure of pretentious falsities, the laughing of stupid superstitions out of existence.”⁴⁷

Twain voiced opposition to changes brought about by modernity, yet could

not resist being drawn into the very world he was deriding. He was always at the forefront of the new technology. He became a Mississippi riverboat pilot in the new age of steam. He was one of the first homeowners with a telephone. He had a vision of a new typesetter that would revolutionize printing; that “invention” eventually failed and led to his bankruptcy. Twain and especially his daughter Susy detested his popular image of entertainer and humorist. His satirical goals have often been underappreciated, just as Shakespeare’s satirical intentions have been misunderstood. Similarly, Edward de Vere was straddling the Middle Ages and the early modern era. At heart, de Vere was a medieval man, who was inevitably drawn to the dazzling culture of Renaissance Italy and the allure of attractive, yet foolhardy, investments in the new Age of Exploration. By the ends of their lives, both Twain and de Vere were disillusioned as they contemplated rapidly changing worlds.

Late in his life, Twain loved making trips to Bermuda. The seclusion and beauty of the island helped Twain to cope with the loss of his beloved wife, Livy, and two of his three daughters, Susy and Jean. In his autobiography, he wrote the following:

It is human life. We are blown upon the world, we float buoyantly upon the summer air a little while, complacently showing off our grace of form and our dainty iridescent colors; then we vanish with a little puff, leaving nothing behind but a memory—and sometimes not even that.⁴⁸

In these words, Twain was reflecting on his beloved daughter Susy, who had died of meningitis at age twenty-four. But he was also recalling the words of Prospero spoken when he was letting go of his daughter Miranda and saying: “All which it inherit, shall dissolve,/And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,/Leave not a rack behind.”⁴⁹ While writing a letter from Bermuda, Twain self-consciously drew upon *The Tempest* when he confessed that “my ship has gone down, but my raft has landed me in the Islands of the Blest, and I am as happy as any other shipwrecked sailor ever was.”⁵⁰

On his final trip to Bermuda, Twain and his friend Marion Allen discussed Shakespeare. When Marion began to wonder how Shakespeare might have picked up information about Bermuda while living in London, Twain was quick to correct Marion’s careless use of the poet’s name, saying that instead of referring to “Shakespeare,” she should have said, “the man who wrote the Shakespeare plays.”⁵¹ By spring of 1910, Twain was preparing to depart Bermuda for his return trip home. He intentionally left behind his beloved 2,000-page dictionary, inscribing it to his friend, as follows: “Given by Mark Twain to Marion Schuyler Allen, Bermuda, April 1910.”⁵² As a young printer, Twain came to appreciate the value of a dictionary and the significance of words. In setting the type, he had watched each letter of a word being formed. This work was essential to his education as a writer. Both Twain and Walt Whitman used words in revolutionary ways to create a uniquely

American literary language. Of course, those two seminal authors both doubted the conventional Shakespeare authorship story. On one occasion, Twain described his goal of returning the American language to the English of the Elizabethan age. By that, he was referring specifically to Shakespeare's language. Now, he was drowning his book just like Prospero. Twain returned to his home at Stormfield, dying on April 21, 1910, within weeks of leaving his book behind in Bermuda.

Twain clearly sensed a kindred spirit in Shakespeare. By the time he wrote *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, Samuel Clemens was the voice of America, just as Shakespeare had been the voice of England and, indeed, the voice of the Renaissance. In his own remarkable rise from humble Midwestern origins to riverboat pilot to failed gold prospector to successful writer, Twain became America's first modern celebrity. He was in the perfect position to assess the story of another self-made man—the gifted poet and playwright who ostensibly had made his way from a small provincial English town to London. On the surface, the two biographies of Twain and Shakespeare were parallel journeys of writers who moved from obscure upbringings in small towns to international fame as writers of genius.

And yet, Twain did not find the story of the Stratford man to be credible! As the embodiment of the Horatio Alger myth himself, Twain perceived that something was amiss in the conventional biography of Shakespeare. In *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, he presents a host of problems about the orthodox Shakespearean biography, including the author's intimate knowledge of the law; the absence of recognition in his home town even at the time of his death; the uncanny ability for a man of the middling order to recreate stories of the nobility; and the absence of hard evidence linking the Stratford man to the literary works. Above all, Twain knew that his own life experience was imprinted in his literary masterpieces. But he was unable to find a similar connection with the conventional biography of the Stratford man and the plays and poems of Shakespeare.

In this regard, Twain recognized a pseudonym when he saw one. He spent his adult life struggling with the dichotomy of his dual identity as Samuel Clemens and Mark Twain. By the end of his life, he saw himself as the American incarnation of Prospero, and by inference, the author Shakespeare, renouncing his magic and leaving behind for posterity in a massive autobiography the true feelings of Samuel Clemens, as opposed to Mark Twain. Without his book — the 2,000-page dictionary — Twain really had nothing more to live for. Prospero vows to “retire me to my Milan, where/Every third thought shall be my grave.”⁵³ Likewise, Twain saw himself as the mere mortal he was upon departure from Bermuda. A final parallel of the two authors comes with Prospero's decision in Act V to renounce his magic, saying,

I'll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound,
I'll drown my book.⁵⁴

The phrase “plummet sound” takes us back to the genesis of the pseudonym of a young author who recalled his personal experience of sounding the depths for safe passage along the Mississippi and awaiting the signal of two fathoms deep in the reassuring cry of “mark twain!” With good reason, Twain proclaimed, “I am not an American. I am THE American.”⁵⁵ A study of *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, Twain’s autobiography, and his own literary works helps to inform the nature of artistic creativity and may serve as a guidepost to understanding why Mark Twain and “Shake-Speare” are soul mates.

Works Cited

- Bancroft Library home page: "Europe and the Holy Land" <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/Exhibits/MTP/europe.html>.
- Thomas Cahill. *Heretics and Heroes—How Renaissance Artists and Reformation Priests Created Our World*. New York: Doubleday, 2013.
- Shelley Fisher Fishkin. "Lighting Out for the Territory—Reflections on Mark Twain and American Culture." *The Washington Post* (June 20, 1995): <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/books/chap1/lightingoutfortheterritory.htm>).
- Alan Greenblatt. "Why Mark Twain Still Matters." NPR (April 21, 2010): <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126135081>.
- Justin Kaplan. *Mark Twain and his World*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974.
- Albert Bigelow Paine. *Mark Twain A Biography—The Personal and Literary Life of Samuel Langhorne Clemens*. 1912. Project Gutenberg ebook: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2988/2988-h/2988-h.htm>.
- Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, The New Penguin Shakespeare. New York: The Penguin Group, 1968.
- Michael Sheldon. *Mark Twain: Man in White—The Grand Adventure of His Final Years*. New York: Random House, 2010.
- Mark Twain Project Online: <http://www.marktwainproject.org/>
- Mark Twain. *Autobiography of Mark Twain: The Complete and Authoritative Edition, Vol. 1*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.
- Mark Twain. *Autobiography of Mark Twain: The Complete and Authoritative Edition, Vol. 2*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
- Mark Twain. *Innocents Abroad, Roughing It; Mississippi Writings; A Tramp Abroad, Following the Equator, & Other Travels; The Gilded Age & Later Novels; Tales, Sketches, Speeches, & Essays 1852-1890; Collected Tales, Speeches, and Essays: Volume 2—1891-1910*; The Library of America. For free ebooks of the Twain corpus, see The Project Gutenberg at: <http://www.gutenberg.org/>.
- Mark Twain. *Is Shakespeare Dead?* New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1909.
- The Mark Twain House & Museum website: <http://marktwainhouse.blogspot.com/2011/06/i-am-not-american-i-am-american.html>
- Geoffrey C. Ward, Dayton Duncan, and Ken Burns. *Mark Twain—An Illustrated Biography*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001. Historical Romances: Prince & the Pauper, Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc.

Endnotes

- ¹ Bancroft Library home page: “Europe and the Holy Land” <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/Exhibits/MTP/europe.html>.
- ² Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad, Roughing It*, The Library of America, 227-228. The title of Twain’s final book publication, *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, clearly derives from the content of his first book, *The Innocents Abroad*, wherein Twain lampoons the deceased giants of the high culture of Europe. Similarly Twain’s 1898 play, *Is He Dead?*, is a comedy, based on the fictional treatment of the nineteenth-century French painter François Millet, who stages his own death in order to increase the value of his paintings. The play made its debut on Broadway in 2007. There is no doubt that Twain would have conceived a priceless quip about the name of the leading actor who played Millet: Norbert Leo Butz.
- ³ Sheldon, *Mark Twain: Man in White*, 52.
- ⁴ *Autobiography of Mark Twain*, Vol. 1, 296.
- ⁵ Ward, et al. *Mark Twain—An Illustrated Biography*, xi.
- ⁶ *Autobiography of Mark Twain*, Vol. I, 441.
- ⁷ Kaplan, *Mark Twain and His World*, 25.
- ⁸ Ward, et al. *Mark Twain—An Illustrated Biography*, xiii.
- ⁹ Cahill, *Heretics and Heroes—How Renaissance Artists and Reformation Priests Created Our World*, 88.
- ¹⁰ It is clear from de Vere’s dedication that he has studied Castiglione’s *The Courtier* with great care when he writes, “what more difficult, more noble, or more magnificent task has anyone ever undertaken than our author Castiglione, who has drawn for us the figure and model of a courtier, a work to which nothing can be added, in which there is no redundant word, a portrait which we shall recognize as that of a highest and most perfect type of man. And so, although nature herself has made nothing perfect in every detail, yet the manners of men exceed in dignity that with which nature has endowed them; and he who surpasses others has here surpassed himself and has even out-done nature, which by no one has ever been surpassed. Nay more: however elaborate the ceremonial, whatever the magnificence of the court, the splendor of the courtiers, and the multitude of spectators, he has been able to lay down principles for the guidance of the very Monarch himself. Again, Castiglione has vividly depicted more and even greater things than these. For who has spoken of princes with greater gravity? Who has discoursed of illustrious women with a more ample dignity? No one has

written of military affairs more eloquently, more aptly about horse-racing, and more clearly and admirably about encounters under arms on the field of battle. I will say nothing of the fitness and the excellence with which he has depicted the beauty of chivalry in the noblest persons. Nor will I refer to his delineations in the case of those persons who cannot be courtiers, when he alludes to some notable defect or to some ridiculous character, or to some deformity of appearance. Whatever is heard in the mouths of men in casual talk and in society, whether apt and candid or villainous and shameful, that he has set down in so natural a manner that it seems to be acted before our very eyes." The complete translation of de Vere's dedicatory letter by B. M. Ward may be accessed at: <http://www.elizabethanauthors.org/vere106.htm>.

- 11 Twain, *Life on the Mississippi* in *Mississippi Writings*, Library of America, 283.
- 12 Fishkin, "Lighting Out for the Territory—Reflections on Mark Twain and American Culture." *The Washington Post* (June 20, 1995): <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/longterm/books/chap1/lightingoutfortheterritory.htm>
- 13 *Autobiography of Mark Twain*, Vol. I, 211.
- 14 Alan Greenblatt, "Why Mark Twain Still Matters": <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=126135081>.
- 15 Mark Twain, Explanatory Note to *Huckleberry Finn* in *Mississippi Writings*. Library of America, 620.
- 16 Mark Twain, *Huckleberry Finn* in *Mississippi Writings*. Library of America, 834-35.
- 17 Ward, et al. *Mark Twain—An Illustrated Biography*, 181.
- 18 *Autobiography of Mark Twain*, Vol. I, 57.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 217.
- 20 *Ibid.*, 210.
- 21 Sheldon, *Mark Twain: Man in White*, 318.
- 22 *Autobiography of Mark Twain*, Vol. 1, 465.
- 23 Sheldon, *Mark Twain: Man in White*, 312.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 313.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 *Autobiography of Mark Twain*, Vol. 1, 466.
- 27 *Ibid.*, 467.
- 28 Sheldon, *Mark Twain: Man in White*, 317.
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 *Ibid.*, 321.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 318. By the time he occupied his new home called Stormfield in Connecticut, Twain was a widower. Craving companionship, he was constantly inviting guests for short visits, and there was clearly never a dull moment in this bustling household. One can only imagine the dynamism and energy during the stay of Helen Keller and the lively discussions about Shakespearean authorship. On another occasion, there had been a robbery at Stormfield, in which three unimaginative thieves had escaped with some of the family silverware belonging to Twain's beloved wife, Livy. The

incident devolved into comic opera with a chase scene and shootout on a train in which a local deputy sheriff was wounded. Upon the arrest of the burglars, Twain personally confronted the thieves, saying, “So you’re the... young men who called at my house last night and forgot to put your names in my guest-book?” (Sheldon, 274) After unleashing a lengthy diatribe, Twain concluded with his characteristic wit: “Don’t you see where you’re drifting to? They’ll send you from here down to Bridgeport jail, and the next thing you know, you’ll be in the United States Senate. There’s no other future left open to you” (Sheldon, 274).

³² *Ibid.*, 319.

³³ A fastidious Twain scholar, Michael Sheldon has written a superb biography of Twain’s late years in *Mark Twain: Man in White—The Grand Adventure of His Final Years*. While Professor Sheldon’s sensitive insights have left an imprint on this paper from start to finish, he is nonetheless unable or unwilling to acknowledge that Twain has raised legitimate concerns about the conventional Shakespearean biography.

³⁴ Twain, *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, 65.

³⁵ On April 17, 1986, the paper was submitted to Professor Milton Rickels for English 550 (Seminar in American Literature)—a course that is still offered at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (formerly the University of Southwestern Louisiana). During one of the many pleasant trips of Miller and her husband to the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, she deposited a copy of her Mark Twain paper in the library’s archives. On those ventures, Miller delivered lectures at the renowned Marian Miner Cook Athenaeum at Claremont McKenna College. In the UK, she left a copy of her paper in the holdings of the Seax-Essex archive, likely through her friendship with the distinguished archivist F. G. Emmison. The manuscript was graciously shared with me by Miller’s daughter, Bonner Cutting. John Fiero is now a retired English professor from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, who taught Ruth Loyd Miller in a Shakespeare seminar in the late 1970s or early 1980s. Reflecting thirty-five years later, Professor Fiero observed to me in an e-mail of September 29, 2014, that “she Miller and her husband were...two of the most genteel persons it was my pleasure to know.” This is arguably one of the highest tributes ever paid by a Stratfordian to an Oxfordian.

³⁶ The name of the editor of the multi-volume *Oxford Mark Twain*, which totals 14,176 pages in the 2009 edition, is Shelley Fisher Fishkin, who is the Joseph S. Atha Professor in Humanities at Stanford University. Miller correctly observes that Professor Fishkin chose to combine Twain’s short parody *1601* with *Is Shakespeare Dead?* It is also true that the two works bear no stylistic or thematic similarity and were composed thirty years apart. While Twain spells the poet’s name as “Shaxpur,” he does not overtly explore the authorship topic in *1601*. Miller is also correct about filmmaker Ken Burns, who produced a four-hour PBS series on Twain, plus a 250-book

accompanying the series. There is not a single reference to *Is Shakespeare Dead?* in either the film or the book.

- 37 Ruth Loyd Miller, unpublished manuscript (1986), 12.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 14.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 2.
- 40 Title page, Twain's annotation within his personal copy of Greenwood's *The Shakespeare Problem Restated*. Albert A. Berg Collection of the New York Public Library.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 64.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 75.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 19.
- 44 Sheldon, *Mark Twain: Man in White*, 6.
- 45 Kaplan, *Mark Twain and His World*, 13.
- 46 Paine, *Mark Twain A Biography—The Personal and Literary Life of Samuel Langhorne Clemens*. 1912. Project Gutenberg ebook: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2988/2988-h/2988-h.htm>. For students of the Shakespeare authorship question, it is important to observe that in late-nineteenth-century America, even a figure as renowned as Mark Twain at the height of his celebrity was still unable to find a publisher for all of his writings. Suppression of free speech works in insidious ways. If Mark Twain's writing could be suppressed in the late nineteenth century, then one may imagine how easy it was for Burghley or Walsingham in the sixteenth century to reject prospective publications, destroy already printed materials, or conceal the identity of authors, in the interests of national security. Part of the challenge in understanding the identity of the author "Shake-speare" lies in coming to terms with the entirely unique way in which that author's works were treated, when compared with any other Elizabethan poet-playwright. One critical question is: how was it possible for the Shakespearean texts with components of satirical writing from "Venus and Adonis" to *Troilus and Cressida* to find their way into print, while the works of other Elizabethan authors were suppressed?
- 47 Ward, et al. *Mark Twain—An Illustrated Biography*, vi.
- 48 *Autobiography of Mark Twain, Vol. II*, 257.
- 49 Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, The New Penguin Shakespeare, IV,i,154-56.
- 50 Sheldon, *Mark Twain: Man in White*, 403.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 389.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 407.
- 53 *The Tempest*, V,i,311-12.
- 54 *The Tempest*, V,i,54-57.
- 55 According to the scholars at the Mark Twain House & Museum in Hartford, this famous quote was first made by Twain's friend Frank Fuller. See: <http://marktwinhouse.blogspot.com/2011/06/i-am-not-american-i-am-american.htm>