

If one measure of the greatness of a literary work is the variety and breadth of new scholarship it inspires, then *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is inarguably great. Despite the fact that Mark Twain's novel has been examined and re-examined in scores of books and hundreds, if not thousands, of articles for more than a century, its ability to continue raising new questions and suggesting new perspectives is demonstrated yet again by the fresh ideas in the thirteen new essays in the present volume. In selecting topics for these essays, one of the editor's primary goals was to encourage innovative ways of looking at *Huckleberry Finn*. It is gratifying to report that goal has been exceeded. Within this volume, readers will encounter many perspectives they have never before seen articulated in print. They will, of course, revisit some familiar questions about such issues as slavery and racism in the novel, Jim's degradation in the so-called "evasion" chapters, and Huck's narrative voice and Mark Twain's use of dialects. However, they will also find these and other issues examined from fresh and wholly original perspectives.

The first section of the volume, "The Book and Author," contains the editor's views on Mark Twain and what makes *Huckleberry Finn* worthy of study.

Essays in the next section, "Critical Contexts," examine *Huckleberry Finn* in its broadest cultural and historical contexts. The section opens with a penetrating exploration of how the novel traveled from Mark Twain's pen to the printed page in "'Bessie' or 'Becky': Should We Care about Text?" Its author, Victor Fischer, is a veteran editor of the Mark Twain Papers and Project at the University of California in Berkeley, which prepares the most authoritative editions of Mark Twain's works ever published. Few people—if any—in the world know more about *Huckleberry Finn*'s tortuous publishing history than Fischer, who was deeply involved in editing two critical editions of *Huckleberry Finn*. After beginning his essay

with a fascinating discussion of how the name “Bessie Thatcher” accidentally found its way into the first edition of the novel—where it mistakenly remained in almost every subsequent edition ever since—he goes on to give examples of things that have gone wrong in editions over the years. Then, drawing on his unique expertise, he explains the painstaking work that has gone into restoring the text of the novel to what Mark Twain himself originally intended. The essay is the fullest explanation of the process of preparing a critical edition of *Huckleberry Finn* yet published, outside the Mark Twain Project’s own editions of *Huckleberry Finn*. Readers who carefully follow Fischer’s fascinating step-by-step explanations should come away not only with an appreciation of what goes into producing “critical editions” but also with an enhanced understanding of how Mark Twain himself crafted his fiction. Equally important, they should better appreciate *why* editions do matter. Teachers assigning *Huckleberry Finn* to classes should pay special attention to this essay.

Huckleberry Finn is now almost universally regarded as one of the greatest works in American literature—perhaps even the greatest. Such has not always been the case, however. Indeed, one of the most interesting things about the novel is the surprisingly rocky history of its reception by critics, other professional writers, and ordinary readers. In “Huck’s Reception during Three Centuries,” Kevin Mac Donnell surveys that history, citing numerous specific examples of what critics and readers have said about the book. This is a subject that has been examined before, but Mac Donnell is able to bring a broader perspective to it. One way is by drawing on recently published letters to Mark Twain from his contemporary readers. Of particular interest are the opinions of twelve-year-old Gertrude Swain, who in 1902 told Mark Twain she had read his novel about fifty times. Even more interesting, perhaps, is Mark Twain’s reply to Gertrude. Meanwhile, because Mac Donnell is known to be one of the most original and prolific researchers in the field of Mark Twain studies, he also throws in a few surprises—including radical revisions of what Louisa May Alcott and Ernest Hemingway really said—or did *not* say—about *Huckleberry Finn*.

A racially offensive word frequently repeated in *Huckleberry Finn* has made the book the target of calls for removal from classrooms and libraries throughout the United States for many years. In 2011, Alabama’s NewSouth Books published editions of *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn* from which that offending word was removed in order to make reading the novel more acceptable to students, especially African Americans. Not surprisingly, those editions became the focus of a heated national controversy about “censorship” that settled hard on the scholar behind them—Professor Alan Gribben of Auburn University at Montgomery. In the next essay, “Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer Expelled: Censorship and the Classroom,” Professor Gribben himself recounts, for the first time at length in print, the full story of the NewSouth editions. He also discusses the impact those editions are now having in schools and raises compelling questions about what really constitutes censorship. It is an essay that may change the opinions of many readers.

The social issue with which *Huckleberry Finn* is most closely associated is doubtless slavery, as one of the novel’s central themes is Jim’s flight from bondage down the Mississippi River on the raft he shares with Huck Finn. Another nineteenth-century novel even more closely associated with slavery is Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852). Stowe’s story of the oppression of enslaved African Americans so riled northerners during the 1850s, it is generally credited with playing a role in starting the Civil War that would lead to the abolishment of the “peculiar institution.” In 1996, novelist Jane Smiley published an influential essay in *Harper’s Magazine* comparing Mark Twain’s and Stowe’s treatments of slavery. She concluded that not only is *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* vastly superior but also that *Huckleberry Finn* is essentially a failure as an antislavery novel. In “*Huckleberry Finn* vs. *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* as Antislavery Novels,” Jocelyn A. Chadwick takes issue with Smiley’s conclusions. Drawing on her three-decade career as an educator who has visited schools and teachers’ groups across the country and tirelessly promoted Mark Twain’s novel as a powerful antiracist work, she makes a persuasive argument for why *Huckleberry Finn*

is, in fact, the superior book, while also arguing that schools should continue teaching both novels.

The next section in this volume, “Critical Readings,” contains ten essays exploring more specialized topics that provide additional fresh insights into *Huckleberry Finn*. The first, “Animating the Unsaid: Between the Lines in *Huckleberry Finn*” by novelist Jon Clinch, offers a truly unique perspective into Mark Twain’s novel. Since the 1930s, many writers have used characters from Mark Twain’s works in new novels of their own. Some have simply tried to pick up where Mark Twain’s stories left off. Others have retold all or parts of his stories, typically recasting his characters and story lines. In 2007, Clinch published a novel, *Finn*, which does neither. A backstory about Huck’s cruel father, Pap Finn, his book scrupulously adheres to the characters, events, and details of *Huckleberry Finn*, while fleshing out Huck’s father as a character and providing explanations for unanswered questions that Mark Twain’s novel raises. His essay for the present volume is an ingenious analysis of how he constructed his own novel to mesh with Mark Twain’s. It will open readers’ eyes to aspects of *Huckleberry Finn* they have probably never before considered and will also help readers to appreciate how a work of fiction, such as *Finn*, can be as valuable a tool as a work of traditional scholarship in understanding classic literature.

If there is one aspect of *Huckleberry Finn* on which virtually everyone agrees, it is probably the book’s humor. The novel is undeniably a funny book. One would almost have to be one of the old and dry mummies in Mark Twain’s *The Innocents Abroad* (1869) to read *Huckleberry Finn* without laughing at least occasionally. How humor works in the novel is the subject of Tracy Wuster’s essay, “‘How a body can see and don’t see at the same time’: Reading Humor in *Huckleberry Finn*.” A recognized authority on American humor and the author of a recent stout book on Mark Twain’s humor, Wuster explores what makes *Huckleberry Finn* funny and how its humor works to increase readers’ awareness of the novel’s important cultural issues. Wuster concludes that reading the book *as* humor can make it both clearer and more fun.

Wuster’s essay notes that *Huckleberry Finn*’s readers “must interpret the puzzling link between Mark Twain as an author of books and Huck Finn as an ostensibly ‘real’ person who was the subject of one of those books (*Tom Sawyer*) and who is now framed as the creator of the book they are reading.” What he is talking about, of course, is *metafiction*—which happens to be the subject of the next essay. John H. Davis’s “The Reluctant Author: Huck Finn’s Metafictional Partnership with Mark Twain” is a stunning roller-coaster ride through the truly puzzling links between Mark Twain’s and Huck Finn’s interconnected roles as joint authors of *Huckleberry Finn*. Davis is the kind of relentlessly thorough scholar who not only leaves no stones unturned but in the process squeezes every drop of blood from those same stones. Metafiction is a slippery kind of concept that at times seems to be built on circular arguments and ideas too nebulous to get a firm grip on. Davis drills deeply into the subject, building arguments that may make some readers feel they are in a hall of mirrors. However, careful readings of his essay will prove richly rewarding and leave readers with a fuller appreciation of the complexity of Mark Twain’s masterpiece.

In “Is *Huckleberry Finn* a Picaresque Novel?,” Robert C. Evans undertakes an exhaustive analysis of another complex aspect of *Huckleberry Finn*. As he explains, Mark Twain’s novel has long been regarded by some as America’s only true picaresque novel. To answer the question of whether that view may be true, he begins by defining “picaresque” and examining how the definitions have been applied to classic works of fiction, including Miguel de Cervantes’ famous seventeenth-century masterpiece, *Don Quixote*. When he goes on to show why *Don Quixote* not only might be dismissed as a true picaresque but also may be regarded as the “opposite” of a picaresque, it is clear that *Huckleberry Finn* is in for a rough ride. Drawing heavily on the work of Ulrich Wicks, a leading authority on picaresque writing, Evans then offers a point-by-point analysis of Mark Twain’s novel that builds toward a persuasive and satisfying conclusion.

In “Identity Switching in *Huckleberry Finn*,” Linda A. Morris turns toward a subject that readers will find both easy to grasp and

a great deal of fun. A frequent effect of reading an essay that makes a strong argument about an aspect of Mark Twain's novel is that it may leave one thinking its subject is the single most important theme of the novel. Such is the impression that Morris's fascinating essay may make on readers. Anyone familiar with the novel knows that Huck goes through multiple identity switches, adopting such alternative names as "Sarah (Mary) Williams," "George Peters," "Charles William Allbright," "George Jackson," "Adolphus," and even "Tom Sawyer." Morris's essay discusses all these and Huck's other identity changes, while also making us fully aware of all the other characters undergoing identity switching—and there are many of them. All this is fun, to be sure, but Morris also makes a serious point about what the identity switching says about the characters—especially Huck—themselves.

If the next essay is not at least as much fun as the identity-switching essay, it may well be regarded as the most provocative in this volume. In "'Pow-wows of Cussing': Profanity and Euphemistic Variants in *Huckleberry Finn*," Sarah Fredericks (no relation to Sarah Williams) examines Mark Twain's use of profanity—which she describes as one of his favorite vices—in the broader context of his life and all his writings. She carefully categorizes "foul language" as it was defined during his time and looks for patterns in his usage of it throughout his writing career, all the while paying particular attention to the language of *Huckleberry Finn*. Along the way, she also examines numerous specific examples of Mark Twain's saltiest language and discusses some of struggles he went through to find a balance between his personal inclinations to cuss and what his reading public would accept.

Huck's concluding words in *Huckleberry Finn*, expressing his fear of being "sivilized" by Aunt Sally Phelps, are among the novel's best-known lines. In "Why Huck Finn Can't Stand Being Sivilized," Philip Bader offers one of the most thorough examinations yet published of what "civilization" means to Huck. Not surprisingly, much of what Huck sees in it is violence, cruelty, and hypocrisy. Indeed, Bader's essay makes such a strong case for rejecting civilization that readers may find themselves reconsidering their

own views on the subject. Given the sheer power of *Huckleberry Finn*'s indictment of civilization—as Mark Twain himself saw it—one of the most extraordinary things about Huck, as Bader notes, is the boy's steadfast refusal to respond to the cruelty and violence of others with cruelty and violence of his own. Readers are thus apt to come away from this essay with an even greater respect for what a remarkable character Huck Finn is.

Another dominant theme in *Huckleberry Finn*, and one that has received far less attention than it merits, is the role of family and parenting. Incomplete and dysfunctional families pervade Mark Twain's fiction, and Huck Finn has one of the most incomplete and dysfunctional families of all. His father, Pap, is a brutal drunk who appears to have been absent throughout much of Huck's childhood, and we know nothing about his unnamed mother, except that she was illiterate and died sometime in the past. Pap Finn dies early in *Huckleberry Finn*, making Huck a full orphan, but Huck does not know his father is dead until the conclusion of the novel. Meanwhile, he lives in a series of temporary homes—including the raft he shares with Jim—that provide surrogate families. In “‘Huck Finn, He Hain't Got No Family’: Home, Family, and Parenting in *Huckleberry Finn*,” John Bird builds a persuasive case that a central and neglected theme of the novel is Huck's constant quest for a permanent home and family. As Philip Bader's essay points out, the novel ends with Huck expressing his fear of being civilized by Sally Phelps and his wish to flee. Bird's essay, however, offers a different interpretation of the novel's ending that is certain to surprise most readers.

Hugh H. Davis, a high school teacher with considerable experience in interesting young people in literature, addresses an original subject likely to appeal especially to the young in this volume's last essay, “‘It's Tom Sawyer!’ (No it ain't . . . it's Huck Finn!).” Adapted from a remark made by Aunt Sally Phelps when she mistakes Huck for her nephew Tom in chapter 32 of *Huckleberry Finn*, the essay's title is an allusion to how Tom and Huck are often confused in readers' eyes, thanks largely to popular culture. Davis's densely rich essay explores how preconceptions of Tom and Huck

as characters are molded by stage, film, and television adaptations as well as by advertisements, toys, memorabilia, and illustrations. In addition to making a powerful case for Tom and Huck as popular cultural icons, the essay should impress readers with the sheer volume of its consistently fascinating evidence.

The final section of the book, “Resources,” contains a substantial bibliography and a detailed chronology of Mark Twain’s life that emphasizes dates relevant to *Huckleberry Finn*. There are also notes on the volume’s editor and contributors as well as a detailed index.

Animating the Unsaid: Between the Lines in *Huckleberry Finn*

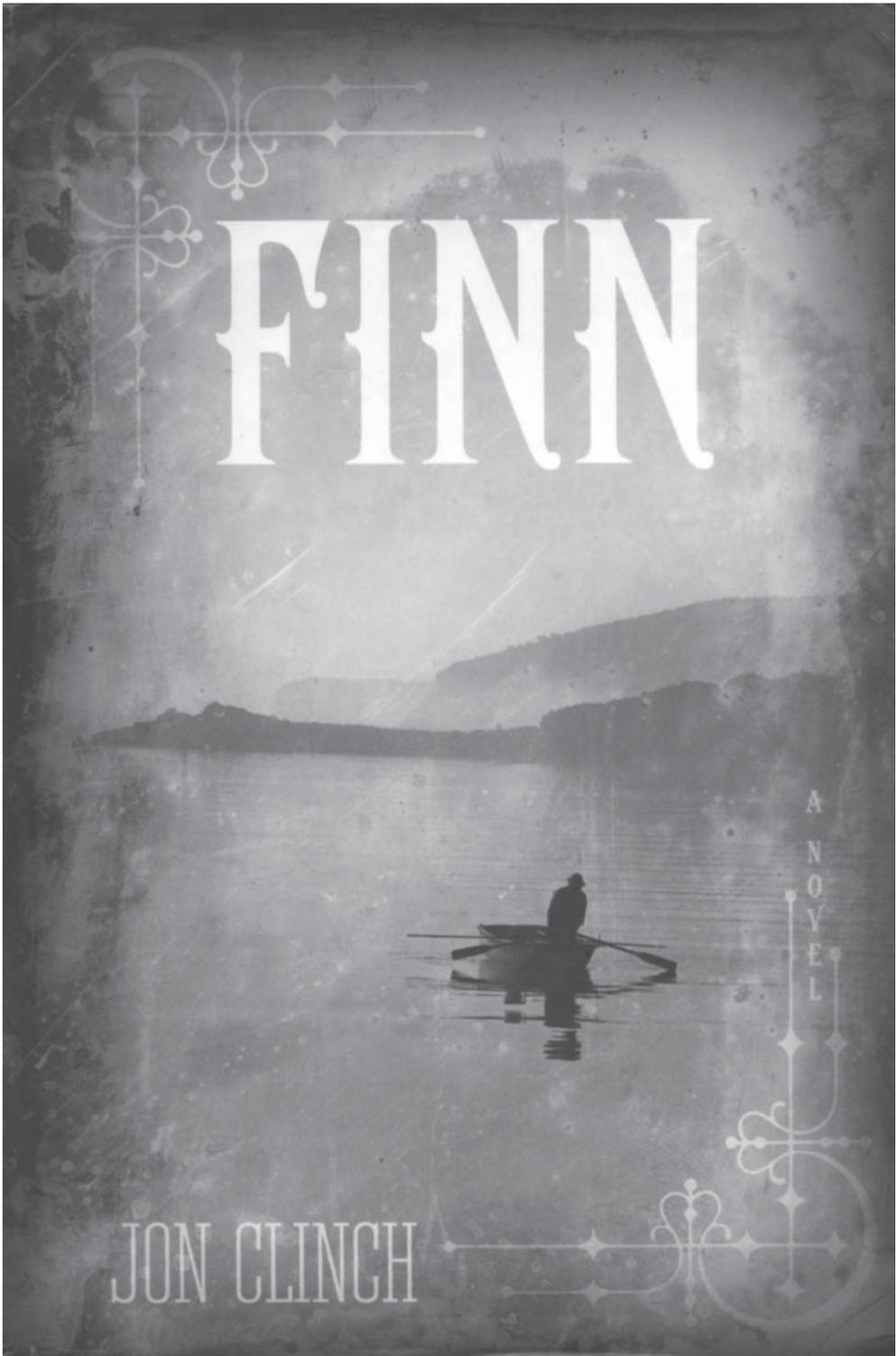
Jon Clinch

A few years ago I had the opportunity to take an unusual look at *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Inasmuch as Mark Twain's most important novel has been examined from most every direction, the idea of anyone's taking "an unusual look" is probably suspect on its face. Yet the world is always full of new angles and new possibilities, especially concerning a subject as deep and rewarding as *Huckleberry Finn*.

My project was the writing of a novel called *Finn* (2007), which set out to be "the dark, secret history of Huckleberry Finn's father." Essentially, the aim of the novel was to explore some important things that Twain suggested but left unsaid in *Huckleberry Finn*. Developing it called for a reading of Mark Twain's novel that was both close and expansive, an approach that instead of being critical or scholarly was engaged and deeply sympathetic. It would be the willful act of a reader prepared to enter Twain's world via both the text on the page and the text left unwritten.

As an act of sympathetic imagination, such a reading of *Huckleberry Finn* could not focus directly on Twain's technique or methods. Quite the contrary: my intent was to be captivated only by the narrative, immersed completely in Huck's story as if it had actually taken place and could be discovered in full by a kind of visionary belief.

I had reasons. First, I needed to avoid the trap of *reimagining* Pap Finn. He'd already been fully imagined; to alter him so as to suit some purpose of my own would be to violate the original material and dishonor Twain. Not that that kind of thing is not done all the time, of course. Gregory Maguire's popular 1995 novel *Wicked: The Life and Times of the Wicked Witch of the West*, which inspired a smash-hit Broadway musical, for example, gives us a misunderstood and sympathetic Wicked Witch of the West. Could someone have



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made Pap Finn into the wronged hero of his son's story? Certainly. But it would have perpetrated an injustice upon the memory of Mark Twain. (We shall let L. Frank Baum's defenders make their own stand, should they ever be so inclined.)

Second, insisting that behind Huck's naïve and perhaps unreliable telling of his own story in Twain's novel is a cohesive reality with conditions and consequences of its own provides a useful way to understand the narrative as Huck gives it to us. No story ever told is complete, after all. And by doing *Huckleberry Finn* the honor of taking it for Gospel (however transmuted by the voice of a child with objectives of his own), we gain a lens for interpreting not only what is on the page, but what is not.

Third, it has always seemed to me that while Twain left holes in Pap's story, he also left a number of clues with which we might fill them in. Consider the scene in chapter 9 in which Huck and Jim find Pap's body in a floating house:

[Jim] went, and bent down and looked, and says: "It's a dead man. Yes, indeedy; naked, too. He's ben shot in de back. I reck'n he's ben dead two er three days. Come in, Huck, but doan' look at his face—it's too gashly."

I didn't look at him at all. Jim throwed some old rags over him, but he needn't done it; I didn't want to see him. There was heaps of old greasy cards scattered around over the floor, and old whisky bottles, and a couple of masks made out of black cloth; and all over the walls was the ignorantest kind of words and pictures made with charcoal. There was two old dirty calico dresses, and a sun-bonnet, and some women's underclothes hanging against the wall, and some men's clothing, too. We put the lot into the canoe—it might come good. There was a boy's old speckled straw hat on the floor; I took that, too. And there was a bottle that had had milk in it, and it had a rag stopper for a baby to suck. We would a took the bottle, but it was broke. There was a seedy old chest, and an old hair trunk with the hinges broke. They stood open, but there warn't nothing left in them that was any account. The way things was scattered about we reckoned the people left in a hurry, and warn't fixed so as to carry off most of their stuff.

If we trust Twain completely, and we must, then none of those objects—not the scrawled words and pictures, not the black cloth masks, not the speckled straw hat—are in that room by accident. And even though Huck does not grasp that the body in the corner is that of his father, we must ultimately reckon with the objects surrounding it if we mean to chart the course of Pap’s life and death.

A Machine for Constructing Stories

In constructing *The Castle of Crossed Destinies* (1969; trans. 1977), Italo Calvino arranged and rearranged a deck of tarot cards as a means of generating his book’s multiple narratives, letting the cards function as what he called “a machine for constructing stories.” In the course of imagining *Finn*, I set out to use the contents of Pap’s death room in much the same way.

The objects present at the scene of Pap’s death in *Huckleberry Finn* led me to some unexpected places and sometimes even forged connections with other bits of Huck’s narrative. The crime suggested by the pair of black masks, for example, led to a black woman and her child who serve as doubles for Huck and his mother, as well as to an encounter with the scoundrel known as the King in his life beyond the pages of *Huckleberry Finn*. The broken wooden leg conjured a fatal encounter with a Philadelphia lawyer, representative of the lost heights of Pap’s family background. The words and pictures graven on the walls became a combination confessional and roadmap of Pap’s guilty conscience (chapter 8 and elsewhere). And the boy’s speckled straw hat grew into a sad memento and fateful clue to the story of Pap’s bloody death.

That these and other objects led where they did is anything but a tribute to my own imagination. It is a statement on the power inherent in the selective authority of fiction.

Leaving In, Leaving Out

Fiction accumulates power by convincing us that it is true, and one way that it does so is by telling not *everything*, but only *the crucial things*. Thus it lures the reader into making an investment of his own, supplying lesser details, helping to tell the story as it moves

forward. In *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, Twain did an especially masterful job of leaving things out. Pap, for example, appears only sporadically in the text—and is gone entirely by the close of chapter 9—and yet he manages to remain in our minds even during his absences. Huck is obsessed with him, naturally, and mentions him often when he is not on stage in person. But it is more than Huck’s response that drives our interest in him. He is the first hint we have that the world in which our beloved narrator exists is no carefree idyll. Pap is vividly and stinkingly alive, depraved and debauched, a figure of unknowable evil and bottomless threat. By portraying him so—and by granting him life in the way that great literature can—Twain makes his absences as compelling as his appearances.

Where has he been when he materializes in Huck’s room at the widow’s in chapter 5? Where does he go when he leaves? These are not idle questions, not for Huckleberry Finn and not for us, since wherever Pap may be, he is forever haunting the margins of this book.

Twain gave us one more notably absent character in *Huckleberry Finn*: the boy’s mother. She is mentioned only once, when Pap describes her during that scene at the widow’s, and we know her only as illiterate and dead. That is it. And yet Huck is so real, and Pap is so real, that we wonder in spite of ourselves what kind of woman she might have been. Those two questions—“Where does Pap go?” and “Who was Huck’s mother?”—were among those that *Finn* sought to answer.

Huck himself, as a child and as a first-person narrator, can be a source for only so much. First, his knowledge is limited. Second, he may well be concealing things or at least coloring them. His voice itself—humorous, naïve, abundantly tolerant—actively softens any sequence he narrates, however grim or brutal its content may be. I suspect that on Twain’s part, this was in some measure a means to excuse his own inability—given the Victorian culture of his time and his presumed audience of boys—to recreate on the page the kind of violence and cruelty known to him from his childhood in the Mississippi valley. Consider this, from his *Notebooks & Journals* of the time: “I can’t say, ‘They cut his head off, or stabbed him, etc.’”

& describe the blood & the agony in his face” (notebook 18, page 312). Neither could, nor would, Huck.

A novelist writing today faces no such strictures, of course. So other, more explicit, readings of the events good-naturedly narrated by Huck become possible.

Filling in the Details: A Four-Part Approach

As I strove to fill in the gaps—both in Pap’s appearances during *Huckleberry Finn* and in his larger life story—it became clear that at least four different approaches were available to me. In retrospect, they derive from choices made by Twain as he constructed the novel, particularly as the result of Huck’s character and first-person narration. Let’s group them as matters of limitation, naiveté, shading, and concealment and take a closer look at examples of each.

Limitation:

When any first-person narrator tells his story, the events that he can credibly describe (to the extent that his narration is itself credible) are limited to those that he has personally witnessed. It is perilous enough to trust him on these matters, without extending our trust to things he has only heard about second-hand. In Huck’s case, it is particularly risky to trust anything he may have heard—even verbatim—from his manipulative miscreant of a father. Thus Pap’s adventures in town *minus Huck*—the encounter with the black professor, for example (chapter 6), or his attempted rehabilitation at the hands of the new judge (chapter 5)—provide enormous opportunities for development.

My method was always the same: to trust the general outline of the story as told by or to Huck (new judge, fresh clothes, broken arm; black professor, voting rights, fury) while dramatizing the material so as to explore particulars of character. In the first case, a fuller exploration of Finn’s overnight at the house of the new judge provides a chance to contrast civilized child-rearing methods with his more primitive ways; to work out a fully satisfying version of the broken-arm story that Huck can only telegraph; and to present a close-up description of frontier medicine at work—setting the

stage for a similar but more brutal scene to follow toward the book's end. In the second case, putting Finn himself face to face with the black professor lets us witness at close range his ignorance, his arrogance, his entitlement, and his dangerously wounded dignity. It also provides a set of interrelated links among Finn's desperate poverty, his constant engagement with the legal and penal systems, and the economic and legal underpinnings of black/white relations in slave states vs. free.

Here's the entirety of Huck's version, narrated at second-hand by Pap himself (chapter 6).

There was a free nigger there from Ohio—a mulatter, most as white as a white man. He had the whitest shirt on you ever see, too, and the shiniest hat; and there ain't a man in that town that's got as fine clothes as what he had; and he had a gold watch and chain, and a silver-headed cane . . . They said he was a p'fessor in a college, and could talk all kinds of languages, and knowed everything. And that ain't the wust. They said he could vote when he was at home. Well, that let me out. Thinks I, what is the country a-coming to? It was 'lection day, and I was just about to go and vote myself if I warn't too drunk to get there; but when they told me there was a State in this country where they'd let that nigger vote, I drawed out. I says I'll never vote agin. Them's the very words I said; they all heard me; and the country may rot for all me—I'll never vote agin as long as I live.

Here's part of the expanded version from chapter 6 of *Finn*, in which Pap questions the black professor's white companion:

“New in town?” says Finn from his seat by the fencepost. “Your friend I mean.” Looking straight at the white man and the white man only, with an intensity that makes a show of excluding the other.

The white man has been so long so far beyond contact with an individual like Finn that he accepts his question without reservation. . . . “Why, yes,” he says, and again: “Why, yes indeed.”

“Thought so.”

“You fixing to sell him?”

“I beg your pardon?”

“Not that he’s likely to fetch much.” Here he permits his gaze to wander over the black man’s regally slim figure. “Not by the look of him.”

“Sir.”

“Ain’t nothing worth any less than a puny nigger. Other’n a puny nigger in a ten-dollar suit, putting on airs.”

“Come along, professor,” says the white man to the black. “We’re late for your introductions at the church.” He takes his associate by the elbow but finds him immovable, for the professor has been turned to stone by Finn’s effrontery. He spreads wide his legs and cocks his head to one side and leans forward upon his cane, transfixed by their interlocutor as he would be by a Siberian tiger in a circus parade.

“You mind your master,” says Finn with a dismissive wave of his hand. “Git along now, boy.”

Naiveté:

If he is like most children, we can count on Huck to overestimate his own capabilities. He is certainly resourceful; we see that particularly in his escape from the shack where his father holds him prisoner (chapter 7). Yet there is a self-aware, Tom Sawyeresque theatricality to the crime that he fakes to cover his tracks: the submerged sack of rocks, the bloodied axe, the sacrificed pig. He takes pride in it all, though. And he persuades himself (and thus probably his readers) that the affair is a complete success.

Here’s Huck’s self-narrated version, from chapter 5:

I took the axe and smashed in the door. I beat it and hacked it considerable a-doing it. I fetched the pig in, and took him back nearly to the table and hacked into his throat with the axe, and laid him down on the ground to bleed . . . Well, next I took an old sack and put

a lot of big rocks in it—all I could drag—and I started it from the pig, and dragged it to the door and through the woods down to the river and dumped it in, and down it sunk, out of sight. You could easy see that something had been dragged over the ground . . .

Well, last I pulled out some of my hair, and blooded the axe good, and stuck it on the back side, and slung the axe in the corner. Then I took up the pig and held him to my breast with my jacket (so he couldn't drip) till I got a good piece below the house and then dumped him into the river.

If, however, we believe fully in the Pap that Twain has given us—his innate cunning, along with the wilderness skills of a man who draws his living from the river—we ought to be less certain about the success of Huck's charade. Thus in *Finn* (chapter 6), Huck's father instantly detects the many fabrications of the crime scene, and although he draws a tainted conclusion based on his longstanding hatred for Judge Thatcher and the Widow Douglas, he gets closer to the truth than Huck in his innocence would ever presume.

When Finn returns to the squatter's shack, he finds the place transformed by violence:

“You Huck.”

No answer comes from within or without, and the single room lies empty not just of his son but of his own every earthly possession. Food and fishlines and matches, skillet and coffeepot and jug. All of them gone. Only the axe remains, bloodied all over and with a bit of hair stuck to the back of it as if from a blow to the boy's head, and from this significantly ostentatious detail he deduces not Huck's actual plan for counterfeiting his own murder and stealing away under cover of it, but a different and more cunning plan altogether—this one contrived by Judge Thatcher and the widow Douglas.

“They think they can steal him that easy,” he says to himself as he rubs the axehead clean with the heel of his hand. “They think I'll give him up for dead like a goddamned beast.” He plucks away the tuft of hair and brushes it off on his pantleg.

His instincts serve him well, drawing him onward to discover and discount the rest of Huck's planted evidence.

He walks the path to the riverbank and discerns there in waist-deep water all he needs for confirmation: A sack, a perfectly good and useful sack, filled with rocks by that wasteful Thatcher or some other in his employ and drawn across the grass to the water as if Huck's body itself had been there dragged. He vows to deny Judge Thatcher the satisfaction of misusing his property, and wades in to recover it less its burden of rocks. Sitting to wring it out upon the bank he catches sight of further sign, footprints in the dirt and a drop or two of blood, and he scouts down along the waterside until he comes upon marks where someone looks to have nearly lost his balance throwing some other thing into the water, some other thing that proves to be a half-grown pig with its throat cut, nearly bled-out and still foggily abloom and staining the Mississippi a vague dark red. . . . He wallows it out and skins it and cleans it with his clasp-knife, and he pledges that none shall have a bite of it save himself. Surely not that son of his who probably went off without a fight and is now living high on some other hog at either the judge's table or the widow's.

Shading:

As noted earlier, the innocence and childish joy in Huck's voice colors every aspect of the book—including, necessarily, reports about his relationship and interactions with his father. Thus it is easy—and perhaps inevitable, given the difficulty of telling the worst about your only living relative—for Huck to narrate even the scene where his father returns home drunk and furious (chapter 6) as a kind of slapstick comedy:

Pap was agoing on so he never noticed where his old limber legs was taking him to, so he went head over heels over the tub of salt pork and barked both shins, and the rest of his speech was all the hottest kind of language—mostly hove at the nigger and the govment, though he give the tub some, too, all along, here and there. He hopped around the cabin considerable, first on one leg and then on the other, holding first one shin and then the other one, and at last he let out with his left foot all of a sudden and fetched the tub a rattling kick. But it

Chronology of Mark Twain's Life and Legacy_____

Mark Twain is the subject of each entry, except as otherwise stated.

Nov. 30, 1835 Samuel Langhorne Clemens—later better known as Mark Twain—is born in the northeastern Missouri village of Florida. The sixth of seven children of John Marshall and Jane Lampton Clemens, he will outlive all his siblings, his wife, and three of his own four children.

1839–1853 Lives in Missouri's Mississippi River town of Hannibal, on which he will later model the fictional St. Petersburg of *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry Finn*. After leaving school at eleven, he does printing work for local newspapers, including his brother Orion's papers, and writes occasional sketches and essays.

Mar. 24, 1847 John Marshall Clemens's death leaves his family impoverished.

1853–1856 Sam Clemens leaves Missouri to work as a printer in St. Louis, Philadelphia, and New York; after returning to the Midwest, he does similar work for Orion in southern Iowa.

**May 1857-
Apr. 1861** Spends two years training as a steamboat pilot on the Lower Mississippi—mostly under Horace Bixby—and two more years as a licensed pilot.

June 13, 1858 Steamboat *Pennsylvania* blows up south of Memphis, severely injuring his younger brother, Henry, who dies eight days later.

Apr. 12, 1861 Civil War begins when Confederates fire on Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina. Clemens, who is

R. Kent Rasmussen is the recipient of numerous writing and editing awards and was honored as a Legacy Scholar in the *Mark Twain Journal* in 2015. He is a retired reference-book editor whose involvement in Mark Twain studies is actually his third career. After graduating from the University of California in Berkeley, he earned a doctorate in African history at UCLA, where he briefly taught. During the 1970s, he published four books on African history. He later became associate editor of the Marcus Garvey Papers at UCLA. While seeking the sources of two Mark Twain quotes in 1990, he read *Roughing It*, which he found so compelling he determined to read “all” of Mark Twain and compile a quote collection. He later achieved that goal with *The Quotable Mark Twain* (1997). Meanwhile, he wrote the book for which he is best known—the award-winning *Mark Twain A to Z* (1995; rev. as *Critical Companion to Mark Twain*, 2007).

As *A to Z* entered production, Rasmussen began his next career, editing reference books for Salem Press, then based in Pasadena, California. Over the next sixteen years, he worked on scores of multivolume reference works on literature, history, government, and other subjects. He also wrote dozens of reference articles and reviewed audiobooks for *Library Journal*. Through those years, he continued to write about Mark Twain and other subjects. The present volume is his twelfth Mark Twain book and his second in the Critical Insights series. Others include *Mark Twain’s Book for Bad Boys and Girls* (1995), *Mark Twain for Kids* (2004), *Bloom’s How to Write About Mark Twain* (2008), *Critical Insights: Mark Twain* (2011), *Dear Mark Twain: Letters from His Readers* (2013), *Mark Twain and Youth: Studies in His Life and Writings* (2016, coedited with Kevin Mac Donnell), and *Mark Twain for Dog Lovers* (2016). Rasmussen has also contributed introductions and notes to Penguin Classics editions of *Tom Sawyer* (2014), *Huckleberry Finn* (2014), and Mark Twain’s *Autobiographical Writings* (2012). His next major projects include coauthoring a book on Mark Twain film adaptations with Mark Dawidziak.