

Mark Twain's Autobiographies: Which Was the Truth?

by

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Abstract

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Mark Twain's *Autobiography* is an unheralded early work of literary Modernism in a genre which until now has no recognized siblings and for this reason alone deserves recognition and examination. In addition, it is a major work by one of America's most praised and recognized authors which has not even at this date been published entirely even though it had been excerpted, truncated and reordered by four different editors even before the University of California at Berkeley commenced what is promised to be a complete and authorized edition. The different editions deserve examination in light of what the multiple editorial decisions imply about a modernistic autobiography in terms of its recognition as being modernistic. The very existence of the different editions also embodies implications regarding the nature of modernistic literature, such as editorial and public preferences and modernistic literature's form. The plural nature of the autobiographies in the title refers to the fragments and abortive starts, both fictional and non-fictional, produced by the author through a period of greater than three decades in his artistic struggle to determine a valid form and content for his autobiography as he conceived it must be.

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Mark Twain's Autobiographies: Which Was the Truth?

Introduction

The thesis of this dissertation is, first, that Mark Twain employed in his autobiography many of the major characteristics of literary modernism and did so before most of the founding works of modernism appeared, and those facts merit recognition and appreciation which the *Autobiography* has not received. Those major characteristics include composition through the process of association with a result resembling stream of consciousness, narrative fragmentation, subjectivity esteemed as the truest means of portraying human character and insertion of multiple forms of media within the narrative. Twain's strategic intention in using these characteristics was to enable the reader to perceive the emotion and thought of the narrator, Twain, at the long-past moment of the incident he is recounting in the present, thereby bringing memory to life in maximum vividness. Also, because his stated intention was to constantly bring past and present face to face, past memories are conjoined and contrasted with realizations and reflections of his present surroundings and emotions. In contrast to most autobiographies, Twain's is consciously about the past in relationship with the narrator's continuing present, lending a modernistic sense of the permutations of temporality. In employing these characteristics of literary modernism, Twain created his autobiography at the prompting of the same nineteenth century conditions – determinism, Darwin, Freud, new technology and media forms and awareness of human cultural diversity – that prompted the rise of canonized literary modernism.

A concise description of how the *Autobiography* uses such characteristics is to state that Twain expresses a concept of life and time as perceptions of human thought rather than manifestations of material reality. Because the author composed most of his work by speaking aloud to an audience, the work is a performance, which is appropriate to a literary artist who grew wealthy through his lectures. However, the degree of subjectivity expressed in the recollection and the process of association used to determine the subject matter make the work a supreme product of human interiority. Memory and the

passing present coexist in importance; human memory is a construct rather than photographic and is shaped by emotion as much as fact.

At the core of Twain's autobiographical form and manifesto was a belief that his life had no governing narrative but was instead expressed most honestly in portrait form, comprised of vignettes, segues, and subjective memories and opinions, presented in the order of occurrence within his mind over a period of years. The *Autobiography* is therefore not a sequence of events but a record of the play of Twain's changing mind, as was Twain's intention. Therefore this dissertation is both an analysis and a biography of a literary work which aimed at portraying its writer's mind. It required more than thirty years and multiple failed attempts for the author to conceive a way to tell his life consistent with his theory of autobiography. Upon finishing this dissertation, the reader should understand Mark Twain's personality and method of creation better, which he would have said was a goal in reading his autobiography since his personality and method of creation were equally and consciously as important to the author as any assembly of facts.

The second and subordinate strand of the thesis is the contention that Twain's autobiography is a logical last step in a lifetime of finished works and false starts which all abounded in problems with narrative structure, theme and tone. The *Autobiography* exists with Twain's other books as part of a continuum. It is an oddity, but also a concept of author-recorded life previously unexplored in the genre. Also, as a resolution of a life-long struggle with narrative structure and completion, it is a flawed artistic triumph. At last, Twain did not need a comprehensive plan or an ending.

The methodology of this dissertation will be to regard the *Autobiography* as a constructed object, like a piece of architecture, in consonance with Twain's own statement in his preface, "I will construct a text" (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 220). It will consist of dissection of the text, its conception, materials and execution. The chapters address in order of discussion (1) Twain's evolving plan; (2) reconstructions by four different editors and one scholarly institution; (3) Twain's preliminary pieces; (4) Twain's major construction; and (5) significant parallels between the *Autobiography* and other works by Twain. Twain obliged future students of his autobiographical endeavors with a plethora of statements

about his motives, ambitions, justification and reservations. Explicit statements exist in interviews, letters and the *Autobiography* itself, and implicit evidence lies in Twain's other works. Therefore Twain's written and spoken words will be the primary source. Critical reaction to the *Autobiography*, autobiographical theory, and studies of human memory will be treated as they reflect upon the work itself.

When Bernard DeVoto began his study of Twain's fragments, he wrote that his findings were "essentially speculative," but his reference was "to demonstrable fact wherever possible" (*Mark Twain at Work* 106). This dissertation makes many conjectures also, and hopefully it makes an equal number of references to demonstrable fact. The conjectures are made in the spirit that conjectures often lead to research producing substantiation, even if by other researchers.

The significance of this dissertation is, first, that it attempts to gain credit for Twain as a writer who partially solved his own literary and philosophical problems by his creation of an experimental and open-ended work within an established and largely conventional genre. Furthermore, Twain's work has never been recognized fully for its use of form and devices as a predecessor to the twentieth century's prime literary movement. Twain was not a modernist in the sense of James Joyce, but he employed and understood the effect of multiple characteristics of modernism. The significance of this assertion lies in recognizing that Twain as a man and writer was moved to the schemes and form of his autobiography by the same forces that moved other writers to modernism.

Secondly, study of Twain's autobiography is significant because it is a predecessor to autobiographical practices today in terms of use of subjectivity and eschewal of master narrative. Twain grasped that his portrait of himself through words required a form that would encompass memories constantly emerging and subsiding among feelings and thoughts of the present minute. The diary form, with the all-important feature of sympathetic listeners, was how Twain contrived, in lieu of a running camera, to record himself. A running camera, in fact, might be less subjective than the diary form he chose because a camera would capture elements of performance, such as tone of voice, pauses and facial expressions, but a running camera is ultimately an objective machine. It records the externals before it. Twain's chosen form, however, records his interior in motion more accurately than would a camera.

Thirdly, Twain's autobiography is significant as a subject for textual scholarship. Although the Mark Twain Project of the University of California at Berkeley published the first of three planned authoritative volumes in 2010, no complete edition has ever been published. It's been truncated, grouped by subject, grouped by chronology of the author's life and grouped by excerpts in magazines. Personal editorial conceptions of style and concerns with publishing viability created these incomplete editions, and each editor left marks upon the original material complicating future efforts to locate the author's original intent. Furthermore, Twain's contradictory marginal injunctions about publication dates in the distant future for some portions of his dictations and his requests to insert letters, newspapers clippings and entire manuscripts within the dictations has hindered until now the creation of a comprehensive edition because the most obedient editor, even if gifted with adequate financial resources, has many decisions to make about indeterminate issues.

Fourthly, study of Twain's autobiography is significant because it forecasts many elements of twentieth and twenty-first century culture. It was the most public of autobiographies before, during and after composition. Newspapers trumpeted Twain's autobiographical intentions, complete with tantalizing, hyperbolic Twainian quotations, years before the major labor of composition. In other words, the *Autobiography* was a predecessor to the age of advertising, hype and performance, in which consumers are primed for products long before their appearance. In addition, subjects within the *Autobiography*, such as U.S. imperial adventures and the worship of wealth and celebrity, sound like Twain is alive and dictating today.

One of Twain's first principles was that his autobiography would never be finished. Then, near his life's close, he furnished an ending, the use of which he left to the discretion of his future first editor. This contradiction is a summing up in miniature of the themes and execution of the total work. Biographer Fred Kaplan said Twain was probably the only great writer with no regard for Aristotelian unities in his work (graduate school address 2003). In his autobiography, Twain claimed by statement and method that it was his life that lacked those unities as well.

This belief became the theme that allowed Twain to compose the bulk of this work. He had written short autobiographical pieces over preceding decades, but until 1906 had never been able to envision the shape the whole work should take. He made a major advance in 1904 with the discovery that he needed to talk his life out to a sympathetic listener and talk of momentary interests and memories. Twain thus decided upon a fragmentary, non-linear form with listeners. Thus the *Autobiography* is not so much like a person recording a narrative as it is a man apparently thinking out loud and performing. This expressed best Twain's conception of a portrait of his life.

Life, Twain believed, was not a story. Life is what happens in the mind moment to moment, day to day, in an endless number of segues, breaks, returns to old subjects and promises to return. It was a method employing techniques of association and stream of consciousness that would be employed within a decade by Joyce. Twain claimed that his life, any life, is not reducible to words and acts, people met and sights seen. Human life is, rather, lived in the thoughts and feelings of the mind, the succession and re-occurrence of image and emotion, and this realm exists in size beside conventional autobiographical renditions of a human life as a continent exists beside a calla lily.

In acting upon these precepts, Twain was intuiting another foundation stone of literary modernism, subjectivity. He was claiming that any search for objectivity as a means of relating his life was fruitless. Acted upon, this meant that Twain had grounds for claiming as he did that he was composing history's most honest autobiography. The honesty of a person's life story told by the person, Twain implies, is honest insofar as it portrays how that person feels, perceives and remembers, rather than through an assemblage of actions and events. Portrayal of sincerely expressed feelings and thoughts are the measure of honesty in this conception, even if those feelings and thoughts are based upon faulty memories or biased. As Twain stated in a letter of 1888, "a man's private thought can never be a lie; what he thinks, is to him the truth, always" (Paine, ed. *Mark Twain's Letters* v.II, 498).

Some critics have grasped Twain's performance as an unreliable narrator and credited him for being something more than Munchausen. His first biographer and autobiographical auditor, Albert Paine, wrote that Twain's "capricious memory made history difficult even when as in his so-called 'Autobiography'

his effort was in the direction of fact” (Paine *Mark Twain* v.I, xli). Twain’s great nephew Samuel Charles, who edited a book in defense of his father against Twain’s charges of business ineptitude, wrote, “Like Pilate, [Twain] was puzzled by the problem ‘What is truth?’ What came to him from the inside was as real as what came from the outside” (Twain *Mark Twain, Business Man* 399). And James Cox wrote that Paine, who read the documents of Twain’s life, solicited recollections of Twain’s life and listened to Twain’s frequently rearranged account of that life, “realized the profound element of insight harbored in the heart of that unreliability” (Paine *Mark Twain* v.I, xxvi).

Chapter One

The Builder's Plan

Any examination of Mark Twain's plans for his *Autobiography* risks making the same large assumption most autobiographers do. They select and arrange the infinite moments of their lives in order to present, from the present, a coherent story. Coherence being essential to this examination, the most defining characteristics of Twain's plan are here enumerated and detailed. However, emphasis must be placed on the evolution of the characteristics, for no plan existed at the outset. The defining characteristics were arrived at through incremental steps and changes which occurred in a sequence and settings too random to constitute a plan. It is more analogous to an evolutionary process in which characteristics develop without a guiding intelligence. Twain exerted at best an inconsistent guiding intelligence. He sometimes understood analytically what he formed and directed. More typically he was happily surprised to discover the tool of a characteristic developed through past experiment and waiting for present use.

This haphazard method of foray, retrenchment, and alteration often occurred publicly, as Twain communicated his ideas in letters and interviews years before his major labor commenced. Having decided the *Autobiography* would be published posthumously, he could change its scope or objectives and do so out loud, thus generating publicity and satisfying his eternally ravenous hunger for an audience. Twain was not like Joseph Mitchell's Joe Gould, who spoke endlessly about a never-to-be-found book he was writing. Twain worked at his autobiography sporadically for more than three decades and produced thousands of manuscript and typescript pages. When Twain spoke or wrote about his project, he was communicating his then-present thoughts and struggles about its form and content. A typical example of this struggle occurs in an interview given to the *Buffalo Express* in 1899. It is worth quoting at length in order to portray Twain's frustration, changing ambitions, and interest in literary

experimentation:

There isn't a living soul, so far as I can discover, who can understand my purpose. My best friends don't grasp the idea. I begin to think even my family don't quite understand me. You couldn't get the idea either. Nobody could...I don't use any big words...and yet I suppose I have read comments about it in 50 English and American papers, and not one of 'em seemed to know what I was driving at. The difference between what I am writing and the ordinary biography is as marked as between an ordinary flat photograph and one of those - what-d'ye-call-'em - cinematograph pictures [motion pictures]. Biography is a patchwork of flat photographs, each of them giving the prejudiced view of some particular observer.... Along comes the biographer to patch all of these prejudiced views together, and, lo, he, too, is prejudiced. The cinematograph picture, on the other hand, shows the man complete, around and in action. Now I'm writing on this book...just as if I were writing about people I had known 100 years ago, and as if they and their children were buried. I'm writing as much as possible as if time had smoothed down all my prejudices; as if I'd got far enough away from my subject to see it in the proper perspective. Yes, I'm writing as if I were Rip Van Winkle, and as if the thing I remembered as having happened yesterday had really happened 100 years ago. [Twain isn't aware the two preceding sentences contradict each other. The first asserts Twain's view will be complete and considered, like a historian's view might. The second sentence implies Twain wishes to bring the distant past into the present with immediacy of detail and emotional subjectivity. During his dictations with Albert Paine, beginning in 1906, Twain tacked closer to the ambitions in the second sentence, modifying his 1899 words by continually contrasting vivid memories with present circumstances so as to emphasize his process of recollection was part of his ongoing life.] I'm not going to write autobiography. The man has yet to be born who could write the truth about himself. Autobiography is always interesting, but howsoever true the facts may be, its interpretation of them must be taken with a great deal of allowance. Let me see if I can't make a kind of parallel that will show one side of my idea. Supposing there was a shoemaker who lived in Stratford-on-

Avon in Shakespeare's time. Suppose the shoemaker...concluded that he would entertain himself by setting down every night for his own amusement, and not for anybody else to read, his observations of the people who came in his shop, made a record of the things they did and said that seemed to him significant of the time in which he lived. He would have something in about the saddler and the baker and the candlestick maker, and might also have something about a man named Shakespeare, who lived in town and was said to have some sort of a reputation in London, but who wasn't considered as anything extraordinary by the townspeople who had always known him...would probably find when he had this book written that this man Shakespeare occupied an unexpected amount of space in it, not because he was as important as some of the town dignitaries, but because he seemed to say brighter things....[Twain means his autobiography will find its own scale of values through what the future reader deems important or memorable, not through the author's valuation.] Just think, if the meanest, most insignificant man in all the town in Shakespeare's day were to walk out on the streets of London this morning with his memory as fresh as if Shakespeare had passed him on the corner the night before, how precious every word he had to say would be!" (Scharnhorst, ed. *Mark Twain's Complete Interviews* 341-4)

Within this interview appear several of the *Autobiography's* defining characteristics. First, Twain's analogy to the cinema expresses his interest in finding a new means to express himself and his life's experiences in words. That Twain chooses as an example a means of recording life made possible by new technology, motion pictures, makes explicit that Twain was struggling with ideas soon to inspire the High Modernists, who were preoccupied not only with the technology of modern life and human interaction with it, but also with new means of representation of human perception.

That Twain compares himself to Rip Van Winkle suggests that he is contemplating ways in which to bridge the changes physical time brings to memory and, in fact, to use associative memory to eliminate the chasm between past and present. That Twain says he is not going to write autobiography because no man can write truth about himself means that Twain has grasped the inevitability of subjectivity in human

perception and expression. That he says his book will consist of portraits of contemporaries shows he has not arrived at the final conception of his book. He is temporarily deterred from actual autobiography because he hasn't determined how to reconcile "the truth" with "the facts" in the telling, a problem he will solve by deciding to subjugate the facts to his perceived truth. He has told himself temporarily his autobiography will consist of his memories pertaining to people he has known, and that this plan, if carried to massive length, will result in a comprehensive history of his time.

Furthermore, he is struggling with the idea that his life must be portrayed in story form, as in typical autobiographies. He has always had difficulty structuring and completing a narrative and will later conclude that lives don't have stories in large scale. His attempts so far at autobiography have resulted in short pieces which he terms "scraps". In the past twenty-nine years he has written or dictated approximately twenty of these which can fit all together within about one hundred book pages. These numbers demonstrate how long he has been struggling with the idea of his autobiography without making remarkable progress, and this slowness is largely due to his inability to accept the conventional idea of what an autobiography should be. He has had different conceptions through the decades of what his autobiography might be, and in the interview of 1899, he is portraying a stage. The Mark Twain Project, engaged in publishing the first total and authoritative edition of Twain's *Autobiography*, believes he chose not to include the portraits written in this period in his final conception, which means they will become a dead end. And the analogy of the Stratford shoemaker's diary reveals that he has grasped the importance of the diary form, of a continuing record of minutiae, to a portrait of a human being. An on-going record, Twain believes, shows what a human notices and values and is more susceptible to candor than a record made in time's retrospect. His major labor will have the form of a diary, even though it will be a spoken diary and will not be dictated every day.

The plan that Twain finally created for his autobiography contained constant revision, which makes it difficult to state any unwavering rules of procedure. He altered or broke almost every rule he said he would follow. Still, there are some overall defining characteristics of Twain's approach to autobiography. They are (1) Dictation, (2) Association, and (3) Subjectivity. Division into parts for ease of

comprehension should not obscure the fact that the characteristics are not discrete in practice. One of Twain's statements about association, for example, also illustrates his thought about subjectivity, and the characteristics act in conjunction throughout the autobiography.

Dictation

When Twain began dictation to his biographer Albert Bigelow Paine and stenographer Josephine Hobby in January, 1906, he had tried the method at least eight times previously, with seven different stenographers and one phonographic machine. However, Twain's purpose for dictation varied through the decades, beginning as a means of noting his thoughts while journeying with the aim of capturing his ideas for books that sometimes never were written. It's pertinent in understanding Twain's lifelong method of composition that he worked often from thoughts captured in note form, rather than in continuity. Seen thus, Twain's use of shorthand note-takers of his speech from the 1870's on is a precursor to the final compositional method in the *Autobiography*.

However, Twain's first planned use of dictation cast him, curiously, in a reversal of the roles he and Paine would play in 1906. In 1870 Twain had hired an old friend, John Henry Riley, to visit South Africa and collect information for a book Twain would write about that country's diamond field (*Mark Twain's Letters* v. 5, 3). Twain intended to have Riley speak out his experiences to Twain while a stenographer took notes. As Twain wrote in January, 1872, "I shall employ a good, appreciative, genial phonographic reporter who can listen first rate, enjoy, & even throw in a word, now & then. Then we'll light our cigars every morning, & with your notes before you, we'll talk & yarn & laugh & weep over our adventures, & the said reporter shall take it *all* down ... & leave me to work up & write out the book at my leisure" (*Mark Twain's Letters* v. 5, 2-3). Twain conceived himself as the listener and interlocutor to Riley, much as Paine would be to Twain three decades later. Twain didn't wish to read Riley's notes; he wished to hear Riley's embellishments and to have Riley tell him what he had felt and to have the discourse of memories that were prodded by the use of notes. Twain didn't intend Riley to be limited to

the typical role of a researcher, as a gatherer of information. He hoped, by asking Riley to tell of his discoveries, to capture the feelings of first-hand experience of events he hadn't been part of.

Discourse - the manner of individual speaking - was a career-long fascination for Twain, expressed in works such as *Huckleberry Finn* and "The Jumping Frog of Calaveras County". Twain had a conviction that individuals signified who they were in part by their talk, and it was a conviction implicit in his autobiography. His own speech was as much a part of himself as his thought, Twain believed, for Twain's speech was not only the means by which he worked out his plans and feelings, often by talking out loud, but it was tailored to his specific audiences as performances.

However, Twain's intuitive belief in discourse as a means of recapturing emotion and experience and portraying personality didn't become an articulated principle for autobiographical purposes for almost three decades after he wrote his first autobiographical piece, even though he experimented with dictation for autobiography in 1885. Twain's next experiments with dictation after Riley were construed as conveniences to his aim of catching thoughts to be used in later writing. In 1873 Twain hired Samuel C. Thompson to accompany him to London as a short-hand stenographer and record his impressions of scenes and persons for another book never-to-be-written. The year before Twain had written to his wife, "If I could take notes of all I hear said, I should make a most interesting book - but of course these things are interminable - only a shorthand reporter could seize them" (Twain *Mark Twain's Letters* v. 5,199). As an example of the manner in which essential components of Twain's autobiographical plan intermingled with each other, Twain mentions Henry Stanley in this same letter, the explorer who had "stenographically reported a lecture of mine" in 1867 (201). Twain wishes he could dictate his thoughts, and by process of association he remembers a man who had recorded his, although it's uncertain which thought recalled which.

Twain may have recalled these thoughts during his first meeting with Thompson in 1873 for, according to Thompson, "Clemens complained of forgetfulness; lost much by not writing down things at once; thought of learning shorthand, but found the only way to learn would be to hire a teacher... Also he

wished he could have with him the coming summer in England a suitable person to help take notes” (360).

Thompson offered his services and promptly taught himself shorthand. No book emerged from the London efforts, and in 1909 Twain wrote that his “first experience in dictating” resulted in sentences that “came slow & painfully, & were clumsily phrased, & had no life in them” (418). By coincidence or irony, Twain’s comments about his unsatisfactory “first experience in dictating” came one week after Twain’s final autobiographical dictation, in a period of rupture with trusted associates which left Twain disaffected with dictation as an effective means of self portrait even though he quickly turned to another autobiographical scheme (872). He was not finished with autobiographical efforts, but clearly estranged, in the full emotional sense of the word, from his efforts of the last three years, as shown by his description of the dictations as “tedious long labor” in the document titled “The Death of Jean” (Lystra 247). Following the “first experience” with Thompson and the non-emerging book, Twain used Charles Warren Stoddard as a secretary on a third London trip. Stoddard’s evident purpose was less as secretary than as audience, since Twain later wrote that Stoddard had been hired “at \$15 a week & board & lodging, to sit up nights with me and dissipate” (Twain *Mark Twain’s Letters* v. 5, 476). Neither Thompson nor Stoddard was hired for expertise in stenography, though Thompson had briefly been a reporter (360). Thompson was hired upon a few hours’ acquaintance, so Twain must have perceived him as an eager receptacle for his talk. As for Stoddard, a friend of his commented, “It was simply [Stoddard’s] duty to be, or at least to seem, amused at the conversation of Mr. Clemens” (477).

Thompson and Stoddard were hired to service one of Twain’s deepest needs - to have a sympathetic listener. As Stoddard wrote, “As soon as I got into bed he’d come and sit right down by my side, his glass in his hand, now talking so slowly that the syllables came about every half minute and the last picture I’d have as I dropped off to sleep was of Mark bending over me, glass in hand, uttering the second syllable of a word he began a full minute ago” (ibid).

This deep need was to be filled more productively by three future listeners: Twain’s daughter Susy, his governess/secretary Isabel Lyon, and his biographer Albert B. Paine. These three facilitated the

composition of the mass of Twain's autobiography. Twain could speak to any audience through lecture, letter, or interview, but for relaxed reminiscence or prejudiced invective he needed sympathizers.

Without Susy, Lyon, and Paine, the *Autobiography* probably would not have been created, though their contribution to Twain's autobiographical methodology came years after the experiments with Thompson and Stoddard. In the interim, and even after Susy's contribution, Twain employed more shorthand secretaries and a phonographic machine. In 1876 a private secretary took dictation and answered letters (Twain *Mark Twain's Collected Tales, Sketches, Speeches and Essays 1852-1890* v.I, 973). When Twain's writing arm was "disabled by rheumatism" in 1891, he asked William Dean Howells to test a phonograph machine with the aim of dictating part of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (Twain *Mark Twain-Howells* v. II, 637).

However, there is a distinction discernible between the use Twain made of dictation for purposes of note-taking, answering letters, and ease in completing novels, and the use made for autobiographical purposes. In the former, the intent was utilitarian in perception and result. For example, when Twain hired Roswell Phelps to accompany him as shorthand stenographer in 1882 for his research for *Life on the Mississippi*, he gave Phelps the pseudonym "Thompson" (Twain *Mark Twain's Notes and Journals* v. II, 458). Twain had his own pseudonym in order "to escape the interviewers," so the tactic was practical (ibid). But to christen his stenographer with the name borne by a man who had previously served Twain as a stenographer indicates that at this period Twain perceived his hired listeners as a function, in effect like the later phonograph. They were his instruments.

An observation by Charles Neider, who edited *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, suggests that the author's experiment with Phelps may have influenced his future decision to adopt dictation for his autobiography. Neider wrote,

The most obvious instance of the notebooks [Twain habitually used throughout his adult life] containing 'objectionable' matter occurs in a dictated (and therefore perhaps somehow protected?) notebook, dictated to his secretary Roswell Phelps on the Mississippi trip. This

notebook is generally freer than most and contains ‘God damn,’ ‘bitch,’ ‘whore,’ ‘son of a bitch,’ and ‘piss.’ (*Mark Twain* 163)

In contrast, Twain’s handwritten notebooks in the same year omit letters from even mild curse words, as when he writes “a d-d fool” (Twain *Mark Twain’s Notebooks & Journals* v. III, 48). In other words, it appears that speaking allowed Twain to express himself with ease unfelt in writing, even if the medium of writing was his private notebooks. This particular notebook Neider mentions is transcribed by Phelps from his own shorthand, and the profanity occurs within dialogue heard and reported by Twain, so it might be argued that it represents Phelps’s freedom of expression, not Twain’s. However, Twain read the notebook, as evidenced by his marks within it as well as by reference to an anecdote within it in a dictation of August 31st, 1906 (532). The use of language Neider notes signifies a small but significant degree of difference between the notebook Twain dictated and those he wrote.

It’s significant also that the notebook’s profanity is captured in dialogue Twain heard and dictated. He reports a steamboat mate referring to a country residence thusly: “There, that’s a God damned fine place. That place was built out of the profits of the flesh brokerage business in St. Louis. The old bitch that owns that place has the biggest whore house in St. Louis” (526). Twain always strongly believed speech portrayed character, and therefore he dictated to Phelps the language of the mate rather than the gist of the anecdote. When Twain dictated for his autobiography decades later, he hoped the transcription of his own speech would be the best chance to capture his processes of thought and emotion. Within two years he would dictate his account of publishing Grant’s memoirs, but those dictations were a first draft for what Twain knew might someday be published, which means they were an experiment. His secretary Isabel Lyon believed the author wouldn’t have published them as Paine did in his edition without revision (*Twain Autobiography of Mark Twain* 66). He dictated them as a defense against allegations that he had stolen Grant’s memoirs from other publishers and because in Twain’s mind his relationship with Grant lent him some kind of historical significance. The Grant dictations are formal or stilted in places because these are his first serious and extended use of the medium. The dictations to Phelps, however, show the

author relaxed, one man speaking to another, and thus allow uncensored profanity. The author felt a similar ease when he decided upon dictation decades later.

As for his later experiment with the actual phonograph, Twain found it unsatisfying because it made him self-conscious and provided no flattering human attention. He wrote to Howells in 1891 that the phonograph was “good enough for mere letter-writing ... you can’t write literature with it, because it hasn’t any ideas & it hasn’t any gift for elaboration, or smartness of talk, or vigor of action, or felicity of expression, but is just matter-of-fact, compressive, unornamental, & as grave & unsmiling as the devil” (Twain *Mark Twain-Howells* v. II, 641). Twain blamed the machine for not providing elements he should have contributed himself and for failing to respond positively to him, as his desired audiences did. Twain ended presciently, “I believe it could teach one to dictate literature to a [stenographer] - & some time I will experiment in that line” (ibid).

Twain discovered definitely his affinity for dictating autobiographical material when his thirteen-year-old daughter recorded things Twain said for a biography of her father that the young girl wrote. When Twain’s wife Livy discovered Susy’s covert project in 1885, she informed the subject, and he began “posing for the biography,” as he told Paine in 1906. Twain remembered “saying a very smart thing ... at the breakfast table one morning, and that Susy observed to her mother privately, a little later, that papa was doing that for the biography” (Twain *Mark Twain’s Own Autobiography*, 35-6). In a notebook entry of 1885 concurrent with the event Twain told the story slightly differently. “At breakfast this morning I intimated that if I seemed to be talking on a pretty high key, in the way of style, it must be remembered that my biographer was present. Whereupon Susy struck upon the unique idea of having me sit up and purposely talk for the biography!” (Twain *Mark Twain’s Notes and Journals* v. III, 112).

In other words, the notebook entry presents Twain soliciting his daughter's cooperation by calling to her attention the fact that he would perform for her project. Since performances have but an appearance of spontaneity, Twain was assuming control of Susy’s project and getting satisfaction from her admiring attention. This would become, with Lyon and Paine, a comfortable means of talking about his thoughts and memories at length and a means of production with minimum labor. As Stoddard had noted, Twain

could talk until listeners were exhausted. Twain was self-conscious with Susy, of course, but it was the self-consciousness of a performer confident of favorable reception. For Twain's autobiographical intentions, it was the equivalent of Francis Crick's dream of the double helix, a discovery that made his autobiography possible in the distant future.

That Susy influenced Twain to talk out his autobiography is evidenced by the notebook entries made immediately before the one just described. It reads, "Get short-hander in New York and begin my autobiography at once & continue it straight through the summer." The evidence lies not only in the proximity of the two entries, but also in the first words of the entry about consciously talking for Susy's biography. The first words are "Which reminds me," explicitly linking his plan and the breakfast table event (*ibid*). That Twain linked Susy with his autobiographical plans is further evidenced by Twain's notebook entries of April 1885. The first is a reminder to himself to take Susy to a dog show at Madison Square Garden. The next entry reads "Get Redpath," Twain's lecture manager, "to shorthand my autobiography" (130).

Twain had written fragments of reminiscence before 1885 and would do so thereafter, employing dictation exclusively during and after 1904. However, the convergence of Susy's biography and Twain's involvement with the *Memoirs* of Ulysses S. Grant eventually caused Twain to realize that only dictation to uncritical audiences could permit him to compose autobiographical material at length. When Grant agreed to write his memoirs for Twain's publishing company, the ex-President had terminal cancer and dolorous financial problems. There is evidence that Twain applied the insight he gained through Susy to assist Grant in composing his book. On March 31st, 1885, Twain wrote in his notebook that he visited Grant with a stenographer from his publishing company, Webster & Company. "I hoped to find General Grant well enough to tell the story of the surrender & let young Hall take it down in shorthand" (Twain *Mark Twain's Notes and Journals* v. III, 116). Grant was too weary for Twain's plan that day, but by May 26th, Grant had "dictated 10,000 words at a single sitting, & he is a sick man! It kills me these days to do half of it!" (152). Susy's suggestion, reworked by Twain, became a substantial aid to composition for Grant. Also, Twain himself was simultaneously dictating his version of how he acquired rights to

Grant's book and his other dealings with the man whom he venerated. He had begun, with Redpath as stenographer, on May 11th or 12th (144).

In a dictation of 1904 Twain was to say that his friend John Hay had given him the initial impetus to begin his autobiography by telling Twain most men past age 40 had lived through all experience worth telling, and Twain was 42 at that time (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 223). Despite Hay's suggestion, which Twain would have heard in 1877 or 1878 if his memory was accurate, by the time of his Grant dictations he had written only two pieces, comprising only about eight pages in length. The Grant dictations of 1885, by contrast, consist of fifty-seven pages in Paine's edition. What accounts for this burst of autobiographical interest? It's pertinent that Twain's life was a succession of enthusiasms resulting in flurries of activity, whether literary, business, or social. He typically flung himself into projects. Also, Grant's *Memoirs* represented a convergence in Twain's mind between himself and a man of history. In addition, the Grant dictations were motivated by Twain's desires to refute slurs about his own conduct in acquiring the book and about the book's authenticity. But it's also probable that Twain was excited by his new compositional tool. Otherwise, why dictate?

The Grant dictations will be considered further in Chapter Three, but if the proposition that dictation represented a breakthrough for Twain is accepted, the question arises why Twain dictated no more autobiography for nineteen years. He wrote eleven autobiographical pieces in that period amounting to 117 pages in Paine's version of the *Autobiography*, but dictated none. The nineteen years were filled with financial and personal disaster, with exile and literary production and lecturing. The eleven autobiographical pieces indicate continuing interest in his project. What may have curtailed autobiographical dictation was the absence of sympathetic listeners and recorders, and Twain found mechanical recording devices short of perfect for literary work. Also, upon completing the Grant dictations Twain wrote to Henry Ward Beecher that it had been "most troublesome and awkward work," indicating discomfort with either Redpath or the process itself in his first effort (Paine, ed. *Mark Twain's Letters* v. II, 462). In any case, in the nineteen years between 1885 and 1904, he had no family members

or friends equipped both temperamentally and technically to listen at length to him uncritically and record his words.

Twain resumed dictating autobiography when three things happened: Isabel Lyon was hired as “correspondence secretary” in 1902 (Lystra 38). His wife Livy entered a long period of declining health requiring removal to the northern Italian climate in 1904. And Twain found the atmosphere of his rented villa near Florence to be conducive to reflection and reminiscence.

Lyon became for Twain a sympathetic listener without equals. His wife and daughters had to listen to Twain; Lyon yearned to. To Lyon, Twain was “the saint and the shrine before the saint - the God behind it all,” as she wrote in her diary in 1905. Even after Twain severed connections with her and after his death as well, Lyon maintained a “shrine” with “artifacts” to remember him by (Lystra 58). She was “an inspiration” to his dictating, Twain wrote, “because she takes so much interest in it” (Twain *Mark Twain-Howells* v. II, 778).

Though Twain had in Lyon an audience and recorder who never tired of listening to him, he still needed time and distraction from his wife's ill health to recommence dictating autobiography. From Florence, in 1904, he wrote to Joseph Twichell that he had “turned out 37,000 words in 25 working days” for *Harpers* magazine. “On many of the between-days,” he continued, “I did some work, but only of an idle and not necessarily necessary sort, since it will not see print until I am dead.... This secluded and silent solitude this clean, soft air and this enchanting view of Florence, the great valley and the snow-mountains that frame it are the right conditions for work. They are a persistent inspiration” (Paine, ed. *Mark Twain's Letters* v. II, 749).

The earliest thirty pages of the Florence dictations are a minute description of the rented villa, interspersed with ruminations about European history as connoted by its architecture and recollection of the villa Twain occupied in Florence twelve years before. It's significant because Twain is working with the process of association, being reminded of Cosimo De Medici because of a church dome, thinking about events twelve years previous because he occupies a similar dwelling in a similar locale. The mind's immense associative capacity was to become the means by which topics were selected for the

autobiography, justified by the reasoning that the process of human thought was the life story of any human. The Florence dictations are also significant because they portray how Twain felt about his present project as well as the more organized dictations with Paine to come, which Twain was to describe as mimicking the slow movement of a river, going “lazily & pleasantly on” (Twain *Mark Twain-Howells* v. II, 810) and as “a modified paradise” (Scharnhorst, ed. *Mark Twain’s Complete Interviews* 537). When his wife’s death interrupted the dictations, Twain dealt with his family’s grief and their return to America, where he socialized and was feted too much to settle back into a routine of further dictations. They had been a distraction and diversion in any case, and he felt no pressure to complete his autobiographical project. It took Albert B. Paine’s biographical proposition in 1906 to regenerate Twain’s interest and put his autobiographical interests on a more business-like basis, as will be examined in Chapter Four.

As the Florence dictations ended with emotional turmoil, so, too, did his dictations to Paine. The last dictation occurred April 16, 1909, in the month and year of Twain’s rupture with the two people who had become closer to him than his own daughters. The autobiographical writings continued, commenced immediately in the form of letters to friends which would never be mailed, but the dictations closed.

Association

“A Scrap of Curious History,” written during Twain’s debt-driven exile in Europe, begins, “Marion City, on the Mississippi River in the state of Missouri - a village; 1845. La-Bourboule-les-Bains, France - a village; time the end of June, 1894. I was in the one village in the early time; I am in the other now. These times and places are sufficiently wide apart, yet today I have the strange sense of being thrust back into that Missourian village and reliving certain stirring days that I lived there long ago” (Twain *What Is Man?* 182). Twain’s essay is a description of the process of association at work in human thought and emotion. A French mob, motivated by the assassination of France’s president by an Italian, besieged Twain’s hotel and terrorized the Italian waiters within. Twain was “thrust back into” his boyhood by the associative link between the French mob of 1894 and southern white anger against abolitionists during

Twain's childhood. Twain exhibited throughout his life and work an intuitive knowledge of the mind's tendency to work by tenuous strings of similar sensations and appearances, rather than sequentially. In Twain the tendency was so strong that even after he stopped dictating his autobiography he could recall in one morning memories of boyhood through the agency of taste and a memory of youth through the agency of place. As Paine recorded in the third volume of his biography,

We were leaving the Belvedere next morning, and when the subject of breakfast came up for discussion [Twain] said: 'That was the most delicious Baltimore fried chicken we had yesterday morning. I think we'll just repeat that order. It reminds me of John Quarles's farm.' ...As he stood on the railway platform waiting for the train, he told me how once, fifty-five years before, as a boy of eighteen, he had changed cars there for Washington and had barely caught his train – the crowd yelling at him as he ran." (1499)

The author's awareness of process of association in the retention and summoning of memories was not only intuitive, but exemplified through his reading. He mentioned in his own autobiography the well-known scene from Benvenuto Cellini's in which as a child Cellini witnesses a salamander alive in flames. Cellini's father "gave me a great box on the ears" and told the boy his blow was "to make you remember," (9) as if the pain would guarantee the memory of this sight memorable in itself. Twain also loved to read the diaries of Samuel Pepys, where he would have seen an account of a London ritual enacted by similar means for the same purpose. Pepys records that in order to make the children of a parish remember the parish's boundaries they were marched around its limits while adults poured water on them and beat them (Tomalin *Samuel Pepys: The Unequalled Self* 7). Twain's popular image as a man from the Southwestern frontier without much formal education but with variegated practical experience makes it easy to forget that he read constantly and omnivorously and always learned from his reading.

If dictation became the physical process making his autobiography viable, Twain's awareness of the process of association became a thematic and methodological process of the *Autobiography*. Along with a dedication to remembering subjectively rather than factually, association determined what was said and how.

Twain realized early the applicability to his autobiography of remembering by association, certainly before John Hay suggested he begin his life story. The evidence is in *Memories of a Hostess*, edited by Mark Antony De Wolfe Howe. This book's selections, taken from the diaries of Annie Fields, refer on April 28, 1876 to Twain's "revolving subjects for his 'Autobiography'." Fields wrote the following day that Twain said of his autobiography, "I shall take out passages from it, and publish as I go along in the 'Atlantic' and elsewhere, but I shall not limit myself as to space, and at whatever age I am writing about, even if I am an infant, and an idea comes to me about myself when I am forty, I shall put that in" (Howe 250-251). Twain mentioned three of the features of the autobiography he was to write thirty years later: Excerpts would appear in magazines, it would be voluminous, and, most importantly, it would record the progress of Twain's mind and eschew chronology. When Twain spoke, he was characteristically both publicizing a future project and talking out loud as a way to sort out ideas. In other words, Twain chose as a means of recollecting his life a replication of his thought process - the occurrence of an idea, a memory or an emotional reaction - and "revolving" it, giving himself the liberty of pursuing any idea, memory or emotional reaction suggested by the process of association.

The diary selection also inadvertently highlights Twain's future "capricious memory" as Paine termed it in his biography (v.I, xli). In April 1877, when Twain was 42, John Hay apparently urged Twain to write his autobiography, though Twain appears to have misremembered the date by one or two years or actually conceived the idea of an autobiography before Hay suggested it. The Mark Twain Project notes that although Twain says Hay made his suggestion while the author was a visitor to Hay's home, Twain was age 45 at the time of his visit. The Project suggests Twain "conflated more than one discussion with Hay" (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 535). Twain had written only one autobiographical piece before the reported conversation with Fields, dated "about 1870" by Paine and the Project both (Paine

Mark Twain's Autobiography v.I, 3; *Twain Autobiography of Mark Twain* 61). That Twain spoke to Mrs. Fields of his autobiography thusly in 1876 argues he had the recorded conversation with Hay before he was age 42 (*Twain Autobiography of Mark Twain* 223), or he made up portions of the conversation or the entirety. Mrs. Fields's diary entry proves the autobiography was swirling in Twain's mind with elements formed, whereas Twain's conversation with Hay, real or imagined, has the effect of suggesting he had the idea imposed upon him. This would be congruent with Twain's later ideas regarding Determinism. In old age Twain often told tales of important changes in his life occasioned by found objects, such as a \$50 bill or a page torn from a book, and since Twain adopted a philosophical view that he had been an object, not an actor, in his life's courses, it would be fitting for Twain to say that Hay had inserted in his mind, like a letter in a post box, the spur for his autobiography.

Twain took no immediate action to realize his words to Fields, but he could shelve or actually forget his projects or ideas for years and even decades. Thus he could be pleasantly surprised by rediscovery of a past precept, such as the one above, whether for his own present use or another's. For example, in 1880 Twain encouraged his brother Orion to write his own autobiography, a project which enabled Twain to both share his own autobiographical precepts and gather new ones from Orion's work. Twain wrote, "When you recollect something which belonged in an earlier chapter, do not go back, but *jam* it in *where you are*. Discursiveness does not hurt an autobiography in the least (Paine, ed. *Mark Twain's Letters*. v.I, 379)." Here Twain stated his belief about the importance of association in life-recording in terms similar to those he had used four years before to Fields, though he himself had not yet practiced what he recommended. At the start of the Florence dictations in 1904, Twain wrote a euphoric letter to Howells:

You will never know how much enjoyment you have lost until you get to dictating your autobiography...what a dewy & breezy & woodsy freshness it has, & what a darling & worshipful absence of the signs of starch...& the other artificialities! There are little slips here & there, little inexactnesses, & many desertions of a thought...but these are not blemishes, they are merits, their removal would take away the naturalness of the flow & banish the very thing - the nameless something - which differentiates real narrative from artificial narrative & makes the one so vastly

better than the other - the subtle something which makes good talk so much better than the best imitation of it that can be done with a pen.” (Twain *Mark Twain-Howells* v. II, 778)

After telling Mrs. Fields twenty-seven years before and Orion twenty-four years before about the value of a wandering associative narrative, Twain could apparently forget his own plans and rediscover them. Of course, the rediscovery emerged via the modification of dictating, and naturally so. Writers in practicality can't wander. Talkers can. For this reason, Twain's book has often not been admitted to be an autobiography at all by critics. Charles Neider, its third editor, called it “a kind of table-talk” (Twain *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* x). However, Twain's friend and critic William Dean Howells wrote in *My Mark Twain*, in words that connect Twain's methods to those of 20th century modernist authors:

He wrote as he thought, and as all men think, without sequence.... If something beyond or beside what he was saying occurred to him, he invited it into his page.... Then, when he was through with the welcoming of this casual and unexpected guest, he would go back to the company he was entertaining.... He observed this manner in the construction of his sentences, and the arrangement of his chapters.” (17)

In an essay of 1901, collected in the same volume, Howells wrote,

So far as I know, Mr. Clemens is the first writer to use in extended writing the fashion we all use in thinking, and to set down the thing that comes into his mind without fear or favor of the thing that went before or the thing that may be about to follow He would take whatever offered itself to his hand out of that mystical chaos, that divine ragbag, which we call the mind, and leave the reader to look after relevancies and sequences for himself ...the author ... would have shifted their whole responsibility to the reader, with whom it belongs, at least as much as with the author.” (166-7)

Lest readers believe from Howells' comments that Twain's work was totally artless, it should be noted that books without some structure and craft don't get published. For example, *Huckleberry Finn's* final third is widely acknowledged to be a structural failure and has even occasioned criticism attempting to find some subtle thematic purpose to account for the failure. Nevertheless, no one argues that the entire novel is a result of spontaneous jotting without forethought or revision. Similarly, an assessment of the *Autobiography* as "table-talk" ignores the fact that Twain prepared for his daily dictation by reading his notebooks, his letters, and the morning newspapers and even by rehearsings with Lyon before Paine arrived. Twain was after a simulation of spontaneity. He worked to demonstrate the process of association in support of his thesis that "[life] consists mainly of the storm of thoughts that is forever blowing through one's head" (Twain *Mark Twain's Autobiography* v.I, 283).

As said, Twain decided that an honest autobiography required that his own portray his mind's mechanical process, which was the process of association. A reasonable contention is that he used process of association in his art as well to make less than obvious thematic connections. For example, in the first chapter of *Pudd'nhead Wilson* he wrote, "The candy-striped pole, which indicates nobility proud and ancient along the palace-bordered canals of Venice, indicated merely the humble barbershop along the main street of Dawson's Landing" (Bradbury, ed. 56). The thematic connection between Venetian nobility and the novel is the latter's portrayal of southern slaveholders, some of whom are First Families of Virginia, this nation's old and wealthy families respected like aristocrats in their communities. Twain wrote the novel while living in northern Italy, and the "candy-striped pole" of Venice sounds like a confusing sight he saw and associated with sights from his early life, much as a visitor to modern Korea may be confused by the sight of ancient swastikas that have no relevance to their twentieth century association. Inasmuch as Twain mocked in his novel the mores of the American southern aristocrats, it appears the pole ignited a connection in the author's mind between what was humble in America and exalted in Venice, with the artistic irony that one symbol represents both. An incongruous detail Twain likely witnessed in Italy led by the process of association to his biting portrayal of upper class southern slave holders, locally respected and morally reprehensible.

In moving toward an argument that Twain was working with ideas soon to preoccupy literary modernists, it is significant that Howells says that Twain left the reader responsible for making sense of the “relevancies and sequences”. The literary modernists are famously and purposely difficult, respectfully expecting of readers attention and cogitation. Twain was, by contrast, generous in his attempt to explain what he was after, even when palpably frustrated, as in this chapter’s first quotation. Twain in practice and Howells in his criticism were dealing with the ideas of modernism without the modern critical vocabulary. Some critics have indeed linked Twain to the concerns and methods of literary modernism. Jonathan Raban, for example, writes that *Life on the Mississippi* showed Twain dealing with a “necessary premise” of “the ‘modernist’ writer,” the idea that he had “somehow survived into an era without precedent, beyond history,” and “dealing with that predicament in a typically modernist way - in pastiche, in parody, in writing (as John Barth described Borges) ‘postscripts to the corpus of literature’” (Twain *Life on the Mississippi* xvii). Dixon Wecter, Twain’s biographer and literary executor thought Twain possessed “a sensibility as keen as that of Proust in the remembrance of things past” (Wecter *Sam Clemens of Hannibal* 62) and that Twain shared with Proust a fascination with the train of associations stimulated by sensory perception. In a document titled “Memory Eccentricities,” written at approximately age seventy, Twain noted “his multitude of ‘auditory’ and ‘visual’ memories beside his fewer ‘tactual’ and ‘gustatory’ ones” (81).

Further evidence that Twain understood and used the human mind’s process of association in a fashion similar to Proust exists in an autobiographical dictation of 1906. Twain recounts memories of his apprenticeship as a printer, and, upon recollecting a particular method by which one of his fellow apprentices cooked a potato, pauses to describe a dinner with Wilhelm II, emperor of Germany, forty years after his apprenticeship. This is not a random digression, but is governed by the appearance within Wilhelm’s dinner of a potato cooked precisely as a fellow apprentice had done. Then Twain returns forty years back into his memories of his apprenticeship (Twain *Mark Twain’s Autobiography* v. II, 277-8). Twain’s potato is a most humble agent to serve as a bridge between Twain’s days as a youthful printer and the emperor, but so also was Proust’s madeleine as a vehicle to facilitate Proust’s search for total

recollection. Lest Twain's potato appear too frivolous to serve as a comparison between Twain and Proust, it is useful to discern Twain's implicit purpose in this dictation beyond the technical demonstration of the process of association as a narrative device. The distance between the printer's apprentice and the man who dined with emperors is implicit in the comparison. Implicit also is the unity of the two. The distance is between the past and the present. The unity is within the physical fact that both are one man. Twain is working in one sequence with two of his autobiographical preoccupations: the arbitrariness of chronological measurements of time in comparison with time as the human mind construes it and the incongruity of the same human station when viewed in distantly separated periods of chronological time. In the first preoccupation, any number of decades in chronological time can be bridged by any element common to two moments in time. In the second preoccupation, because physical time exists, the difference in station of any human seen at two moments in time can be so unlike or unexpected that questions about continuity of human personality or identity ensue.

Twain's excitement when he began the Florence dictations resulted partly from his insight that he could make his book "a combined Diary *and* Autobiography. In this way you have the vivid thing of the present to make a contrast with memories of like things in the past, and these contrasts have a charm which is all their own" (Twain *Mark Twain's Autobiography* v.I, 193). It is clear in Twain's use of the words "present" and "past" that he envisions a work in which subject matter will be introduced through the mind's process of association. Less obvious is the reason Twain conceived of a "Diary" as the proper vehicle to exhibit the process of association. Twain's suggestion that "contrasts" of "present" and "past" possess "a charm" understates the complexity of his ideas in use here. Diaries and memories are both about time. A diary is the sequential daily record of thoughts and emotions, experienced in chronological order, which all humans experience in effect even if they don't keep actual diaries. Association is the process by which memories occur within each day of chronological time. The process of association allows the same or similar subject to reoccur in a future day or days of chronological time without the

necessity of appearing within the intervening day or days. It is analogous to the Einstein-inspired idea that physical space bends, and therefore an object might pass through a point between two widely separated distances without traversing the total distance between.

Twain probably knew nothing of Einstein when he conceived a combined diary and autobiography in 1904, even though Einstein published his paper concerning his Special Theory of Relativity one year later. But he was fascinated with the power of the process of association to bring a memory into the present without traversing the chronological time between. The diary form allowed him to embody this concept in a narrative. He could discuss three subjects in one dictation, for example, and continue the last subject in the following dictation and return to the first subject a third dictation via the process of association. Thus the mechanical process of dictation and the thematic and methodological process of subject selection by association emerged.

Subjectivity

The third defining characteristic of the *Autobiography*, subjectivity, had already been articulated by Twain to himself and to others long before his primary labor upon it began. Many commentators have warned readers of Twain's autobiography to be cautious about accepting its claims as strictly factual. Twain's great-nephew Samuel Charles Webster, in a book he edited for the purpose of debunking the author's assertions that his father had driven Twain's publishing company into bankruptcy, wrote, "His idea was that this would be the first true autobiography ever written, but once he started talking his imagination took him in hand and facts were not allowed to cloud the document" (Twain *Mark Twain, Business Man* vi). Because he was defending his deceased father against Twain's castigation, Webster's comment might be disregarded if he alone held such opinions. However, Twain's biographer and autobiographical auditor, Albert B. Paine, wrote that when he undertook the 1906 dictations:

It was not for several weeks that I began to realize that these marvelous reminiscences bore only an atmospheric relation to history; that they were aspects of biography rather than its veritable

narrative, and built largely - sometimes wholly - from an imagination that, with age, had dominated memory, creating details, even reversing them, yet with a perfect sincerity of purpose on the part of the narrator to set down the unvarnished truth....Those vividly real personalities that he marched and countermarched before us were the most convincing creatures in the world...but alas ... often disagreed in their performance, and even in their characters, with the documents in the next room” (Paine *Mark Twain* v. III, 1268-9).

Despite these comments about Twain’s elastic view of facts in “his so-called autobiography,” Paine denied the work was “a mere fairy tale”. It was “amazingly truthful in the character-picture it represents of the man himself” (ibid). In *Searching for Memory*, Daniel L. Schacter offers a possible resolution of the apparent conflict in Paine’s statement. Schacter writes, “we do not store judgment-free snapshots of our past experiences but rather hold onto the meaning, sense, and emotions those experiences provided us” (5). He asks us to envision two people “tied together so each could witness only what the other saw...and have only the emotional experiences” of the other as well. “Unless these two people were identical personalities with identical pasts, their memories of the time period could be vastly different” (5-6). In other words, Twain was not entirely subject to a frail memory, as Paine suggests. Twain’s rereading of notebooks and letters in preparation for the dictations should have aided his memory. But it appears they aided the memory of his feelings generated by the events. And this was Twain’s intention: to portray his past as an emotional record, as Paine apparently recognized when he said the *Autobiography* was a truthful character-picture.

Twain had long believed that objectivity in autobiography didn’t exist. As he said in an interview with Rudyard Kipling in 1890, “In genuine autobiography, I believe it is impossible for a man to tell the truth about himself or to avoid impressing the reader with the truth about himself.” Twain also said that if he created an autobiography himself, “it will be as other men have done - with the most earnest desire to make myself out to be the better man in every little business that has been to my discredit, and I shall fail, like the others, to make the readers believe anything except the truth” (Twain *Life as I Find It* 316-7).

Twain clearly believed autobiographies were necessarily subjective. Less clear is to what degree he remembered and made conscious use of his own dictum during the Paine dictations. Paine wrote that, following a dictation, he would sometimes mention to Twain that he had “misstated some fact known to me,” to which Twain would remonstrate, “Why didn't you stop me?” However, if Paine heeded him and stopped him in the flow of words, the author would say, “Now you've knocked everything out of my head” (Twain *Mark Twain, Business Man* viii).

One interpretation of the passage above is that Twain consciously allowed himself to enter into his performance in the same spirit as a Method actor performs, willing himself to feel and project the emotions generated by less than factual retellings of episodes. When the performance ended, he could blithely turn Paine's comment back upon the biographer. But when interrupted in his performance, Twain could blame Paine for halting his creativity, much as any writer at work might do at an interruption. As for the apparently ludicrous suggestion that Twain could will himself to temporarily believe something that he objectively knew to be false, Schacter says that “the same brain regions are involved in both visual imagery and visual perception.” Therefore, “creating visual images may lead us to believe that we are remembering an event even when the incident never happened” (23).

This psychological phenomenon is certainly not unique to Twain. Robert A. Caro, biographer of Lyndon Johnson, thinks Johnson eventually came to believe he deserved a military medal of valor he received for simply being an observer on an airplane that came under fire during World War II. Apparently the award to Johnson had political motivations because “no one on the plane,” not the pilot nor the gunner, “received a decoration for the mission” except Johnson, who did nothing but watch the action. At first Johnson clearly knew his medal had at least the merit of political uses because he repeatedly arranged to have the medal awarded to him at political gatherings, “affixed to his lapel as if for the first time” (Caro *Means of Ascent* 51). But although he used the medal initially for self-advancement, he later complained to a close associate that his medal underrated his wartime accomplishment, which in reality had been only to be a bystander. “He bitched and bitched because he only got the Silver Star...he believed what he was saying. He believed it totally” (52). In other words, both Twain and Johnson could

remember things which were false, which they knew at one time were false, and could in time reverse fact in their minds and rage about the injustice of things that hadn't happened.

Furthermore, in reference to contentions made earlier in this chapter about what motivated Twain to employ a diary form of reminiscence and that decision's relevance to subjectivity, Schacter credits Proust for explaining how people believe in their memories: "The experience of remembering a past episode...is not based merely on calling to mind a stored memory image. Instead, a feeling of remembering emerges from the comparison of two images: one in the present and one in the past" (28).

Instead of composing a life story set entirely in his past and discrete from his continuing life, Twain created an on-going portrait of himself reacting to recollections and present stimuli. In doing so, Twain emphasized his feelings, which were necessarily subjective. That Twain's choice of subjectivity as an autobiographical operating principle came naturally to him and might, indeed, have been the truest possible portrait of himself is suggested in Paine's statement that

Twain lived curiously apart from the actualities of life.... He observed vaguely or minutely, what went on about him; but in either case the fact took a place, not in the actual world, but in a world within his consciousness or sub consciousness, a place where facts were likely to assume new and altogether different relations from those they had borne in the physical occurrence... More than once I have known him to relate an occurrence of the day before with... absolute conviction, when the details were precisely reversed." (Twain *Mark Twain* v. III, 1519)

Paine concluded that, for Twain, living humans were viewed "not as a part of the material landscape, but as an item of his own inner world" (1520).

Today, of course, the idea that autobiographies are subjective appears to be realized and assimilated into readers' approach to reading. John N. Hall, in his class "Autobiographical Fictions" at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, asserted that only "naïve" readers believe autobiographies are impartial accounts of lives (November 3 1996). And Jane Brox writes in a review of Vivian Gornick's

The Situation and the Story: The Art of Personal Narrative, that “‘Truth in a memoir is achieved not through a recital of actual events’, Gornick insists, ‘it is achieved when the reader comes to believe that the writer is working hard to engage with the experience at hand. What happened to the writer is not what matters; what matters is the large sense that the writer is able to *make* of what happened’” (November 4, 2001).

Twain apparently understood these concepts and articulated them more than a century ago. But how and when did he understand this? If Twain understood the principle of autobiographical subjectivity by 1890 in his interview with Rudyard Kipling, he recalled it in 1904 during the Florence dictations. To Howells he wrote he would take the position

that an Autobiography is the truest of all books; for while it inevitably consists mainly of extinctions of the truth, shirkings of the truth ... the remorseless truth *is* there, between the lines, where the author-cat is raking dust upon it which hides from the dis-interested spectator neither it nor its smell...the result being that the reader knows the writer in spite of his wily diligences.”

(Twain *Mark Twain-Howells* v. II, 782)

Whether or not Twain’s belief was born in Hay’s comments in 1877 or 1878, the belief manifested itself more than twenty years before the Florence dictations when Twain encouraged his brother to write his autobiography for his own amusement. Perpetually annoyed by the fecklessness and gullibility of his older brother, Orion, Twain urged him in early 1880 to begin a completely candid autobiography, modeled after those of Casanova and Rousseau, who had produced books noted for their revelations of self (Paine, ed. *Mark Twain's Letters* v.I, 376). Twain referred to Orion’s work in progress as “The Autobiography of an Ass,” and Orion’s rapid and voluminous response evidently met Twain’s expectations. In a development which, in combination with Twain’s eternal difficulty with structure, may have suggested the diary format for his own autobiography, Orion began sending chapters daily (Twain *Mark Twain-Howells* v. II, 296). Although only seven pages are known to now exist, one is numbered 1027 and 1/2, indicating Orion retained enthusiasm for a lengthy period (Twain *Mark Twain-Howells* v.I,

313). Paine, who used much of Orion's autobiography to reconstruct Twain's childhood for his own biography, guessed the work might have comprised two thousand pages (Paine, ed. *Mark Twain's Letters* v.1, 379). As for the lost portion, Paine apparently told Twain's secretary Isabel Lyon in confidence that Orion's manuscript was stolen while in Paine's possession, by a thief who lifted Paine's bag in Grand Central Terminal (Shelden 87).

Twain praised his brother's manuscript as

a model autobiography. Continue to develop your character in the same gradual and conspicuous and apparently unconscious way. The reader may have his doubts, perhaps, but he can't say decidedly, 'This writer is not such a simpleton as he has been letting on to be'. Keep him in that state of mind. If, when you shall have finished, the reader shall say, 'The man is an ass, but I don't really know whether *he* knows it or not,' your work will be a triumph." (Paine, ed. *Mark Twain's Letters* v.I, 378)

Behind the gleeful sadism in Twain's words are the germs of his dedication to subjectivity. Twain is telling his brother to be totally candid and earnest, and he will reveal that he does not know himself. The reader will understand the writer in spite of the writer's "wily diligences," and the autobiography will be honest and true because the writer's character is portrayed, not because of the work's factuality or lack thereof. It is the principle articulated to Kipling ten years later.

That Twain thought of his own autobiographical plans when he wrote those words to Orion is uncertain. However, he clearly was enthusiastic about encouraging people he considered foolish to expose themselves through their own life stories. Within one year he sought again to create amusement for himself through a second annoying relative, Jesse M. Leathers. Leathers, who "claimed to be the great-grandson" of Twain's great-grandfather's brother, purported to be the unrecognized British Earl of Durham and pestered Twain with requests for money to prove his claim and other purposes (Twain *Mark Twain-Howells* v. II, 869). With a facility for turning aggravation into literature, Twain used Leathers as a model for the central figure in *The American Claimant* and other figures in his works (870).

In March, 1881 Twain whimsically decided that Leathers' own voice would create a novel autobiography. Twain wrote to Howell: "Now here is my little game: I won't have this tramp under my roof, nor on my hands, yet at the same time he is a perfectly stunning literary bonanza, & *must* be dug up and put on the market. You must get his entire biography out of him." (358). Twain envisioned a proposed magazine, to be edited by James R. Osgood, as the venue for Leathers' autobiography, and wrote to Osgood, "I believe this ass will write a serious book that would make a cast-iron dog laugh" (869). A sample of the content Twain expected from Leathers may be found in a letter from the prospective autobiographer to Twain's wife: "By accident I landed last evening at the Fort Hamilton Inebriate Asylum, where my friends urged me to stay three or six months, and I being short of funds, Dr. J. Willits telegraphed Mr. Clemens to know whether he would stand good for my board" (870).

Leathers responded to Twain's suggestion with "twelve thousand words of a MS entitled 'An American Earl'," but the project died when Howells and Osgood declined to publish it (869). As with Orion, Twain found in Leathers a lesson that the surest means of portraying the truth of human character in autobiography lay in a sincere recital of events as the writer perceived them. For Twain, Orion and Leathers were comical caricatures of the lesson. Finding a way to use the lesson for himself took decades. As this chapter's first quotation shows, Twain had not totally accepted even by 1899 the idea that he would compose his own autobiography, preferring to refer to his project as being about other persons he had known. Twain was still unsure how to tell his life. But just as Orion may have suggested to Twain that an autobiography composed in daily batches and presented daily to an audience had merit, Leathers may have suggested to Twain that a spoken autobiography would best reveal the creator. In February, 1887, Twain wrote, "I wanted the history from his [Leathers's] *tongue* - not his pen, or mine." (870). Of course, this insistence upon oral autobiography explains Twain's choice of dictation for himself. He believed speech revealed personality more truly than the written word in that it eroded some sort of buffer between objective statement and the truth emotion lent.

Tracing the progress of an idea is particularly difficult when examining a person who could shelve or forget ideas for years or decades. Although the chronology from Orion to Leathers to Kipling to Florence

appears orderly, it's possible that the origin of Twain's autobiographical subjectivity is recorded in three notebook entries Twain made in late 1877 or early 1878. Written in sequence are the following entries:

“Publish scraps from my autobiography occasionally.

Skeleton Novellettes.

Leathers, Earl of Durham”

(Twain *Mark Twain's Notes and Journals* v. II, 51)

Recalling how strongly Twain worked by process of association in his thought and writing, it is likely that the three entries revolve around one unwritten idea. The first entry indicates not only that Twain was thinking of his autobiography at the approximate time when Hay is credited with suggesting its writing, but, more importantly, Twain conceived it as possessing an anecdotal or fragmentary form which could be excerpted for income and publicity. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, this would be the form and use of the *Autobiography* thirty years in the future. The second entry is about one of Twain's narrative experiments. Twain proposed a story plot which seven different prominent authors would be invited to use in order to write seven different stories. Although such writers as Howells, Bret Harte and Henry James were invited to participate, only Twain actually wrote a story, which was not published until 2001 in the *Atlantic Monthly* (July/August, 54-64). The third entry refers to the person discussed earlier, whom Twain asked to write an autobiography with the unrevealed proposition that the writer would not realize he was portraying himself as a different character than he believed he was.

The unexpressed idea that the three entries share involve subjectivity, the expression of individual perception of material reality. The first entry subject, Twain's autobiography, would appear with subjectivity as a guiding principle. Further, it would embody a belief that one man's life was not a story but pieces of a story, a jumble, fragments, scraps. The second entry proposes a project with established facts, the plot. The interest of the project would lie in the treatment of the facts by the different authorial sensibilities. The third entry refers to a man who represented himself as something only he believed himself to be, and his representation would reveal unintentionally the person he actually was. The

sequence may be coincidental, but the processes and interests of the writer's mind suggest, consciously or unconsciously, that the three entries have been generated by the writer's interest in a common element: the subjectivity of narrative.

Chapter Two

The Quarry

When Mark Twain died in April, 1910, he left to Albert B. Paine, his biographer and autobiographical auditor, the task of arranging the mass of autobiographical papers Twain had composed in manuscript and typescript over the preceding four decades. Twain's only living daughter, Clara, was to have power to restrict publishing sections she felt might damage her father's reputation. This chapter's title, "The Quarry," borrowed from Dwight Macdonald, refers to what Paine and subsequent editors did with the mass and what critics and the public thought of their efforts. Among the papers were short pieces Twain had written about his boyhood, his mother, a large tract of land his father bought, sketches about people Twain had known, a parade Twain witnessed in Vienna and a description of public transportation and neighborhoods in London. Also included were dictations made in Florence in 1904 describing a villa Twain had rented and other subjects, dictations from 1885 about the author's personal and professional dealings with President Ulysses S. Grant and 252 dictations made between 1906 and 1909 supposedly as part of Twain's agreement to provide Paine with his biography. Somewhere among the papers designated as autobiographical was a short story titled "Wapping Alice," based upon actual events in Twain's life and alluded to in one of the dictations. There was a written description of a man named MacFarlane whom Twain allegedly once knew. There were two short books, *Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven*, and *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, which Twain initially wanted in his autobiography and then published during his lifetime. There were sections of a biography Twain's daughter Susy wrote about her father and numerous newspaper and magazine clippings, some lengthy, which Twain wanted interpolated in his autobiography. Finally, there was a reminiscence/elegy Twain wrote immediately after his daughter Jean's death. Twain left three brief explanations of his autobiographical methodology and two brief notes, one divided into three sections, with instructions pertaining to how his autobiography was to be published. These explanations and instructions were frequently alluded to in his dictations and just as

often contradicted. Further instructions were scribbled in the margins of some dictations and in two cases put into the typescript pertaining to lengths of time Twain wished to keep those dictations unpublished.

In their totality, the autobiographical papers presented a volume of material, a novelty of form and a labyrinth of instructions which assured a convoluted fate editorially, critically and publically. Twain had been publicizing his autobiography in newspaper interviews before he knew its final form and before he had written more than five percent of the total. This ballyhoo served Twain's purpose insofar as it kept his name before the public during a period in which he produced little major work otherwise. The publicity also gratified Twain's desire for attention, which rivaled financial compensation as a reward in his scale of values. Twain achieved both ends through arranging for the publication of some of the Paine dictations and earlier pieces, arranged and edited by Twain, in the *North American Review* in 1906-7 in exchange for \$30,000 (Twain *Mark Twain's Own Autobiography* xix).

However, the publicity for the unpublished autobiography was so effective that expectations for the unseen book became difficult to satisfy. As the work finally appeared posthumously in three different editions at long intervals throughout the 20th century its critical and public reception was extremely mixed. Critics felt duped and disappointed. Even before Paine published two volumes in 1924, there were hints of what was to come. Harry Thurston Peck wrote in *The Bookman* two months after Twain's death "*The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, which has been dragging its slow way along for many months, is formless and in places without any meaning whatsoever. His best friends have regretted that he ever began to write it. It is to be hoped that his heirs and executors will suppress it" (Anderson, ed. 292). Since Peck could have seen none of the work except for the *North American Review* chapters, published for income and publicity while Twain lived, this opinion must have been formed from rumor inasmuch as only a handful of friends, family members and associates had seen any of Twain's typescripts. But Twain's heirs and executors did not suppress it, and the authoritative first volume of the autobiography, published in 2010 by the University of California at Berkeley's Mark Twain Project, was a financial success, appearing for 20 weeks on the *New York Times'* list of bestsellers ("Best Sellers" 24). Robert Hirst, general editor of the Mark Twain Papers, controls use of Twain's unpublished words through the

Mark Twain Project, which has been engaged since the 1960's in publishing authoritative editions of Twain's works. He said in a television address that the Project might likely sell 2,000 copies of a volume of Twain's letters over the course of ten years and based upon this experience expected sales of the first volume of the autobiography to equal 10,000. Therefore the printing of 150,000 copies of the autobiography was "a new game for us" (Hirst). This success was undoubtedly assisted by publicity Twain would have gloated over, such as a *New York Times* front page story published the preceding July 10th. The headline read, "Dead for a Century, He's Ready To Say What He Really Meant," allowing readers to assume Twain hadn't been allowed to previously and furthering the impression that the autobiography contained opinions and information offensive to societal norms.

Yet critics have been largely tepid or worse. Garrison Keillor, writing for the *New York Times Book Review*, termed it "a wonderful fraud," a "ragbag of scraps," "a powerful argument for writers' burning their papers" and "this dreary meander of a memoir" (Keillor). Adam Gopnick in *The New Yorker* was similarly non-adulatory. "If not exactly a deliberate swindle, it is an endlessly repeated put-on, a shaggy-dog story without a punch line," Gopnick wrote, and "it keeps getting replayed for credulous new generations." In his opinion, "A book that had been a disjointed and largely baffling bore emerges now as a disjointed and largely baffling bore," and "What was to have been, briefly, life as it is became an endless squirt of squid ink, with the creature making his getaway under its cover" (Gopnick, 79).

Inasmuch as Twain vilified different editors and critics in his autobiography for being less derogatory of his works than are these contemporary critics, it can be assumed that should Twain still be dictating in some spirit world his reaction would be choleric. Yet Twain largely bears responsibility for the multiple incarnations of his autobiography and its critical fate because he composed it as a deliberately unorthodox example of autobiography which invited editorial tampering. Declaring it would be published posthumously meant the maintenance of its integrity depended upon the willingness of his editors to adhere to the instructions of a dead man, and those editors would be subject to different financial pressures and artistic prejudices. In the event, all his twentieth century editors saw value in the autobiographical papers, but all also tampered with them. It's an open question whether Twain would be

more infuriated by the tampering and criticism or more pleased that his name was still appearing on a bestseller in the twenty-first century.

Critics of high scholarly attainment with access to the autobiographical papers have held them in modest esteem or made inaccurate statements regarding them. Henry Nash Smith, who succeeded Dixon Wecter as literary editor of the Mark Twain estate and custodian of his papers, termed the *Autobiography* “incoherent” and its contents as “random comments on whatever happened to occur to him” (Smith 185). There are portions of the *Autobiography* which are no doubt trivial in focus or disorganized, particularly late in its composition, but much of it is highly crafted and structured along a developed theory of autobiography. The success of Charles Neider’s edition belies any claim of incoherence even though he performed major surgery on the text. As he said, “You can edit the trivia out, but you cannot edit the greatness in” (xv).

In his 2005 biography of the author, Ron Powers described the *Autobiography* as an “oracular mass of dictated verbiage that overwhelmed three successive editors and remains...formally insoluble to orderly minds, a Vandal of the genre” (Powers 620). The last characterization seems not quite fair if it accepts the definition of Vandal as someone who deliberately destroys art or property. Twain didn’t set out to destroy the genre of autobiography any more than the baseball centerfielder Tris Speaker set out to destroy conventional outfield play when he played so shallowly that he sometimes tagged out runners at second base. Also, neither Twain nor Speaker revolutionized autobiography or centerfield play. Both broke the mold by doing what hadn’t been done before or since in their vocations (Broeg 239). But Powers’ other words are accurate and pertinent. Not only did the autobiography’s unorthodox form, its volume and its posthumous publication create its fate, but Twain also bears responsibility because he vacillated in what he perceived as its purpose. Over a period of years he repeatedly said the autobiography’s purpose was to serve as an extension of copyright on his existing books through a plan of appending the dictations to his published work, a proposition to be discussed at length later in this chapter. Also, Twain left instructions that were both vague and farfetched in practicality, such as writing on the first pages of two dictations that they should not be published for five hundred years. His words

read, “Not to be exposed to any eye until the edition of A.D. 2406. S.L.C.” (Twain *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* xxi). Editors faced instructions like the following: “I shall scatter through this Autobiography newspaper clippings without end. When I do not copy them into the text it means I do not make them a part of the Autobiography - at least not of the earlier editions. I put them in on the theory that if they are not interesting in the earlier editions... that age is quite likely to make them interesting.” (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 250).

Taken together, these factors have led some to believe that Twain didn't really intend that his work ever be published, that his dictations were the recreation of a lonely man who loved talking. Indeed, in his autobiographical plans and pronouncements Twain sometimes sounds uncomfortably close to Joe Gould, purported author of much talked about but never found volumes of personal experience and observation, who said his volumes were to be collected after his death, weighed on a scale and divided by weight with two thirds to go to Harvard University and one third to the Smithsonian Institution (Mitchell 625-6).

For a similarly eccentric example of activity concerning Twain's autobiography, in 1900 the man who would later publish the *North American Review* chapters of the autobiography, George Harvey, proposed in his role as Twain's publisher at Harper & Brothers to arrange for the autobiography to be published in the year 2000. The work was to be sealed at Twain's death and reside with a trust company until the twenty-first century. At that time it would be published “in whatever mode should then be prevalent, that is, by printing as at present, or by use of phonographic cylinders, or by electrical method, or by any other mode which may then be in use, *any number of which would doubtless occur to his vivid imagination*” [italics mine] (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 19). In other words, Harvey knew how to appeal to Twain's love of gadgetry, publicity and literary experimentation and guessed that a writer who had already proclaimed he was working on a book not to be published for 100 years hence would be attracted to an offer that combined all three elements. At this point, however, Twain had only about 100 pages of autobiographical sketches and no settled concept of the entire project. Harvey also planned a public dinner for Twain at which the two would sign a contract for the autobiography and “sell autographed

copies for \$50 each” (Strouse 366), although it’s not clear how copies could be autographed at the time the contract was drawn for its publication. It’s also not clear how copies could be autographed for buyers if the autographed copies were to be received in accordance with the stated publication date one hundred years in the future, when they assuredly would be received by the descendants of the buyers. As fantastic as these abortive plans were, they are not immeasurably more strange and unexpected than what actually became of Twain’s work. For example, Twain intended the profits from his book to benefit his descendants. However, the profits from the Mark Twain Project’s edition are benefitting a collection of scholars, albeit a collection devoted to studying Twain and publishing his works. Harvey’s two proposals, which blur the difference between Twain and Gould in the sense that both writers entertained notions about their works that sound ludicrous, serve to point out what an oddity the autobiography was in its origin and publishing history. A great American writer left a work that was partially published, excerpted, truncated and reordered and finally published a century after the writer’s death in what will be authoritative totality by a group of scholars laboring for years like medieval monks or translators of the King James Bible, all within a critical framework doubtful of the work’s value. Popular success was absent for the first partial publication, present for a radical reordering, and it became a bestseller in a presentation the size of a bible. The dinner which never occurred in 1900 is something of a metaphor for Twain’s grandiose proclamations and the book’s outlandish publishing history.

Indeed, Dwight MacDonald said in a 1962 essay that Twain’s autobiography was like “another large edifice, the Colosseum” in that it had served as a quarry for subsequent builders (MacDonald 79), a comment applicable to a limited number of other books. It might be said about Ralph Ellison’s unfinished novel that produced *Juneteenth* and *Three Days Before the Shooting*, for example, but Ellison’s novel has been quarried twice by subsequent builders, not four times. The historian Edward Gibbon’s autobiography resembles Twain’s a bit in the fact that Gibbon himself left no definitive complete version, and publication was posthumous. He wrote six different drafts, some of which overlapped portions of others (Gibbon *The Autobiography of Edward Gibbon* 11-12). His literary executor compiled the known work from the various drafts, adding numerous words of his own and

removing passages he believed to be “unduly revealing, or too personal, or in bad taste” (14). He then sealed Gibbon’s papers so that his own influence upon the work remained unknown for a century, all of which resembles the fate of Twain’s work and the practices of his editors. However, once Gibbon’s papers were unsealed, “an accurate rendering of the several drafts was satisfied in 1896 by their verbatim publication” for scholarly use, and the original literary executor’s compilation was superseded in 1961 by a compilation restoring many cuts the executor made while allowing most of his textual additions to remain (8, 16).

Still, Gibbon’s autobiography did not undergo the cumulative extent of editorial revisions that Twain’s did. Neither did the most famous American autobiography, Benjamin Franklin’s, which had its own tangled fate. It was published a year after Franklin’s death incompletely and improbably in French, and English readers saw only a version translated from French into English until 1818, when “Franklin’s grandson printed an authorized,” but still incomplete, version. Only after the complete manuscript surfaced, again in France in 1868, did it get published complete and in English (Boorstin 583). So seventy-seven years passed between Franklin’s death and the complete publication of his autobiography. In comparable time, Twain’s saw three very different versions, four in eighty years including Michael J. Kiskis’ edition, none close to complete.

Unfinished books like Charles Dickens’ *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* or Raymond Chandler’s *Poodle Springs* weren’t quarried in the sense Twain’s was because other writers finished these works, made them complete, without extensive revision to the original authors’ written words. In contrast, Twain’s book underwent various editorial reconstitutions, but was apparently complete, a judgment not accepted by all his editors. Charles Neider, for example, believed that Twain might have revised his book had he lived, “would have found a sufficient perspective to organize the Autobiography and edit out of it all the irrelevant materials which his odd methods of composition had allowed to sneak in,” perhaps ordering it into a work comparable to Neider’s reordering (Twain *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* xv). Twain certainly returned to many works after intervals of years for further writing or revision, but in the autobiography’s case he signaled his waning interest by a declining number of dictations produced in

each year from 1906 through 1909. The number diminished by fifty percent in each succeeding year, from 134 in 1906 to 70 in 1907 to 34 in 1908 and 9 in 1909 (Emerson 286). Also, he wrote on the first page of the document published as “The Death of Jean,” which he termed to be the “closing words of my autobiography,” that the dictations had been “tedious long labor” (Lystra 247). These sentiments were the exact opposite of those expressed as he began the dictations with Paine. In March 1906, for example, Twain told a reporter, “For five days every week I am busy writing or dictating, and I’m in a modified paradise the while” (Twain *Life as I Find It* 382). Twain constantly changed his literary plans, but Neider’s opinion was probably mistaken. In addition to waning interest, the autobiography had become distasteful to Twain, composed during a period of close association with people Twain believed had betrayed him, and he wrote no other literary work succeeding “The Death of Jean” before his death four months later.

However, the fact of the autobiography being complete did not begin to solve the problems of Twain’s editors. Neider said there was “no definitive text; there is only a typescript in most cases, often in more than one draft” (Twain *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* xxiii). Every edition has differed with the others over which documents deserved inclusion. The Mark Twain Project, editors of the 2010 first volume of three, believed it necessary to divide their volume into two parts, the autobiography proper and “preliminary manuscripts and dictations,” and they excluded three documents appearing in Paine’s 1924 edition from either of their own two parts because they “did not meet criteria for inclusion” (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 2). Paine, who had a financial interest in Twain’s image for the remainder of his life, cut Twain’s harsh language about living persons and some dead ones in his edition, abridged some documents and excluded a few dictations entirely. His financial interest in Twain is demonstrated by the small industry of books by Twain he edited after Twain’s death, including two volumes of letters, two volumes of speeches, two volumes of his autobiography, a selection from Twain’s notebooks and *The Mysterious Stranger* in addition to his three volume biography of Twain. Bernard DeVoto and Charles Neider were both more interested in publishing selections from the autobiography than comprehensive editions, but Twain’s daughter prevented them both from publishing a series of dictations about religion,

and Neider found it necessary to bridge some selections with his own words to achieve his scheme of a conventional chronology. As for the Mark Twain Project, despite having the resources of a dedicated group of scholars and financial assistance in the millions of dollars, the difficulty of establishing an authoritative text required six years of “intensive editorial work” and “will continue for several more” (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* xvii).

To understand why the task took so long for so many scholars, it is helpful to examine one of the Project’s problems, establishing the author’s intended text. A major difficulty was the presence of so many previous hands on the papers. The “central puzzle” of the dictation typescripts made between 1906 and 1909, amounting to more than five thousand pages, was an apparently superfluous number of copies of each typescript for dictations from January to August 1906. Each dictation existed in two to four typescripts with a folder for each dictation. These typescripts of the same dictation had differing pagination, “handwritten authorial revisions” and markings by “at least a half dozen (mostly unidentified) hands, in addition to the author’s.” The Project decided through examination of the paper used, characteristics of the typewriter and typist and differences in pagination that one sequence of pages was the first made from stenographic notes, and the Project logically termed this sequence to be “typescript one” (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 26). Two further sequences, typescript two and typescript four, “were begun in mid- to late June” 1906 so that readers might view the dictations without danger of damaging or losing the single copy. Typescripts two and four were copied from typescript one, not from each other, but two and four end during the dictations of August, 1906, while typescript one continues through 1909. Two and four include material Twain wrote before he began Paine’s dictations, which explains why two and four are paginated differently than one (32). In addition, two and four are paginated differently from each other, which the Project finds attributable to missing pages in two (46). Twain’s agreement with Harvey to provide chapters for the *North American Review* necessitated another copy, typescript three, a composite, because the magazine published selections and rearrangements from the dictations. This also created pagination different from one, two and four, and “because the TS3 [typescript three] batches contained excerpts from several different Autobiographical Dictations, the way

they were filed in the Mark Twain Papers [in the folders with the other typescripts] also created a confusing anomaly until their function was understood” (52). The different typescripts were not superfluous, but overlapping, and inasmuch as some pages were missing from typescript one (Paine discarded some material he decided not to use in his version), the existence of other typescripts containing the missing material gave the Project “conclusive evidence of exactly which of his accumulated drafts and false starts” Twain wanted to constitute his autobiography (670). In other words, typescripts two and four contained some of the documents Twain had written before he began the dictations with Paine, and the Project concluded this indicated which “drafts and false starts” Twain wished to be part of the final autobiography. This finding bolsters the argument that Twain intended his autobiography to be published, at least when these typescripts were created, and that his dictations were not simply a means of assuaging Twain’s need to monologue. If typescript one was a comprehensive record of all the dictations from 1906 through 1909 (except for the pages Paine discarded), then the fact that two and four include material created before Paine’s dictations indicates Twain at some stage was deciding the contents of the entire work. The Project says that the four typescripts were “doubtless” left to Paine as four piles of consecutively numbered pages, and its puzzlement about the purposes of the typescripts would have ended much earlier if the papers remained thus. The project judges that “probably since DeVoto’s time as editor of the Mark Twain Papers” the typescripts had been divided by date of dictation each in its own folder (26).

As an example of complication created by multiple persons marking the typescripts, the first page of the dictation of January 12, 1906, in typescript two, has marks in pen or pencil by Twain, Paine, George Harvey and the stenographer (48). Other pages bear markings by future editors Charles Neider and Bernard DeVoto and DeVoto’s secretary in addition to those by persons alive in Twain’s lifetime. This describes briefly the appearance of the autobiographical papers when they came to the Mark Twain Project. Visiting scholars could view the autobiographical papers, but they were not microfilmed until Twain’s biographer Fred Kaplan paid \$800 for the task (personal interview 2001).

Textual scholarship, briefly, is the study of texts in manuscript, typescript or printed forms with the objective of discovering and correcting errors generated through reproduction. To judge only by the difficulties the Project faced as described in the preceding paragraphs, it is a huge understatement to state that the autobiographical papers posed a textual scholarship problem even before Twain died, and each succeeding editor left traces of his handling. Professor David Greetham of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York has told students in his textual scholarship class that every reproduction or transmission of documents introduces the possibility of changes in the documents. He realized this when he left a text of a colleague's article with a departmental secretary to be copied for a class handout. He scanned the copy and realized the argument in the copied article was the exact opposite of his colleague's position and had occurred because one line of the text had been excised in the copying (Greetham 1998). Determining Twain's authorial intentions for his autobiographical papers was especially difficult because they had been so complicated in compilation and handled so frequently. The possibility of "changes in the documents," as per Greetham's anecdote, was especially high.

A book by Professor Greetham, *Textual Scholarship: An Introduction*, finds that goals of modern textual scholarship derive from practices in libraries in two cities of the ancient world, Alexandria and Pergamum. In Alexandria the major purpose of scholars "was to gather together several manuscripts of the same work to be used as the basis for 'collation' (the comparing of different copies of the same work)" (Greetham 15). Scholars "attempted to reconstruct a putative original form from the comparison of variant copies," using "both marked corruptions and recorded variants" (Greetham 305). In this endeavor, scholars relied "upon individual critical perceptions" to differentiate between work by famous writers and mistakes or material created by scribes. The scholars attempted to "sort the authorial from the non-authorial through collation, but also to create (or reconstruct) an authoritative reading where none of the extant documents seems to represent the expected or appropriate usage." Depending upon the critical acuity of the scholars, such labor could "produce a sensitive and discriminating text responsive to authorial intention" (Greetham 299). The text thus produced is sometimes called a "text that never was" because it never existed until the scholars created it through a process of collation.

Scholars in ancient Pergamum, in contrast, believed it was “impossible to create or recreate an ideal form...and that the only honest course is to select the specific utterance or that extant document which...seems best to represent authorial intention, and once having made that selection, to follow the readings of the document as closely as possible” (Greetham 299-300). This Pergamum methodology could result in “very conservative texts” which today bear the name of “best text” (Greetham 300). These texts necessarily require a copy which appears “complete, consistent, and of good provenance” (Greetham 311).

The whole process of multiple arrangements and recoveries which happened to the autobiographical papers is a case study in modern textual scholarship. The autobiography is not an example of the practices of Pergamum, being nothing like a “best text”. Since the autobiography was never published in its entirety (not even yet), there is no “best text” to find. It is a product closer to Alexandrian practices - a “text that never was,” as was the first edition of Gibbon’s autobiography, compiled from six different drafts.

Errors of transmission and corruptions may not have concerned the Project as much as they have troubled Shakespearean textual scholars, for example, because Twain’s papers are the product of a more orderly age that values original documents from famous authors. But puzzles like the four typescripts and their arrangement in folders, described above, as well as their passage through many hands made the task Alexandrian - a search for authorial words and intentions by collation and beneath an accumulation of markings by subsequent hands. Because Twain’s autobiography is a collection of documents, the Alexandrian resemblance is strong, and the Project made a few choices that are subject to quibbling. For example, the modern scholar should be grateful that the Project included twenty-four documents totaling 199 pages in its “Preliminary Manuscripts and Dictations” section because many are interesting, and all offer insight into Twain’s slowly evolving autobiographical plans. But because the Project decided conclusive evidence about Twain’s intentions consisted of what was included in typescripts two and four, a manuscript titled “Scraps from My Autobiography. From Chapter IX” is excluded from the autobiography proper even though most of it was published in the *North American Review*. The Project

says Twain had decided by August, 1906 “not to include” it in his posthumous book and “never incorporated” it even though he revised it three times (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 155). Also, Twain wrote “Auto.” on the first page of two other documents, “Reflections on a Letter and a Book” and “Something About Doctors,” (181,188) but inasmuch as these two are not in typescripts two and four, they also are printed in “Preliminary Manuscripts and Documents”. The Project accepts four of six existing Florence dictations in the autobiography proper, excluding only “Henry H. Rogers,” which is in “Preliminary Manuscripts and Dictations,” and “Type-Writer Machines,” which Twain inserted in a 1907 dictation with Paine. This last document was published in *Harper's Weekly* in 1905 under the label “From My Unpublished Autobiography,” (22) which gives it the interesting status of being the first published piece from the autobiography, preceding the *North American Review* chapters of 1906-7.

Twain vacillated so much about his autobiographical plans that, as mentioned before, some have doubted he even intended to publish it. In light of the complexities of this work of literature, the Project made a logical, conservative decision to accept the pieces in typescript two and four as the sum of the autobiography and performed a service by allotting substantial space and editorial comment for other autobiographical pieces deemed to be those Twain excluded.

Until the Project’s first volume appeared, Paine’s was the only edition which purportedly followed Twain’s plan, although subsequent editors and scholars noted Paine made many silent omissions of words and passages and questioned his dating of many documents written before 1906 when Paine began his dictating sessions with Twain. Paine began his edition with what he termed to be “Early Fragments 1870-1877,” followed by “The Grant Dictations – 1885,” (adding “The Machine Episode” although unconnected with Grant and written later) “Chapters Begun in Vienna - Written 1897-8” (adding a piece written in 1900) and “Chapters Added in Florence – 1904”. These documents, comprising 265 pages, precede the Paine dictations, which are continued throughout a second volume ending with the dictation of April 11, three months after the dictations commenced. The Project’s first volume coincidentally ends with a dictation of the same time period, March 30, but is a vastly different work, not only with its notes and textual apparatus, but in its selection of texts. It excludes from the autobiography proper almost

every document Paine included prior to the Florence dictations. Most of Paine's selected earlier documents are included in the Project's volume, but in their own category, "Preliminary Manuscripts and Dictations, 1870 – 1905". The Project's rationale for a separate category is that Twain clearly indicated, by his selections for typescripts two and four, the documents to constitute the autobiography. The Project accordingly includes in "The Autobiography" only the Paine dictations, four of the six dictations made in Florence, a manuscript titled "My Autobiography [Random Extracts from It]," three short explanations of Twain's attempts at autobiography through the years and two notes, one in three sections, of instructions pertaining to publishing the work.

Into "Preliminary Manuscripts and Dictations" the Project put "preliminary efforts...that [Twain] reviewed and rejected (but did not destroy) in June 1906". Since Twain did not include these in his autobiography, they are presented by date of composition. In the Project's words, "We include those preliminary texts for which the evidence is reasonably strong, without asserting there were no others" (4).

The Project's explanation of its methods sounds convincing. However, their findings raise a question: Why did Paine, who collaborated with Twain for four years, misunderstand Twain's intentions or knowingly make choices contrary to Twain's wishes? This will be discussed more fully in the examination of Paine's edition below.

The Project also performed other textual labors such as differentiating between punctuation as desired by Twain and punctuation chosen by the typist. Twain's second stenographer, Mary Louise Howden, said Twain "put in the punctuation himself. His stenographer was never allowed to add so much as a comma" (Scharnhorst, ed. *Twain in His Own Time* 321). However, she was new to the task, and Twain may have exercised extra supervision. The Project also needed to distinguish between markings by Twain and all other persons. Paine's handwriting resembled Twain's to the extent of creating uncertainty, and he annotated and "corrected" the text and cut out passages he thought improper for his edition. DeVoto similarly marked the typescripts, "struck through whole sections of the text" and marked through punctuation he thought incorrect "so emphatically" that the original punctuation was sometimes in doubt (*Twain Autobiography of Mark Twain* 672). In modern times, collation might take into consideration, for

example, the manuscript, the typescript, the first American edition, the first British edition and paperback editions. In the case of the autobiographical papers, in contrast, the problems were different because, again, there had never been a complete publication. Issues of collation all took place in the source materials, complicated by the subsequent hands. Professor Greetham's anecdote about error occurring through reproduction or transmission is still to be considered even in studying the Project's version. The quality achieved by a collection of experts on Twain is probably extremely high. The first volume contains 182 pages of explanatory notes plus online textual commentary. Evidence of thoroughness is attested by such efforts as a 125 page document at Berkeley listing variant spellings in the typescripts and running to 1,456 entries (679). Yet even the Project relied upon occasional conjecture in recovering Twain's work. For example, typescript two had missing pages, evidenced by missing page numbers, and these "cannot always be certainly reconstructed, but all surviving evidence shows that the missing pages were identical in content to [typescript four], which is the only complete record of these initial elements in Clemens' plan" (32, 46). Also, Project editors might be able to locate authorial intentions, yet be unable in practicality to carry them out. For example, during his dictation of January 12, 1906 Twain instructed that a "32 page illustrated issue of *Harper's Magazine* commemorating his seventieth birthday" be inserted in the dictation. The Project, deciding that an instruction such as this might have been a reminder to the author himself for possible later revision, elected to make the document available online and not in the volume itself (675). The last example is a quibble, inasmuch as no one could reasonably expect even a scholarly edition to print 32 pages of an article Twain refers to, particularly when the article is available on-line. The example serves to point out how Twain's autobiography, after a century of piecemeal and corrupted delivery, can never be delivered precisely as Twain directed because his directions are sometimes contradictory, impractical or imprecise.

Consideration of different twentieth century editions of the autobiography begins with the *North American Review* chapters, inasmuch as they appeared first, leaving aside the afore mentioned single Florence dictation published in 1905. Michael J. Kiskis, who edited the chapters for their first book appearance in 1990, asserts that Paine, DeVoto and Neider created biography rather than autobiography in their editions because their selections and arrangement “intrude on the self-portrait” of the writer and that only Twain could have arranged “the myriad materials” so as to portray himself. Kiskis believes only the writer “decides the manuscript’s final shape, structure, plan, proportion, and emphasis” in autobiography (Twain *Mark Twain’s Own Autobiography* xvi). Kiskis implicitly asserts the chapters to be the only authoritative edition to the time of his book because Twain had selected, arranged and seen these portions through the press. In the Oxford edition of *Chapters from My Autobiography*, the scholar terms the work to be “one of the final – and perhaps among one of the most successful – of Clemens’ final decade” (Twain 18). Additionally, they “present a unified tale” of Twain’s life and function “as *the* autobiography” (Twain *Mark Twain’s Own Autobiography* xxiv, xxvi). In support of this assertion Kiskis references a 1936 essay by Delancey Ferguson which compares the material in Paine’s edition and the chapters published earlier. Ferguson found that Paine had removed words, sentences and paragraphs from passages in the *North American Review* that he published in his 1924 edition and concluded Paine’s work constituted an “intrusion”. As a result, Kiskis says “it is difficult to believe” the chapters do not “represent what Mark Twain meant to say” and are therefore authoritative as Twain’s autobiography in their particular appearance (xxii).

In cooperating in the publication of the *North American Review* chapters in the form in which they appeared, Twain violated some of his precepts for the autobiography, such as that its publication would be posthumous and that it would observe no order but the chronological order of composition. Undoubtedly George Harvey’s offer of \$30,000 for the chapters exerted strong temptation to Twain to violate his precept, particularly at a time when an average American’s annual income might be much less than \$1,000 (Trombley 115). Similarly, Harvey clearly hoped to sell a maximum number of issues by heading each chapter with the sentence, “No part of the autobiography will be published in book form during the

lifetime of the author” (Twain *Mark Twain’s Own Autobiography* 3). Inasmuch as the published material amounted to two hundred forty two pages in Kiskis’ edition, Twain must have had confidence in public acceptance of his autobiography, or else he would not have revealed a book length portion of it. He had relentlessly publicized his autobiography for years in interviews, even while he had written little, and he must have been confident these chapters would generate greater desire for the posthumous work. This desire for publicity would have been a substantial incentive in addition to the pecuniary motive because, if reaction was positive, it would gratify Twain’s ego and augur well for his book’s posthumous future. Twain always loved praise so intensely that he made it a joking motif, turning a character flaw into a humorist’s professional asset. The extent of the author’s desire for praise and his awareness of this characteristic in himself is shown in a mock serious reply he asked Henry Rogers’ daughter-in-law Mary Rogers to write to Harvey about his public compliments to Twain. Proofs of the magazine chapters contained Harvey’s comments to his readers and praised the author’s “wit unexcelled, philosophy rare...his heart so strong, and his art so masterful”. The autobiography was “wonderful because of its truth, its frankness, its unhesitating and unrestricted human feeling”. Twain asked Mary Rogers to sign her name to these words in response: “To me your praises of him seemed most generous...to him they sounded cold and indifferent, and they deeply saddened him...When we of the family butter [flatter] him we do not do it with a knife, we use a trowel” (Twain *Mark Twain’s Letters to Mary* 44-6).

Publication of the chapters in itself acted as publicity for the autobiography, but even within the chapters Twain planted advertisements for his work. In an example which Kiskis termed to be “titillation” aimed at stoking anticipation, Twain interrupted a chapter with a line of printed stars and explained in a combination of salesmanship and metawriting,

Those stars indicate the long chapter which I dictated yesterday, a chapter which is much too long for magazine purposes, and therefore must wait until this Autobiography shall appear in book form, five years hence, when I am dead” (Twain *Mark Twain’s Own Autobiography* 248,130).

According to Twain, the work of selection was largely Harvey's work. In August, 1906, Twain wrote to Mary Rogers that Harvey read his autobiographical material

to see if he could find a chapter in it good enough...He found twenty-four...I have written Clara that she can take the money and build a house with it. The twenty-four chapters make 100,000 words. Then Harvey went on and read the remaining 150,000 words, and has carried the whole of the MS. to Howells, so that he can do some more selecting." (Twain *Mark Twain's Letters to Mary* 39)

Twain had decreed as he began the Paine dictations that his autobiography would be published as it was composed, in no order but the order of the words in which he told it. Twain therefore became the first editor of the autobiographical papers to violate Twain's command. He rearranged and abridged sections of the dictations extensively. He used material from some of his earlier written documents that the Mark Twain Project puts in its "Preliminary Manuscripts and Dictations" and from the Florence dictations also, splitting documents and inserting them in the order he saw fit. Kiskis provided a useful appendix to his edition which displays in columns the order in which the *North American Review*, Paine, Devoto and Neider editions published the autobiographical pieces. As an example of how Twain broke his own artistic rule about publishing his work in the order of its composition, one sequence of dictations and earlier material appears in the appendix by date as "3/28/06, 7/3/08, 4/5/06, Florence dictations, Early Days, 12/6/06" (Twain *Mark Twain's Own Autobiography* 256). The final chapter begins with material from the date January 11, 1906, two days after Twain began the dictations with Paine, and concludes with material from the dictation of October 3, 1907, thus illustrating how cavalierly Twain treated his own decree. In treating his material thus, Twain was acting as Neider would in his 1959 edition, although Twain did not reorder the chapters as radically as Neider did in order to achieve relation of events in the order of occurrence. He was making a concession, with Harvey's advice, to his public's desire for something approaching a conventional autobiography, although Neider acted from his own sense of aesthetics as well as the same desire for large sales Twain had. Neider said of Paine's edition, which

followed Twain's dictate that the material be presented in the order of composition, "its chief flaw was that it correctly reflected Twain's notions and methods" (Twain *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* xvii). Kiskis wrote that the *North American Review* chapters had dates placed in the margins "beside the text in various places" to assist readers in understanding when the events being related occurred (xx). Twain did so because he recognized as early as his dictations about Ulysses S. Grant that his unorthodox chronology might annoy readers, so he elected to aid them through this literary signpost. He knew readers were so used to chronologically narrated autobiographies that his radicalism might baffle many. He was to prove correct.

The series was titled "Chapters from My Autobiography," emphasizing they were extracts from a larger whole and emphasizing with the possessive pronoun that their author oversaw and approved their publication. Although Twain spoke of Harvey picking the material for his magazine, Kiskis says Twain "did direct the development of the chapters - there are scraps of paper on which he not only identified sections of the autobiography he had with him [during the period in which the selections were made] but also indicated specific sections he wanted to weave into the chapters." Kiskis adds that if Twain left "directives in a bid to maintain control after his death," which he did, it is dubious that he would have left control to Harvey while alive (ibid).

Assuming Kiskis is correct, it is incumbent upon this study to ask what principles guided Twain as he made his selections. The result is a reasonable approximation of an autobiography even though the individual chapters are replete with the stream of consciousness segues which have baffled or annoyed critics. Kiskis offers a clue when he notes that nine of the twenty five chapters "take their cue from Susy's biography". These chapters typically include passages from Susy's actual written words, surrounded by his dictated words, with the result of "infusing memories of Susy with a new energy by setting up a conversation, by reacting to, expanding on, or correcting her observations; her disembodied voice aids him as he traces the variety of family relationships" (Twain *Chapters from My Autobiography* 15). This use of Susy's biography served Twain's autobiographical concept in multiple ways in his complete work. It prompted his memory of events and emotions, thus aiding his scheme of composition

through process of association, and since his goal was self portrayal, the viewpoint of this cherished and adoring person acted sometimes to correct and sometimes to confirm the author's view of himself. In the *North American Review* chapters the use of Susy's biography in more than one third of the installments brought cohesion to a work apparently lacking that. Readers regularly saw a return to a motif to which they'd become accustomed. Additionally, Susy's opinions are sometimes cute, and her father's reflections are often poignant, which adds up to reader appeal. With Harvey's advice or without, Twain's selections considered reader circulation.

The first published chapter began with an introduction by the author that was taken from a dictation of March 20th, 1906 (Twain *Mark Twain's Own Autobiography* 262). In part it read,

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 the present are constantly brought face to face, resulting in contrasts which newly fire up the interest all along, like contact of flint with steel" (3).

The statement is significant, firstly, because Twain is saying his autobiography's unprecedented form and method, which was to displease so many critics and two of his future editors, is of major literary importance, possibly more so than the content. As noted in Chapter One's discussion of subjectivity, Twain's insistence upon viewing his past in contrast with his present (and vice versa) made the autobiography a living document, the work of a man contemplating his memories in conjunction with his own ongoing present. For similar reasons his diary/autobiography form was a convenience, but not a gimmick. It was convenient in that it allowed the author to commit himself to a work of memory without planning what might be discussed a week, month or year later. Also, the reader would constantly be made aware of the living talker at the moment of recollection, so as to vivify the corporeality of an author who'd be dead at the time of reading. Secondly, the statement bestows the author's imprimatur upon the chapters, bolstering the contention that he took a large interest in their selection and arrangement.

Despite Harvey's enthusiasm, the *North American Review* may have paid too much for the privilege of publishing the chapters. In July, 1907, the editor asked Twain to defer his payments for the chapters until 1908 and reprinted the chapters in a supplement to Sunday newspapers, an arrangement which gained Twain no payment except further publicity. The supplement's art editor wrote that Twain told him this reprinting should have carried the subtitle "Hitherto confidentially circulated," Twain's sarcastic comment about the circulation of Harvey's magazine (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 56). Reviews were "complimentary," but without "substantial critical commentary or analysis" (55). An anonymous reviewer wrote less than one month after Twain's death that information about the author's life was "probably not yet at an end, for only a part of the work which he humorously styles his *Autobiography* has been put into print" (Anderson, ed. 282). The reviewer's choice of the adverb "humorously" forecasts a century of critical comment to come.

Personal reactions regarding Twain's characterizations of persons in his chapters were not at all complimentary, at least with regard to those described unfavorably. The daughter of James Lampton, revealed in the chapters to have been the model for the fictional Colonel Sellers, forever talking of riches while feeding his family radishes and water, said Twain had depicted her father as "a foolish, shiftless man unable to keep his family from starvation" (Hill 163). She felt thus even though Twain in the published dictation described Lampton as "manly," "straight," and "honorable" with "a big, foolish, unselfish heart" and a "beautiful spirit" (Twain *Mark Twain's Own Autobiography* 8). In the same dictation Twain described a deceased actor who had played Colonel Sellers as "empty and selfish and vulgar and ignorant and silly, and there was a vacancy where his heart should have been," (9) a description the man's son termed "a cowardly attack" (Hill 163). In the second part of Twain's "Preface" he wrote instructions to exclude from the autobiography's first edition "all characterizations of friends and enemies that might wound the feelings of either the persons characterized or their families and kinship," (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 221) and one might think the instruction was prompted by these or similar reactions. However, the Project dates these instructions as being written in mid-1906 (533), preceding by two or three months the publication of the dictation which elicited anger from the two

persons above. The inference that Twain was affected by criticism regarding his negative characterizations is supported by Paine's comments in his introduction to his edition of the autobiography. Paine wrote that after the chapters appeared, Twain "expressed a willingness that any portions of the work not dealing too savagely with living persons or their immediate descendents should be published sooner" than one hundred years after his death (ix). Of course the words "too savagely" characteristically show Twain leaving the issue to future editorial opinion.

Kiskis' choice of the *North American Reviews* chapters as constituting the most authoritative edition of the autobiography in the twentieth century for the reason that Twain supervised it through publication illustrates the textual scholarship idea of the best text. It is one certain portion of the autobiography as Twain intended it to appear because Twain saw it through the press. In reprinting the chapters as they appeared in the magazine, Kiskis avoids tampering with the autobiographical papers in any sense in which Paine, Devoto and Neider, for different reasons, tampered with them.

The word tamper bears a negative connotation and using that word asks for the sake of fairness that a question be posed: What *were* publishers and editors to do with a multi-volume book consisting of short essays, anecdotes, a combination diary and reminiscence in oral form plus inserted news clippings? One purpose editors serve is to coax writers into submitting work that will be publishable, as in reduction of a two thousand page typescript into seven hundred print pages, as occurred with Thomas Keneally's *The Great Shame*, for example (609). Despite having been a publisher himself, Twain often displayed obtuseness about which literary products reasonably could expect to be published. Theodore Dreiser noted that Twain had to be dissuaded from offering "the most amazing and Rabelaisian stories of his own composition" by editors at Harper & Brothers using "discreet and yet firm diplomacy, in order, as they said, to 'protect Mark' from the violent and fateful public conservatism of Americans" (Fishkin *The Mark Twain Anthology* 182-3). When the autobiographical papers became available for book publication after Twain's death, no direct editorial counsel or persuasion upon the author was possible of course. Thus editors and publishers were inclined, for economic and aesthetic reasons, to make decisions about form

and selection that Twain had declined or rejected, and their decisions are perhaps less surprising than the number of incarnations Twain's work has occasioned.

Paine's Edition

The first pertinent fact in considering Paine's edition of the autobiography is that Paine didn't intend to be its editor, at least not in the first months of his collaboration with the author. He intended to write Twain's biography. The act by which Paine became involved with the autobiography was a hijacking, and it was a hijacking in the sense that it was a radical alteration in Paine's plan after Twain had agreed to his plan. Six months before Paine approached Twain and proposed an authorized biography, the author had considered his friend William Dean Howells for the task (Trombley 38), and therefore he was probably psychologically prepared to submit to a process he had previously felt to be something between autopsy and theft. He had rebuffed all requests from prospective biographers previously. When his brother Orion wrote asking permission to reveal incidents of his early life to a local reporter in 1887, Twain replied thusly:

I have never yet allowed an interviewer or biography-sketcher to get out of me any circumstances of my history which I thought might be worth putting some day into my *AUTO*biography...I have been approached as many as five hundred times on the biographical sketch lay, but they never got anything that was worth printing." (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 11)

The capitalization of "AUTO" in the quotation states plainly Twain's determination to tell his life himself and as he viewed it, without contrary interpretations. Also, Twain always guarded his experiences which might someday earn literary money for him, in this case even from small town news organizations. In a later instance, a man coincidentally named Clemens had written one book about the author in 1892, and when he sought the author's permission to publish more, Twain objected, "Such books as you propose are not proper to publish during my lifetime. A man's history is his own property

until the grave extinguishes his ownership in it. I am strenuously opposed to having books of a biographical character published about me while I am still alive” (Twain *Mark Twain’s Correspondence With Henry Huddleston Rogers 1893-1909* 447). The words “property” and “ownership” explain the tangible value he believed his history held. Twain also suggested hiring a lawyer to go after Clemens if advertisements appeared for the proposed works (ibid). This reluctance to let others profit from his experiences extended into possessiveness of his image, and because he felt he had been cheated and exercised bad judgment in business so frequently, his suspicion easily flared. Even after working with Paine as his biographer for approximately two years, Twain became concerned with his study of Twain’s personal letters without explicit permission and temporarily restrained his use of them (Trombley 166). Evidently Twain’s secretary, Isabel Lyon, prodded Twain to do so on the grounds that Paine might use the letters to portray Twain in some unflattering light. So much did Twain want to control the conditions of his biography that he asked Howells in this period not to provide Paine with Twain’s letters, a request made after the biographer already had possession of them (Shelden 185, 186). More humorously, in 1907 he autographed a book for George Bernard Shaw “inside of the cloth case on the ground that when he autographed fly leaves they were *taken out and sold*” (Scharnhorst, ed. *Twain in His Own Time* 282). This minor eccentricity on Twain’s part is explicable in that it shows how deeply he resented giving anything for free that others profited by. Requests for gratis literary efforts brought stronger reactions. Paine wrote in the second volume of Twain’s letters that Twain developed a habit of venting steam in the form of letters not to be mailed when correspondents made requests he deemed impudent. Newspapers commonly asked noted men of the time to express their written opinions on subjects of the moment without compensation, and when one asked Twain, he wrote, “I can sell my stuff; why should I give it to you? Why don't you ask me for a shirt?...Perhaps you didn't know you were begging” (476). After dissipating his anger through writing down his sincere objection to having something filched from him, Twain would mail a curt decline, in this case citing other work.

Also, Twain vilified individuals in his autobiography for a variety of alleged offenses done to him, for inconveniencing or annoying him or wounding his vanity, but he expended much of his bile upon persons

he believed to have cheated him. In another letter never mailed, Twain assailed a man who wrote that he had turned *Tom Sawyer* into a play and wanted to use Twain's name as well. Also, he invited Twain to be present for the play's opening night in the audience and be recognized as the book's author. Twain's unsent answer was "Your piece will be a Go. It will go out the back door on the first night...How kind of you to invite me...can you be aware that I charge a hundred dollars a mile when I travel for pleasure? Do you realize that it is 432 miles to Susquehanna? Would it be handy for you to send me the \$43,200 first, so I could be counting it as I come along [?]" Twain's mailed reply declined the invitation and threatened legal action (Schuster, ed. *A Treasury of the World's Great Letters* 396). Twain's attitude towards money was complex. He'd been rich, bankrupt and rich again, promoted charities and gave to worthy causes, yet he also once suggested euthanizing his daughter Jean's dog in order to save \$16 in boarding costs (Trombley 171). Considering his anger at those he believed cheated him and his determination to always receive compensation for his labor, it would be logical that Twain knowingly misled Paine in order to obtain the conditions he needed to complete his autobiography. Twain had turned seventy the previous November. He had two unmarried daughters, one with epilepsy, and he thought about his literary productions in financial terms for his daughters' sakes, almost as if one of his books was land he owned beneath a building in Manhattan. He wanted and intended for his literary works to keep paying; it was the reason he kept toying with his autobiography as a copyright extension scheme. If Paine would receive the literary and financial benefits of a biography of America's most famous author from the author's cooperation and labor, then the author would use the biographer to receive literary and financial benefits also.

Therefore when Paine approached the famous writer to ask what others had been denied, Twain had been recently thinking of undertaking the task, yet deeply opposed to giving others value without receiving value in return. As Paine told the story in his biography of the author, he had a professional acquaintance with Twain before he made his request. In 1900 he had sent Twain a book he had written, and Twain replied with "a kindly letter" (v. III, 1257). One year later Paine listened to an address Twain made at the Players Club and "made my thanks now an excuse for addressing him" (1258). Paine

received Twain's permission to use the latter's letters to Thomas Nast while Paine was writing Nast's biography, and he thanked Twain in person for that permission because he was present at the dinner when Twain gave a speech about reaching the age of seventy (ibid). Paine was also present at the Players Club on January 3, 1906 when Twain gave another speech, and on this occasion, Paine says, he conceived the idea of writing Twain's biography, encouraged to do so by another attendee (1261). So when Paine visited the famous author at his home on the following Saturday, Twain knew Paine's professional reputation and had met him casually on several occasions.

Paine says he had not made his purpose known before arriving, and he engaged in small talk before expressing his hope "that I might someday undertake a book about himself...his silence which followed seemed long and ominous". Significantly, Twain's first words in reply were about his autobiography, which he said he had worked on but "tired of" (1263). After further remarks, Twain asked, "When would you like to begin?" (1264) Paine's account has a satisfying storybook quality as related and may be factual. However, there may have been some dissembling on both sides in this account. Paine, a professional biographer, may have made an instantaneous decision thanks to that helpful attendee's suggestion, or he may have made a considered decision based upon his acquaintance with the nation's most famous author. For his part, a man of Twain's astuteness probably surmised the purpose of a visit by a professional biographer before Paine voiced his request. This suggestion is significant because it implies that Twain's "silence" was staged. Twain probably knew what Paine would ask, probably knew his own response and, importantly, probably had decided by the moment he accepted Paine's request that he would alter his agreement and present it to Paine the following Tuesday as a *fait accompli*, knowing Paine would agree, even if reluctantly.

Before leaving with his informal agreement, Paine suggested using a stenographer to take notes while he "prompted the subject to recall a procession of incidents and episodes," as he'd done before as a biographer. Twain said, "I think I should enjoy dictating to a stenographer with someone to prompt me and to act as audience" (1264). Paine did not record Twain as mentioning that he, too, had used dictation

before with happy results, but Paine learned that information on the first day of their work together the following Tuesday. As Paine later wrote, Twain

had been revolving our plans and adding some features of his own. He proposed to double the value and interest of our employment by letting his dictations continue the form of those earlier autobiographical chapters...He said he did not think he could follow a definite chronological program; that he would like to wander about, picking up this point and that, as memory or fancy prompted, without any particular biographical order.” (1266)

In his introduction to his edition of the autobiography, published twelve years after his biography, Paine described what occurred as a result of Twain’s alteration of their plans thusly: “[H]e was likely to go drifting among his memories in a quite irresponsible fashion, the fashion of table conversation, as he said, the methodless method of the human mind” (v.I, vi). Paine’s term “irresponsible” in the latter description, after wrestling with the papers to get them in publishable shape, may offer insight into his feelings about how Twain changed the terms of their collaboration.

On that Tuesday Twain also announced he would pay the stenographer and own the “memoranda” made from them, allowing Paine his use of them. Paine could also “suggest subjects” and “ask particulars,” and their agreement was made within “five minutes” (Paine *Mark Twain* v. III, 1266, 1267).

Twain had discovered dictation as a mode of composing autobiography in Florence. He needed an attentive and friendly audience, and Paine and the stenographer would be that for him. His ego would be gratified, as he discovered while consciously posing for his daughter Susy's biography of him in the 1880's. Also, because he'd decided dictation permitted his tongue to display his mind's process of recollection through association, and the tongue showed the person more truly than the pen, Twain's change of Paine's agreement permitted him to fulfill his artistic conception of the work. In consideration of these inducements, and in addition to Twain's belief in his just ownership of his words, the author probably felt more than sufficient justification for his actions.

Twain could be conniving to the point of being underhanded when he wanted to accomplish a goal, particularly, as in this case, for business purposes, or he could conversely be transparently good-humored in his schemes. When he was enamored with the business prospects for Plasmon, a protein supplement, he attempted to interest Andrew Carnegie by enlisting Carnegie's daughter to convince her father to buy shares. He wrote a letter asking the daughter to give Carnegie "five or six fingers of whiskey and then talk" about Plasmon's virtues with the aim of getting Carnegie's signature on "his cheque for 500 pounds, drawn to order of 'Plasmon Syndicate Ltd', which you will send to me" (Nasaw 634). This action could be construed as a joke between the author and his old friend Carnegie except for Twain's labor in writing out a "three-page prospectus" to accompany the letter, which argues for his underlying seriousness.

As for Paine's feelings about the hijacking of his plans, he never allowed rancor to show in print. In his biography Paine wrote that he "felt himself the most fortunate biographer in the world, as undoubtedly I was, though not just in the way that I first imagined" (v. III, 1268). It would be contrary to human nature if his unexpressed emotions did not contain surprise, irritation and resentment, but if Paine felt such emotions he suppressed them and made his close access to Twain advantageous to himself in ways he didn't anticipate during their initial agreement. Not only was he constantly in Twain's presence, with advantage to his biography (one fifth of the biography concerns the four years of their association), but he actively sought to be the autobiography's editor and had himself appointed editor and executor of Twain's unpublished works in December, 1906 (Trombley 126). Clara soon received foremost authority in this latter privilege (127), but Paine was to have his name on eight volumes of previously unpublished writings by Twain following the author's death in addition to compilations of work previously published and not.

Twain not only misled Paine at the time of agreeing to the biographer's request, but he also misled Paine when he told Paine how the dictations would be conducted. Twain made his alteration to Paine's plan temporarily more palatable by telling the biographer he could freely ask questions during the dictations. However, Paine learned his questions were not welcome. If Paine asked questions during the monologues or pointed out a contradiction, Twain would cease talking and say Paine had made him forget

what he was going to say (Twain *Mark Twain, Business Man* vii). Paine learned not to interrupt while Twain was creating his own book, and having used Paine for his own purposes, Twain honored his agreement to his biographer when his own daily labor on his autobiography ceased. Paine wrote,

In the talks which we usually had, when the dictations were ended and Miss Hobby [the stenographer] had gone, I gathered much that was of still greater value. Imagination was temporarily dispossessed...It was at such times that he allowed me to make those inquiries we had planned in the beginning, and which apparently had little place in the dictations themselves.”

(Paine *Mark Twain* v. III, 1270).

Although Paine made efforts to publish the autobiography as Twain had instructed, questions might be asked about how highly Paine regarded this work which he, in conjunction with Clara, controlled. For example, although Twain stated in writing that “The Death of Jean” was to be the “Closing Words of My Autobiography” and told Paine he could use it thusly, Paine published the piece in *Harper’s Monthly Magazine* in January, 1911 (Twain, *Mark Twain’s Own Autobiography* 245). As Paine wrote in his biography, Twain said, “It is the end of my autobiography. I shall never write any more...If it is worthy, perhaps some day it may be published” (v. III, 1552). Although Twain phrased this instruction both specifically and with a qualification, so that Paine could do as he chose, the piece’s separate magazine publication deprived Paine of having a previously unviewed conclusion for the later work. He may have been uncertain at that point how he would handle the autobiographical papers, or he may have simply recognized “The Death of Jean” as having literary merit that was also timely, and so published it less than one year after Twain’s death. In his introduction to his edition of the autobiography, Paine said the piece “was to be the closing chapter, and such in time it will become. [Twain] wished, however, that it should have separate publication,” a bit of information unmentioned in the biography, “and it is for the present included in another volume” (ix). In these words Paine informed readers that his open-ended edition would have a closure satisfactory to conventional expectations of an autobiography. However, Paine would never use that “closing chapter” because he published two volumes in 1924 and no more, despite

his estimation in a 1933 newspaper interview that complete publication might fill six volumes (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 3). This raises the question why he didn't publish more volumes. Editing the autobiographical papers was difficult for the Project's team of scholars and would naturally have consumed much of Paine's time, so it's not surprising the two volumes didn't appear until 1924.

However, Paine edited two volumes of Twain's letters, two volumes of Twain's speeches and *The Mysterious Stranger* before the autobiography, indicating less than fervid enthusiasm for the work.

Also, Paine's comments about the autobiography show praise and reservation both. This was Paine's opinion of the autobiography in 1917 before the public or critics had seen his edition: "his so-called *Autobiography*, which was not that, in fact, but a series of remarkable chapters, reminiscent, reflective, commentative, written without any particular sequence as to time or subject-matter" (Paine *Mark Twain's Letters* v. II, 795). In his foreword to his 1935 compilation of Twain's notebooks, which he falsely said contained their entire contents despite his extensive abridgement of them, Paine implied that the notebooks might be more revelatory of Twain than any other work, including the autobiography. Paine wrote, "A man in his diary, if anywhere, can have his say. He is talking to himself - his thought and his language are strictly his own". Furthermore, "The entries, whatever their interest, or lack of it - are as he left them," an untrue statement, "and they bring us about as near as we shall ever get to this remarkable man" (xi). In light of the fact that Twain's autobiography was his stated hybrid diary, and in consideration of typical expectations that a person's autobiography "will bring us about as near as we shall ever get" to the writer of it, Paine appears to be stating that Twain's notebooks give readers closer insight into him than his autobiography, which can be construed as a devaluation of the earlier work. Or it might be intended to promote this last work of Twain's that Paine edited.

As editor of the autobiography, Paine attempted to honor Twain's wishes to a substantial degree. He made it a combination diary and autobiography. He published the Grant dictations and many other autographical manuscripts and dictations, although by the Project's standards these are "Preliminary" dictations because they're not part of typescripts two or four. Because Paine chose to include so many of these preliminary pieces, he subtracted substantially from the space available for the dictations made in

his presence. Also, issuing the autobiography thus made it an even more disunified book than it would have been had it consisted only of the dictations, which themselves have displeased many critics through their eschewal of expected chronological narration. Paine's decisions made the autobiography bulkier and divided it into two large disparate parts. This is not to argue that Paine made the wrong decisions knowingly in terms of choosing what he knew Twain rejected or unknowingly in terms of making editorial choices that resulted in a literary griffin. It's likely that Paine chose some pieces that the Project did not because he believed they were interesting and autobiographical, and those critical judgments may have taken precedence over his knowledge of exactly what Twain selected. Evidence for this is in his edition's introduction where Paine praised the "chapters" written "during those busy Vienna winters (1897 to 1899)," the place and period of Twain's long recuperation following Susy's death and his emergence from bankruptcy. For the editor these pieces, which were "recollections of his Missouri childhood," had no superior in charm among Twain's writings (iv-v). These pieces are undoubtedly autobiographical, but according to the Project Paine misdated the well-known piece about "Jim Wolf and the Cats" (155), and he dated "The Tennessee Land" and "Early Years in Florida, Missouri" to the 1870's in his own edition. He apparently attempted to place the preliminary manuscripts in their order of date composition, as Twain had requested the dictations be published, although it appears he misdated some of the manuscripts. He may have been influenced in his selections by the conventional expectation that autobiographies devote space to childhood and youth, and the pieces the Project rejected suited his idea of a narrative of life experiences. Paine was one person with a background in biography and not a team of literary scholars, and he may not have realized that, as the Project decided, typescripts two and four consisted of all documents which Twain chose for his autobiography. That he may not have realized is questionable considering that Paine was Twain's close companion for four years, particularly if Twain took enough interest in his autobiography's fate to instruct Paine about what document might constitute the conclusion, but it's possible.

Public and critical opinion towards Paine's edition was not encouraging, either at its time of publication or later. When DeVoto published his collection of excerpts in 1940, Clifton Fadiman wrote in

the *New Yorker* that Paine's edition was "about as disappointing a book as ever came from the pen of a first-rate writer" (Twain *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* xix). Carl Van Doren, in words reflecting the unmet high expectations Twain encouraged, wrote, "Was Mark Twain really so cautious that the occasional objurgations of this book seemed to him untempered violence? These questions ought to be...not slurred over as they have been by Mr. Paine...Is there any more of it?" Richard Aldington in *The Spectator* described the volumes' content as "the tedium of these desultory disconnected pages". Brander Mathews' opinion was, "it begins anywhere; it doesn't end at all...it is compounded of unrelated fragments; it is haphazard and helter-skelter". And Mark Van Doren in a positive review called it "a jumble of things...Unpublished articles and other scraps on hand were shoveled in to make the manuscript 'complete'...But the Autobiography, shapeless and disappointing as it is, must still be called a great book" because its "imperfections" displayed Twain's "literary sinew" (Neider *Mark Twain* 101-2). And the *New York Times* sounded positive, saying it offered "an extraordinarily complete and rounded picture of the writer," and Twain's plan, which perplexed most critics, ensured "that the interest of the reader is rarely if ever exhausted". Also, the reviewer credited *Tristan Shandy* as a model for Twain. The review's second point is subject to individual opinion, of course, but the first and third points are insightful (Brock).

Like many authors, Twain's literary reputation declined for a period of decades following his death, even though enough new works appeared (five in twenty five years) to create the semblance of animation. This typical decline in reputation plus Van Wyck Brooks's widely read *The Ordeal of Mark Twain*, which portrayed Twain as a failed artist, plus mostly tepid reaction to Paine's edition may have precluded enthusiasm for future volumes. Sentiments such as these may have affected Paine's attitude toward the work and consequently any prospect of publishing more volumes. His second volume ends with an air of inconclusiveness, and well it might. Since it adheres to Twain's instruction that his dictations be published in the order he composed them, its final dictation has no larger structural importance than the dictation it follows. Of course so, too, does the Project's single volume end inconclusively because it, too,

adheres to Twain's instruction. In contrast to Paine's edition, the Project's first volume was a bestseller. But in light of the fact that reviewers for the same national magazine, *The New Yorker*, expressed deeply unfavorable opinions of Twain's autobiography as published by both Paine and the Project, it will be interesting to see if the sales of the Project's second volume approach that of the first.

Paine lived a quarter century past Twain's death and remained his literary executor until he died himself. In cooperation with Clara Clemens and Twain's long-time publishers, Harper & Brothers, Paine in effect kept Twain alive through regular issues of unpublished essays, fiction, speeches, letters, notebooks and his autobiography. These two persons and the publisher naturally had an interest in maintaining Twain's image favorably as well as in issuing his unpublished work. Both interests led to controversies in Paine's career, the latter notably when Paine, in cooperation with Frederick Duneka of Harper & Brothers, selected a "final chapter" in a piece of fiction from among Twain's writing, joined it as a conclusion to a related uncompleted work of fiction and published it as a completed novel by Twain, *The Mysterious Stranger*. Paine and Duneka also changed characters' names in order to maintain their illusion of completion and switched "the grosser acts and speeches of a priest" to an astrologer in order to avoid offense to religious readers (*Twain Mysterious Stranger Manuscripts* 2-3). Because Paine concealed his changes and said Twain had completed the novel, rather than making public his grafting of one piece of manuscript to another, Twain scholar William M. Gibson called the work known as *The Mysterious Stranger* an "editorial fraud" (1). When Paine added some notes and observations to his biography of Twain in 1935, twenty three years after it first appeared, he apparently noticed and amended a passage that might have cast suspicion on him. Paine originally wrote that he had seen different versions of *The Mysterious Stranger* before Twain died and suggested to the author that one of them held a satisfactory conclusion. "He discussed some of his plans, and later I found the notes for its conclusion. But I suppose he was beyond the place where he could take up those old threads." In 1935 Paine added the footnote, "About a year later I found among some papers that startling closing chapter...probably

written about the time of our conversation.” As if to justify his surgery Paine added, “By many it is regarded as the author’s high-water mark” (v.III, 1515).

Obviously these acts by Paine create suspicion about his scrupulousness in selecting and ordering the pieces in Twain’s autobiography preceding the mass of the dictations, but it may be said in his defense that he did follow Twain’s stated plan to publish in the sequence of composition, even if he omitted portions and included manuscripts that Twain rejected, as the Project finds. If Paine had wished primarily to have financial success with the autobiography by compiling a more conventional example of the genre, he might have given readers a complete reordering, like Neider, or a book of excerpts, like DeVoto.

As literary executor of an author with remains so extensive that works were published under his name almost as frequently as if he still lived, Paine understandably became desirous of maintaining Twain’s good image, if only for financial reasons. In a 1926 letter to Harper & Brothers, Paine wrote

I think on general principles it is a mistake to let anyone else write about Mark Twain, as long as we can prevent it...As soon as this is begun (writing about him, I mean) the Mark Twain that we have ‘preserved’ – the Mark Twain that we knew, the traditional Mark Twain – will begin to fade and change, and with that process the Harper Mark Twain property will depreciate.” (Hill 269)

In accord with the tone of his letter, Paine was possessive of Twain’s image to the extent of denying researchers access to Twain’s papers, perhaps with encouragement from Clara, and this possessiveness delayed discovery of substantial bodies of Twain’s writings for decades. Twain biographer Hamlin Hill, for example, discovered an autobiographical manuscript in excess of 400 pages in 1970 (Lystra 316). This possessiveness also generated a literary dispute between Paine and the scholar who would succeed him as editor of the Mark Twain Papers and the next edition of the autobiography, Bernard DeVoto, both of whom left written accounts of their differences (Trombley 247).

In his foreword to *Mark Twain’s America*, published in 1932 while Paine still lived, DeVoto wrote that when he began that book years before, Paine “informed me that nothing more need ever be written about

Mark Twain. The canon was established, and whatever biography or criticism had to say could be found in the six pounds of letterpress that composed Mr. Paine's official Life" (xi). Paine would later say, "The only correct thing about that statement is its grammar" (Paine *Mark Twain* v. I, xxxiii). Having been denied access to Twain's papers, which Paine said were inaccessible in a bank vault, DeVoto engaged in a "species of blackmail," a series of questions he asserted Paine's biography failed to answer, and he threatened "to publish the best ascertainable rumors" if Paine didn't answer them. Paine answered the questions, but "testiness made him remind me that further books about Mark Twain were unnecessary" (DeVoto *Mark Twain's America* xii). Summing up this exchange, DeVoto wrote, "no one else [than Paine] has seen these manuscripts, yet, obviously, they must someday be accounted for. Public benevolence constrains me to offer the Estate my services," thereby asking to be given Paine's position (xiii). Paine's possessiveness, of course, may have been motivated to keep concealed his actions described in regard to *The Mysterious Stranger*, and his letter to Harper & Brothers was written during the same approximate time period when DeVoto made his inquiries. Ironically, when the documentary evidence was in DeVoto's possession, he failed to notice Paine's patchwork on the *The Mysterious Stranger* and praised the book. Twain, DeVoto wrote, "came back from the edge of insanity" in writing *The Mysterious Stranger*, "and brought his talent into fruition and made it whole again" (*Mark Twain at Work* 130).

Paine's response to DeVoto appeared in two places. In "Author's Notes 1935" added to his biography, he referred to DeVoto's *Mark Twain's America* as a good book and its writer as "more talented than exact, and not always pleased with facts as he finds them" (xxxiii). Paine said he'd told DeVoto Twain's papers were "stored in the depths of a safe deposit vault," that "the trustees of the estate would not consent to their removal and that he could not possibly read them where they were". Also, although he had not stated it thus to DeVoto, another reason for his denial of access was that Twain "would have been the first one to resent the use of that discarded material for dissection purposes," (xxxiv) an ironic statement in light of the Mark Twain Project's dedication since the 1960's to providing access to all the author's material for any scholarly purpose. In regard to DeVoto's request for his job for the sake of

“public benevolence,” Paine wrote, “Mark Twain would have enjoyed that – the only humor in an entire book about him” (xxxv).

Paine also responded in his own foreword to his 1935 edition of Twain’s notebooks, in which the first words were,

A superstition, nursed and nourished by a number of persons – most of them too young to have known Mark Twain, too perverse to accept the simple and the obvious, is that because of restrictions laid upon him by his wife, by W.D. Howells, and later by those to whose care he trusted his manuscripts, he has not been permitted to have his say.

Now this is a good way from the truth. Mark Twain had his say; as much as any author could have it, thirty, forty, fifty years ago. When restricted at all it was chiefly through his own expressed wish to observe the conventions and convictions of that more orthodox, more timid and delicate (possibly more immaculate) day” (ix).

Paine was here addressing not only DeVoto’s intrusions, but also the allegations made in 1920 by Van Wyck Brooks that American customs of gentility, in the persons of Howells and Twain’s wife, had in psychiatric terms made Twain a repressed man and failed artist. However, the explicit reference to himself in the words “those to whose care he trusted his manuscripts” is obviously a thrust against DeVoto.

On the same first page of his foreword Paine wrote, “Mark Twain never wrote for publication anything salacious or indecent or bordering on the suggestive,” although Paine follows this statement by mentioning two extremely unVictorian pieces Twain composed for the amusement of selected persons, “1601” and a speech about masturbation. In writing this, Paine addressed an issue Twain caused himself. The author was too successful in creating the impression that the frankest and most truthful autobiography must also be unrestrained in language, discussion of bodily appetites and evaluation of persons and beliefs. People would reasonably expect such from the autobiography when Twain made statements such as the following to reporters in 1907: “I have made it as caustic, fiendish, and devilish as I possibly could.

I have spared no one. It will make people's hair curl" (Shelden 104) . Evidently Paine had heard such allegations, and even DeVoto in his introduction to his edition of the autobiography felt it necessary to write that "The rumor will not do down that the unpublished Papers are full of obscenities" (Twain *Mark Twain in Eruption* viii).

This issue has disappointed critics through the decades as portions of the autobiography have become public. Dwight Macdonald, speaking with knowledge of the published portions and the editors' description of the unpublished, said the autobiography's supposedly shocking statements of belief are reminiscent of what a "village-atheist" might espouse (106). And Garrison Keillor, writing for the *New York Times Book Review* in 2010, complains, "there is precious little that could be considered scandalous – maybe a rant against James W. Paige, the inventor of a typesetting machine that Sam lost \$170,000 on: 'If I had his nuts in a steel trap I would shut out all human succor and watch that trap till he died'" (Keillor). This apparent failure to live up to promised offensiveness in language or opinions fosters in critics the opinion that the autobiography is similar to a swindle, as Adam Gopnick wrote.

In regard to criticism that Twain had nothing really subversive or shocking to say for all his insinuation, it is wise to keep in mind that it's difficult for persons in our time to understand what was transgressive in Twain's. Paine published "The United States of Lyncherdom" in 1923, twenty-two years after Twain wrote it, and "had misgivings about its 'timeliness'" (Twain *Mark Twain on the Damned Human Race* 97). Paine might well have had concerns about its reception during those years of high racial violence in the United States. Paine himself wrote in 1935 that

Some of the things that Mark Twain set down ...were hardly suited to...polite society in that purer pre-war day. Now all is changed. How tolerant the world has grown in a few years...the utterance that twenty years ago was regarded as too highly seasoned for the 'general' has become its daily nouriture" (Paine, ed. *Mark Twain's Notebook* xi)

In those words Paine showed deeper understanding of time's factor in literary transgression than more contemporary critics have. There is ample evidence to support the point of view that Americans in

Twain's lifetime harbored a "dark and fateful conservatism," as Dreiser termed it. Twain commented upon its strength in an April, 1906 "memorandum" concerning Maxim Gorky's visit to New York with his alleged wife, who was in fact his mistress. Gorky's New York hotel evicted the couple when their actual relationship became known, and other hotels refused them lodging. Twain and Howells had formerly committed themselves to appearing at a public dinner in Gorky's honor, but Twain reversed himself when newspapers reported Gorky's situation, one bearing the front page headline "Gorky Evicted Twice in a Day from Hotels" (Scharnhorst, ed. *Twain in His Own Time* 274). In Twain's written opinion,

Laws can be evaded and punishment escaped, but an openly transgressed custom brings sure punishment. The penalty may be unfair, unrighteous, illogical and a cruelty...but I think that the ink was wasted. Custom is custom: it is built of brass, boiler-iron, granite; facts, reasonings, arguments have no more effect upon it than the idle winds have upon Gibraltar." (Paine *Mark Twain* v.III, 1285)

Lest it be thought that Twain was overly timid of incurring public censure in this instance, the fate of Wallace Stevens' poem "Sunday Morning" is instructive. As Twain's autobiography was cut and reordered for publication, so too was Stevens' poem, although in the latter case Stevens assented to the cuts and reordered the poem himself. Three of eight sections of the poem were removed for its 1915 publication in Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* magazine (Stevens *Letters of Wallace Stevens* 183), and the three removed sections implicitly questioned the importance of a traditional Christian afterlife. Non-fiction writing as well could encounter legal restrictions which today sound ludicrous. For example, an essay by Margaret Sanger discussing contraception "was banned on the ground of obscenity" because any mention of "venereal matters violated the Comstock law" (Lepore 48). The significance of societal mores to Twain's autobiography isn't incidental, inasmuch as it pertains, first, to Twain's posthumous publishing stricture. Twain continually thought he needed to restrain voicing his true sentiments, as evidenced humorously through his use of unmailed letters mentioned before. More seriously, Twain's frank and public displeasure with America's adventures into imperialism in 1900 brought written reproach. One

critic replied to Twain's "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" with, "American literature does not contain so shameful a case of disreputable conduct as the action of Mark Twain in his attack." Another wrote that Twain had joined "the prophets of evil, spreading the gospel of discontent" (Hill, 26). At this time Twain had enormous fame and wealth for a writer, and such violently critical language intensified privately held convictions that he recorded later upon the occasion of Gorky's embarrassment. The censure he and Gorky received for their different transgressions warned that celebrity and money were vulnerable attributes, particularly when they stemmed from a product dependent upon popular approval. In a further example, the illustrator for *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, Dan Beard, held socialist views and produced illustrations which portrayed the upper class and clergy of the novel's time period in comical or unfavorable poses. Beard stated in his own autobiography that his work pleased Twain but "grievously offended some big advertisers" and "were removed from future editions" (Scharnhorst, ed. *Twain in His Time* 164). American writers aren't typically answerable to advertisers, but Twain at this time owned a publishing house and was convinced he would soon hold ownership in a new typesetting machine, business activities susceptible to financial pressure. Twain, who always reproached himself for mistakes large and small, real and imaginary, would have understood the consequences of breaking no laws, but offending financial and religious interests.

These observations about perceived or actual constraints upon what might be openly said and done in Twain's time period obviously have pertinence regarding the liberties he said he would take in his autobiography, particularly in relation to the degree to which his autobiography is perceived to fall short of what he claimed. Thus it's not a digression, but has bearing upon a discussion in Chapter Four about the degree to which Twain's autobiography is, as critics have complained, without introspection, that it "goes no deeper than the top surface of the writer's mind" (Macdonald 81). The extent of the discussion here arises from the entry into this narrative of actions and personalities responsible for the first two posthumous incarnations of the autobiography. The second incarnation, published in 1940, bore a title, *Mark Twain in Eruption*, that apparently promised the "caustic," "fiendish" and "devilish" language with which Twain had promoted his book in 1907.

DeVoto's Edition

After Paine's death in 1938, DeVoto succeeded him as editor of the Mark Twain Papers, but not as literary executor, which meant Clara Clemens controlled DeVoto's selections for publication (Trombley 247). The death of the man he argued with didn't prevent DeVoto from writing that, unlike Paine, he had "freely opened" the Mark Twain Papers "to study by qualified scholars" (DeVoto *Mark Twain at Work* vii). According to DeVoto, his professional duties also prompted him, "as an agent of the Mark Twain Estate and of Harper & Brothers...to read the unpublished Mark Twain papers and to determine which of them, in my judgment, were worth publishing" (Twain *Mark Twain in Eruption* vii). That Harper & Brothers asked this of DeVoto sixteen years after they published the first two volumes of the autobiography is evidence that the publishers lacked enthusiasm for future volumes in the form in which they had appeared previously, even if the publisher wished to keep mining Twain for dollars.

DeVoto saw value in the unpublished dictations, but "if the book were to interest more than a small group of students and collectors, some surgery must be done on the text" (ibid). The results of DeVoto's "surgery" appeared with no claim to be Twain's autobiography at all. The book's subtitle was "Hitherto Unpublished Pages about Men and Events," (iii) which neatly avoids questions about autobiography entirely while being completely factual. DeVoto's choice of content, largely "about Men and Events," reflects the editor's expertise, for while he often wrote insightfully about literature, his Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award were earned for history. As for literary criticism, in 1932 DeVoto had termed that field to be "that department of beautiful thinking," not a compliment, and pronounced it "too insulated from reality for my taste" (DeVoto *Mark Twain's America* xi).

It is ironic that the *Autobiography* has been dismissed by so many critics for lacking form, and yet every edition has been guided by its editor's vigorously expressed consideration of form. As said, Paine largely followed Twain's instructions in terms of form, even if he was unaware or uncaring of precisely what documents Twain desired to include. If Paine knowingly included documents Twain rejected, this,

too, represents Paine's consideration of the work's form. If he considered the dictations to be "a series of entertaining stories and opinions – dinner-table talks," (Twain *Mark Twain's Autobiography*, v.I, vii) then his edition reflects that opinion, for Paine's edition is the most disunified one.

DeVoto's edition initially appears even more disunified, consisting of an assembly of dictations grouped into categories, each of which has a theme or person pertinent to each dictation contained therein. The categories in order of appearance are "Theodore Roosevelt," "Andrew Carnegie," "The Plutocracy," "Hannibal Days," "Two Halos," "In A Writer's Workshop," "Various Literary People," "The Last Visit to England" and "Miscellany," the last representing selections DeVoto found merit in even if they defeated his attempts to unify them. Obviously DeVoto discarded Twain's commands about publishing the dictations in order of composition, and he also needed to make cuts where individual dictations segued from the category subject into whatever else. However, even if these choices create a perception of disunity, DeVoto's assembly, whether he knew it or not, actually is based upon his evaluation of Twain's natural narrative form, as he considered it in his 1932 book *Mark Twain's America*. "About half of the 'Autobiography' consists of anecdotal reminiscences told solely for the sake of the story," he wrote.

[Twain] took the humorous anecdote, combined it with autobiographical reminiscence, and so achieved the narrative form best adapted to his mind...His fiction is episodic...Form, as a reasoned and achieved technique, was not possible for him. The mode of creation that expressed him was a loosely flowing narrative, actually or fictitiously autobiographical – a current interrupted for the presentation of episodes, for, merely, the telling of stories...The oral anecdote thus becomes a narrative interlude, a sophisticated art form charged with the expression of genius." (244-5)

This interpretation of Twain's narrative mode accounts for DeVoto's arrangement of *Mark Twain in Eruption*. Seeing the autobiography as a collection of "episodes," DeVoto grouped them by subject and cut the links between other subjects within individual dictations and between dictations also, creating selections that in consequence appear essayistic.

If DeVoto believed that Twain's fiction was "episodic," that he expressed himself best in "loosely flowing narrative," then he would appear to be stating that in his opinion Twain was flawed as a novelist, for respected novelists usually possess highly tuned skills of structure. However, DeVoto expressed the opinion that "fundamentally [Twain] was a novelist" (Twain *Mark Twain in Eruption* xxii). The statement may not be a contradiction for DeVoto because he made it in conjunction with explaining why he believed the *Autobiography* was an artistic failure. Twain wanted his work to be "the naked revelation of a man in the light of eternity. The intent was there – but the capability was not." Instead, he could only achieve his "revelation" by "forging it into the symbols of fiction," which DeVoto thought was expressed most completely in *The Mysterious Stranger*, the version DeVoto apparently didn't know Paine altered. This was "the final word on what he found inside himself and his final expression of the years in Hannibal that had shaped him once and for all" (xxi). In other words, DeVoto believed, like numerous critics, that Twain's fiction was an amalgam of autobiography and imagination, that he couldn't have written fiction without autobiography as its creative core and that the *Autobiography* was superfluous if revelation of Twain's life and psychology was sought because revelation of those elements was contained in his fiction.

DeVoto liked much content in the autobiography and valued Twain's writing as "a sophisticated art form," but he apparently cared nothing for Twain's plan. In his edition's introduction DeVoto criticized Paine again, writing,

If I should follow the plan of my predecessor, Mr. Paine, which was to publish selections in the arrangement Mark Twain originally gave them, interspersed as they were with trivialities, irrelevancies, newspaper clippings, and unimportant letters – disconnected and without plan – then I should come out with something as shapeless as the published portion, which had always seemed to me to be an annoying book...[but] by omitting trivialities and joining together things that belonged together, I could make a book which, I thought, would interest many people" (vii-viii)

DeVoto's words testify to editorial self-confidence bordering on brashness, displayed also in his dispute with Paine, but his words also point to the nature of Twain's work that in part made it modernist. DeVoto perceives it as "shapeless," without plan," and "annoying" in the sense that it offended his sense of coherent narrative, even though his words quoted above astutely characterize Twain's strength as a renderer of episodes. And although DeVoto grants high praise in his concluding line, he also qualifies his praise in the phrase "for, merely, the telling of stories," as if the achievement in form was spent upon a humble product. But DeVoto's facile explanation of his editorial procedure, simply "joining together things that belonged together," states that at least when encountering autobiography, this editor had no recognition of the modernist characteristic of fragmentation of narrative. In a very different incarnation Charles Neider would be motivated by a similar aversion nineteen years later. Neither editor could abide an autobiography that didn't unfold its author's life from birth to end of composition. Neider, as will be discussed, made Twain's work just that. DeVoto didn't recognize Twain's book as an autobiography and so made it into a product of a different genre, essays of reminiscence or commentary.

As a rough parallel to how Twain's method of composition left his book open to radical reordering by others, one could look to a modernist or even post-modernist work, *The Unfortunates*, by B.S. Johnson. A *New York Times* book review of 2008 bore a title apt to both Johnson's novel and DeVoto's editorial work on the autobiography, "Piece This One Together". The novel is sold in "a box of 27 unbound chapters," with the first and last labeled and the other twenty-five "to be read in any order we choose". Not only does the novel's form, a collection of excerpts which the reader is invited to shuffle like a card deck, resemble what DeVoto decided Twain's work needed, but the review's next sentence unwittingly links Johnson's novel to Twain's autobiography in another vital resemblance. "Far from some modernist stunt, the form of the book dovetails beautifully with Johnson's subject – the accidental yet persistent nature of memory," the reviewer writes, and the novel "captures perfectly the way memory springs on us unawares, not in the tidy manner of a narrative flashback, but in shards" (Taylor 14). Twain's stated aim, to reiterate for sake of comparison, was to tell his life through process of association, to begin with memories generated through a newspaper story or letter in the morning mail and then explore attendant

memories stimulated by an associated link within the first recollection, like a boat continually turning into diverging streams.

It's interesting that a review of a modernist novel in 2008 notes that the novel's form is dedicated to a theme which Twain attempted a century ago with similar dedication and conscious attention to form as a means to convey the theme, but in autobiography. Twain didn't know that his chosen form would invite DeVoto to rearrange his work so that it might be read in any desired order, like *The Unfortunates* is constructed, but he whimsically considered making his own surgery upon his text for the purpose of extending copyright to his existing books by appending portions of his autobiography like footnotes along each page. Interestingly in terms of comparison between Johnson's novel and Twain's work, a book store buyer said of the Project's first volume of the *Autobiography* that no one would read it straight through, and no one would finish it, but readers would read bits over time (Bosman). This comment notes a resemblance between Twain's work and the novel's invitation to be read in order of inclination, but reading Twain's work thus would defeat his method of frequently continuing subjects from one dictation to another in the manner in which humans may end one day revolving an issue and wake the next to find themselves revolving the same issue still. Therefore Twain's plan was not that of the novel's, although they share a theme of memory expressed in distinctly different ways. The novel's invitation to be read at random resembles how memory doesn't follow a chronological order. The *Autobiography*'s process of association involves the recalling of memories which are then recalled again later, one leading to another and another. In seeking to impose his idea of order, DeVoto largely invalidated Twain's memory theme but demonstrated how Twain's work could be divided and reordered like *The Unfortunates*.

DeVoto not only reordered the dictations with no attention to date order, against Twain's command, but he also printed partial dictations in order to keep the dictation subjects as much as possible within his created categories. As the editor wrote in his edition, "I have left out what seems to me irrelevant or uninteresting." (ix) He also divided sentences "that had got intolerably long because Mark was lounging in bed and talking with such comfort that he forgot the shortness of a reader's breath," (viii) not

considering that Twain might have employed languous sentences as a simile to his mind's flowing thought.

DeVoto claimed he stopped short of censoring any dictation, but his introduction contains qualifications in regard to Twain's dictations containing assertions about or characterizations of persons. DeVoto omitted some dictations concerning the author's "experiences with publishers" because "what he said was fantastic and injurious" (x). Because the dictations the editor included about some publishers such as Elisha Bliss and Charles Webster are rife with insulting allegations, the reader may wonder how DeVoto made his selections. For example, he included a dictation where Twain says Elisha Bliss agreed to his request for a book contract giving Twain one half the profits above manufacture, but actually presented him with a contract for seven and a half percent royalty and said it was the equivalent (152). This dictation also carries Twain's opinion that Bliss only told the truth once in his life, and the telling of the truth killed Bliss (154). He also included the dictation in which Twain says his book publishing partner and nephew by marriage Charles Webster "squandered" Twain's share of a book's profit in the amount of \$100,000 and harmed their business through addiction to a drug for neuralgia: "It stupefied him and he went about as one in a dream" (190-1). The editor said the selections he chose to publish should not be regarded as "history; they are crowded with inaccuracies, distortions, and exaggerations" (x). He said he chose those dictations mentioned above and others like them because they were "interesting" and "help to reveal Mark Twain" despite their vilification of persons (xi).

However, he omitted others "because the exaggeration gets so far into phantasy that it becomes a trivial rage. I have left them out as units, and the texts I publish are not emended" (ibid). He included thirty one pages about Bret Harte, about whom Twain said, "his heart was merely a pump and had no other functions" (265). Yet he left out a dictation about Harte which "rakes up a distressing episode...but it is irrelevant" (xi). DeVoto's stated reasons for omissions, given the uncomplimentary characterizations in so much he included, don't sound completely consistent, and one suspects he had either inhibitions for legal reasons or a restraining hand upon him. This suspicion is strengthened by his comments about the Thomas Bailey Aldrich Memorial Museum dictation, in which Twain describes Aldrich's widow as "a

strange and vanity-devoured, detestable woman! I do not believe I could ever learn to like her except on a raft at sea with no other provisions in sight” (293). DeVoto noted about that dictation that Twain placed a “prohibition” against publishing a passage in it for seventy five years “in the text itself”. The editor wished to publish this dictation, but feared “certain other passages,” in addition to the one Twain noted, “would cause pain to living persons” (xii). Therefore he sought advice from Clara Clemens, who permitted publication of the passage “provided I could edit the passage so as to remove the offense. I have therefore in this single instance...omitted relevant parts of the text” (xii). That DeVoto resigned his position in 1946 in disagreement with Twain’s daughter increases the suspicion Clara’s intercession contributed to DeVoto’s complicated explanation of his editorial choices in the two previous paragraphs. As Laura Trombley wrote, Clara accused DeVoto “of wanting to publish manuscripts that would hurt her father’s reputation” (247). Also, when Charles Neider examined the autobiographical papers in preparation for his own 1959 edition, he found written on three of the religious dictations from June, 1906, “Edited, for publication in *Mark Twain in Eruption*, but omitted at the request of Mme. Gabrilowitsch” (Twain *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* xx). Gabrilowitsch was Clara’s married named, but the designation of “Mme.” rather than Mrs. hints at irritation on DeVoto’s part. DeVoto undoubtedly chose the form and content of his selections largely from personal taste, yet he was guided by interests financial in the entity of Harper & Brothers and interests of propriety in the person of Twain’s daughter.

Despite these caveats about the editor’s restrictions, that DeVoto largely used the autobiographical material he wished in the arrangement he deemed best is attested to by his statement, “The portions of the typescript that remain unpublished are also, in my opinion, without general interest.” In other words, DeVoto believed he had extracted from the dictations all verbiage with commercial viability, even though he anticipated laborers with different objectives would follow him. Continuing presciently, he wrote,

Scholars will eventually have a gorgeous time working them over, sifting them, and trying to make out how true or false they may be and what relation they may have to the biography and criticism of Mark Twain (the Papers I have gone over could furnish forth

several dozen Ph.D. dissertations), and collectors will regret that the whole typescript has not been published. I can only say that my desire – which is supported by my instructions from the Estate and the publishers – has been to produce a book for the public, not for the special interests of scholars and collectors.” (xiv)

DeVoto’s choice of material and arrangement, notably in the sections “Teddy Roosevelt” and “The Plutocracy,” naturally reflected his interests as a historian, and he found Twain to be farseeing in his forebodings that Roosevelt’s massive popularity and aggrandizement of federal power represented a human desire to be ruled by monarchy. DeVoto wrote in 1940, “[Twain] said that the end was monarchy; he meant what our generation calls dictatorship” (xxvii), alluding to events in Europe and Asia and possibly to his own era’s Roosevelt, who was then seeking an unprecedented third presidential term.

This is not to say DeVoto devalued the *Autobiography*’s non-historical content, either in Paine’s volumes or his own. He appreciated in Paine’s “the fragrance of Hannibal” and Hartford, “the fantasia composed about Orion Clemens” and “the painful tenderness in the portrait of Susy” as well as “the nuggets and flashes of light that are plentifully distributed through both volumes” (xxii). In his own volume he appreciated “the sketches of his publishers and literary friends,” and “memories of how his books were written.” But in support of the statement that DeVoto’s background as a historian guided his choices, DeVoto wrote,

“Most of all, I am glad to spread on the record the feelings and opinions of a man who had grown old as the nineteenth century in America ran out and who found himself not too assured about his country and his countrymen in the first decade of the twentieth century. What is added to the portrait of Mark Twain by this book is the citizen of the first Roosevelt Era looking toward our own time with a strong foreboding...In what Mark has to say about the government and the plutocracy at the moment when the American empire is achieved he typifies his generation’s confused surprise at finding contradictions in the American axioms. The man of good will...perceives that there is something wrong.”

(xxii-xxiii)

Accordingly, a quarter of the book's selections occupy the sections "Theodore Roosevelt," "Andrew Carnegie" and "The Plutocracy".

The highly unfavorable opinion Twain held of Theodore Roosevelt, dictated during his presidency, stemmed from a combination of grievances and forebodings that were both personal and political. It's not likely that Twain knew the opinion Roosevelt expressed of him in a letter to his son in 1907. Speaking of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, the President said Twain was "a man wholly without cultivation and without any real historical knowledge...There is nothing cheaper than to sneer at and belittle the great men and great deeds and great thoughts of a bygone time" (Fishkin *The Mark Twain Anthology* 1). But Roosevelt's comment is truly autobiographical of himself because he believed in the grandeur of great men and deeds and thoughts, whereas Twain tended to believe them grandiose, and inasmuch as he and Twain met and conversed, Roosevelt may have sensed he and the author shared little except gifts for dramatic statements and outsize egos. As for Twain's opinion of Roosevelt, in a dictation Paine omitted from his volumes Twain said, "our President is *the* representative American gentleman – of today...We are by long odds the most ill-mannered nation, civilized or savage, that exists on the planet today, and our President stands for us like a colossal monument visible from all ends of the earth". A few lines later Twain reveals the immediate source of his venom to be Roosevelt's congratulations to General Leonard Wood after he "penned up six hundred helpless savages in a hole and butchered every one of them" in the Philippines (Twain *Mark Twain in Eruption* 33). Twain so continually interweaved or segued from the personal to the political and philosophical in his dictations that the practice constitutes a motif in his work, and this dictation allowed Twain in one morning to vent spleen upon American imperialism, a specific act of mass murder during wartime and a president whom Twain feared represented the country's future. Roosevelt is criticized in dictations of nine different dates in DeVoto's edition for his espousal of imperialism, for his personal boisterousness, for his handling of racial issues, for his policy of government centralism, for questionable electoral practices (among which Twain places

Roosevelt's assault on the business trusts) and for the failure of a bank in which Twain had fifty-one thousand dollars.

This last charge came in November 1907, long after Twain had formed his antipathy for Roosevelt, but since Twain had gone bankrupt once before, his blame in this instance probably placed the president among the crowd of men whom Twain hated for allegedly swindling him, a location of eternal damnation in Twain's brain. A summary of this dictation illustrates Twain's composition by segue and interweaving of concerns within one dictation. "This has been a strange panic," he began, "there are no hysterics, no frenzies...The conditions make one think of a mighty machine which has slipped its belt and is still running...but accomplishing nothing. There has not been a single important failure in the financial world" (4). Twain said big industries were laying off a few thousand employees each, but there was a "far wider and more disastrous laying off that does not find its way into the newspapers...the discharging of one employee out of every three in all the humble little shops and industries" with the consequent reductions in employed servants, governesses and counter clerks.

And then, in his habitual fashion of seeking villains whenever he entered business trouble, Twain said, "A blight has fallen everywhere and Mr. Roosevelt is the author of it. Last week a prodigious and universal crash was impending and but for one thing would happened: the millionaire 'bandits' whom the President is so fond of abusing in order to get the applause of the gallery, stepped in and stayed the desolation" (5-6). Twain referred here to the efforts J.P. Morgan captained to keep credit flowing in the absence of today's financial regulatory agencies. Although Twain had criticized men of vast fortunes ever since he wrote in 1869 that Cornelius Vanderbilt lacked a soul (Twain *Collected Tales, Sketches, Speeches, & Essays 1852-1890* 289), the influence of Henry Rogers, his friend and Standard Oil millionaire, probably modified his opinion here and may have contributed to his loathing for the President. Twain did not logically establish that Roosevelt's clash with America's business trusts caused the panic, of course, but logic often escaped the author when he sought culprits for his financial problems. Since Rogers did, indeed, work with Morgan and other financial behemoths to prevent the crisis getting worse (Strouse 565), Rogers may even have instigated the dictation through conversation with Twain.

And Twain had personal anger about the panic. “The great financiers saved every important bank and trust company in New York but one – the Knickerbocker Trust Company...Of course I had to be a depositor in the only concern that got into trouble – it was just my luck. I had fifty-one thousand dollars there” (Twain *Mark Twain in Eruption* 6). Twain blamed Roosevelt even though he was advised by Henry Rogers the previous January to deposit in the Knickerbocker because it paid high interest (Shelden 147).

To conclude the dictation, Twain told an apparently irrelevant humorous story about a young man who could not get through a crowd to hear Twain talk to the Young Men’s Christian Association. He and his secretary Isabel Lyon were already seated when Lyon went to look for invited friends the main entrance. As the frustrated young man “almost got his body into the closing door,” he was “pushed by a big officer,” and he said, “I have been a member of the Young Men’s Christian Association in good standing for seven years and never got any reward for it, and here it is again – just my God damned luck!” Despite what his critics have said, Twain was seldom irrelevant in his dictations, and he added the simile, “I do not feel as profane as that – still I sense the situation, and I sympathize with that man” (6-7).

Quite a bit of hidden motivation and craftsmanship was in the dictation just summarized. Twain blamed Roosevelt for his loss of the fifty-one thousand dollars because Roosevelt had attacked the trusts, represented in Twain’s mind in part by the person of his friend Henry Rogers. In Twain’s convoluted logic, this contributed to the panic, which was stanching by a consortium of millionaires including Rogers. The failure of the Knickerbocker, construed by Twain as his personal “God damned luck” in a deterministic universe, bore extra indignation because the Knickerbocker’s president had allied himself with an old business antagonist of Rogers’ in a scheme to inflate the price of shares in a copper mining operation using depositors’ money. The scheme’s failure caused losses of fifty million dollars to the bank president and Rogers’ antagonist and precipitated the bank’s problems (Shelden 148-9). Since Twain tended to hate his chosen villains for all aspects of their personalities, behavior and even associates, it’s possible that the bank president’s friendship with Stanford White contributed to Twain’s negative opinion of the latter man, expressed during the trial following his murder.

Lest this discussion appear to portray Twain as irrationally petulant in this instance, it should be noted that others at the time also perceived Roosevelt as culpable for the panic. Although the failure of the Knickerbocker president's scheme was "the initial cause of panic," according to Edmund Morris in his biography of Theodore Roosevelt, the President amplified the country's financial unease by speaking flippantly of Wall Street's straits. "Do I look as though those Wall Street fellows were really worrying me?" Roosevelt said. "I've got them on the run" (*Theodore Rex* 497-8).

Twain's ire about his money was needless because the Knickerbocker recovered in a few months and paid every depositor in full (Shelden 152), but the dictation illuminates Twain's capacity for rationalization and illogically blaming some and absolving others. Twain couldn't blame his friend and financial savior Rogers for advising his investment in the Knickerbocker, but he had to fix blame on someone, so he blamed Roosevelt, whom he already fervently disliked. The dictation fulfills Twain's pronouncements about his autobiography's objectives: It shows Twain's psychology in process, the displacement of his anger, his deterministic brooding that he was not responsible for his misfortunes, his concern for his nation and ordinary people, and it even reveals Twain's humor and ego in the tailoring of what sounds like an old joke to his personal circumstances. In Twain's telling, the crowds wishing to hear him talk were so huge police had to forcibly repel the excess. It would appear that the profane young man actually said the words that Twain sympathized with inasmuch as Lyon recorded them in her diary after the event (*Twain Autobiography of Mark Twain* 620). However, lacking that evidence, the scholar of Twain's autobiographical habits, particularly his habit for fictionalizing within non-fiction genres, might suspect that the young man existed only within some old anecdote, a suspicion bolstered by other examples of Twain adapting old jokes and stories for use in his work and claiming them as personal experience, as will be documented in Chapter Four.

Eight months after the dictation just examined, Twain expressed his fears for his country's future in another DeVoto selection. In 1874 Twain had written to Howells that he expected the United States to eventually become a monarchy because, firstly, "It is the nature of man to want a definite something to...obey: God and King, for example" (*Twain Mark Twain in Eruption* 1). Secondly, this desire would

manifest itself concretely when “vast power and wealth, which breed commercial and political corruption and incite public favorites to dangerous ambitions” became entrenched nationally. Twain said in the dictation that his forecast had borne fruit because “For fifty years our country has been a constitutional monarch with the Republican party sitting on the throne,” and “it passes from heir to heir” (2-3). The “monarchy” maintained its power through cooperation with “a number of giant corporations in the interest of a few rich men” by fostering “extraordinary tariffs” (3). Twain’s target, again, is Roosevelt, and specifically the President’s advocacy of his Vice-President, William Howard Taft, to succeed him as President. “[F]ormerly our monarchy went through the form of electing its Shadow by the voice of the people, but now the Shadow has gone and *appointed* the succession Shadow!” (4). Twain had at least the consolation of being correct when Taft was elected later that year, and one historian agreed with Twain that Taft’s election resembled an appointment: “Only two or three times in American history has an incumbent President been able to pick his successor and get the nation to accept him...Roosevelt practically gave the country an ultimatum to take Taft or take himself for a third time, and the country without a whimper took Taft” (Armbruster *The Presidents of the United States* 255).

The author’s forebodings about his country’s political future bundled together a collection of perceived trends including one party rule, Roosevelt’s actions and personality, the political power of big money and the desires of the American people. In a dictation of December 13, 1906, Twain warned of the “worship of gauds, titles, distinctions, power...we have to have somebody to worship and envy...we worship money and the possessors of it – they being our aristocracy.” American media, he said, understood this desire and catered to it. Twain said the newspapers “even leave out a football game or a bull fight now and then to get room for all the particulars of – according to the display heading – Rich Woman Fell Down Cellar – Not Hurt” (Twain *Mark Twain in Eruption* 64-5).

Obviously Twain’s method mixed seriousness, ridicule and sarcasm in a form which blurred differences between the philosophical and the personal, and this is exemplified in DeVoto’s selection from March 20, 1906. Published within “The Plutocracy,” it gives insight into the editorial choices of Paine, the Project and DeVoto. In addition, it demonstrates how Twain could use one object of criticism

within a dictation to provide him with an appropriate associative link to a second object of criticism. The dictation also demonstrates how Twain could interweave his ire at individuals who accumulated massive wealth (and consequent public respect) with ire at their misinterpretations of Christianity as Twain viewed it. Paine omitted it entirely inasmuch as its targets were John D. Rockefeller and his son John Jr, both alive in 1924. That the dictation attacked the biblical Joseph as well probably affected Paine's decision to exclude it on the grounds that it might offend public religious sentiment. The elder Rockefeller had died one year before DeVoto's edition, but John Jr. lived to read his father described by Twain as "the richest man in the world, and this makes his son's theological gymnastics interesting and important. The world believes that the elder Rockefeller is worth a billion dollars. He pays taxes on two million and a half. He is an earnest, uneducated Christian and for years and years has been Admiral of a Sunday school in Cleveland, Ohio". (Twain *Mark Twain in Eruption* 84) The younger Rockefeller and his "Bible Class adventures in theology" were described as

a plain, simple, earnest, sincere, honest, well-meaning, commonplace person, destitute of originality or any suggestion of it. And if he were traveling upon his moral merit instead of upon his father's money, his explanation of the Bible would fall silent and not be heard of by the public." (83)

As an example of John Jr.'s "adventures in theology," Twain recites Christ's advice to the wealthy man seeking salvation to "Sell all thou hast and give to the poor." According to Twain, the younger Rockefeller interpreted Christ's words to mean, "Whatever thing stands between you and salvation, remove that obstruction at any cost," understood by the Rockefellers as meaning their riches wouldn't impede the salvation of father and son (83-4).

Twain's comment that newspapers catered to Americans' obsession with the rich appears obliquely in this dictation also:

Every Sunday young Rockefeller explains the Bible to his class. The next day the newspapers and the Associated Press distribute his explanations all over the continent and

everybody laughs. The entire nation laughs, yet in its innocent dullness never suspects that it is laughing at itself...these analyzations are exactly like those which [the people] hear every Sunday from its pulpits, and which its forebears have been listening to for centuries without a change of an idea – in case an idea has ever occurred in one of these discourses.”

(83-84)

Four pages into the dictation Twain arrives at its associative spur, an invitation to talk at John Jr.'s bible class. It's associative because it brings to his mind a number of intertwined religious and financial issues the author has contemplated and permits his discussion of them. He can talk about the Rockefellers and their gospel of righteous riches as well as about traditional theological tenets and public fascination with the the rich.

In his three page reply to the official sending the request, inserted within the dictation, he declines “on account of Joseph. He might come up as an issue and then I could get into trouble, for Mr. Rockefeller and I do not agree as to Joseph.” Eight years previously Twain had published an article in the *North American Review* stating that Joseph, judging by the words of the Bible, had been a sharp financial dealer of historical proportions. Newspapers had reported recently that “Mr. Rockefeller had taken up Joseph.” The author's response is that “In every sentence uttered by Mr. Rockefeller there was evidence that he was not acquainted with Joseph. Therefore it was plain to me that he had never read my article...He thinks Joseph was Mary's little lamb; this is an error” (87). Twain says theologians “make up a Joseph-statement on the plan of the statement which a shaky bank gets up for the beguilement of the bank inspector. They spirit away light-throwing liabilities and insert fanciful assets in their places” (87-8). In contrast to traditional clergy teaching that Joseph, much like Presidential financial advisors, brought Egypt through hard economic times by astute economic policies, Twain's view is, “I get the impression that he skinned [the Egyptians] of every last penny they had, of every last acre they had, of every last animal they had.” As the Bible put it, Joseph's maneuvers gave Pharaoh a fifth of all land and produce from the kingdom except for that owned by the priests. In regard to this information Twain comments,

“Joseph acted handsome by the clergy; it is the most I can say for him. Politic, too. They haven’t forgotten it yet.” (91)

DeVoto concludes the dictation in his edition with the author’s closing of “Mark Twain, Honorary Member of the Bible Class,” but the Project’s edition has four additional pages, mostly a sequence of correspondence between Twain and the son of Ulysses S. Grant concerning the author’s imminent last public lecture at Carnegie Hall. It’s readily apparent why DeVoto excluded it considering his stated selection process, but the material isn’t irrelevant to Twain’s plan. Before the correspondence are six paragraphs describing how Rockefeller Jr. had recently invited Twain to talk before his Bible class on the subject of lying, an invitation the author declined because he had bronchitis. He regretted passing up the invitation because he considered himself such an authority on lying that “to this day I do not always know when to believe myself” (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 425), an authorial wink at the lack of veracity so many critics have noticed in the *Autobiography*. Then, in an associative segue, the purpose of the six paragraphs is revealed. The mention of the talk he cannot attend prompts him to speak of one he will. At “my farewell in Carnegie Hall...I shall see, and see constantly, what no one else in that house will see. I shall see two vast audiences – the San Francisco audience of forty years ago [at his first public lecture] and the one which will be before me at that time. I shall see that early audience with as absolute distinctness in every detail as I see it at this moment” (426). Here occurs one of the *Autobiography’s* most prominent themes, the persistent conjunction of past and present, the latter recalling the former, by a speaker as self-consciously aware of this function of memory as Proust was. As Twain had said in his introduction to the *North American Review* chapters, his method would be one in which “past and present are constantly brought face to face, resulting in contrasts which newly fire up the interest all along, like contact of flint and steel”. But he also intended that his readers be constantly reminded that the document was not closed and finished, as in conventional autobiographies, but that its creator breathed and would speak the next day also, making his autobiography a true *life* document. In the passage above, Twain is at one time recalling a distant memory, emphasizing its recall “at this moment” and rendering the memory

poignant by contrasting it with an associated event that hasn't occurred yet, a construction which demonstrates his method's craftsmanship.

This digression in an overlong chapter into analysis of five dictations from DeVoto's edition serves to illustrate that editor's preference in subject matter, the author's method of construction and a typical flavor of the *Autobiography's* content. More substantive analysis of major themes and motifs occurs in Chapter Four. With *Mark Twain in Eruption*, DeVoto finished his attentions to the *Autobiography*, and inasmuch as he claimed to find nothing in the work to interest the public beyond what he and Paine had edited, no future surprises might be expected. There was much unpublished yet, but DeVoto said it would be scholars and not the public who would find it fascinating. In any case, critics were not especially enthusiastic about DeVoto's edition, so even if the next custodian of the papers, Dixon Wecter, published a biography of Twain and edited volumes of his letters, and even if readers kept buying Twain's books, silence about the *Autobiography* in ensuing years is unsurprising. However, in 1959 Charles Neider would publish *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* in a radical reordering and truncation that won Twain's work its greatest critical and popular success to that point, even as it violated most of the author's precepts and instructions.

Neider's Edition

Charles Neider resembled Paine insofar as virtually making a career out of editing Twain. Among the works he edited were *The Gilded Age*, *A Tramp Abroad*, collections of essays, sketches, speeches and letters, newspaper interviews and fugitive pieces, a volume of the prefaces he wrote to the books he edited, and, of course, the *Autobiography*. This last work he reduced from five thousand typescript pages to just short of four hundred printed ones, but its distinction and popularity probably owe more to his rearrangement of the contents than to his abridgment, even though he required drastic excision to fulfill his artistic scheme. His reordering of Twain's autobiography was unique among his liberties with Twain's literature, but his abridgment was not. He cut "approximately 25 percent" from *A Tramp Abroad*

by deleting nine entire chapters, parts of eight others and joining two chapters together, as well as writing his own chapter titles (Twain *A Tramp Abroad* xxi, xxii). When Neider edited *The Gilded Age*, he used a letter Twain wrote explaining which chapters Twain wrote and which his co-author Charles Dudley Warner wrote in order to delete all of Warner's chapters and title the resulting book *The Adventures of Colonel Sellers* (Neider *Mark Twain* 47, 30). His efforts in this case, he wrote, strengthened a book "that often wanders and drags" and thus gave "the stage alone" to Twain and "commandingly" so, without Warner's "conventional happy ending" (47). Of *A Tramp Abroad*, Neider wrote, "It's a pity that [Twain] allowed himself to mar the book by self-indulgently inserting much boring material. His critical faculties seemed to be on vacation, his artistic conscience to be dozing," and Neider blamed these flaws for the book's being long out of print (64).

In other words, Neider valued both books, but believed their original editors were deficient in their duties, so he had found the valuable and jettisoned the sub-par and extraneous. Obviously the taste and outlook voiced here prompted Neider's approach to the *Autobiography*, even though he treated it even more radically. Like DeVoto, Neider provided an introduction to his edition in which he assessed its content, his predecessors' efforts, the genesis of his interest in the project and an explanation for his editorial choices.

In contrast to DeVoto and Paine, Neider in his introduction's opening sentence left no doubt that he held high regard for the work as autobiography: "Mark Twain's autobiography is a classic of American letters, to be ranked with the autobiographies of Benjamin Franklin and Henry Adams," and he believed, "it has the marks of greatness in it – style, scope, imagination, laughter, tragedy" (Twain *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* ix). Of course the implication, since Neider believed Twain hadn't finished revising the work and might have done so had he lived longer, is that his own rearrangement would fulfill its promise to be ranked among those classics. "Now for the first time the material...is being presented *as* autobiography, and in the sequence which one would *reasonably* expect from autobiography" [italics mine]. Neider termed the original typescript to be "the grab bag which [Twain] thought of as his autobiography" (ibid). Neider didn't think Twain had failed in his task "as had been

generally believed...he kept winning tactical battles at the cost of winning a war...But many works of art are approached in such a way, works which reach a great culmination" (xiv-xv). Neider wishfully suggested that Twain might have deleted the *Autobiography's* "irrelevant materials" had he not died, an unlikely prospect inasmuch as Twain virtually ceased work on his autobiography a year before his death, and preceding dictations had been largely trivial. But, "The fact is that the greatness is *there*. You can edit the trivia out, but you cannot edit the greatness in" (iv). In a statement both false and true, Neider wrote that Twain's "chief aim during the dictations" was "to amuse himself," and most of the trivia entered "near the end of his life" (ibid). It's true that Twain ran dry in both interest and material as 1908 progressed and 1909 began, and it's true that his project gave him vast delight at the outset and for a long period thereafter, but Twain treated the work with too much professional interest to accept the proposition that he wanted chiefly "to amuse himself". The attention he gave to the typescript's revision, the selection of the *North American Review* chapters and the preparation evident in each dictation's construction attest to his professional interest. It's been written that Twain probably wasted more of his energy on diversionary notions and games than any other major writer, but his autobiography received his sustained and close grained attention for a period of years during which he never ceased thinking of its commercial potential.

Paine's "dilemma," Neider wrote, was to edit "a series of extended notes," an unjust assessment of the dictations, as they bore no resemblance to notes. However, Neider rightfully recognized "the sections and fragments in themselves" were "thematically, stylistically and factually complete". So although Neider understood the dictations' structural unity, he didn't agree with Twain's structural concept: "publish the *Autobiography* not in chronological order but in the sequence in which it was written and dictated. What an extraordinary idea! As though the stream of composition time were in some mysterious way more revealing than that of autobiographical time!" (xvi). Of course this statement and his actions show Neider failed to appreciate or even acknowledge Twain's modernist conception of narrative through process of association. Neider then questioned the seriousness of Twain's instructions, although they are enunciated definitely and repeatedly within the dictations, before concluding that Paine's obedience resulted in the

“debut” of the most inauspicious and confusing autobiography by any “major writer” (xviii). The “chief flaw” of Paine’s edition “was that it correctly reflected Twain’s notions and methods...much of it was embarrassing: fragmentary notations on news stories of the day, exchanges of letters, opinions of the moment” (xvii). It was in Neider’s view as if the highest quality ingredients had been assembled and combined through a misbegotten and contrary recipe into a dish resembling hash, and the diners had been nonplussed and left the table following a few bites. There’s evidence today to support Neider’s view as witness Garrison Keillor’s reaction that readers of the Project’s edition soon find themselves “turning the pages two and three at a time” (Keillor).

Neider astutely recognized different components of Twain’s mind that contributed to his autobiography, such as Twain’s “anecdotic forms of recollection” and his valuing of “imagination over ‘facts’,” but the form “did not easily suit the chronological organization of the classic autobiography” (xiv) which Neider proposed to create. Paine and DeVoto hadn’t attempted autobiography, but “a kind of table talk,” and he owed both editors thanks “because they gave me the opportunity to do the exciting job which remained to be done” (x). Neider ranked DeVoto’s “judgment and ability” as “clearly superior to those of Paine” because his edition “had clarity and organization” (xix). But in justifying his own reordering of the content, Neider wrote that DeVoto’s “thematic order was an imposed one and could not accurately be called the tightest which can be given the Autobiography, the essence of whose internal order is time” (xviii). Neider is correct here, but not as he thinks because for Twain the internal order was the time recollected and the time of telling.

As for his account of his own efforts, Neider “weeded out a variety of material” in order to reduce the size for a general audience, to excise the “dated, dull, trivial and journalese sections” and to “concentrate less on opinion and second hand recollection and more on the more truly autobiographical, the more purely literary and the more characteristically humorous material” (xx). Inasmuch as Neider believed Twain to be “primarily a humorist” (Neider *Mark Twain* 113), his choices were logical, but, once again, he ignored or misunderstood the fundamental thesis underlying the work. He “omitted material on the San Francisco earthquake” because Twain “did not experience the quake personally” (*The Autobiography*

of *Mark Twain* xx). However, the point of that particular dictation was that the news recalled to Twain's mind memories of his youth in that city, which was true to the process of association by which Twain had decreed he would compose.

Like DeVoto, Neider wished to publish the five dictations of June 1906 concerning religion, and like DeVoto, Clara Clemens prevented his doing so in his edition. But "I would have made an appendix of them," Neider wrote, "because they are more essayistic than autobiographical" (ibid). This further indicates he didn't accept Twain's view that his autobiography was a record of his mind.

Thanks to Neider, "The Death of Jean" for the first time concluded the *Autobiography*, as Twain told Paine it could. But Neider also compiled his Chapter Seventy One from pages about the death of Twain's wife which are not in the autobiographical typescripts upon the questionable logic that "I believe them to have been intended as part of the *Autobiography*. Mark Twain described the deaths of Susy and Jean and included the detailed notes on his wife's illness, and it's likely that he desired to include the death of his wife also" (xxii).

Finally, Neider arranged his selected material in a chronological sequence corresponding to the events of Twain's life, which was exactly what Twain had ruled out. In doing so Neider admitted to writing "connective" sentences "in a very few instances" and deleting sentences "repetitive under the new arrangement" (xxiii). Like DeVoto, he omitted hundreds of commas, a practice ironic in that one of Twain's autobiographical pieces written prior to his dictations is a torrent of invective against a copy editor who altered Twain's punctuation.

Neider's rearrangement demonstrates not only a wish for a conventional narrative, but also a wish for nostalgia, a desire to experience Twain's long-ago boyhood and its environment that produced Twain's works of nostalgia, and undoubtedly this, as well as the reconstruction as a conventional life story, accounted for much of its popular success. Neider says as much in writing "it brings back the tone and flavor of an America which was young and optimistic, a homespun provincial America" (ix). As such, his edition is intensely conservative as it chooses to value traditional modes in content as well as form. Metaphorically, Twain had created Picasso's *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon*, which coincidentally was

painted in the same year when Twain was dictating to Paine, and Neider, with great skill admittedly, recreated it as by Norman Rockwell. The popularity of Neider's edition indicates his recreation is something like a piece of literary Americana. Like so much modernist literature, Twain's autobiography is challenging, whereas Neider's edition is enjoyable, and the omission of approximately ninety percent of the content, as well as the rearrangement, made the book easily approachable.

The critical praise for Neider's edition implicitly supports the assertion that the original work was not the rambling mess it's been described as, but has interesting content and a pleasing style, even if it required Neider's drastic surgery to render it appreciated by many readers. His edition's lasting appeal is apparent in the fact that when Fred Kaplan, Twain's biographer, taught the *Autobiography* in a 1995 graduate school seminar, he said the work couldn't be read as Twain created it. Not only had it not been entirely published, but Neider's was the only edition in print thirty-six years after its appearance. Kaplan praised Neider's edition for its artistry but added the caveat, "It's just not Twain's book" (graduate school seminar 1995). As with DeVoto's edition, the scholar must therefore approach Neider's edition as a collaborative effort between the author and its editor to render a fair critical appraisal.

Harper & Brothers, which apparently had had no desire for further volumes of Paine's edition, initially felt similarly about Neider's. "They feared the book proposed by me would lose money" wrote Neider. "We had a lengthy correspondence punctuated by many phone calls...The editors relaxed only when, while still in galleys, to their great surprise (and mine, too) the *Autobiography* became an alternate selection of the Book of the Month Club" (Twain *Life as I Find It* xiv-xv). The "lengthy correspondence" presumably reminded Neider to make cuts and reordering that would confer conventionality and popularity, and Neider presumably returned assurances he intended to. With Neider's sustained prodding, the publishers had enough optimism to allow him to move forward, happily for them.

Whatever may be said of Neider's edition, it must be complimented for popularizing Twain's autobiography. The *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote, "Charles Neider's careful editing makes of the Mark Twain material a true autobiography" (Twain *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* back cover Harper Perennial edition), which was Neider's own opinion. A 1963 textbook for 10th graders carried a selection

from Neider's edition, the account of the author's birth and boyhood in Missouri (Loban and Olmstead, eds. 333-8), which definitely recalls, in Neider's words, "the tone and flavor of an America which was young and optimistic, a homespun provincial America". That a high school textbook should select such a piece is evidence of Neider's accurate perception of readers' taste for nostalgia. Significantly, the textbook piece omits Twain's comparison of produce prices in his boyhood Missouri with prices in his adult Connecticut (334). In Twain's manuscript, the comparison serves as an example of Twain's intention to constantly compare past incidents with present associated thoughts so as to show the process of his mind. The omission, however, makes it appear as if the textbook editors, like Neider, wished to erase Twain's original plan and concentrate upon the nostalgia and story quality of memory. In small, the textbook selection's content and omission attests to readers' expectations and aversions regarding autobiography. Furthermore, Neider's edition had lasting appeal, as witness its 1999 selection by the Modern Library as number forty-three on a list of the one hundred best non-fiction books of the twentieth century published in English (Twain *Life as I Find It* xiii). This accolade makes abundantly clear that Twain's autobiographical voice showed no waning of creative powers, but his modernist preoccupations annoyed critics and escaped their comprehension. Readers were perplexed and bored by an autobiography that wasn't a life story and was founded upon a voluminous ongoing record of the writer's mind. In analogy it mirrored initial lack of public appreciation for what Abstract Expressionists in painting and sculpture were attempting. A century long perception that Twain was simply talking endlessly and spontaneously in his dictations resembled the reaction that some viewers had to depictions of paint spatters on canvas, namely, that it was some hoax and their school children could paint better. Art critics, however, rapidly valued Abstract Expressionism, whereas the concept of Twain's autobiography had few critical adherents or even understanding of what the author was attempting. Twain's frustration, as expressed in the quotation beginning Chapter One, "not one of 'em seemed to know what I was driving at," was prophetic.

As one might expect in light of Neider's stated goals, Chapter One of his edition begins with the words, "I was born the 30th of November, 1835, in the almost invisible village of Florida, Monroe County,

Missouri.” The chapter’s substance is taken from a manuscript of 1877, the second earliest autobiographical piece Twain composed, now placed in the Project’s “Preliminary” section. Even with Neider’s efforts to create a conventional life story, elements of Twain’s themes and method remain inextricable. For example, one such theme is a constant oposal of past and present, a comparison of incidents or persons in the memory with associated incidents or persons at the time of composition. These contrasts were an essence of his method, or, as he put it, “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 and steel” (Twain *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* xii). Of course this is almost indistinguishable from the method of process of association Twain employed, but its impact consists of the emphasis laid upon the “contrast,” the emotional import latent in differences between circumstances over time. In the instance alluded to in the paragraph above discussing the textbook’s excerpt, Twain recites prices of items in rural Missouri in the 1840’s sold in his uncle’s store and follows the recital with the prices of the same items in Hartford, Connecticut at the time of writing. In other words, a nostalgic recollection of rural boyhood is linked via produce prices to an affluent and celebrated urban adult so that the man who remembers is contemplating not only his memory, but himself as he remembers. It is the aim Twain expressed in 1906 when he dictated, “This Autobiography of mine is a mirror and I am looking at myself in it all the time” (xiii). It’s significant that this motif appeared in a piece written twenty-nine years before Twain enunciated the principle. It explains why Twain’s art has often been called intuitive. He typically used artistic principles ages before he recognized them as such. Also, of course, it counters the frequent assertion that the dictations are unplanned because by 1906 Twain consciously realized this was part of his plan, and he structured his recitation of his memories so as to utilize the principle.

A passage in which Neider interferes with Twain’s purpose occurs in Chapter Twenty Four, where Neider removes Twain’s present day thoughts about the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. As the dictation existed before the surgery, Twain uses a recent memory associated with his then current San Francisco to reminisce about his youth there until his recollection brings to his mind a thought of the present day.

Then he returns to long ago only to make a connection between an event long past and the city's recent disaster.

Twain begins his dictation by mentioning the earthquake and residents of the city who had recently visited him. This is removed. But Neider retains Twain's memories of his tenure at the San Francisco *Morning Call* in 1864. The author segues from the past, when "The *Call* could not afford to publish articles criticizing the hoodlums for stoning Chinamen," (120) to discussion of muckrakers with greater willingness to discuss social injustice that were active at the time of dictation, like Upton Sinclair. Returning to his past, Twain says, "I was loftier forty years ago than I am now and I felt a deep shame in being...slave of such a journal as the *Morning Call*" (121). Therefore Twain neglected his work, was given an assistant and sloughed off his duties upon the assistant until he was dismissed. "I knew the ways of Providence and I knew that this offense would have to be answered for ...sooner or later" (122). Twain then says, "Sure enough! Among the very first pictures that arrived in the fourth week of April – there stood the *Morning Call* building towering out of the wrecked city" (ibid). Twain then segues into a biting comment on the Presbyterianism in which he was raised.

I had never lost my confidence in Providence...It was put off longer than I was expecting but it was now comprehensive and satisfactory...Some people would think it curious that Providence should destroy an entire city of four hundred thousand inhabitants to settle an account of forty years standing...but to me there was nothing strange about that because...I was a Presbyterian, and I knew how these things are done." (123)

Neider's method was not seamless, nor could it be because Twain's plan had been conceived and executed tightly enough to resist even Neider's artistry. DeVoto was affected less because his plan was less refined than Neider's. DeVoto simply chose blocks of text and regrouped them by subject. The resilience of Twain's plan caused Neider to occasionally resemble DeVoto, as in his Chapter Eleven, where he grouped material from two different documents because they both concern a resident of Twain's

Hannibal boyhood, “old Dr. Peake,” and then slotted the material into the appropriate time period in his chronology.

Despite its popularity, Neider’s edition couldn’t please everyone, and one notable displeased entity was the absurdly unlikely literary establishment of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. Neider would publish a pamphlet of its charges and his countercharges and get front page publicity for his edition in the *New York Times* and *New York Herald Tribune* as a result of this contretemps near the height of the Cold War. Neider’s account of the dispute further illuminates the process by which he made his editorial decisions and illustrates how Twain is the rare American author who can generate controversy in areas not necessarily literary many decades past his death. As Neider stated the charges, *The Moscow Literary Gazette* in August of 1959 alleged, “America has an official line on Mark Twain, that the nation tried to suppress or forget him, that his editors have followed the line carefully and that I have been the worst offender in this respect” (Neider *Mark Twain* 110).

Neider responded by asking the *Gazette* for space in its pages to reply and addressed the letter to Nikita Khrushchev, Premier of the Soviet Union. The *Gazette’s* foreign editor assented, and the combat began, with Neider’s response in print that December along with the *Gazette’s* counter response. Neider wrote a counter-counter response which the *Gazetteer* declined to publish on the grounds that both sides had had plentiful say (112). As if to emphasize the closure, the *Gazetteer* mailed Neider a \$49 check as “Author’s Fee” which generated more stories in the *New York Times* and *Herald Tribune* citing Neider’s intention to spend the check on “paperback editions of the works of contemporary writers whom I think the Russians are not too familiar with” and mail the paperbacks to the *Gazette* (115)

The *Gazette* article was entitled “Mark Twain on the Bed of Procrustes,” deriving from the assertion that Procrustes “either stretched his victim to the desired length or else cut off those parts of the body which seemed superfluous to him. Charles Neider uses both methods”. Neider, they wrote, “shut Twain’s trap” (117) by excluding the political material DeVoto used about Rockefeller, Roosevelt, “and the other knights and henchmen of American expansionism” (116), and included “meditations on baldness” and phrenology instead (ibid).

The metaphor of Procrustes was unintentionally apt in that it's an excellent description of how Paine, DeVoto, Neider and even Twain had treated their respective editions. Paine included material apparently not intended for the *Autobiography* (as did Neider), Paine broke the dictations off abruptly, DeVoto chopped sections out and arranged them by theme and Neider reduced the mass to a fraction of its bulk and made a life story of it. For the *North American Review* Twain broke his own precepts in rearranging the dictations and included material the Project believes he wished excluded from his official autobiography. At the time of the *Gazette's* charges Twain's autobiography had been an experiment in how many editorial conceptions one work could endure.

In his reply Neider noted that contrary to the charge of America forgetting Twain, Hal Holbrooke's theatrical show *Mark Twain Tonight* was then wildly successful, *Life* magazine had run an article about Holbrooke and Twain, a *Huckleberry Finn* film was in production and the letters between Twain and William Dean Howells were about to be published (118-9). Neider wrote he couldn't guess what combination of governmental entities worked to suppress Twain and that "as every student of Mark Twain knows," Twain had decreed restrictions upon publishing parts of the *Autobiography* for many decades, so "it is Mark Twain himself" who was responsible for any failure to publish specific selections (119). As for his own edition, he referred to his introduction's statement that he was aiming at "the general reader, not the scholar," and he omitted Twain's "attacks on the politicians" because "I found them dull and dated" (120). Neider noted Twain had prohibited publication of the religious dictations himself, a subject he would address in a 1967 essay after their eventual magazine appearance.

In its counter-counter charge, the *Gazette* adjusted its argument, reciting examples when American institutions had suppressed Twain's writings as support for its charge that there was an official American line on Twain. In addition to the Boston's library ban of *Huckleberry Finn* in 1885, the New York public school system banned *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* in 1949 and Senator Joseph McCarthy asked for the banning of *Huckleberry Finn* soon after that. In 1957 New York City banned *Huckleberry Finn* from elementary and junior schools, and the English journal *Books and Bookmen* listed *Huckleberry Finn* as being a banned book in a list with *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and Henry Miller's

works (122-3). The *Gazette* praised Neider's skill in producing his edition, but said he represented an unfortunate tendency in American scholarship to regard literary social content as "petty, secondary, incidental, and sometimes simply non-existent" (126). The *Gazette* said in closing it hoped its decision to reply to Neider directly and not through President Eisenhower, in reference to Neider's address through Khrushchev, would imply no disrespect for the American President.

Neider's counter-counter-counter charge, unpublished by the *Gazette*, denied slighting Twain's social content and said he found the "didactic" Twain to be "strident, or flat, or humorless" (129). "It was painful for me to have to exclude" the religious dictations, but Clara Clemens forbade him to, and it was Twain's wishes, not "the 'official' American line," that caused the piecemeal publication of the work (130). The *Gazette* had had the last word in its country, as Neider was to have it in his own.

Neider's concept and work also didn't impress one influential American critic. When his edition appeared, Dwight Macdonald wrote, "One's first reaction is: why? Four-fifths of the new book...have already appeared in the Paine and DeVoto volumes. If there is any need for a new edition, it is for a complete one, edited by a specialist in Mark Twain" (79). Although Macdonald was prescient by a half century about the Project's edition, he erred on its popularity, adding that a scholarly edition "would certainly not sell as well as the present version" (ibid).

Macdonald didn't intend to denigrate Neider's edition so much as he intended to question Twain's total achievement in the autobiography. Twain "may have hoped that his vices might miraculously become virtues," Macdonald wrote, but "The miracle didn't happen. The Paine volumes were simply a jumble" (80). He professed to find most interest in the index, apparently because it is more eccentric than utilitarian. The index has limited value as a result of decisions to file entries misleadingly and irrelevantly, such as "putting 'Little girl's letter about *Huckleberry Finn*' under 'L'" (ibid). Similar whimsical entries are "Dream, remarkable," "Chapters begun in Vienna," "Incident of the arctics" and "Inefficient postal service". Macdonald has a point here in that the index in Paine's volumes would constitute an apt postmodern joke if the *Autobiography* appeared for the first time today since the index has little value as indexes are typically understood to function. Without evidence that Twain was

responsible for the index, a speculation can be made that Paine didn't care for the prosaic labor of compilation after years of work or that he provided an index he thought suitable for a work so defiant of conventional genre standards.

In response to Neider's claim that the autobiography had "the marks of greatness in it – style, scope, imagination, tragedy," Macdonald wrote, "Its style is relaxed to the point of garrulity, its scope is limited, its imagination goes no deeper than the top surface of the author's mind, and its few personal sections are pathetic rather than tragic" (81). A reply to Macdonald's criticism might be yes and no. The style is often relaxed, but this is a work of reminiscence constructed through process of association, and narrative flow is a goal. It's difficult to credit Macdonald's criticism that the autobiography has a limited scope if scope means breadth of subject because the work encompasses childhood, youth, family, varied business pursuits, professional and personal friendships, acquaintance with the celebrated of Twain's day, political discussion, religious belief and a geographical range that is intercontinental. The charge of going no deeper than the topmost surface of the author's mind is false. Twain decided to be reticent or euphemistic about subjects which embarrassed him, as sexuality embarrassed him, but his vindictiveness, egocentricity, convictions about conformity and auto didactical Determinism are voiced freely. In answering this charge that the *Autobiography* lacks introspection, Chapter Four contains a discussion of the manner in which Twain voiced his deepest feeling indirectly, beneath a sort of literary camouflage, by making references to apparently unrelated issues at a level of obscurity that links Twain to modernist writers.

As for displaying pathos rather than tragedy, an assertion could be made that most personal tragedies appear as pathos to observers if the feelings appertaining to tragedy are openly expressed. On the other hand, if tragedy lies in the considered expression of feelings of loss of a magnitude that might usually be expressed at the extremes of inexpressible or histrionic, then the autobiography displays tragedy. For example, consider Twain's reflections upon the loss of his daughter Susy in Neider's Chapter Sixty Six. After his year-long and planet-circling lecture tour to pay off his bankruptcy debts, Twain settled in England with his wife and daughter Clara in anticipation of reunion with their two other daughters .

Instead, a letter reported the illness of Susy in the United States with what would be diagnosed as spinal meningitis. Although the letter said “her recovery would be long but certain,” the alarmed Mrs. Clemens and Clara boarded a ship to join her while Twain remained to house hunt. “Three days later,” recalled Twain, “when my wife and Clara were about halfway across the ocean, I was standing in our dining-room, thinking of nothing in particular, when a cablegram was put into my hand. It said, ‘Susy was peacefully released to-day.’” And then appears a frequently printed passage:

It is one of the mysteries of our nature that a man, all unprepared, can receive a thunder-stroke like that and live...The mind has a dumb sense of vast loss – that is all. It will take mind and memory months and possibly years to gather together the details and thus learn and know the whole extent of the loss. A man’s house burns down...as the days and weeks go on, first he misses this, then that, then the other thing. And when he casts about for it he finds that it was in that house...He did not realize it was an essential when he had it; he only discovers it now when he finds himself balked, hampered, by its absence. It will be years before the tale of lost essentials is complete, and not till then can he truly know the magnitude of his disaster.” (Twain *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* 322-3)

It’s difficult to conceive of many metaphors which express more measurably a commensurate loss of life-changing significance, and it serves on its face to refute Macdonald’s charge.

Because of the largely negative criticism about Twain’s *Autobiography*, it appears paradoxical that the quarry has been mined so often, occasionally with success. Many critics have been positive about elements, but few about the whole, and the suggestion is made here that this paradox is linked to the popular image of Mark Twain, which was the result of the author’s much sought celebrity and is immeasurably stronger than the entire body of his work. Janet Smith wrote in 1962 that DeVoto’s edition of the autobiography was “not widely admired for our most influential critics then [1940] took a very poor view of all Mark Twain except parts of *Huckleberry Finn* and the first half of *Life on the*

Mississippi” (Twain *Mark Twain on the Damned Human Race*, xiii). In the year Smith wrote those words Dwight Macdonald expressed sentiments resembling those of Smith’s “influential critics” of 1940. “The bulk of Mark Twain’s work is no longer readable,” Macdonald said. Exceptions were *The Mysterious Stranger*, “the first half of *Life on the Mississippi*,” “a little of *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, more of *Tom Sawyer*, and almost all of *Huckleberry Finn*” (88-9). In 2000 Everett Emerson wrote that Twain “made better use of his memories in *Tom Sawyer*, *Huckleberry Finn*, and ‘Old Times on the Mississippi’” than he did in his autobiography because in the earlier works the memories “are shaped, filtered through nostalgia and refined with art” (*Mark Twain: a Literary Life* 289). And in 2010 Garrison Keillor said “you’d like to be remembered for *The Innocents Abroad* and *Life on the Mississippi* and the first two-thirds of *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*” (Keillor). MacDonald tolls off the literature he finds to be of merit, and what he finds of merit is largely what Emerson and Keillor mention. Critical opinion across the generations tends to be similar in that it values Twain’s writings about Mississippi. This popular image of Twain solely as an artist of boyhood and chronicler of vanished rural America is critically myopic because it ignores most of his writings. Did Macdonald really believe *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court*, *The Prince and the Pauper*, *The Innocents Abroad*, *Roughing It*, *A Tramp Abroad*, *Following the Equator* and numerous pieces of non-fiction were “no longer readable”? To judge by the works he names as being meritorious, it appears Macdonald based his statement upon a division of Twain’s writings between two figurative bins. Writings about boyhood and Mississippi went into a bin for retention, and everything else went into a bin to be chucked. His taste, and that of many other critics as well, seems to have resembled that of the public that brought best seller status to Neider’s edition. It’s inappropriate to argue with anyone’s literary taste, but it’s appropriate to note when literary criticism appears to be based upon inaccuracy, oversight or misunderstanding. Many critics, as well as much of the public, seem to perceive Twain as he appears in an illustration on the cover of the 1966 Signet paperback edition of *The Innocents Abroad*, which shows a white-haired, mustachioed, cigar-puffing Twain carrying an umbrella and valise (see photo one). Twain, as he appeared in old age when he constituted a blessing for cartoonists, is pictured setting off on the journey he took when he was only thirty-one. It’s a misrepresentation in that it

portrays a beloved, wise-cracking, sometimes grouchy grandfather we laugh at for his misadventures, value for his tales about old times and forgive for his irreverence, whereas the reality was a young man adopting different poses in his first non-fiction book. In other words, people have an image in their minds of Twain, both visual and literary, and that image is largely the cause of his popularity, even if it's incomplete or inaccurate. Newspapers criticized Twain for his anti-imperialist pieces of the early twentieth century because he was being acidulous, not humorous, and thereby not satisfying audience expectations, and he was treading on the mine-laden soil of patriotic beliefs as well. Similarly, critics have expressed unhappiness when Twain's literature fails to conform to what they think are his strongest merits, humor and the pastoral nostalgia of youth.

Even DeVoto fell prey to this misrepresentation when he wrote in his introduction to *The Portable Mark Twain* that Twain's autobiography served the author "as an escape into the security of the boyhood idyll he had made immortal in *Tom Sawyer*" (Fishkin ed., *The Mark Twain Anthology* 220). DeVoto had ignored this aspect in his selections for his own edition, and this judgment is so far off the mark except in its application to a limited portion of the work that it makes one think this knowledgeable and astute writer meant it only to apply to select portions dealing with the author's first years. Since his words appear in the anthology he edited in 1946, perhaps he wrote in reaction to the tepid reviews his edition elicited in 1940.

Also, it's easy to categorize Twain only by seizing upon certain enjoyable elements of his writing, and categorization is not to be underestimated in accounting for authorial popularity and reputation. DeVoto said he was primarily a novelist; Neider said he was primarily a humorist; he's been called a realist and a fabulist. Dividing his book-length works into stacks by rough denominators would result in travel books, works about Mississippi and historical writings, much as the Library of America did in its compilations. However, terming *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* to be historical is like saying *Tarzan of the Apes* is about Africa. This problem in categorizing Twain accounts to some degree for the verdicts of Macdonald, Keillor and others upon the author's corpus and the life-work under study here. Figuratively, many critics and much of the public appreciate Twain only as the old white-haired man with rampart

mustache amid clouds of smoke, even if it's illustrating what he wrote at age thirty-one. This quality has been commented upon. George Ade said, "Every book by Mark Twain was so different from the one preceding that comparisons were impossible," and Shelley Fisher Fishkin commented, "Each time critics thought they had him pegged, Mark Twain set out in a new direction" (*The Mark Twain Anthology* xvii). The author of the *Autobiography* could not be categorized, which meant he would always be baffling or disappointing to many, for they would never find twice what they liked in one work, save humor. It is the opposite of formula. He was a writer of nostalgia, true, but also perpetually fascinated with literary experiments, a confounder of genres, interested in modern forms of philosophy and, of interest in this study, psychology. The Norman Rockwell-esque Twain is real, but only a fragment of the whole.

The popularity of Neider's edition shows that public and critics don't disparage the autobiography's content, except possibly in terms of the volume. Jonathan Yardley in the *Washington Post* review of the Project's first volume wrote "The best passages here are funny or thoughtful or touching or outspoken, sometimes all at once," but "too often is like being trapped in a locked room with a garrulous old coot...who loves the sound of his own voice and hasn't the slightest inclination to turn it off." Yardley implied Twain's choice of dictation flawed his work because it allowed him "to avoid the writer's obligations of self-discipline and discrimination". He also noted that when he had edited H.L. Mencken's dictated memoirs he found its "nearly 1,800 pages" frequently "clogged with the minutiae that Mencken loved not wisely but too well" (Yardley). Therefore it's plausible that the *Autobiography's* volume is partially responsible for its negative reception. However, as Neider noted, Paine had published about one half of the total, DeVoto published another quarter, and he had used a previously unpublished thirty or forty thousand words in addition (Twain *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* ix). Since the autobiographical papers contain approximately one half million words, this means the public had seen more than eighty five percent of the whole even before the Project's first volume, excluding the news articles and letters Twain directed be inserted. Paine's, DeVoto's and Neider's editions all caused enough anticipation to merit publication, and they received sufficient readership to cause publication of the succeeding edition. Publishers and public found *something* to merit the work's repeated incarnations.

People kept wanting to read its contents. Therefore the evidence suggests it's not the content or volume of the work that's disliked so strongly as is the form, the form that Twain boasted would become a model of autobiography and be studied for centuries. This issue of form, which makes the *Autobiography* a modernist work in conception and execution, will be addressed at length in Chapter Four.

By the time of Neider's research, the autobiographical materials as well as most other authorial papers resided in the Bancroft Library of the University of California at Berkeley. After Dixon Wecter succeeded DeVoto as Twain's literary editor, he brought the papers to his institution, Berkeley, in 1949, and arranged with Clara Clemens for their permanent placement there (Trombley 248). Henry Nash Smith became the next literary editor, and Frederick Anderson, who succeeded Smith, became the first editor to plan a complete and authoritative edition of the *Autobiography*.

So thus the *Autobiography* stood aside from occasional brief published excerpts until the first volume from the Project appeared in 2010, and its gestation period may be measured from a statement appearing in 1971: "For the complete *Autobiography*, however, we shall have to await the volumes edited by Frederick Anderson for the Iowa-California edition" (Woodress, ed. *Eight American Authors* 274). Anderson died in 1979.

The Copyright Extension Issue

Everything in this chapter about the different editions, the public and critical reaction and the task of textual scholarship would be unwritten if Twain had carried through with a plan regarding the autobiography that he repeatedly talked and wrote about beginning in 1904. Therefore, in a study of the artistic conception, formation and fate of the autobiography, it's necessary to ask whether Twain really intended his dictations as a scheme for copyright extension. If Twain had used his dictations as he repeatedly said he intended to, the act would have destroyed his stated conception that his autobiography would mirror his mind in the process of association because the dictations would have been appended to his existing books approaching end of copyright. A line would be drawn at about two thirds of the length

of each page of the existing books, Twain said, and portions of his autobiographical writing would be placed below each line, so that the new material would run the length of the book in parallel with the old. Twain said the new material would be relevant as much as possible to the old material. In other words, the dictations would have been commentary by the elderly author upon his literary career in a fashion similar to which other authors write introductions to their own works published long ago. The nature of the dictations, however, curtails their strict relevance to Twain's books because their process of association creates a succession of subjects under discussion. The new material on each page would be relevant to the old only if selected chunks were cut from the dictations and inserted. Otherwise, new editions of the books would be strange, new creations; they would be old, well-known books with odd, new books running in tandem page by page to the end.

This idea first appeared when Twain wrote jubilantly from Florence to William Dean Howells in 1904 that dictating was the method that would make his autobiography possible. In the same letter he wrote that his words "will not be published independently, but only as notes (copyrightable) to my existing books...the *notes* will add 50% of matter to each book, & and be some shades more readable than the book itself" (Twain *Mark Twain-Howells* 779). He termed his dictations notes because he was at the very doorstep of his discovery and lacked a better term. Also, the Florence dictations lack the polish of those with Paine. They were a prototype, done for the purpose of making needed adjustment. He would refer to this idea intermittently through the years right up to the moments when he wrote on the "Death of Jean" that his dictations with Paine had been wasted because Congress had extended copyright.

Twain may have felt obligated towards Paine only to furnish his promised biography, not his autobiography as well, and if he did feel thus and carried forward his scheme, then the *Autobiography's* fate would have been simply another episode of cutting and pasting, this one guided by the author and not by DeVoto or Neider. In such a case, Twain's other autobiographical instructions and statements of methodology would have been obliterated, as they were by DeVoto and Neider.

That Twain told Howells in the same letter about dictating autobiography and using it for copyright extension argues he was sincere. However, Twain could be sincere on different sides of the same issue on

different days. When he wrote Howells, he was enthused about his discovery of dictation. He had not conceived of a way to tell his life that suited his artistic integrity. He had conceived its non-chronological and discursive features by 1876 when he voiced them at Annie Fields's house. But having decided upon the features, he couldn't figure out how they would make an autobiography practical for publishing. He knew dictation was a good method for him to express himself autobiographically, but he hadn't discovered the purpose of his method. He was obsessive about copyright extension as an issue of professional interest, so he seized upon his new-found method as a vehicle for the purpose of copyright extension, and this explains the letter's content. He normally arrived at decisions with such tortured syllogisms as described. He regularly conceived elements for action before devising a plan and would then devise a plan to incorporate the elements because he was so pleased he had conceived the elements.

But consider for argument's sake that the dictations were truly for copyright. Perhaps the passage of copyright extension in Congress really caused Twain to dispense with his scheme and tell Paine that he could use the "Death of Jean" as a conclusion to the autobiography if Paine so wished. However, Twain made no concrete efforts toward arranging the dictations for appending to existing books, none. Also, as stated previously, the fact that typescripts two and four contained material made before the Paine dictations indicates that at least in the period when those typescripts were created Twain intended to publish his autobiography according to his stated plan, posthumously and in the order of their composition. The Mark Twain Project holds the conviction that grouping material written before the Paine dictations with those dictations is the clearest evidence of what Twain wished to include in his autobiography, and if that conviction is correct, a parallel inference would be that Twain intended to publish in book form. Even if one considered that those typescripts contain material to be appended to existing works to extend copyright, then the logical inference would be that such appending would be done with no aptness between original book and new material, but merely in the order of the new material's composition. Therefore the idea of using the dictations for copyright extension was most likely a notion that entered and left and reentered Twain's mind over a period of years. His lack of arrangement argues it was a notion, yet another of his castles in the sky. Also, the judgment the Project made that

typescripts two and four contain all the documents intended to be in the autobiography argues that copyright was not Twain's purpose, at least when those typescripts were made.

In an autobiographical dictation of March, 1907, Twain said that his autobiography would not be finished until he died, but "the object which I had in view in compiling it is accomplished: that object was to distribute it through my existing books and give each of them a new copyright life of twenty-eight years" (Trombley 127-8). This apparently definite pronouncement is less clear than it appears. If Twain had achieved his purpose to extend copyright by this point because he had a sufficient number of dictated words, then he still felt the need to dictate because he continued, less regularly but systematically, until he dispensed with Paine's stenographer in August, 1908. In fact, in October, 1908, Twain wrote to William Dean Howells about yet another idea he wished to present to Congress concerning copyright, one without mention of using the dictations for doing so (Twain *Mark Twain-Howells Letters* v. II, 836). This indicates that nineteen months after his "object" was "accomplished" Twain still wasn't committed to his ploy of appending the dictations for copyright extension's sake. His habit of continuing with a course of action while considering different purposes for that course of action, as in this case, is analagous to the way Twain would introduce new themes, tones and narrative directions into the many unfinished fictions he began after 1897.

It's true that Twain formulated schemes for extending copyright on his books throughout his writing career. For example, he and Charles Dudley Warner added an appendix of translations of nonsensical epigrams in foreign languages to *The Gilded Age* in 1899 for that purpose (Kaplan, *J. Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain* 181). So Michael Kiskis makes a reasonable assertion that the second section of Twain's "Preface" to his autobiography (instructions in three parts to future editors) is aimed at extending copyright on that one work because it states "editions should be issued twenty-five years apart. Many things that must be left out of the first will be proper for the second; many things that must be left out of both will be proper for the third; into the fourth - or at least the fifth - the whole Autobiography can go unexpurgated" (Twain *Mark Twain's Own Autobiography* xviii-xix). It shares the general vagueness of many of his instructions and may also reflect the author's frequently grandiose pronouncements for his

work, and if Kiskis is correct, it's another aspect of Twain's copyright scheme. However, if serious on the writer's part, it would not have affected the integrity of his overall plan in the sense that the autobiography would remain a record of Twain's associative flow of memories and reflections rather than chopped up and appended to existing works.

An additional argument against the seriousness of the copyright scheme is that in December, 1908, the author incorporated himself as the Mark Twain Corporation, assigning "his existing copyrights and his pen name to his new corporation". His daughters and his secretary, Isabel Lyon, became directors under the author-president, and Ralph Ashcroft, Twain's business manager and the scheme's instigator, became secretary and treasurer (Trombley 189). Ashcroft told the *New York Times* Twain's heirs could "enjoin perpetually the publication of all of the Mark Twain books not authorized by the Mark Twain Company, even after the twenty-year first copyright and ten-year secondary copyright have expired" (Trombley 190). Twain's daughter Clara took this alleged protection seriously enough that even in 1962 when Hamlin Hill and Walter Blair published a facsimile of the first American edition of *Huckleberry Finn* they did so without Twain's name on the title page "because the Mark Twain Estate maintains the attitude that 'Mark Twain' is a trade mark" (Hill and Blair, eds. *The Art of Huckleberry Finn* 19). Charles Neider wrote that "Harper & Brothers and the Mark Twain Estate requested the payment of fees for the right to reprint works by Mark Twain already in the public domain...I myself had had occasion to pay such a fee" (Neider *Mark Twain* 147). Even the 1945 Classics Illustrated comic book edition of *Huckleberry Finn* lists "Samuel L. Clemens" as its author rather than "Mark Twain" because of this issue (see photo two). Indeed, incorporation paid Clara until her death in royalties and other commercial uses of Mark Twain's name to the extent that her estate's value exceeded her father's (Emerson 292), at least in absolute dollars. The Mark Twain Company was created ostensibly to control copyright, but it also hoped to stop unremunerated use of Twain's name and image to sell products like shaving soap, cookbooks, sewing machines, cigars, playing cards and baking flour (Trombley 190). But as a scheme to extend copyright, incorporation indicates Twain's appending idea was not fixed or that Twain lacked confidence in it. Otherwise copyright extension would not have been quoted as incorporation's primary purpose.

Therefore Twain's statement on the first page of "The Death of Jean", that his autobiographical dictations were created "to save my copyrights from extinction," (Lystra 247) is a rationalization after the fact to explain Twain's loss of interest in the autobiography. As stated, the dictations declined in number each year. 1908 had thirty eight, and 1909 had nineteen, and in the final two years some of the dictations were about true ephemera such as his angelfish, little girls Twain befriended who offered him the uncritical attention his true daughters did not.

It was in Twain's character to conceive a purpose for the emotional release he gained by writing about his daughter's death, and his rationalized "reason" for the dictations "perishes" with Jean because "Last March [1909] Congress added 14 years to the 42-year term, & so my oldest book has now about 15 years to live." He had no use for the extension, he wrote, because one daughter was dead and the other "happily and prosperously married" (Lystra 247). In considering these words it should be noted that Twain had visited Washington to lobby for the copyright extension and continued dictating after his lobbying bore fruit. He had dismissed Josephine Hobby in August, 1908, supposedly to cut costs in a period of declining dictations (Lystra 146), but he hired stenographers twice more because he still felt the occasional urge to record his thoughts and memories. He dismissed Hobby, his principal stenographer, before Congress extended copyright. If he thought at the time he dismissed Hobby he had enough material for his appending scheme, why did he keep dictating? In judging Twain's statements that his dictations were for copyright extension, we return to the fact that no matter how much Twain talked about copyright extension and even labored for it, he never made any sign of arranging his dictations for appending. This, in combination with the other evidence, argues that Twain intended his autobiography be published after his death in compliance with his other instructions, instructions that were non-legally binding, and therefore the autobiographical papers were left for a century of posthumous excerpting, rearranging and publishing.

Chapter Three

Pieces of the Foundation

As Bernard DeVoto noted in his introduction to *Mark Twain in Eruption*, the urge to write his autobiography interested Twain as early as his composition of “The Tennessee Land,” which the Project dates to 1870, and he wrote or dictated disconnected pieces through the 1880’s. “But all these are episodic,” DeVoto wrote, “and so are the jottings in his notebook”. The “first systematic intention to write his autobiography appears” in 1897 in a notebook, and Twain produced a number of pieces the following year. “That is,” DeVoto wrote, “he turned purposely to autobiography in the late 1890’s” (xviii-xix). This is the same period in which Twain began to give interviews about his autobiography, and it was also the period in which he wrote numerous fictional fragments, fragments which are clues to the author’s psychology in terms of fears, regrets and broodings about his life’s vicissitudes.

One such fictional fragment, “Which Was the Dream?”, “was planned at the beginning of 1895 but was not written until 1897” according to John Tuckey (Twain *Which Was the Dream* 31). Tuckey termed it “in part a fictional account of what Mark Twain had endured at the time of his business failure in 1894” (32). A man of immense respect and accomplishment loses his house in a fire and discovers his relative/secretary has contrived to render him without insurance, bankrupt and in debt. The secretary is clearly in Twain’s mind a fictionalization of his nephew by marriage, Charles Webster, whom Twain later vilified in his autobiography for allegedly ruining their publishing company, and his characterization in the fragment is a measure of Twain’s animus towards his nephew. The bereft householder, who is left with nothing but his family’s love, is clearly Twain as he felt after his bankruptcy, and although the author endured no ruinous house fire, it’s striking that when he speaks of losing his daughter Susy in the passage quoted in the preceding chapter he compares the effects of her loss metaphorically to a house reduced to cinders.

“Which Was the Dream?”, as well as other fragments and completed works of his final two decades, will be given more detailed attention in Chapter Five, but it’s suggested here that these works constitute a sort of partial psychological autobiography. Also, it’s not coincidental that these appeared during the same time period in which he “turned purposely to autobiography”. The author’s inability to conceive a suitable autobiographical form, coupled with an artistic imagination which rushed to put on paper ideas only half-thought through, caused a frustration that produced curious amalgams of autobiography and fiction, as in “Which Was the Dream?”

Another fragment, “The Secret History of Eddypus”, is fiction without plot and so clearly expressive of Twain’s psychological frustrations during its period of composition, 1901-02 (Twain *Fables of Man* 20), that it serves in places as a quasi-autobiographical piece itself. The simplest means of describing “Eddypus” is that it purports to be a book by Mark Twain discovered in the year 2901 (one thousand years after Twain composed “Eddypus”) with introduction and annotations by an obtuse scholar of that distant future. “Eddypus” has no plot or cohesion of theme. It is not a burlesque autobiography, but offers slivers of genuine autobiography floating in a stew of raw, mismatched musings on subjects such as a fictional domination of the earth by Christian Science, whose founder, Mary Baker Eddy, furnishes the title. But as is typical in the fictional fragments, Twain writes of any subject as fleetingly as the subject occupies his mind, and after a discussion of the fictional future, his fictional scholar discusses Twain himself in an exercise in authorial meta-writing. His works, the scholar begins, “have come to us exactly as they were when they left his hands – complete, undoctored by meddling scholars of later days, no word missing, no word added” (336), an ironic statement in light of the *Autobiography*’s fate. In the first of his constant misreadings, the scholar confuses Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer for Twain’s own children, “who must have been illegitimate, since he nowhere gives them the family surname” (337). But his misreadings are most egregious in his examination of some of the author’s well-known maxims: “‘We should never do wrong when people are looking.’ The first five words are true, and admirably stated; the rest of the maxim is idiotic. Idiotic because it as good as conveys the idea that when people are *not* looking we are privileged to do wrong!!!” A second misreading is, “‘Truth is the most precious thing we

have. Let us economize it.’ His misapprehension of the true meaning of ‘economize’ renders the maxim almost ridiculous, for it as good as advises the young to *save up* the truth – not *tell* it!” (339).

The autobiographical sliver in view here is Twain’s frustration with persons misunderstanding him by taking him literally or not understanding him at all except by contriving their own meaning for his words. He caused some of his own problems, of course, because he had always tended to disguise his blunt opinions in humorous guise, believing that speaking nakedly would bring him criticism. George Orwell wrote, “Twain never attacks established beliefs in a way that is likely to get him into trouble” (Fishkin *The Mark Twain Anthology* xxiii). But George Bernard Shaw, writing in Twain’s own time and feeling the pressures he felt, wrote that “He is very much in the same position as myself. He has to put matters in such a way as to make people who would otherwise hang him believe he is joking” (10). Decades before he wrote “Eddypus”, Twain was criticized for being serious rather than humorous, and this pressed him toward a double-edged means of expression which eventually confined him. For example, this statement appeared in 1874: “Mark Twain can be so very funny that we are naturally as dissatisfied with him, when he is not funny at all, as we should be with a parrot that could not talk, or a rose that had no odor” (Foner *Mark Twain Social Critic* 19). And this appeared in 1880: “When he fails to make laughter – no matter how much useful information he may convey, or whatever else he may accomplish – his work is apt to be regarded as a failure.” And a more astute critic wrote in 1883, “Mark Twain labors under the disadvantages which attach to the position of the professional humorist. When he writes a serious book, the public receives it with a predisposition to laugh which interferes with its appreciation of what the author has to say” (61).

He had been rewarded for this habit of disguising his opinions with misunderstanding and with criticism imputing aspects to his works which he hadn’t suspected existed. For example, *Huckleberry Finn* hadn’t been banned because of its racial epithets, which the author used to question and subvert racist attitudes, but for its vulgarity and bad example it set for children, who were not its intended readers. A dictation of December 26, 1906 is amusing, but its purpose is puzzling unless one grasps this feeling Twain had of being perpetually misunderstood. The dictation tells of a visit to Hannibal by a mesmerist

during the author's adolescence. At a stage show Twain volunteered to be mesmerized, pretended to be under his spell and made a small town sensation of himself. Typically, he felt mock guilty for this minor swindle perpetrated upon the villagers' credulity, and "Thirty-five years after those evil exploits of mine I visited my old mother...and being moved by what seemed a rather noble and perhaps heroic impulse, I thought I would humble myself and confess my ancient fault". His mother disbelieved him and "made arguments to prove I was under a delusion and did not know what I was talking about. Arguments! Arguments to show that a person on a man's outside can know better what is on his inside than he does himself!" (Twain *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* 57). In a second sense this dictation is about subjectivity in that it's about the impossibility of getting others to inhabit our viewpoint, to know what we know.

By the time he wrote "Eddypus" he had another reason to measure his words. Twain had entered into a new public role as espouser of anti-imperialism, and he saw newspaper editorials severely criticize his patriotism when he'd been attempting to preserve his nation's virtue. His public loved him more than previously after his recovery from bankruptcy. Therefore he felt emboldened to speak frankly about public affairs that troubled him, yet he found himself attacked despite his age and accomplishment. It was as if his previous fears were true; he could not say what he thought without couching his words in humor and irony. This tension contributed to the proliferation of fragments and completed pieces not intended to be published. Twain's emotions forced him to write down his broodings and indignation even when he knew he wouldn't publish them or in some cases even complete them, as it forced him to write angry letters he wouldn't allow himself to mail.

The new public role he inhabited post-bankruptcy also paradoxically made it more difficult for him to show himself in the conventional autobiographical form. Twain's unceasing need for attention and praise appears egomaniacal in instances, as when he wore his scarlet Oxford University honorary doctoral robes at Clara's wedding or rushed to be introduced on-stage as her father when she gave singing recitals (Emerson *Mark Twain: a Literary Life* 289). He could not bear to go unnoticed even at occasions when courtesy required that he be obscure. Yet despite this exhibitionism, he could not reveal himself for at

least two reasons. First, he could not reveal himself in the form of a conventional autobiography, for he felt them to be false. There were no life stories in his view except for manufactured ones, as fiction was manufactured. The pieces therefore may be looked at as attempts to both seek and avoid creating what he considered to be a true autobiography. The pieces show the course of Twain's artistic groping in that he created them even as he remained baffled in his search for the true grail of autobiography as he perceived it. Second, his words at Annie Fields's indicate he substantially knew in 1876 what he wished to accomplish, but he avoided acting on his words because a lifetime of performance, complete with a manufactured identity, Mark Twain, made him shrink from the exposure of his actual self he believed his autobiography would require.

The pieces show a variety of false starts, some surprisingly conventional, some odd, as he stabbed at his task sporadically. In the 1899 interview given to the *Buffalo Express* and quoted in Chapter One, Twain speaks of biography, not autobiography, as his current ambition, and his autobiographical writing during this period consists of reminiscences concerning men such as Horace Greeley, Petroleum V. Nasby and Ralph Keeler. These actual pieces are referred to in the "Eddypus" fragment. The fictional scholar writes

[Twain] intended to make [his book] a record, of the most searching and intimate sort, of the life of every person whom he had known – not persons of illustrious position only, or of renown springing from high achievement, but interesting persons of all sorts and ranks...His idea was, that to write a minute history of *persons*, of all grades and callings, is the surest way to convey an intelligible history of the *time*...In it are intimate biographies of his multitude of friends, from emperors down through every walk of life to the cobbler and the sheeny – whatever that may be – and the result is as he had expected: his book reveals to us the wide history of his time" (Twain *Fables of Man* 341-2)

Aside from anticipating twentieth-century social history, Twain would not appear the best candidate to write comprehensive history, and the description bears little resemblance to his eventual autobiography

except that Twain in that period had been writing pocket-sized biographies of persons he had known. However, the next paragraphs in “Eddypus” offer not only the explanation for why Twain believed his would be the most honest of autobiographies, but also forecasts the procedure by which it would actually be published: “He believed that no man could write the remorseless truth about his friend, except under this condition: that the publishing of it be securely guarded against while any one of that friend’s name and blood survived to read and be hurt by it. He believed that nothing but the uncompromising truth could be supremely informing and accurately convey the history of a period” (342). Twain is confused here about his paramount purpose, which would not be an account of “the history of a period”, but he is stating his commitment to commenting as he remembers and feels without concern for diplomacy or discretion, and he is naming the method of posthumous publication by which his goal is attainable. In acting thus, writes the fictional scholar, the author’s pen became “the freest that ever wrote. As a result, his friends stand before us absolutely naked. They had not a grace that does not appear, they had not a deformity that is not present to the eye.” This passage also shows that Twain realized the precept he had given to Orion about revealing himself unintentionally in his autobiography, as stated in Chapter One, applied also to himself: “Evidently he was intending to wear clothes himself, and as constantly as he could he did; but many and many is the time they slipped and fell in a pile on the floor when he was not noticing...we know him better than he knew himself” (ibid).

“Eddypus” also demonstrates that in 1901 Twain had on his mind the concept that his autobiography should erase the passage of time between its composition and its reading. He believed real autobiography should have vivacity akin to listening to a person, a belief which explains his delight when he decided upon dictation as his mode in 1904. In “Eddypus” he aims at this in his “Introduction” even though he writes in this instance rather than dictates: “I see this page now for the last time, you will be the next to see it – and there will be no interval between! There is a tie between us, you perceive: where your hand rests now, mine rested last...for I am *writing* this word of greeting and salutation, not *type-writing* it. You notice that this draws us together, you and me? That it removes the barriers of strangership” (345). When Twain speaks of “no interval between,” he meant that he aims at the erasure of chronology and

time. He aimed at finding a form of writing in which the reader felt he was present with the author as he composed. Time, as Twain perceived it autobiographically, could be bridged by associative memory, as can space, ala Einstein. Further, he kept seeking a form that worked as instantaneously as associative memory to erase time between reader and writer. This explains the cinemaphotograph allusion he used in the interview beginning Chapter One. The cinema image erased time.

A sort of separation of creative and intellectual powers is at work in these two literary pursuits, the fictional fragments and autobiographical pieces. The author was bereft by the loss of his daughter Susy, but in financial recovery from his bankruptcy. His deepest emotions were expressed through the fictional fragments. His autobiographical pieces were stimulated by his reasoning process. He had achieved enough and was famous enough that an autobiography was the logical book to write, but its form and theme could not come clearly to view, and so the pieces of the late eighteen-nineties, like those earlier, were still stabs at an extended narrative. His fictional fragments were begun in seizures of ideas and ended with each seizure's demise. The autobiographical pieces were typically self-contained reminiscences or commentaries, nothing at all like conventional autobiographies.

It should be borne in mind also that his preliminary pieces were created spasmodically throughout a period exceeding three decades, and therefore they never were constructed to fit into a predetermined plan. They thus bear greater resemblance than do the later dictations to the modernist novel described in Chapter Two that is bought in a box with chapters to be assembled as a reader desires. The pieces written and dictated through the eighteen-seventies, eighties and nineties are comparable to the modernist novel in a box because they are almost all non-contiguous and self-contained. Paine placed them in his conception of chronological order of composition, but they can be easily read in a random sampling, unlike the dictations, which often continue subjects and themes through multiple dates and often refer to what's been related earlier.

This spasmodic composition relates so obviously to the fact of Twain's difficulty with any concept of a life story that it is easily overlooked. Most people form narratives to account for their lives, and these, with the adjustments required for publishing, form the spine and flesh of autobiographies. People say, if

only to themselves, “I did these things; I have these personality traits; I have these talents or passions; these things happened to me or were done to me, and this explains why my life happened as it did.”

Twain also formed his own narratives, and the plural nature of his narratives is significant to his autobiography’s compositional history because he couldn’t unify his narratives in any fashion satisfactory to himself.

Perhaps the most conventional autobiographical document Twain ever created consists of three pages of factual history. Paine believed it was a fragmentary letter from 1891, but it addresses no recipient and remained in Twain’s possession, indicating Twain wrote it for himself. Considering that no copy has turned up in anyone else’s possession, it would appear to be Twain’s attempt to explain his life to himself, although this explanation doesn’t exclude the possibility that some outside inquiry generated its reflection. Because it begins and ends with discussion of his creative efforts, it could theoretically be an attempt to answer a question about what spawned his fiction, even if the question originated with the author. The document reads

I confine myself to life with which I am familiar when attempting to portray life. But I confined myself to the *boy*-life out on the Mississippi because that had a peculiar charm to me...I was a *soldier* two weeks once...and I have shoveled silver tailings in a quartz-mill...And I’ve done “pocket-mining”...And I’ve been a prospector...And I was a newspaper reporter four years in cities...and was reporter in a legislature two sessions and the same in Congress one session, and thus learned to know personally three sample bodies of the smallest minds and the selfishest souls and the cowardliest hearts that God makes...And I was some years a Mississippi pilot...And I was for some years a traveling ‘jour’ printer...And I was a lecturer on the public platform...And I watched over one dear project of mine for years, spent a fortune on it, and failed to make it go [the type-setting machine]...And I am a publisher, and did pay to one author’s widow (General Grant’s) the largest copyright checks this world has seen...And I have been an author for 20 years and an ass for 55...as the most valuable capital or culture or education usable in the building of

novels is personal experience I ought to be well equipped for that trade...none of it is artificial, for I don't know anything about books." (Paine, ed. *Mark Twain's Letters* v.II, 541-3)

If Paine's dating of 1891 is correct, this fragment originated in the period when Twain was writing *The American Claimant*, one of his least praised books, and Twain may have been suffering doubts about his ability to exercise again a talent his squandered fortune necessitated. His daughter Susy noted a few years earlier, "Mama and I have both been very much troubled of late because papa, since he had been publishing General Grant's books, has seemed to forget his own books...he told me that he didn't expect to write but one more book...he had written more than he ever expected to" (Paine *Mark Twain* v.II, 840).

Whatever the reason for the document, in sum it is a description of a disunified life, and it may have been "valuable" for "the building of novels," but it availed the author naught in terms of creating a concept of his life story. To him his life hadn't one. Because his life had no unity, he couldn't create a conventional autobiography, and this fact explains the existence of the pieces and, finally, Paine's dictations. Throughout the period when he created the pieces, he essentially thrashed and foundered through an incredibly extended quandary, despite his confident words at Annie Fields's. Paine's dictations, in contrast, are the fulfillment of his considered plan, which avoided any life story in favor of a psychological portrait.

Twain wrote a letter to his sister-in-law, Susan Crane, in March, 1893, which echoes the fragment quoted above in its awareness of a disunified life, but it also points toward the means by which the author would attain unity in his autobiography. With changes by Paine, the letter reads,

I dreamed I was born and grew up and was a pilot on the Mississippi and a miner and a journalist in Nevada and a pilgrim in the *Quaker City*, and had a wife and children and went to live in a villa at Florence – and this dream goes on and on and sometimes seems so real that I almost believe it is real. I wonder if it is? But there is no way to tell, for if one applies tests they would be part of the dream too, and so would simply aid the deceit. I wish I knew whether it is a dream or real." (Twain *Mark Twain's Letters* v.II, 581)

In this letter Twain's disunified life has become a dream, a dream in the sense that the disparate elements of his life did not add up. The different elements had culminated in his late life financial reverses. His life's facts had been stated and added, but had no logical sum. This failure of the facts to have a logical sum caused him to question whether his remembered life was waking or somnambulant. Not only would this inability to conclude logically whether he lived or dreamed become fodder for uncompleted pieces of fiction later in the decade, but for the purposes of this study it shows an increasing concern the author was to have for the processes of human thought and perception which would culminate in his autobiographical concept.

A third document of self-examination, written to the psychologist Sir John Adams in 1897 during the period Twain lived in Vienna, helps explain further how the author arrived at his final autobiographical concept. Adams published the letter in 1929 and explained that the writer's larger subject concerned human resemblance to machines, which Twain expounded upon at length in *What Is Man?*

A curious thing is the mind certainly. It originates nothing, creates nothing, gathers all its materials from the outside, and weaves them into combinations automatically, and without anybody's help – and...draws the scheme from outside suggestion. It does seem a little pathetic to reflect that man's proudest possession – his mind – is a mere machine; a machine that is so wholly independent on him that it will not take even a suggestion from him, let alone a command, unless it suits its humor...that we can't make it stick to a subject (a sermon for instance) if an outside suggestion of sharper interest moves it to desert...we have nothing that even resembles control or authority...Any tramp that comes along may succeed in setting it in motion, but *you* can't...Meantime *which is I and which is my mind?* Are we two or are we one?" (Adams *Everyman's Psychology* 202-3 onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu)

Twain is discussing his belief in Determinism, which would be a theme in Paine's dictations. He is also voicing his awareness of the process of association as the factor that determines human thought

sequence, which would be the compositional basis of the Paine dictations. But the question “*which is I and which is my mind?*” signals the dualism which so many critics have noted in Twain and more. It forecasts his decision to record his life as a record of his mind. By the time he began the Paine dictations, he had answered his own question. His “I” and his “mind” were largely identical, he believed. The life he dreamed, as in his 1893 letter, was indistinguishable from any other life that might exist. This realization made the *Autobiography* a portrait of his mind, with its subjectivity and process of association. This answer to his own question also forecast the ending Paine chose for *The Mysterious Stranger* - “Nothing exists but You. And You are but a Thought” (Twain *Mysterious Stranger Manuscripts* 405). It also accounts for Paine’s observation in Chapter One about how the author lived “curiously apart from the actualities of life”. The disunity of the pieces, some of them written during the period he wrote to Adams, reflects his question to Adams. Did his life consist of his movements, meetings and words about those movements and meetings, or was his life the contents and workings of his mind? The writing of the pieces shows his indecision. After he wrote the pieces, when he had decided his life was essentially his mind, he discerned the autobiographical structure by which he would proceed.

As noted in Chapter Two, the Mark Twain Project rejects most of the pieces which Paine selected for his edition and includes them, instead, in a section titled “Preliminary Manuscripts and Dictations, 1870–1905”. Three of Paine’s selections “did not meet the criteria for inclusion” at all (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 2). Even if the Project is correct in judging that Twain rejected these pieces himself, Paine’s choices merit discussion for the reason that his edition existed as the official one for almost ninety years. DeVoto made no known objections to Paine’s inclusions other than aesthetic objections, and Neider used some of Paine’s selections in his edition.

One of the three selections by Paine which the Project excluded entirely from its edition is “Macfarlane” which Paine dated “about 1898” (*Mark Twain’s Autobiography* v.I, 143). It begins, “When I was turned twenty I wandered to Cincinnati, and was there several months,” which appears autobiographical enough inasmuch as Twain actually did reside in Cincinnati in 1856. However, the particulars the author recites concerning a man he came to know there named Macfarlane have been

disputed in that no such individual has been shown to exist, and the opinions Macfarlane voices to Twain sound suspiciously like opinions Twain held by the time he wrote the piece. In other words, the piece has been suspected to be fiction couched in a first person narrative with some minor actual biography. That Twain did not include “Macfarlane” in the *North American Review* chapters may or may not be evidence. Unless Paine feigned belief, he took Macfarlane to be real himself, devoting two pages in his biography to paraphrasing the four pages of the actual piece.

Evidence of the piece’s fictional nature may lie in the information that Macfarlane supposedly theorized that humans had evolved “from a few microscopic seed-germs” and voiced his theory “fourteen or fifteen years before Mr. Darwin’s *Descent of Man* startled the world”. Macfarlane also voiced opinions Twain voiced himself in his last decade and a half: “He said that man’s heart was the only bad heart in the animal kingdom; that man was the only animal capable of feeling malice, envy, vindictiveness...the sole animal in whom was fully developed the base instinct called *patriotism*” (Twain *Mark Twain’s Autobiography* v.I, 146-7). It seems doubtful that a man like Macfarlane whose “hands were hardened from some sort of toil - mechanical labor,” the nature of which was unconfided to Twain, would possess “histories, philosophies, and scientific works” enabling him to theorize something which Darwin had to travel to the Galapagos Islands to divine (Paine *Mark Twain* v.I, 114-115). It may have been possible had his name been Abraham Lincoln, but otherwise sounds unlikely. The Project’s decision to exclude appears consistent based upon “Macfarlane”’s absence from typescripts two and four aside from its probable fictional nature. “Macfarlane” is an interesting example of the author’s beliefs and his penchant for creating didactic works combining fiction and autobiography and for these characteristics is worth a short discussion.

Paine and Neider both used in their editions the second piece the Project excluded entirely, “Jane Lampton Clemens”. Twain scholar Walter Blair wrote, “There is no evidence that the author wrote this for the *Autobiography*; and there is conclusive evidence that Paine juggled it out of its proper chronological place,” dating it “1890-91” for its first appearance in *Harpers Magazine* and “1897-8” in his edition. Blair dates it to the year the title subject died, 1890, and calls it a description of “a vibrant

personality important in shaping” the author’s life. Also, he notices the piece’s “movement from a single remembered episode to a series of loosely associated recollections was a typical performance in Clemens’s ‘autobiography’ and his fiction” (Twain *Hannibal, Huck & Tom 2*). The single quotation marks around ‘autobiography’ indicate Blair, like many others, was sceptical that Twain’s work really was an autobiography. More importantly, Blair points out that Twain used process of association for autobiographical material long before the dictations. Twain realized as early as his stay at Annie Fields’s, even if he forgot at times thereafter, that his jumble of experiences could only be organized through this process. By the time the dictations began, he not only realized this, but could demonstrably simulate the process artistically. He could relate a family memory, digress into an associated boyhood memory and end with a third memory of adulthood, the last connected to the second only because the theme of the second was restated in the last with additional force. For example, the dictation of March 28th, 1906, begins with a memory of his brother Orion’s fecklessness, which leads to Twain’s version of his father’s death on the verge of financial security, which culminates with a synopsis of Twain’s bankruptcy, exile and return to prosperity too late to save his wife’s life. It’s neither actual process of association nor strictly factual, but artistic simulation of the process of association.

Only eleven pages in length, “Jane Lampton Clemens” is far from purely about the author’s mother. It contains passages about Jesse Leathers (the Earl of Durham from Chapter One), Hannibal incidents, slavery in Hannibal and the author’s father. Unsurprisingly, everything about the author’s mother is eulogistic. Paine probably included this piece because it’s definitely autobiographical and contains memorable descriptions and quips, such as Twain’s mother telling the author she worried very early during his life he wouldn’t survive and worried slightly later he would (52).

The fact that the Project rejects “Henry H. Rogers (Continued)” is unsurprising inasmuch that it was composed in 1909, which means it wasn’t preliminary to the *Autobiography*, and there’s no evidence Twain intended it for the work itself. Written, not dictated, a few months after Rogers’ death, its subject is gratitude to Rogers for advising Twain to retain his copyrights during his bankruptcy, for negotiating with Twain’s creditors, for investment advice that helped Twain return to financial health and for never

making Twain feel he owed Rogers any gratitude. In his edition Paine abridged a dictation Twain made concerning Rogers in Florence in 1904 and followed it with the 1909 work.

More provoking than the Project's exclusion of the 1909 work from its edition is the question of why Twain did not include the 1904 Florence dictation in typescript two or four. The dictation in part gives an example of Rogers' ability to remember paying a debt twenty years earlier and his certainty he has kept a receipt in proof, which is found. It begins with the observation that Rogers has been testifying at length in a Boston trial about his business dealings and concludes with the newspaper article reporting the same. This, of course, is an early example of the feature of including excerpts in his autobiography for the purpose of helping the reader understand the author's thought process. Possibly Twain elected not to include this piece because the article quotes Rogers on the stand hesitating to surrender a memory, and the author may have realized his anecdote cast doubt on Rogers' being forthcoming in the trial inasmuch as his reminiscence paid tribute to Rogers' faculty of memory (*Twain Autobiography of Mark Twain* 192-198).

The earliest of the autobiographical pieces in the editions of both Paine and the Project, dated 1870, is "The Tennessee Land". Paine omitted a section which Neider restored in his own edition, but the latter made "dozens of his own omissions and changes, and he appended two paragraphs" from a piece written almost three decades later (61). Not only is "The Tennessee Land" important because it's the earliest autobiographical piece, but also because the title subject became in Twain's mind a metaphor exemplifying his family's defining weakness. His father bought a "monster tract of land" which brought no large profit to any family member, yet tantalized all of them with promises of wealth never to be realized even as it was sold portion by portion through the decades. "With the kindest intentions in the world," his father "laid the heavy curse of prospective wealth upon our shoulder. He went to his grave in the full belief he had done us a kindness." In Twain's recollection, "even upon his death bed" his father said the land "would soon make us all rich and happy," and "at this very day" his family members are "yet looking toward the same fixed point". He further claims his brother Orion borrowed money to buy a

“worthless weekly newspaper, believing as we all did, that it was not worthwhile to go at anything in serious earnest until the land was disposed of and we could embark intelligently in something” (61-3).

Keeping in mind that Twain is referring to himself as well as the other Clemenses, he means his family always retained false hopes in investments and projects which obstructed them from activities more likely to be remunerative. Amazingly, he sensed this quality in himself long before he proved the quality existed through actions such as his ruinous investment in James Paige’s typesetter. Also, the piece demonstrates that even though he sensed this personal weakness as early as 1870, he either forgot he possessed it or could not help himself in numerous instances of bad investments. In his 1885 Grant dictation he demonstrated he both understood himself and could not help himself when it came to bad investments: “I put myself in this fellow’s place and confessed...I would have done the very thing that he had...for these people are always seeking investments that pay illegitimately large sums; and they never, or seldom, stop to inquire into the nature of the business” (84). At the time he wrote “The Tennessee Land” he had led a peripatetic life with a half dozen occupations, only the most recent one promising. He had just published a bestselling book and entered into the primary occupation of his adult life, but he would also be a lecturer, editor, publisher and investor and frequently make statements to the effect that his writing existed to pay his bills and keep him entertained while some bonanza lay just beyond his immediate grasp. For example, in 1880 he wrote to Orion

I believe I told you I bought four-fifths of a patent some ten days ago for several thousand dollars. Yesterday I thought out a new application of this invention which I think will utterly annihilate & sweep out of existence one of the minor industries of civilization, & take its place – an industry which has existed for for 300 years - & doubtless many attempts have been made to knock the bottom out of its costliness before. Perchance I am mistaken in this calculation, but I am not able to see how I can be. However, never mind about that – I only wrote it to get it out of my mind, for I am grinding away, now, with all my might, & with an interest which amounts to intemperance, at the ‘Prince & the Pauper’ - .” (26 February 1880 MS: NPV, UCCL01763 Mark Twain Project Online)

In Chapter Four is a section examining the theme of autobiographical revenge, and it's asserted there that a substantial amount of revenge exacted is upon the author by the author. No one can read the *Autobiography* without sensing throughout his self-reproach, sometimes historically substantiated, other times questionably ascribed. This theme begins in the first autobiographical document he wrote, and although the document is excluded from his autobiography proper in the Project's finding, "The Tennessee Land" is discussed in the first document the Project believes Twain selected for inclusion, "My Autobiography [Random Extracts from It]", dated to 1897-98. In a portion of that document also selected for the *North American Review*, he wrote, "It kept us hoping and hoping during forty years, and forsook us at last... We were always going to be rich next year – no occasion to work. It is good to begin life poor; it is good to begin life rich... but to begin it *prospectively* rich! The man who has not experienced it cannot imagine the curse of it" (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 209).

Because "The Tennessee Land" was written years before John Hay's admonishment to Twain to begin his autobiography, it may be asked what motivated the author. The answer indicates that by the time he wrote this first piece he was already working at the beckon of two major factors in the larger autobiography, the process of association and the constant contrast between past and present. In May, 1870, the year he wrote the piece, Twain said in a letter to his wife, "We are offered \$15,000 cash for the Tennessee Land – Orion is in favor of taking it provided we can reserve 800 acres which he thinks contain an iron mine". Twain advised his brother to offer all of it for \$30,000 or sell all except that containing the wishful iron mine for the lower figure (Twain *Love Letters of Mark Twain* 152). By August the offer had fallen through, and Twain was choleric to Orion. "The family have been bled for 40 years to keep that cursed land on their hands... If any stupid fool will give 2,000 for it, do let him have it" (Kaplan, F. *The Singular Mark Twain* 262). Dixon Wecter guesses that a trip the author made to Washington in July for a failed lobbying attempt on behalf of a bill "to divide the State of Tennessee into two judicial districts" had as a motive "an oblique connection with the Clemens holdings in that state" (Twain *Love Letters of Mark Twain* 153).

Wecter's guess is plausible because the sequence of actions from the first hopeful letter to Orion to the writing of "The Tennessee Land" describes a man attempting to escape a curse with increasing desperation and ending in final brooding about his failure to do so. The sum of the piece is less about the original purchase and description of the property than it is about the land's baneful effect upon the present, which accounts for the piece's bitter tone.

"Early Days" dates to 1877 and may have been generated by its author's involvement in the writing of *Huckleberry Finn* during the time. It is two pages in length and has the highly conventional opening sentence "I was born the 30th of November, 1835, in the almost invisible village of Florida, Monroe county, Missouri". Its length and factual tone lend it the appearance of a letter written in response to a request for information, although it includes a few memorable comments like that about the church with large gaps between the planks that made its floor. "In winter there was always a refreshing breeze up through the puncheon floor; in summer there were fleas enough for all." What's interesting beyond its nostalgia is the presence of the contrast between past and present. Twain compares prices between farm goods in Florida then and in Hartford at the time of writing. He does the same with prices of cigars in both places and with the costs of slaves in Florida and domestic help in Hartford (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 64-5).

To describe the piece's publishing history takes as much space as describing the piece itself. Paine used it in his edition, and Neider used the first sentence to begin his edition's first chapter. Neider then appended two paragraphs from "My Autobiography [Random Extracts From It]", a document written in Vienna in 1897-98, before using "Early Life"'s description of the church, a store run by the author's uncle and the comparison of prices. Neider ends his chapter with another paragraph from "My Autobiography". It is this patchwork chapter by Neider chosen for print in the 1962 high school textbook, as described in Chapter Two. Both pieces Neider used are imbued with nostalgia, and it's likely that when people think of Twain as an artist of boyhood and pastoralism they are recalling details printed here.

It emphasizes the random composition of the pieces to note that the second came seven years after the first, and the six dictations concerning Ulysses S. Grant came eight years after that, in 1885. The Grant dictations together equal thirty-four pages in length versus five for the two previous pieces together, a fact alone which indicates the author had a purpose to creating this unit of autobiographical material separating it from his previous abbreviated efforts. But what was his purpose, and how did Grant create it?

Ulysses S. Grant exerted influence powerfully and curiously upon Twain's imagination and real life fortunes. In "Which Was the Dream?" the author created a fictional Grant who is thwarted by circumstance from realizing the potential of his character. In a notebook entry from the period of the two men's professional relationship Twain recorded an idea for a piece of fiction never written in which Huckleberry Finn, Tom Sawyer and Jim participate in the same side show Civil War action the author had, and Tom Sawyer meets Grant (Twain *Hannibal, Huck & Tom* 7). In real life the author several times saw Grant as President and later published his hugely successful *Memoirs*, which became the subject of his dictations for the pieces as well as the *Autobiography* proper.

Yet the Project elected to relegate the Grant dictations to its section containing preliminary work despite the fact that, in the Project's own words, "They make up the earliest known substantial body of texts that Clemens said were intended for his autobiography" (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 66). The Project explains its placement decision by quoting Twain's opinion that the words were "pretty freely dictated, but my idea is to jack-plane it a little before I die, some day or other; I mean the rude construction & rotten grammar". He never revised them, singly nor in whole, but he did use much of the subject matter with changes in six different 1906 dictations with Paine (482). To consider the two sets together amounts to some repetitiveness, but it also casts interesting light on the author in that he rephrased and revised different points in the narrative, sometimes so that the two versions, separated by thirty-one years, have contradictions. Paine used all the 1885 dictations in his edition, but not in their order of composition (ibid). Twain's secretary Isabel Lyon had often listened during Paine's dictations and believed Paine erred in including them. Lyon was a possibly biased observer because she had

progressed from friendliness to dislike of Paine and described him in an insertion within her diary as “Old Fraud!” (Lystra 268). She wrote in her copy of Paine’s edition of the *Autobiography* that the author “would not have allowed” their inclusion “without serious editing...notes only and held for drastic revision” (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 66-7). The Project acted finally upon its rationale that typescripts two and four didn’t include them.

It’s appropriate to mention here that although many critics have referred to the Paine dictations as spontaneous meanderings, Twain’s statement, as well as Lyon’s, offers evidence they are not. If Twain spoke of not printing the Grant dictations without revision, then it’s hardly likely he would allowed into print his later massive labor without due professionalism, and he did not, as will be addressed in Chapter Four.

Perhaps the best explanation of Twain’s attitude towards Grant is in words he wrote in 1909 about Henry Rogers:

Unconsciously we all have a standard by which we measure other men, and if we examine closely we find that this standard is a very simple one, and is this: we admire them, we envy them, for great qualities which we ourselves lack. Hero worship consists in just that. Our heroes are the men who do things which we recognize, with regret, and sometimes with a secret shame, that we cannot do. We find not much in ourselves to admire, we are always privately wanting to be like somebody else. If everybody was satisfied with himself, there would be no heroes.”

(Twain *Mark Twain’s Autobiography* v.I, 283-4).

Twain could not do what Grant could, but he felt forcefully that his meetings and dealings with Grant lent him some sort of footnote status in the destiny of one of history’s great men. In getting the contract to publish the dying general’s *Memoirs* and delivering hundreds of thousands of dollars in royalties to his family, Twain felt in some fashion he had saved the savior of his nation. The quotation, of course, also says much about Twain’s own persistent sense of inadequacy. Twain seemingly met every notable person of his time. He heard Gandhi speak, conversed with Winston Churchill, knew three American presidents

and one future president and met literary persons ranging from Uncle Remus to H.G. Wells. But Grant was a great hero, and Twain made the Grant dictations in part because he knew he'd played a part in Grant's life. He was dictating, he thought, his own role in history, and for all he knew at the time it was the only role in history he would have.

Of the thirty-four pages of the Grant dictations two thirds are devoted to the events immediately surrounding the ex-President's memoirs. The remaining pages, five of the dictations, are given to meetings Twain had with Grant before acquiring his memoirs, a discussion involving the sculptor Karl Gerhardt which has no mention of Grant at all and a criticism of a reverend that Twain believed misrepresented Grant's speaking style. These five dictations are not completely trivial, but are secondary in interest for most readers and Twain himself to the primary dictation concerning Grant's *Memoirs*. They probably exist because Twain wanted to record all his dealings with Grant. The discussion about Karl Gerhardt is connected with Grant only in that the sculptor made the general's bust during his illness, a fact not mentioned in the short dictation.

In 1881, before he owned a publishing company, Twain had suggested to Grant without success that he write his memoirs (Kaplan, F. *The Singular Mark Twain* 356). In a dictation of less than one page Twain says his persuasion failed because Grant believed his income was sufficient, and he intended to leave notes his children might use to make a future book (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 71-2). Therefore when opportunity came in late 1884 for him to publish Grant's *Memoirs*, he seized it as if providence, as he would term whatever agency confers favor upon humans, had favored him one time only and with an immediate deadline. He also seized it in a fashion to provoke criticism, and therefore a second motive for dictating was to vindicate his means of obtaining the contract. In a July, 1885, letter to a Boston newspaper's editor, Twain gave one version of how he obtained the contract.

I suggested to Gen. Grant that he submit my offer to the Century & other great publishing houses, & close with the one that offered him the best terms. He did it, & my offer was duplicated by several 'regular publishers', the Century among the number, & two firms exceeded my offer. But

none of them could exceed my *facilities* for publishing a subscription book...& that is why I got the book.” (Twain *Notebooks & Journals* v.III, 64)

This letter differs in detail from the twice-told dictations, which differ among themselves about issues such as precisely how Twain discovered Grant intended to write his memoirs. Therefore the Paine dictations receive discussion here although they were not preliminary to the main effort. These have a publishing history appropriate to the remainder of Twain’s autobiography inasmuch as they await the second volume of the Project’s edition to appear totally and authoritatively. Of the six Paine dictations concerning Grant, Paine published only one before running out of space in his two volumes. DeVoto published four others. Neider published none. And the author, Twain, apparently selected none for the *North American Review* chapters. Presumably he thought he might be challenged on some of his statements, particularly since he has harsh words for the Century Publishing Company and others, so he waited for posterity when his version might more easily become accepted history.

Significantly, the 1885 dictation contains the first use of excerpts, and they serve the same purposes here as they do in the Paine dictations. They stimulated the author’s recollections and emotions and communicate those qualities to the reader with immediacy. In this instance the excerpts are newspaper articles impugning Twain for his conduct in obtaining Grant’s contract for his memoirs and insulting Twain and Grant both. In consideration of Twain’s sensitivity to slights, these articles may have been the prime motive for the major dictation. In March, 1885, the *Springfield Republican* wrote, “it now seems that it was all but concluded that the Century company should publish the book...when in stepped Mark Twain and spoiled it all...it is intimated that Mark Twain cannot have any more of his “Huckleberry Finn” literature published hereafter in those offended pages. The readers of the magazine may well hope this last item of news is true”. In addition, the magazine publisher’s sister was quoted as saying the Century Publishing Company and Twain’s firm offered Grant the same terms except that Twain’s offer included employment of Grant’s son Jesse. “[W]hile it was perfectly natural for Gen Grant to want to see

his son fixed in business, it was not so natural for the Century company to want to be forced into a bargain of this sort” (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 95).

The *New York World* wrote that Twain was a “rollicking humorist” and “a smart business man” and “in recent years he has not shared the profits of his fun with anyone”. Also, “it had been considered almost settled that the book would be issued by” the Century. Grant had “visited the office almost daily...to consult about the material and the make-up of the book”. The *World* also alleged that Grant sought from the Century as a condition of giving them his memoirs a position for his son and that he took his proposed book to Twain because the Century had refused him this (96).

Twain heatedly objected in his dictation. According to him, he had “stumbled over” the *Century*’s editor, Richard Watson Gilder, after leaving a lecture hall in November, 1884, and had gone to Gilder’s home for dinner. There Gilder told Twain the *Century* had paid Grant a \$500 check for an article of his war memories. Furthermore, Grant had reconsidered his decision not to write his memoirs as a book and had been proffered a contract for the same by the Century Publishing Company (77). Grant’s change of mind about writing his memoirs came because his fatal cancer had been diagnosed, and a swindler in the brokerage firm in which Grant was a partner had stolen most of Grant’s money.

Twain’s reaction in his dictation was that the \$500 check had been a “monumental insult” and “if he had given him \$40,000 for a single magazine article he would still be in General Grant’s debt” (78). This is Twain’s figurative language valuing the relative merits of the magazine and the general. The author went “straight” to Grant’s next morning. After receiving Grant’s affirmation regarding Gilder’s words, Twain asked to view the contract. His dictated reaction was,

Now, here is a book that was morally bound to sell several hundred thousand copies in the first year of its publication and yet the Century people had had the hardihood to offer General Grant the very same 10 percent royalty which they would have offered to any unknown Comanche Indian...If I had not been acquainted with the Century people I should have said that this was a deliberate attempt to take advantage of a man’s ignorance and trusting nature, to rob

him; but I do know the Century people and therefore I know that they...were simply making their offer out of their boundless resources of ignorance and stupidity.” (78)

In other words, Twain answered charges he had stolen the contract by asserting he had rescued Grant from being denied proper compensation at a minimum and being robbed at worst.

This passage deserves minor credit as the first instance of major invective in the autobiographical documents. The torrent of inflamed language which followed through the decades constitutes a feature of the *Autobiography* in itself and would fill many pages if excised and pasted together.

What follows in the dictation is a depiction of Twain as the wise businessman informing Grant what terms his true worth as an author deserves, either “20 percent on the retail price” or “70 percent of the profits” above cost of manufacture (79). When the Century met these figures and the American Publishing Company offered to go higher, “The General began to perceive...he had narrowly escaped from making a very bad bargain...he began to incline toward me for the reason, no doubt, that I had been the accidental cause of stopping that bad bargain” (80). The word “accidental” as Twain uses it is important because it emphasizes his innocence in actions that others termed unscrupulous. Twain eventually came to believe almost everything in his life had been accidental, and in this instance it had enabled him to save Grant. He believed he was almost always an agent acted upon, but here in a moment of historical importance he was an agent who acted, and positively. For Twain this was the one affair in his life in which he most closely played an important hero. Decades later in the Paine dictations, however, he sought to explain his financial and personal loss of the 1890’s by perversely identifying Gilder’s words as the precipitant of his losses. His words early in the 1885 dictation portray him to the reader, as per his theory of autobiography, in a light not as flattering as he perceived himself. His words are meant to show him rushing to Grant’s home the morning after he conversed with Gilder as though he suspected what he actually found, a highly disadvantageous deal for the dying general. But what caused his suspicion? It might be asserted he rushed to Grant to better the Century’s offer, whatever it might be, and happily found the company had bid low. In other words, the media charges prompting the dictation

had a shred of truth, even if Twain really did Grant a great service. Both Twain and the Century had self-interest, although Twain's self-interest is justly overshadowed by his altruism and the results he achieved for Grant. As he put it when he addressed the newspaper reports in his dictation, "nobody seemed to have wit enough to discover that if one gouger [himself] *had* captured the General's book, here was evidence that he had only prevented another gouger from getting it, since the Century's terms were...*10 percent royalty*" (95).

In the dictation Twain said he wanted the book dearly and entertained few hopes of getting it because "the General evidently felt under great obligation to the Century people for saving him from the grip of poverty by paying him \$1,500 for three magazine articles which were well worth \$100,000". Also, he said he expected his rivals to meet his advised terms to Grant (79), to which a rejoinder might be ventured that a man like himself who couldn't resist so many poor investments likely would have raised his offer for a deal that seemed both so lucrative and personally important to him. The book was his after Twain suggested "competent people" investigate the capacity of Twain's firm to handle the publishing and they reported "that my house was as well equipped in all ways as the others" (80).

To accept all the dictation's words literally is to accept Twain not only as the savior of the nation's savior, but also as the man who protected Grant from a rapacious Century Publishing Company and magazine. The general had promised one more article to the magazine, and it requested fulfillment during the period the sick man was struggling to complete his memoirs. Twain said, "I asked if there was no contract or no understanding as to what was to be paid...He said there was not. Then, I said, 'Charge them \$20,000 for it.'" (85). To be fair to Twain for the boasting quality of his words here and in the Paine dictations, it should be noted that the publisher made better than good on them, delivering about \$397,000 to Grant's widow by October, 1887 and large amounts afterwards as well (487).

When Twain first addressed the preceding events in the Paine dictation of February 6th, 1906, it was only as an atmospheric allusion:

[W]e gave a reading one night...and when I was walking home in a dull gloom of fog and rain I heard one invisible man say to another invisible man this, in substance: 'General Grant has

actually concluded to write his autobiography.’ That remark gave me joy, at the time, but if I had been struck by lightning in place of it, it would have been better for me and mine. However, that is a long story, and this is not the place for it.” (335)

First, Twain doesn’t mention that one of the men presumably was Richard Watson Gilder, nor going home with him to dinner. Also, it’s new information that he learned his great new fact from the fortuitous overheard talk of two “invisible” men. This sounds like other instances in Twain’s life when he reportedly found objects in the street which changed his life; that is to say it sounds implausible that it happened as stated because it’s too dramatic. The significance of his statement that the remark gave him initial joy and retrospective regret means that Twain is looking back at his great time of triumph and linking it to his financial and personal calamities. He means his triumph created his downfall. Twain didn’t believe his life had a story, but he believed it had major themes, and he stated one here. His association with Grant and the wealth he derived thereby provided him with both the funds and the hubris to pursue the personal flaw that wrecked him, which was investment in the typesetting machine. This is what he’s implying and trusting the reader to infer. Also, it’s significant that it was a completely fortuitous overheard remark that set his flaw in motion because it implies Twain’s helplessness, and this, of course, partially exonerates him for his failure because he couldn’t control walking where he would hear words that would act with chemical precision upon his flaw.

Twain’s version of Determinism included repeated assertions that individual temperament and impersonal circumstances determined all human affairs. This is why he created a fictional Grant in “Which Was the Dream?” who never became an important person because he never received the opportunity to exercise his particular quality of genius. Conversely, Twain’s version of Determinism meant that a man with his own particular temperament could be set on a ruinous course of action by the happenstance of words he overheard. It is a construction by the author similar to Dreiser’s in *Sister Carrie* where a man’s slide to beggary begins because he’s tempted to steal money from a safe. The man is seized by indecision once he’s removed the money and is on the point of returning it, at which point the

safe's door closes and locks itself, thereby determining the rest of the man's life. This sense of delayed and certain misfortune caused by tiny accident is what Twain wishes to achieve in his telling. That his failure proceeded from financial and personal triumph increases the irony.

DeVoto notes in his edition that when Twain resumes his 1906 discussion of Grant's *Memoirs* on May 28th, his words "differ in many particulars, some of them important, from the far more reliable account" the author gave in his 1885 dictation, even though "many memoranda, letters, and notebook entries show that it also is inaccurate" (170). DeVoto's caution applies to this sample of the author's revised account:

It had never been my intention to publish anybody's books but my own. An accident diverted me from this wise purpose...I had been lecturing...and was walking homeward...In the midst of a black gulf between lamps, two dim figures stepped out of a doorway and moved along in front of me. I heard one of them say, 'Do you know General Grant has actually determined to write his memoirs'...That was all I heard – just those words – and I thought it great good luck that I was permitted to overhear them." (ibid)

Gilder and dinner at his home have disappeared in favor of the more dramatic overheard words ("just those words") between two apparent strangers. And the years between the two tellings of the events have relaxed the urgency Twain felt in 1885 because the author "called on General Grant" the next morning, not went "straight" to his house. In this later telling, Grant is on the verge of signing the contract with pen in hand when Twain said, "Don't sign it. Let Col. Fred [Grant's son] read it to me first," which he did, "and I said I was glad I had come in time to interfere". Emphasizing how in his mind Grant's book led to his own ruin, Twain says, "It might have been better for me, possibly, if I had let him alone but I didn't" (170-1). After Twain suggested the higher percentages he believed Grant should command, the general resisted because he believed he had committed to the Century, and to renegotiate made him feel like "a robber of a publisher". Twain responded that robbing a publisher "was not a crime and was always rewarded in heaven with two halos. Would be, if it ever happened" (172). Twain is here referring to his own supposed swindles at the hands of his publishers, Elisha P. Bliss, Jr. and James Webb, as well

as the Century in Grant's case. Twain professes his first thought was to offer Grant's book to the American Publishing Company, now run by Bliss's son, but "I reflected that the company had been robbing me for years...and that now was my chance to feed fat the ancient grudge I bore them" (174).

In speaking of the nature of autobiography with Rudyard Kipling in 1890, Twain had said that if he ever wrote his, he was certain he would be as all others and "make myself out to be the better man in every little business that has been to my discredit" (Twain *Life as I Find It* 317). His involvement with Grant was not to his discredit, but Twain observed the spirit of his earlier remark when he spoke his next words in the 1906 dictation: "It suddenly occurred to me that I was a publisher myself. I had not thought of it before. I said, 'Sell *me* the memoirs, General'." (Twain *Mark Twain in Eruption* 176). It strains credulity to believe Twain had no self-interest until this moment in his meeting. He continually sought business opportunities throughout his adulthood, and although he usually seized poor ones, it doesn't mean he wouldn't recognize a great one instantly, particularly inasmuch as he had suggested it to Grant in 1881. In July, 1885, Twain wrote to the editor of the Boston *Herald* that newspapers appeared to portray him as "a pushing, pitiless, underhanded sharper" (Twain *Notebooks & Journals 1883-1891* v.III, 123). By 1906 he may have convinced himself he had been so innocent of such charges that he hadn't even seen his great opportunity immediately.

The other 1906 dictations concerning Grant are largely Twain's version of how his acquisition of the *Memoirs* precipitated the failure of his publishing firm. Inasmuch as he blamed his partner Charles Webster for this, it is a different subject and will be discussed in Chapter Four in the section devoted to his autobiographical use of revenge. Before Twain's dictations about Grant are concluded, however, reference is made to DeVoto's caution that the 1885 dictation also bears inaccuracies. Although Webster is nowhere mentioned in the dictation, he was necessarily Twain's agent in the negotiation with Grant because Twain was making a lecture tour during part of this time period. Webster met the general repeatedly. Webster reported interest on Grant's part on November 28th, 1884. And Webster made the actual offer of seventy percent of net profits considerably past that date (95). Also, Grant didn't choose Twain's firm definitely until three months past the morning meeting described in the dictation, late

February, 1885 (64-5). Twain probably glossed over this fact because it lent dramatic enhancement to tell his tale as if the events moved rapidly. In a notebook entry Twain writes, “On the 21st [of February] I called on Gen. Grant & Col. Fred...& the General presently said, “I mean you shall have the book – I have about made my mind to that – but I wish to write to [the Century], first, & tell him I have so decided” (96). In other words, Twain’s account plays up the element of nick of time action and rescue with himself as the hero who answers every objection with professional knowledge. It mentions neither a man, Webster, who handled part of the proceedings, nor the author’s required absence on his lecture tour, and it de-emphasizes the protracted nature of the proceedings.

Of course, it would be in keeping with Twain’s autobiographical theory if he reported it this way because that’s how in retrospect it seemed to him.

Ulysses S. Grant gave his book to Twain’s publishing firm for seventy percent of the net profits, which Twain estimated brought Grant’s widow between \$420,000 and \$450,000. Twain and his partner Charles Webster therefore earned at least \$180,000 from Grant’s book, the equivalent of \$3,400,000 today according to the Mark Twain Project (*Twain Autobiography of Mark Twain* 487). These figures make more bitterly ironic the fact that Twain’s next autobiographical piece following the triumphant Grant dictations is “The Machine Episode”, which is Twain’s account of how he plunged into bankruptcy in the early 1890’s.

The Project terms this piece to be “manifestly autobiographical”, but the author “did not explicitly identify it” to be placed in his autobiography (101), which means it didn’t appear in typescript two or four. The first three of its pages were written in December, 1890, when Twain clearly discerned his folly for sinking at least \$170,000 into James W. Paige’s typesetting machine that never completely worked. Its tone of weariness and exhausted patience is set in the first sentence, “This episode has now spread itself over more than one-fifth of my life – a considerable stretch of time, as I am now fifty-five years old” (*ibid.*).

As usual in his business investments, Twain mind had leaped from the initial concept to the illusion of riches without sufficient practical investigation. The first demonstration he witnessed that the machine could do the work of four men overmatched the reality that the machine needed funds to be perfected, lots of funds – if it ever could be perfected. Once Twain invested, he was lured through the years to keep investing by his increasingly wishful thinking that his riches would render his investments petty, as well as by the losing gambler's inability to cut his losses. "The Machine Episode" documents the approximate moment when he realizes he has lost his huge investment irretrievably.

He doesn't exempt himself from complicity: "I quite understand that I am confessing myself a fool; but that is no matter, the reader would find it out anyway, as I go along" (103). However, his main object is to vilify Paige for inveigling him into making continued infusions without risking his own money. As the author describes Paige, "His business thrift is remarkable...but always at someone else's expense. He spent hundreds and thousands of other folk's money, yet always kept his machine and its possible patents in his own possession...could never be beguiled into putting a penny into his own work" (102).

A minor villain is the lawyer William Hamersley, who allegedly induced Twain's first investment by saying he owned stock in the machine himself and was going to purchase as much "as he could afford". He also drew contracts Twain signed with Paige. Twain writes, "I had known him long. I thought I knew him well" (101-2). The following is an example of the author attempting magnanimity toward a lesser target like Hamersley when he believes he's been swindled by the larger target: "I have no harsh words to say about him. He is a great fat good-natured, kind-hearted, chicken-livered slave; with no more pride than a tramp, no more sand than a rabbit...He sincerely thinks he is honest" (203). As usual, Twain's memory has contributed misinformation because in reality it was a man named Dwight Buell, not Hamersley, who informed Twain about Paige and the typesetter and received the author's first stock purchase therein (Powers 436). Also, the misinformation is probably not a simple memory slip. Twain didn't usually blame people simply because they factually injured him. His targets typically had injured him while under the guise of friendship. Hamersley is blamed, not Buell, because Twain had "known him long," and therefore the lawyer's continued involvement through years of investment caused the author to

believe Hamersley had betrayed him. It's impossible to determine whether Twain knew he was being inaccurate on this point or if he had talked himself into believing someone he trusted had abetted his own bad judgment.

When Twain wrote the three page second part of "The Machine Episode" in "late 1893 or early 1894," his bankruptcy was months away, and the tone conveys his desperate awareness that he may lose more than his investment. This second part has less continuity than the first in that it is largely told through lines of dialogue between the author and Paige, reflecting Twain's agitated state of mind.

It's significant that in "The Machine Episode" the arch-villain is Paige, with minor appearances by such as Hamersly. But Charles Webster, the arch-villain of the 1906 dictations concerning Grant, is absent. By 1906 Twain's years of brooding had convinced him that Webster foremost had caused his firm's failure, which in turn led to his bankruptcy, exile and family death. His focus in "The Machine Episode" shows that at the time of the events Twain blamed the man who actually was most responsible for his financial disaster with the exception of himself.

The next five pieces, composed between 1897 and 1898, are so dissimilar and without obvious autobiographical intent, unlike all the prior documents, that they seem reflective of how the preceding years of trauma had affected Twain. They bear no mention of his bankruptcy or death in the family, as if the author noted down his present not very consequential thoughts in preference to considering his past travails or planning any work of larger purpose. Because these seem so musing, daydream-like and detached from his recent personal history, it is as if he composed them during a state of mind he expressed in one of his fictional fragments written during the same period, "The Great Dark". In the fragment the narrator doesn't remember incidents his wife claims have happened to them, but only those things she claims are his dreams. She tells him, "You can remember dream-trips to Europe well enough, but things in real life – even the most memorable and horrible things – pass out of your memory in twelve years. There is something the matter with your mind" (Twain *The Devil's Race-Track: Mark Twain's Great Dark Writings* 109). These pieces' autobiographical basis lies in his stated intentions for them rather than their contents. For example, the manuscript titled "Travel-Scraps I" bears his handwritten revised title

“Travel-Scraps from Autobiog.” (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 107). The piece indicates that at this point he could conceive of his autobiography only as disconnected “Scraps”, and the piece’s contents consist of observations upon the people and public transportation of London. That it bears the name “Mark Twain” at its end indicates he may have written it initially as an essay, and the fact that it’s commentary rather than reminiscence shows he hadn’t realized his autobiography could be both. It’s not an important piece, but even here the author displays the tendency to compare what he observes in London with what he previously observed in New York and what he is observing at the moment of composition in Vienna. In other words, the *Autobiography*’s fascination with physical time and space is present.

The following four pieces, “Four Sketches About Vienna”, are all dated as if they are sequential though non-daily diary entries. Paine published three of them in his edition (118). They bear little significance autobiographically except for their diary feature, which the author didn’t know would be important to his later concept. He composed these four and “Travel-Scraps I” in 1897-98 while working on a document which actually resides in typescript two and four and thus in the *Autobiography*, “My Autobiography [Random Extracts from It]”, so perhaps at the time he held vague ideas about the possible use of these pieces there also.

The next piece, “My Debut as a Literary Person”, of 1898, is Twain’s account of how he wrote his “first magazine article” for *Harper’s* magazine twenty-two years before. The Project notes the title isn’t accurate because the author had published many articles previously in newspapers and journals, but “it was the first nonfiction work he had published in so eminent a journal” (127). The *Century* magazine published this piece in 1899, but the author’s autobiographical intention lies in his words written on the manuscript: “This is Chapter XIV of my unfinished Autobiography and the way it is getting along it promises to remain an unfinished one.”

It’s worth noting about Twain’s compositional practice that “Chapter XIV” is notional. In “My Autobiography [Random Extracts from It]”, which he worked on during this period, there are chapter divisions, but they lack numbers. He wrote episodically with the intention of filling in the gaps later. He

could divide his content into chapters, but he couldn't know what chapter numbers they would bear until he knew what he would write before and after each. When he said sometimes that he had produced a great deal of his autobiography, he may have confused having a great deal of it blocked out in his mind with having produced it. "Chapter XIV" is notional because it occupied in the author's mind the approximate location he thought its content would appear in his finished work. There are no thirteenth or fifteenth chapters.

This idiosyncratic work process necessarily hindered progress, as the author noted on his words written on the manuscript. His plan of his life story at this stage was a series of box cars which he hoped would finally constitute a train. From time to time he created individual cars and slotted them in where he roughly figured they should fit, without concern for the interlinking cars until those were created in an indefinite future. In the event almost all never were created. Obviously his final conception of composition through process of association within the discipline of a diary format bears elements of this preliminary idea. In his final conception he would remain free to create his individual box cars, this time aided and bettered by the organic linking process of his mind and with greatly more artistic results, and he would be liberated from any requirement to create a complete train of properly linked cars. He therefore wouldn't need the artificial chronology of a conventional life story.

But his plan's limitations in 1898 became apparent, which is why Twain told the *Century's* editor when he submitted "My Debut" that he had "abandoned my Autobiography & am not going to finish it" (127). The natural limitations of his plan had brought him to a dead end. His interest in his autobiography hadn't ended, however, because in the same year of his words just stated he conceived of the idea of autobiography as a series of pocket-sized biographies, which would become another dead end.

In the 1866 article pertaining to "My Debut"'s title, Twain had interviewed the fifteen men who survived after the clipper ship *Hornet* was destroyed by fire. The survivors endured "a voyage of forty-three days in an open boat through the blazing tropics on *ten days' rations* of food" (118). Since Twain is commenting upon his own writing, the piece is meta-writing, of course. It's also interesting in that it contains genuinely autobiographical material even though much of the piece consists of excerpts from the

survivors' diaries, interspersed with the author's comments. Of course this is Twain's excerpt practice and theory in action, and of course this is another example of his fascination with the contrasts of past and present. It's also interesting that this piece with genuinely autobiographical material also embodies a metaphor for Twain's recent years. A ship caught on fire. The crew and passengers gathered what assets they could and escaped in open boats on a prolonged and pathless search for survival, exposed to the elements, approaching starvation, surviving through sheer luck and determination. Metaphorically he's describing his own years-long wandering through the 1890's, and he may have described the survivors' ordeal in extended detail in the piece because he felt it to be analogous to his own. Twain spent cumulatively about a year of his life at sea, which is a lot of time to think about the ship and the ocean and consentient metaphors. Furthermore, Twain's retold tale of the *Hornet* not only makes sense as a metaphor for his own disaster and salvation, but in this same period he was writing his dream narratives featuring families on nightmarish sea voyages. In his dream narratives, no matter how lost the characters are or pointless, perilous and endless their voyages are, their ships are comparative locations of stability. Because this particular author worked so consistently by the process of association to stimulate his creativity, it's worth considering that his fictional dream narratives recalled to mind his 1886 article about an ocean ordeal, which led to "My Debut".

A final point of interest in "My Debut" is its vocalization in the last paragraph of the larger autobiography's constant theme of past and present:

The interest of this story...is of the sort that time cannot decay. I have not looked at the diaries for thirty-two years, but I find that they have lost nothing in that time. Lost? – they have gained; for by some subtle law all tragic human experiences gain in pathos by the perspective of time. We realize this when in Naples we stand musing over the poor Pompeian mother...who lies with her child gripped close to her breast...and whose despair and grief have been preserved...She moves us, she haunts us...we do not know why, for she is nothing to us, she has been nothing to any one for eighteen centuries; whereas of the like case to-day we should say, 'poor thing, it is pitiful,' and forget it in an hour." (144)

This is the effect Twain felt personally when distant points in time were brought side by side, and it's the effect he wished to evoke for his readers through his use of past and present in the dictations. He'd discovered a phenomenon to the effect that the present was mere sensation, whereas the past brought against the present through associative stimulus added the dimension of reflection. The past brought into the present made both more striking.

The pocket-sized biographies he wrote next mark the beginning of Twain's publicity for his autobiography, which is ironic because he was convinced he'd achieved a conceptual breakthrough at the time he'd reached another dead end. They contain nothing to justify Twain's claims regarding their unprecedented truthfulness in depiction of persons he had known. An interview with the *London Times* in 1899 said they were being written "with the sole object of telling the truth, the whole truth...without malice, and to serve no grudge, but, at the same time, without respect of persons or social conventions, institutions, or pruderies of any kind" (16). However, the biographies are simply one humorous anecdote about Horace Greeley and vivid portraits of Petroleum V. Nasby and Ralph Keeler. Keeler's portrait contains a digression about a lecturer and author named Olive Logan whom Twain rightly said would be forgotten by time because of the paucity of her talent. "Olive Logan's notoriety grew out of – only the initiated knew what. Apparently it was a manufactured notoriety, not an earned one. She *did* write and publish little things...no talent in them...really built up out of newspaper paragraphs set afloat by her husband" (152). For this digression Twain deserves credit for having unknowingly forecast the present era's burgeoning crop of celebrities with no certifiable accomplishment, such as Paris Hilton and Snooki and so on and so on. He was astute enough to understand that modern communications would create famous people without any achievements except for the puffery that made them famous.

As for why Twain was so enthusiastic in interviews about his admittedly tame fare, it might be asserted that he was neither cynically promoting his autobiography nor mentally deluded. He had written seventeen pages of genuine autobiography during the period in which he worked on the six previous pieces as well as these biographies. This document, "My Autobiography [Random Extracts from It]",

would become the first in order within typescripts two and four, making it the first section of the finished work. The pieces written in concert with “My Autobiography” add up to a substantial amount of effort, and Twain probably believed he was progressing, which accounts for his enthusiasm regardless of his unsolved problem of how to integrate the pieces into a larger whole. As an artist, Twain could exhibit within one literary work both mature technical self-awareness and the aimlessness of a child playing with toys, and he could confuse the two states with each other.

When Twain gave his 1899 interview to the *Buffalo Express* quoted in Chapter One, he didn’t realize he was publicizing an autobiographical concept that would go nowhere. He still believed in his concept of autobiography through biographies when he wrote his fictional fragment “Eddypus” more than one year later. However, he had produced a piece much more predictive of his major efforts between the interview and the fragment. Composed in 1900, “Scraps from My Autobiography. From Chapter IX” is genuine autobiography and employs the process of association and theme of past and present that is omnipresent in the Paine dictations. The piece is rich in anecdotes from his boyhood. Paine and Neider both published it with emendations, and this wide circulation probably helped to create today’s popular image of Twain as the timeless small town boy. When George Harvey read it in 1906, he “instantly suggested selections for publication in the *North American Review*,” and almost the entire piece appeared there. Yet the author didn’t place it in typescript two and four, which is why it’s a preliminary piece in the Project’s edition.

His decision is apparently mystifying inasmuch as the piece contains several of Twain’s most vivid and comic memories of Hannibal, such as when he stripped naked and pretended to be a bear without knowing he was under the eyes of two hidden girls and the story of Jim Wolf sliding off the icy roof in his night shirt and landing among the boys and girls of an outdoor taffy pull. However, the question of its exclusion has a certain answer, to be given in the following chapter. The piece also samples from the other elements DeVoto glimpsed in Hannibal, “anxiety, violence, supernatural horror, and an uncrystallized but enveloping dread” (Twain *Mark Twain in Eruption* xviii). There are anecdotes of five

violent deaths within one page, leading up to Twain's explanation for their occurrence: "They were inventions of Providence to beguile me to a better life" (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 159).

However, the value of this piece for this study includes more than the memories. Twain discovered his accidental nakedness had been witnessed in the mentioned anecdote, but not the identity of the witnesses. His shame was aggravated by the awareness his witnesses might be any of Hannibal's girls, which effectively made all of Hannibal's girls his witnesses. And then Twain wrote, "But – The scene changes. To Calcutta – forty seven years later." One of the witnesses who happened by incredible coincidence to meet Twain during his world-wide lecture tour reveals her identity by recalling stray words mentioned during the incident (157). This is precisely the interest generated in autobiography, as Twain phrased it, when memory is brought forcibly into the present. The author had as in a vision seen the youthful Hannibal girl in Calcutta, but this girl was the granddaughter of the actual witness, who was Twain's age naturally. A childhood memory therefore becomes a cause for reflection about the changes age brings, and the change is emphasized by the strangeness of the location for the meeting, Calcutta. Twain and the grandmother are in some paradoxical fashion simultaneously the boy and the girl in Hannibal and the famous writer and the grandmother in Calcutta. Without exaggeration, this is Proustian.

Likewise, the memory of Jim Wolf sliding off the icy roof segues into a telling of how Twain wrote and published the tale in 1867 only to see it rewritten under another man's name a few years later, with the result that Twain was blamed for stealing another man's work. "But I was not done with 'Jim Wolf and the Cats' yet" he wrote. "In 1873 I was lecturing in London," where he attempted to cheer an impoverished young man by telling him the story. According to Twain, the young man later rewrote Twain's tale and sold it to a local magazine, "And he did not put my name to it. So that small tale was sold three times. I am selling it again now" (161-3). Surprisingly, considering Twain's penchant for representing fiction as fact in the *Autobiography*, the young man's literary theft actually occurred (517). This is the same process of segue from one subject into apparent digression with return to the original associative stimulus that structures the Paine dictations.

Unfortunately, the following piece, “Scraps from My Autobiography: Private History of a Manuscript That Came to Grief”, is no step forward. Critically speaking, it’s the obverse of the preceding piece, a mundane anecdote stretched tediously, whose autobiographical relevance extends only to a portrayal of its author in one of his rages about editorial changes to his introduction to a book concerning Joan of Arc. Paine published part of this piece, apparently upon the basis of the author’s sentence: “The letter will be found in its proper place in this chapter of my Autobiography” (166). The letter referred to is Twain’s unsent and venomous response to the offending editor. The piece contains the excerpt feature of the later dictations, in this case the reproduction of his ten page introduction with every resented editorial change. One can see Twain’s point of view without finding pertinence to his autobiography except in that Twain held opinions of almost religious fervor regarding his command of punctuation and diction.

The author left the final three pieces untitled, leaving their naming to the Project. He indicated his at least momentary intention to use them in his autobiography by inscribing “Auto.” or “Autobiog.” on all, although none went into typescript two and four. All could have been placed in the *Autobiography* without appearing inappropriate because the first is an authorial rumination of the type appearing numerous times in the finished work, and the other two have autobiographical content.

“Reflections on a Letter and a Book”, probably from 1903, is an expression of Twain’s belief that “we are all beggars” in one or another respect, occasioned by his receipt of “Another of those peculiarly depressing letters – a letter cast in artificially humorous form” asking him to read and render opinion upon a book by an unfamiliar correspondent (181). Once again, the letter is transcribed rather than paraphrased in order that the reader may feel the authorial emotions that stimulated the piece’s writing. All people are beggars with merely different objectives: a penny, a dollar, a postmastership, an introduction to society, a free legal opinion from a lawyer sought in “social converse” or “the Presidency” (181-2). As for Twain, “I respect my own forms of passing the hat, but not other people’s...Among my forms is not that of sending my books to strangers...Since that is not my form of soliciting alms, I look down upon it with a polar disdain”.

There follows an intriguing passage presaging an important feature of the *Autobiography* and other future writings such as *Is Shakespeare Dead?* and the Ashcroft-Lyon manuscript. Twain says he accepted the compliments of the first person who sent him a book to read and praise “at par...I didn’t read between the lines, I didn’t know there was anything between the lines. However, as the years dragged along and brought experience I became an expert on invisibles, and could find more meat between the lines than anywhere else” (183). The following two chapters of this study have a discussion with examples of the manner in which Twain expects his readers to note his “invisibles”. As Twain aged, he shared with literary modernism the characteristic that the author often trusts his reader to infer his thought without his being explicit. This is not minor because failure to understand this feature has caused critics to ask where the work’s introspection and heralded truthfulness are.

An example of the author’s “invisibles” occurs here. The Project decided by the piece’s “physical evidence (ink, paper, pagination)” that its “pages make up a single work, but the connection between the first seventeen and the last four seemed so tentative to Paine that he actually turned them (by virtue of penciled titles) into separate works,” although he used neither in his edition (181). The Project is referring here to the strange direction the text takes after Twain writes, “I do not know how to answer that stranger’s letter”. Then one line is skipped, and his next words are, “I suppose the reader...already knows what it was that I did. I followed custom” (184). He read the unsolicited text and replied favorably of it, ending with the words, “We do no benevolences whose *first* benefit is not for ourselves”. He means this gave him “peace for my spirit”. Twain then inserts two newspaper notices, the first about the Presbyterian Church’s revision of its Confession of Faith and the second about a Russian massacre of Jews. He then writes, “We have no respectable evidence that the human being has morals. He is himself the only witness” (185-6). This apparent non-sequitur is actually related to the preceding discussion, as the Project notes. The subject of the unnamed book was Presbyterian doctrine, and the Confession of Faith referred to in the newspaper notice asserted predestination, the theory that people are elected to salvation or damnation at birth. Non-Christians are automatically damned under this belief, “a fact which may bear upon Clemens’s inclusion of the clipping that follows, about the massacre of Russian Jews” (520). In a

process paralleling his mind's movement, he expresses his thoughts regarding his resentment. He reads the book. Then he informs readers what he thinks of as a result of reading the book.

This "invisible" is so Delphic that it would defy explanation without the knowledge the Project possessed regarding the book Twain received. But then, so too did the literary Modernists often require abstruse knowledge from their readers to understand their own "invisibles". After Twain wrote "Reflections on a Letter and a Book", he frequently communicated "with more meat between the lines" in his autobiography, to the perplexity of critics and scholars who didn't recognize this modern form of indirection from an author they believed to be familiar.

Publicizing the Pieces

In the Project's estimation, the author decided finally that the pieces just discussed, with the exceptions of the Florence dictations, not be part of his autobiography at all. Paine selected them erroneously, knowingly or not. Material from some pieces had been worked into the dictations, indicating their final value to Twain was as first drafts or memoranda. Some are entertaining, and some include valuable information regarding points of view otherwise unexpressed by the author. To their author these pieces evidently held major importance, at least while he was creating them. He was so seized with the ideas he had for his autobiography, even before he had figured out exactly what it would be, that he felt compelled to trumpet it as something unprecedented in the history of literature.

Twain kept information about his autobiography surprisingly private for decades. He spoke about it in parlors, as at Mrs. Fields's, and he mentioned it in his notebooks, as when he reminded himself to "get Redpath" to take his dictation. He told his partner in his publishing house, Charles Webster, to keep a copy for his autobiography of a letter he was sending. But he made his project public information in the late 1890's, which is the period when he thought he had become serious about following through with it. He had created comparatively little by the time he began publicizing it, but he had passed through calamities in his personal and financial life and obtained some mental equilibrium as well as increased

fame and age. These factors made an autobiography logical. More importantly, he was writing more that he, at least, perceived as autobiographical and, most importantly, he was arriving at ideas he thought would constitute its guiding principles.

This marked the beginning of the *Autobiography*'s publicity, continued until our time, which has left so many critics disappointed when they read the actual work. The author undoubtedly realized the value of his publicity while being taken in by it himself simultaneously. Occasionally he had to explain why he couldn't produce his efforts for view. When a magazine publisher asked for excerpts in 1898, Twain replied that his material "would not answer for your magazine. Indeed a great deal of it is written in too independent a fashion for any magazine. One may publish a *book* and print whatever his family shall approve and allow to pass, but it is the Public that edits a magazine" (Emerson *Mark Twain: a Literary Life* 302). At this time Twain had written or dictated little more than one hundred pages, which leads one to ask what "the great deal of it" was. It's pertinent that Twain had established by the time he declined the request above his habit of implying that his work would be controversial in some vaguely defined respects. In leaving them vaguely defined his audience naturally thought imaginatively, which suited the author's purposes.

By 1899 he had decided upon his posthumous publication plan and the notion he still possessed when he wrote "Eddypus". His autobiography would consist of short biographies of people he had known. He made these features public knowledge, naturally increasing speculation about what his autobiography's content would include. An English reporter wrote,

In some respects it will be unparalleled in the history of literature. It is a bequest to posterity...which is only to be published 100 years after his death as a portrait gallery of contemporaries with whom he has come into personal contact...with the single object of telling the truth...without malice, and to serve no grudge, but, at the same time, without respect of persons or social conventions, institutions, or pruderies of any kind." (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 16)

This interview's insinuation naturally resulted in further questions the author could respond to without producing evidence to substantiate his words. A reporter asked in 1900 if he had "been doing much recently with that autobiography that is to be published a hundred years after your death?" Twain replied, "I have added a good deal to it from time to time" (Twain *Life as I Find It* 329). The pieces equaled about one hundred forty pages when he made the statement.

Twain continued,

I find I can take such large, calm views of people [with posthumous publication], so free from flattery on the one hand and from any taint of malice on the other, when I am writing my own unvarnished, unbiased opinions and impressions. There has never been an autobiography or biography or diary or whatever you like to call it that has been written with quite the detachment from all anxiety about what the readers may think of it or its writer...even Pepys wrote with the consciousness that his contemporaries were looking over his shoulder, and despite all he could do he was fettered by a sense of restraint that consciousness produced. I am free from all that."

(330)

It's apparent in the interview above that Twain had tentatively decided his autobiography would have a quasi-diary form. Not only was this the influence of Pepys, to whom he refers in the interview, but because his composition has been so sporadic he could only conceive of uniting the pieces by the order of their writing. This tentative decision guided him to the *Autobiography's* final form five years later.

Only two days later Twain again spoke about his work with a completely typical contradiction of his previous words.

[The English public which he addressed above] pretended to think me jesting when I spoke about writing a history to be read one hundred years after...If ever I spoke the truth – and at that time I had not given up the habit of resorting to it occasionally – I spoke it then...Am I really going to write that history? I have never said that I would, and if I said so now no one would believe me.

I merely suggested that it would be an ideal sort of narrative that could slash away at sores without fear of hurting any one – not even the author.” (334)

Despite his public words and a paucity of production behind them during this period, Twain was not Barnum. He wasn't cynically touting a fraud, and if he fooled people, then he was among the persons fooled. This is evident in the interview quoted at the beginning of Chapter One, which reveals an author gripped for years by artistic frustration because he couldn't conceive the form appropriate for his vision. At the time of that interview he thought he had accomplished his conception, but he still couldn't communicate it in such a way as to elicit responses reassuring him his conception made sense. This inability did not keep him from speaking about his project because (a) he believed he had a revolutionary idea, (b) people kept asking him about it, (c) his mind sifted, developed and refined ideas through writing and talking about them and (d) he loved attention and had a Barnum-like appreciation of the uses of publicity.

At the time the pieces were important to their author, and some of their elements, like posthumous publication, lack of chronology, and the seed of its diary form helped create the frame of his final work. But even after he decided upon using dictation in Florence, which helped him understand the benefits of process of association, his conception still lacked the conscious pivotal feature of concentration upon self. Typically, he articulated his discovery of this feature after he began using it during the Paine dictations. On April 3, 1906, he said

This autobiography of mine differs from *all* other autobiographies, except Benvenuto's perhaps. The conventional biography of all the ages is an open window. The autobiographer sits there and examines and discusses the people that go by – not all of them, but the notorious ones, the famous ones...But this autobiography of mine is not that kind...This autobiography of mine is a mirror, and I am looking at myself in it all the time. Incidentally I notice the people that pass along at my back – I get glimpses of them in the mirror – and whenever they say or do anything

that can help advertise me and flatter me and raise me in my own estimation, I set these things down in my autobiography.” (Twain *Mark Twain’s Autobiography* 311-12)

Of course he is speaking here about the selection and emphasis lent by the quality of subjectivity.

Before the Paine dictations began, Twain made at least six in Florence in 1904 and wrote a document titled “My Autobiography [Random Extracts from It]”. Since these were placed in typescripts two and four, they are part of the proper *Autobiography* as the Project finds it. Therefore these are discussed in the following chapter even though they were preliminary to the major labor.

During a span of decades Twain vaguely planned an autobiography without ever devising a form that suited him for long. As a result of this failure, he created the pieces without needing to unify them stylistically or thematically. A number were designated for his “Aut.” or “Auto.” after he wrote them, in the same fashion in which he often wrote first and considered a purpose later. Therefore many of the pieces naturally display disunity among themselves. Having a vague, changing plan in his mind and continuing to write made him believe he was making progress. The pieces are by no means collectively trivial. On the contrary, they’re valuable individually for content and ideas which might contribute to the later massive work. They contribute genuine biographical knowledge of the author as well as frequent entertainment. Their importance also lies in the facts of their spasmodic composition and disunified tone, which contribute insight into the progress of the author’s mind, the changing struggle of Twain’s mind through the decades to determine what his autobiography would be.

Chapter Four

The Mass of the Edifice

In January, 1906, Twain had assembled the willpower and the elements to commence his major autobiographical effort, the dictations, with Albert B. Paine as appreciative auditor and Josephine Hobby as stenographer and typist. His secretary Isabel Lyon was present that first day also and would be a regular adulatory presence thereafter (Trombley 93). The distractions Twain didn't welcome, such as fatherly duties, were diminished by his enthusiasm for his new labor, whereas welcome distractions like games of billiards with visitors or recreational evenings with Henry Rogers came regularly. Twain probably wouldn't have seriously tried to make an autobiography without Paine's request for a biography because the request spurred Twain out of indolence and gave Twain the necessary ingredients of an audience and a structure. Ironically, the audience in some respects *was* the structure because even though Twain said his autobiography would be the most truthful ever attempted, a lifetime as a performer, with the immediate gratification audiences provided, ensured this autobiography would be one of the most public ever attempted.

As for the fundamental elements of subjectivity and composition through process of association, discussed in Chapter One, Twain clearly said in the first paragraph of the first dictation he would employ them. On January 9th, two years and one day after he began his Florence dictations, Twain spoke these words as they appear in Paine's edition:

“The more I think of this [the biography], the more nearly impossible the project seems. The difficulties of it grow upon me all the time. For instance, the idea of blocking out a consecutive series of events which have happened to me, or which I imagine have happened to me – I can see that that is impossible for me. The only thing possible for me is to talk about the

thing that something suggests at the moment – something in the middle of my life, perhaps, or something that happened only a few months ago. It is my purpose to extend these notes to 600,000 words, and possibly more. But that is going to take a long time – a long time.” (v. I, 269)

The author thus signaled within the first dictation’s opening lines that the work to come would be generated by Twain’s imagination and emotions as much as by the facts and would recite no “consecutive series of events,” and these characteristics, subjectivity and process of association, would be his principles of construction. However, Paine did not include in his edition the record of the two men’s words immediately following, words which indicate Twain’s lucid preparation for their about-to-be-altered business arrangement. As the Project’s edition records it, with this writer’s comments in brackets:

The only way is for me to write an autobiography – and then, in your case, if you are going to collect from that mass of incidents a brief biography, why you would have to read the thing through and select certain matter – arrange your notes and then write a biography...*Mr. Paine:* These notes that we are making here will be of the greatest assistance to you in writing the autobiography [Paine hasn’t yet grasped Twain’s plan of writing by dictating]. *Mr. Clemens:* My idea is this: that I write an autobiography. When that autobiography is finished – or before it is finished, but no doubt after it is finished – then you take the manuscript and we can agree on how much of a *biography* to make, 80 or 100,000 words, and in that way we can manage it...So my idea is that I do the autobiography, that I own the manuscript, and that I pay for it, and that finally, at the proper time, why then you begin to gather from this manuscript your biography. *Mr. Paine:* You have a good deal of this early material in readiness. Suppose while you are doing this autobiography you place portions of that, from time to time, in my hands, so that I can begin to prepare my notes and material for the other book [Paine now understands Twain’s alteration in their agreement and seeks permission for time’s sake to begin his biography while Twain creates the autobiography]. *Mr. Clemens:* That can be arranged. Supposing that we should talk here for

one or two hours five days in the week...how many thousand years is it going to take to put together as much as 600,000 words?...let us arrive at the cost of this – say it is to be so many thousand words. You charge in that way, don't you? (One dollar an hour for dictation, and five cents a hundred words for writing out notes.) [These words are directed to Josephine Hobby, whom Twain has just shifted from being Paine's employee to his own]...I hate to get at it. I hate to begin, but I imagine that if you are here to make suggestions from time to time, we can make it go along, instead of having it drag" [Twain hates to begin because even though he writes compulsively, it has been almost a decade since he has completed a book. He has composed thousands of pages of uncompleted manuscripts in that time, but he recognizes that now he is obligating himself to produce a book suitable for publishing. He realizes he must be disciplined to a degree unexercised for years, an ironic statement in light of future critical opinion that his autobiography is formless. Also, he experimented with his plan in the Florence dictations, but he is still daunted by the requirements of composing a novel book length autobiographical document. He will discover that with a friendly audience he will need little prompting, and his project will not "drag" in the least]. (250-1)

This colloquy between Twain and Paine makes evident one of them asked Hobby to begin taking notes at Twain's first words, notes which record how Twain sprang his hijacking upon Paine and negotiated the project's business terms under circumstances similar to that between a prosecutor and a defendant in the sense that Twain possessed preparation and power Paine didn't. If Paine objected, his biography would evaporate, but he possessed the mental agility to adapt during the conversation and plan his own use of Twain's venture so that his book and Twain's would proceed in tandem.

Twain didn't intend to cheat Paine because the author believed the dictations would aid him, as they did. But the obligation the author felt was to himself as well as to Paine, an obligation to produce a book that had thwarted him for decades. Also, the idea of producing two works through one process undoubtedly appealed to this author who had attempted numerous Rube Goldberg-like literary works. It

might be asserted that his literary history consisted of insertions, extractions, patches, and joints, as if he were building physical objects rather than literature.

Only when Twain's terms had been enunciated and agreed to did the first dictation proper begin. Unsurprisingly, given Twain's performance skills and his desire that his dictations appear spontaneous, he begins by pretending his subject has slipped his mind: "Now let me see, there was something I wanted to talk about – and I supposed it would stay in my head. I know what it is – about the big Bonanza in Nevada" (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 251). Although one might think these sentences actually begin the autobiography, Paine began with the paragraph quoted first, and the Project adds the succeeding statement of terms. Including these recorded items of business in the first dictation is akin to beginning a novel with its contract terms. However, Twain elected to retain that first paragraph in the dictation because he wished to begin with an explanation of the methods through which his novel new work would proceed and to do so through its medium, spoken words.

Performance

In referring to the act of performance in the preceding paragraph, it must be emphasized that the dictations constitute a form of performance art, particularly unexpected in that this performance takes place in one literary genre, autobiography, which is ostensibly reflective, and in a second genre, the diary, which is traditionally private. Other diaries have been dictated, as were Harold Ickes's, but he dictated to his secretaries in a continuation of their business relationship, not as an audience. John D. Rockefeller composed a pseudo-autobiography via the medium of responding to questions from a reporter in a process that consumed "hundreds of hours" from 1917 through 1919 (Chernow *Titan* xix). Although Rockefeller entered his project reluctantly at the request of his son, not intending to create autobiography but rather to refute all the criticisms his wealth and practices had generated, the act of talking out his resentment eventually afforded him pleasure. "Now that I've gotten into it I find it interesting," Rockefeller said (xx). In a curious parallel with Twain, Rockefeller not only dictated to an interlocutor, the reporter, but

Rockefeller suggested the means by which his emotions could be unleashed. The reporter “would read passages from Rockefeller’s two chief antagonists, Henry Lloyd and Ida Tarbell...and Rockefeller would refute them paragraph by paragraph” (ibid). Rockefeller, like Twain, was attempting to recall and project emotions of the past within the present moment. His method also resulted in the release of invective resembling Twain’s. His biographer wrote, “Rockefeller couldn’t conceive of a genuinely principled objection to his career and increasingly resorted to ad hominem attacks, deriding his critics as croakers, howlers” and other types of malefactors (xxi). Of Ida Tarbell’s allegations against his father, Rockefeller said, “So she turned to this miserable fabrication, with all the sneers, all the malice, all the sly hinting and perversions of which she is master.” But in keeping with Twain’s precept that the autobiographer will reveal himself unknowingly, Rockefeller realized he was not acting like the beneficent old Christian man he purported to be and added, “I am grateful I do not harbor bitterness even against this ‘historian,’ but pity” (xxii).

It would appear that talking lent Rockefeller some of the therapeutic releases of candor which psychoanalytic analysis aims at inducing and which is often stifled in the reflective nature of writing. Twain probably liked dictating for this reason also and realized intuitively he could not attain the same candor in writing. He could definitely attack persons in writing, but the torrent and degree of invective in the dictations indicates he felt deep comfort in his audiences with Paine.

But Twain’ self-awareness that he was performing the act of revealing himself through his choice of subject and treatment thereof meant, in contrast to Rockefeller, that Twain always maintained control in his dictations. In Chapter Two Twain was compared to a Method actor who wills himself to feel the emotions he needs to project, and study of the dictations shows a craftsman’s construction. The dictations were by no means spontaneous meanderings, but were rather the act of a consummate life-long performer, and the oral component of the dictations accentuates the aspect of performance. When Twain discovered his daughter Susy was taking notes of his meal time monologues, he began “posing for the biography,” as he noted himself. “In fact, I clearly remember I *was* doing that – and I clearly remember that Susy detected it” (Twain *Mark Twain’s Own Autobiography* 35). His career as a lecturer sharpened his critical

skills to a point where he could estimate the optimum location he should occupy in a sequence of after-dinner speakers. He once wrote to Andrew Carnegie, in reference to a dinner at which he would speak, "Put me in the speaker-list about No. 3 – can't you? Not earlier, and not more than *one* later" (Nasaw 605). In other words, Twain knew by experience that the first or second speaker is forgotten in the torrent of words which follow and that no one is listening after the fourth speaker. That he cared enough about being the most memorable speaker at a dinner to write and ask for the position that would give him maximum attention speaks of his need for attention and his craftsman's calculation of how to get it most effectively. His friend William Dean Howells wrote in his eulogy *My Mark Twain* "He was the most consummate public performer I ever saw...on the platform he was the great and finished actor which he probably would not have been on the stage...When he read his manuscript to you, it was with a thorough, however involuntary recognition of its dramatic qualities; he held that an actor added half the character the author created" (51-2). When Howells questions Twain's greatness as a stage actor, he means that Twain possessed high thespic ability in portraying his own memories, emotions and literary creations.

Theodore Herzl described Twain's readings thusly: "he has acquired the actor's mannerisms...one is inclined to think that every movement is carefully studied, however natural he may actually be...his very slips are striking for they tend to illustrate the taste of those for whom his mannerisms are assumed" (Fishkin, ed., *The Mark Twain Anthology* 84). Hal Holbrook described how Twain's performances influenced his own impersonation of them. Twain's lectures, he wrote, had

a meandering structure, purposely improvisational, to keep the audience off guard and wondering what was coming next. It seemed to me that the most effective way to program an evening of Mark Twain was to give the impression that I was making it up on my feet...That was the effect I think he tried to achieve himself, particularly in his speeches. He rehearsed them with intense zeal (so did I)...Then he strove to make the performance look spontaneous." (Fishkin, ed., *The Mark Twain Anthology* 379)

As he did with so many aspects of the *Autobiography*, the author in a dictation told his readers how his performance stratagem functioned:

[I]n reading from the book you are telling another person's tale at secondhand; you are a mimic and not the person involved; you are an artificiality, not a reality; whereas in telling the tale without the book you absorb the character and presently become the man himself, just as is the case with the actor...reading from the book renders the nicest shadings of delivery impossible. I mean those studied fictions which seem to be the impulse of the moment...fictitious hesitations...fictitious unconscious pauses, fictitious unconscious side remarks, fictitious unconscious embarrassments, fictitious unconscious emphases placed upon the wrong word with a deep intention back of it." (Twain *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* 181)

Biographer Andrew Hoffman writes that the author created a new type of naturalness on the lecture circuit. Others "depended on a lavish theatricality, filled with grand gestures, emphatic melodrama, and emotional articulation", while Twain "would speak to a thousand people as though carrying on a conversation with his neighbor". In comparison, other performers were readily perceived as acting (145).

Twain's stated goal of portraying himself in his autobiography is achieved in one regard through a series of poses struck, as beloved father, scrupulous business man, trusting business associate, great men's confidant, boyish scamp, philosopher, fool and more. He had been or thought he'd been all of these. It should be obvious that one aim of talking out his autobiography was to act as well as tell these many roles. In the 1904 Florence dictations he discovered a paradoxical idea. He could be as comfortable and as seemingly natural while speaking out his autobiography to a select group of familiars as he had been on the lecture platform addressing thousands of strangers. Therefore speaking would be the mode that unified his autobiography. For this reason he decided that his autobiography proper would contain only the Florence and Paine dictations, two meaningful written documents as bookends, three explanatory notes and a Preface in three parts. The *Autobiography* would be unified by and consist of the

dictations, along with statements of his autobiographical theory, instructions for publishing and one example of an attempt that failed.

First Items of the Final Selection

It's possible Paine's edition, appearing first and with his selected contents, may have hindered recognition of Twain's autobiography as a work of literary modernism. Paine's edition, although somewhat faithful to Twain's wishes, allowed critics to characterize it as if it were some sort of literary suitcase, packed overfull with extraneous items and without arrangement. Paine's edition does resemble this. Because it ends after two volumes, the preliminary manuscripts and dictations receive too much proportionate space and lend the *Autobiography* an ungainly, unclassifiable appearance. When the unorthodox nature of the dictations was added to this element, critics were first flummoxed and then disdainful, since confusion is often followed by convictions of having been conned. The *Autobiography* as defined by the contents of typescripts two and four is instead symmetrical and unified.

The written document "My Autobiography [Random Extracts from It]", functions appropriately as the beginning to Twain's *Autobiography*, even though it, "The Death of Jean", the "Preface" and the notes are the only non-dictated pieces therein. Twain wrote it during the same period when he wrote his pocket-sized biographies and other preliminary documents, in 1898 and 1899. Twain included "My Autobiography" in typescripts two and four because he viewed this document, rather than the other preliminary works, as a representative sample of the history of his autobiography, suitable for display to illustrate his evolving ideas. That he wanted to show how his project evolved is clear from the explanatory note that precedes "My Autobiography".

Titled "An Early Attempt", Twain wrote the explanatory note in June, 1906, when he was selecting material for an autobiography clearly envisioned for publication regardless of statements about copyright extension made before or in the future (*Twain Autobiography of Mark Twain* 525). It reads,

The chapters which immediately follow constitute a fragment of one of my many attempts...to put my life on paper. It...suffers the fate of its brethren – is presently abandoned for some other and newer interest...its plan is the old, old, old unflexible and difficult one – the plan that starts you at the cradle and drives you straight for the grave, with no side-excursions permitted on the way. Whereas the side excursions are the life of our life-voyage, and should be, also, of its history.” (203)

The author anticipated his critics here because he saw need to explain his efforts. He made no claim of a life story. Instead, he said digressions and minutiae were the substance of his life-voyage, so therefore “its history” should emulate this pattern if the work was to have artistic integrity. He’d made many attempts, none of which met his standards, and “My Autobiography” is offered to the reader in explanation of what he’d rejected. Like most autobiographies, its plan was “old, old, old,” while his most recent discovery, about to be unveiled, was decidedly not.

“My Autobiography” is a somewhat conventional autobiographical document, which is not to say it lacks interest or beauty. However, the reader is given clues in the manner of its presentation as reminders that it failed its purpose. It begins with the convention of a discussion of the author’s ancestry, and it’s divided into chapters. However, despite these conventions the document bears evidence Twain was thinking as a literary modernist even if he lacked the critical vocabulary to articulate it as such. For one thing, the chapters bear no titles or numbers, as if Twain decided to separate sections of his document for the convenience of informing his readers where one topic or period ended while alerting his readers that he was writing his autobiography with gaps in the narrative he wouldn’t fill in. In his title he claims he is presenting “Random Extracts” from some larger work, but the lack of numbers or titles communicates the non-existence of a whole. Twain is presenting “Extracts” that in fact are all there is. It is yet another example of his belief in the episodic nature of life.

Furthermore, Twain first intended that his initial chapter in “My Autobiography” be titled “From Chapter II” as if to emphasize beginning in *media res* (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 525). He

finally elected to begin with nothing but the piece's title and four asterisks, followed by the words, "So much for the earlier days, and the New England Branch of the Clemenses" (203). No writing has ever been found to precede these words (524), and the surmise is there never were any. As Twain did in some of his fictional fragments, he pretends his reader holds a portion of a manuscript. The four asterisks are positively post-modern, a clue to the reader that the author is pretending. He's letting the reader know that nothing before this point was written, and he's effectively stating that he advanced no further than this because he couldn't pretend to give his readers a life story. He's instead alerting his readers that they're beginning a radical new form of autobiography. It doesn't convey the same almost instantaneous realization of being in new literary territory that one gets upon reading the first and second pages of *Ulysses* or *Swann's Way*. Those novels don't have authorial notes of explanation, and readers can't say at all after reading a few pages where those novels are going. "My Autobiography"'s content, in contrast, is what one would expect in autobiography, and it must be remembered that Twain says it failed. It's the sole example given to readers for the purpose of helping them understand his artistic process.

This fact answers the question in Chapter Three regarding the absence of "Scraps from My Autobiography. From Chapter IX" from his autobiography proper. It resembles "My Autobiography" in its subject matter, but it failed to meet the author's requirements in terms of its form. After Twain began dictating to Isabel Lyon in Florence in 1904, he wrote to William Dean Howells with some exaggeration about his production that he had "a good many chapters" of written autobiography, "but I expect that when I come to examine them I shall throw them away & do them over again with my mouth" (21). To a limited degree he did this, turning "Chapter IV" and "Chapter XVII" into dictations with Paine. However, it's pertinent to note that these fourth and seventeenth chapters, which concern events occurring decades apart in the subject's chronological life, metamorphed into the dictations of three consecutive days in 1906 (17-18). Dictation allowed the author to use process of association to an extent he couldn't in writing, and process of association functioned so strongly as both device and concept that he unified his work by choosing to include dictations only.

To say Twain termed “My Autobiography” a failure for theoretical reasons should not be interpreted as meaning the piece lacks lyricism, humor and interesting autobiographical content. It is so strong in these virtues that the author used it in the *North American Review*, Paine printed it with omissions under the title “Early Days” and Neider used it as his second chapter. It is also rich in the nostalgic quality with which Twain is associated, the factual background to *Tom Sawyer* and *Huckleberry* as it were, and this plus its multiple printings probably makes it one of the author’s most widely read works. Yet the author said it failed. It contains important themes like the Tennessee land. It refuses to follow a chronological flow from one memory to another. It displays a Proustian recapturing of the sensations of sight, sound and taste, as these descriptions of his uncle’s farm demonstrate:

the sheen of rain-washed foliage, the rattling clatter of drops when the wind shook the trees, the far-off hammering of wood peckers and the muffled drumming of wood-pheasants in the remoteness of the forest...I can call it all back and make it as real as it ever was...the crackling sound [a watermelon] 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...the slanting roof over my bed, and the squares of moonlight on the floor, and the white-cold world of snow outside...the quaking of the house on stormy nights...the powdery snow used to sift in, around the sashes, and lie in little ridges on the floor.” (216-17)

The content of “My Autobiography” doesn’t fail at all, and it bears resemblance in aspects noted above to the later dictations. To find further reason the author abandoned this scheme for his autobiography, therefore, one looks to his following note, titled “The Latest Attempt”, also written in June, 1906. In Florence he “hit upon the right way”. He would favor the process of association above any chronological order of recollection. In other words, he would turn the method he had intuitively used since he wrote “The Tennessee Land” into the first principle of composition. He would also contrive “a combined Diary and Autobiography” so as to “have the vivid things of the present to make a contrast with memories of like things in the past, and these contrasts have a charm which is all of their own” (220). He had used

this, too, since he wrote “The Tennessee Land”. The new feature is the diary element, and its function would be vital. Inasmuch as his work would lack a chronological narrative, its essential structure would consist of its daily units.

Then the author added a third note, titled “The Final [and Right] Plan”, also written in the same period as the preceding notes. However, its literary language contrasts with the utilitarian words of the others. Those had been statements of craftsmanship, in which he had specified how he would build his work. This third note is a statement of belief regarding the relation of art to the process of human thought. It begins as if he wishes to record his thoughts as he thinks them: “I will construct a text – to precede the Autobiography; also a Preface, to follow said Text”. And then he explains why his autobiography will be an artistic simulation of human thought highlighting its inextricable subjectivity, neither a historical record nor a transcription of his mind’s logorrhea:

What a wee little part of a person’s life are his acts and his words! His real life is led in his head, and is known to none but himself. All day long, and every day, the mill of his brain is grinding, and his *thoughts*, (which are but the mute articulation of his *feelings*) not those other things, are history. His *acts* and his *words* are merely the visible thin crust of his world...[his thoughts] are not written, and cannot be written...Biographies are but the clothes and buttons of the man – the biography of the man himself cannot be written.” (220-1)

No one can write an actual biography, he says, because a person’s thoughts would fill a volume each and every day. Therefore his autobiography will be a mimic of human thought process.

These notes show evidence that Twain understood how different his conception of autobiography was and how perplexed its reception might be. He had written introductions to his works before, generally humorous and unnecessary. These notes, however, are a statement of intention and method for the benefit of readers, in some way like the chronology of action William Faulkner provided after the publication of *The Sound and the Fury*. Twain offered his numerical equivalent of Faulkner’s chronology in his autobiography by posting in his page’s margins the years of his life to which his non-chronological

narrative corresponded, a practice he began with his written manuscript, “Scraps from My Autobiography. From Chapter IX”.

The author’s “Preface. As from the Grave” is divided into three parts and is both explanation and instructions for publishing, necessary from Twain’s viewpoint because he intended to be dead when his words reached his readers. In the first part he writes that, “I speak from the grave” because “I can speak thence freely”. He first wrote “more” rather than “thence,” indicating some reservations about total freedom of expression in any state. Then he describes the position of any living human in respect to total candor of expression in a felicitous metaphor. “The frankest and freest and privatest product of the human mind and heart is a love letter...Sometimes there is a breach of promise case by and by; and when he sees his letter in print it makes him cruelly uncomfortable...He cannot find anything in the letter that was not true, honest, and respect-worthy; but no matter”. Therefore, Twain thinks, he can achieve total candor only if his words are read when he is “dead, and unaware, and indifferent” (221). In consideration of Twain’s habit of disguising his sentiments in double-edged statements comprising humor and sarcasm, it is certain the author knew by the time he wrote this metaphor that his work would bear next to no resemblance to any love letter in its candid statements.

Or perhaps it’s not so certain. In the second part Twain instructs his publishers to “leave out of the first edition all characterizations...that might wound the feelings of” his targets “or their families and kinship”. This seems clear, but the author might have strengthened his instructions by locating those putative passages himself rather than leaving it to others’ judgment. The author’s following words strain credulity unless one understands the depth of his subjectivity. He writes, “This book is not a revenge-record. When I build a fire under a person in it...he is worth the trouble...I do not fry the small, the commonplace, the unworthy”. Every part of this statement is arguably untrue, but it’s open to question how clearly Twain understood the statement’s falsity at the moment he wrote it. As for his words after that, even the author must have understood their absurdity: “From the first, second, third and fourth edition all sound and sane expressions of opinion must be left out” (ibid). It’s nice humor but useless advice to editors and a perfect example of his bedevilingly vague instructions.

The third part contains the practical advice about issuing editions every twenty five years, which Michael Kiskis suggested might have been devised for the purpose of copyright extension.

Paine printed the first part of the preface, but not the second or third. He did this because the first part begins with the information Twain is speaking from the grave, which is to beguile readers they are getting unusual frankness, and because of the felicitous metaphor of the love letter. Paine omitted the second and third parts because he excised most of the portions devoted to revenge anyhow, because instructions therein were vague and because he possibly had plans of his own for the autobiography that might contradict the instruction about twenty five years between editions.

Almost exactly two years passed between the first Florence dictation in 1904 and Paine's first, and although the two sets share most elements of the *Autobiography*, the earlier set is distinct and abbreviated. To illustrate one difference between the Florence dictations and Paine's, the earlier ones lack the flow of similar subject matter from one dictation to the next, the continuation of motifs and concerns, which marks the author's artistic advancement in the later dictations. By the time he dictated with Paine, he had learned to simulate the mind's process of thought, which functions differently than does a corporate board meeting, or most autobiographies for that matter, with each matter considered, voted upon and with further discussion terminated. The Florence dictations resemble the corporate board meeting somewhat in that their subjects are opened, considered and closed in that single dictation.

Another difference between the Florence and Paine dictations is that the author apparently selected the former for publishing out of the order in which they were dictated, violating his own clear rule about the latter. In order of appearance their dates are January 31st, April, undated and January.

He selected four of six known Florence dictations for inclusion, leaving out the Henry Rogers dictation discussed in Chapter Three and a dictation concerning a typewriter. This latter appeared in a magazine in 1905 and in a Paine dictation of 1907, which explains its exclusion (22). The Project believes some Florence dictations are lost based upon Twain's references to subjects not appearing in those known. In August, 1906, the author dictated that he had given negative assessments of "thirteen deserving persons"

since he began dictating. “Whenever I go back and re-read those little biographies and characterizations it cheers me up...I do believe I have flayed and mangled and mutilated those people beyond the dreams of avarice” (23). Since this was said in the same period when he denied he was creating a revenge record, it illustrates his tendency to say and probably believe different things on the same subjects within one time period. However, since by this period he had begun selecting the contents of his autobiography, he may have included some targets from the Paine dictations earlier in the year, or he may have been characteristically inexact when speaking of what he had composed for this work. In January, 1904, he referred to one target as occupying “space enough in my Autobiography to pay back all he & his pimp have robbed me of,” but he struck through these words (*ibid*). Even if Twain eventually decided he’d erred in his animus, which occasionally occurred, he kept virtually everything he ever wrote, even the unsent letters he wrote when people angered him.

Also, it should be borne in mind that Twain sometimes spoke of work done for which no evidence exists. For example Hamlin Garland conversed with Twain in 1899 and recalled much later that the author cursed Charles Webster “with heartfelt fervor and oriental magnificence” for costing him \$50,000 and his publishing company. Twain said “he had for many years been writing a ‘kind of diary’ in which he said exactly what he thought about the men and women he had met, and though it could not be published in his or Mrs. Clemens’ lifetime, when it *was* published, the ‘blankety-blank-blank’ Webster would turn in his grave” (Duckett 293). This statement agrees with Twain’s public comments in this period about his pocket-sized biographies, and his words about a “kind of diary” indicate the author’s subconscious was moving toward the form the dictations would take. His words to Garland demonstrate that by 1899 Twain blamed Webster for his calamities, and his broodings had created some diffuse plot for revenge through written words. But unless he meant something entered in his notebooks, there are no known diaries to substantiate his words and nothing to be construed as a labor spanning “many years”. The diary he’d been keeping for many years was probably only in his heart and mind. So the unknown Florence dictations are either truly lost, possibly because they were in the same stolen bag as Orion’s autobiography, or else quite likely they never existed.

If “John Hay”, dated January 31st, was not the first recorded Florence dictation, then Twain placed it first because it’s the origin story of his autobiography. As discussed in Chapter Two, Hay advised Twain to begin writing his autobiography because by the age of forty, which Twain had attained, a man “has lived all of his life that is likely to be worth recording” (223). Twain says he then began his autobiography, “but the resolve melted away and disappeared in a week and I threw my beginning away...I have made other beginnings and thrown them away”. He began a diary, but “it took me half of every night to set down the history of the day,” and that, too, ended. Then, he says, he discovered his problem was his method, writing. “[N]arrative should flow as flows the brook ...a brook that never goes straight for a minute, but *goes*...sometimes fetching a horseshoe three-quarters of a mile around and at the end of the circuit flowing within a yard of the path it traversed an hour before” (224). Of course he’s describing the mind’s process of association which enabled the form of the final work. Writing was not satisfactory, he says, because “With a pen in the hand the narrative stream is a canal...slowly, smoothly...too literary, too prim...always reflecting...everything it passes along the banks” (ibid). In other words, the path of a canal is like the chronological motion of conventional autobiographies, mentioning everything in its order, and it’s artificially constructed. The brook’s natural path follows the path that a human mind does, with no direction but gravity, which is the equivalent of a ruminative mind.

The Florence dictation about Hay shows Twain discussing his theory of autobiography within his autobiography. Twain constantly talked about his autobiography for purposes of publicity, but he also frequently discussed within the dictations, in a type of meta-theory, what he believed autobiography as a form should be. He knew he was creating a new type, and this excited him. Also, as if he sensed the coming century of criticism, he took pains to demonstrate he was not simply talking endlessly as a preference to constructing a proper life story.

This first Florence dictation credits Hay with instilling in Twain the idea that autobiography will reveal the writer despite the writer’s evasions, duplicity or lack of self-awareness. This sounds so much like Twain’s 1890 interview with Rudyard Kipling that one suspects Twain was ascribing his own discovery to Hay. To Kipling Twain said,

an autobiography was the one work in which a man, against his own will and in spite of his utmost striving to the contrary, revealed himself...it is impossible for a man to tell the truth about himself or to avoid impressing the reader with the truth about himself...the reader gets a general impression from an autobiography whether the man is a fraud or a good man...And the impression that the reader gets is a correct one'." (Fishkin, ed. *The Mark Twain Anthology* 72-3)

In his dictation Twain says that when he was approximately age forty Hay encouraged him to write his autobiography and said such a book couldn't

fail to be interesting if he comes as near to telling the truth about himself as he can. And he *will* tell the truth in spite of himself, for his facts and his fictions will work loyally together for the protection of the reader...and together they will paint his portrait; not the portrait *he* thinks they are painting, but his real portrait, the inside of him, the soul of him, his character. Without intending to lie he will lie all the time...half-consciously...His truths will be recognizable as truths, his modifications of facts which would tell against him will go for nothing, the reader will see the facts through the film and know his man." (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 223-4)

Evidence that Twain might knowingly misattribute words or ideas in this case lies in the fact that Twain clearly did so elsewhere. For example, in *Following the Equator* Twain told a tale of young Cecil Rhodes getting his business start in Australia by borrowing money to buy supplies of wool. His collateral for the loan was a newspaper found in the belly of a hooked shark, a newspaper reporting the beginning of a European war. The young Rhodes saw an opportunity to profit because wool was essential to military uniforms, and the shark arrived with the swallowed newspaper weeks before ships would bring the news, allowing Rhodes to buy wool before the price rose (v.I, 110-117). However, a similar story is told in *Titans of Industry*, but the lucky and perspicacious man is Henry Rogers, the Standard Oil millionaire who guided Twain through his bankruptcy and recovery. While working as a newsboy at the age of fourteen, Rogers read a story in newspapers he was supposed to deliver about a sunken ship carrying five

hundred barrels of sperm oil. He went to the local dealer in sperm oil, who was to have received the contents of the ship, and bargained to sell the dealer all his newspapers in order that the dealer might buy all the sperm oil in the area before the ship's sinking became known publicly and then sell at inflated prices. For a cost to Rogers of about fifty cents in newspapers he received about two hundred dollars (Holbrook 68-9). The surmise is that Twain heard the story about Rogers, possibly from his lips, and changed the person to another titan and the locale to Australia. The two tales contain in common the elements of the lucky youth with a last name beginning with the letter 'r' who receives private and potentially lucrative information from a newspaper via the agency of the sea and possesses the acumen to approach a confederate who can fund the youth's plan. The surmise, that Twain attributed Rogers' experience to Rhodes and his own words to Hay, is bolstered by the numerous demonstrable instances in which Twain attributed statements or occurrences to people who did not make or experience them. Incidentally, this act demonstrates yet another instance in which the author used his personal experience as the gestation for a piece of fiction, a habit so prevalent it became a truism in his lifetime. William Dean Howells wrote in 1882 "I believe the only book of Mr. Clemens's which is not largely autobiographical is *The Prince and the Pauper*" (*My Mark Twain* 137). Of course Howells lived prior to the age that theorized twins and apparent twins carried psychological autobiographical significance for the author.

Why would the author misattribute his own discovery to another person? By doing so he could exercise his creative instinct in a fashion similar to that which he probably did in the piece "Macfarlane". He could turn his convictions into stories which generally carried some form of moral as well. Macfarlane and Hay were both impressive men, even if one happened to be fictional, and in ascribing his own ideas to them, Twain manufactured stories about how he received wisdom from others. In addition, since the author always believed his actual thoughts were objectionable, he created shelter by this practice. Whereas many people claim undeserved credit, Twain wished to be able to say it was someone else who influenced him.

As biographer Andrew Hoffman noted, Twain put his own words into others' mouths as early as his letters written in Hawaii, even if he needed to create the others, as he did with a fictional character he named Brown. "Expressing bigoted opinions about the islands and their inhabitants, Brown served as Mark Twain's foil: anything too base for Mark Twain to say could come from Brown" (105).

On the other hand, if Robert Louis Stevenson did not speak the words that the author reports him saying in the undated Florence dictation, then the author has in this case done good work in disguising his own sentiments. The *Autobiography* has been so often critically dismissed that little mention is made of the beauty of its language, the sharpness of its portraits or the piquancy of its ideas. This dictation, which possesses those virtues, describes "an hour or more" spent in April, 1888, sitting on a bench in Washington Square with Stevenson. "His business was to absorb the sunshine. He was most scantily furnished with flesh, his clothes seemed to fall into hollows as if there might be nothing inside but the frame for a sculptor's statue" (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 228). Twain and Stevenson fell into discussing what they termed as "submerged renown," which is a literary fame and success untethered to traditional critical repute. Stevenson asked the author to name the American writer who had the most "fame and acceptance," and Twain says, "I thought I could, but it did not seem to me that it would be modest to speak out". Stevenson, however, named an unfamiliar person who produced compilations of speeches, poetry and so on, with a "brief, compact, intelligent and useful introductory chapter" to each (229). This person's popularity existed in "the sunless region of eternal drudgery and starvation wages," and whereas "a surface reputation" of distinguished literary repute is always vulnerable, "what the reviewer says never finds its way down into those placid deeps; nor the newspaper sneers, nor any breath of the winds of slander blowing above. Down there they never hear of these things" (230).

Twain never felt secure about his own literary reputation, perhaps with reason, inasmuch as a graduate school professor within the last decade said at a seminar that the author only wrote one good book (2002). In reaction to his insecurity he once said great books were wine, and his were water, and everyone drank water. It's a neat bon mot which raises questions, like his dictation about Stevenson, regarding the value of literary criticism and repute. Twain would have recognized why genre paperback originals and writers

from Edgar Rice Burroughs to Ian Fleming and beyond were popular, and he believed it was worth considering whether or not market value in itself contained value. He always hoped but harbored doubt that he had high literary value himself, took pride in his craftsmanship, enjoyed his popularity, but never confined himself to writing what his time's critics expected or valued highly. Therefore his conversation with Stevenson about surface reputation and submerged renown, dictated when he hadn't completed a book since *Following the Equator*, is a meditation about his own literary place and value.

When critics describe the *Autobiography* as trivial or as the random and momentary contents of the author's mind, they're probably thinking of dictations such as that one concerning Twain's rented Villa Reale di Quarto, dated January, 1904. It's actually not one dictation because Twain refers to speaking on January 8th, which would make it the earliest Florence dictation, and midway through is a gap signaled by "End of March" and further talk (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 231, 239). The trivial charge rests in its recitation and description of the Villa's rooms and accoutrements, but the author's justification is "because every one of its crazy details interests me, and therefore may be expected to interest others of the human race, particularly women. When they read novels they usually skip the weather, but I have noticed they usually read with avidity...about the furnishings, decorations, conveniences, and general style of a home" (231). It's an audition of sorts for the Paine dictations in which Twain is getting accustomed to talking for an audience and has an audition's amateur quality. Of greater significance is the piece's reliance upon the process of association and its use of extracts. Living in this Villa reminds Twain of being in another rented Villa in 1892, and he provides extracts from "my old manuscripts and random and spasmodic diaries" of that period for comparison and contrast of the two time periods (244). And this dictation also contains a spat of major invective against his landlady, the Countess Massiglia, a former American who apparently harassed her tenants constantly - "malicious, malignant, vengeful, unforgiving, selfish, stingy, avaricious, coarse, vulgar" (241). If Clara Clemens is to be believed, the Countess coated two affectionate local dogs in kerosene knowing she could thus stain Clara's and Jean's dresses when the dogs leaped upon them in greeting (Schmidt "Mark Twain and the Infernal Countess Massiglia").

Perhaps this dictation, so centered in a dwelling with its attendant associations and reflections, is a harbinger to what began two years later, and it's not beyond possibility the author realized this connection when he placed this Florence dictation last in order before his major efforts. After these documents come, with the exception of the concluding document, the dictations the author created predominantly in a rented house at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Ninth Street in New York City.

The Location of Memory

One stimulant, perhaps intrinsic and essential, to Twain's autobiographical process of association was a logical but apparently unremarked upon condition of the dictations, the physical location where the dictations almost entirely took place in the years 1906 through 1908. In his biography Paine described atmospherically Twain's bedroom at 21 Fifth Avenue, where the dictations most frequently occurred, as possessing "north light, and the winter days were dull. Also the walls of the room were a deep, unreflecting red...The outlines of that vast bed blending into the luxuriant background" (v.III, 1267). And as the dictations progressed, Paine described the process as "watching one of the great literary creators of his time in the very process of his architecture" (ibid).

This is how the immediate physical location impressed Paine. But for Twain, the entire surrounding neighborhood held elements of his personal and professional history. Twain's publishing house had been quartered on Fourteenth Street five blocks away. One block away on Tenth Street was the house where he lived with his wife shortly before she died. Someone has written of the architecture of memory in a metaphor similar to Paine's regarding the structure of literature. For Twain, the architecture of his dictations was frequently generated by the actual architecture of the streets he daily walked upon or the buildings he saw from the bedroom window where he composed. Today the block of Fifth Avenue diagonally across from Twain's 1906 bedroom is filled with large apartment buildings, as is the site that housed his bedroom. His rented house at 21 Fifth Avenue (see photo three) was torn down in 1954 (Fehrman). In 1906, immediately opposite his bedroom window diagonally was a light-colored low

house of two and one half stories, with a house of similar height beside it (see photo four). The house Twain and his wife rented on Tenth Street still stands today four stories high, tall enough that Twain could have glimpsed from his bedroom window as he dictated the rear windows of the dwelling he had inhabited fewer than three years previously in terms of chronological time. However, chronological time is only a human measurement, not time as perceived by changes in circumstance. Twain, the widower, existed in very different emotional and psychological circumstances than had Twain, the husband, even though widower and husband were separated by fewer than three years in chronological time and unified by physical proximity of 225 footsteps. The past and present, brought face to face unexpectedly, is a major theme within the dictations, to be explored in this chapter.

Furthermore, Twain could stand on the corner outside his Ninth Street house and see the Church of the Ascension diagonally at Fifth Avenue and Tenth Street (see photo five). This church, which Twain saw every time he stepped out the door of the house he rented on Tenth Street in 1903-4, would have been utterly familiar in his changed 1906 circumstances, in something of the fashion human dreams incorporate the utterly familiar into the bizarre and fantastic. If Twain didn't attend the church, he definitely posed with his wife on its rectory entrance steps, captured by camera on a cold, sunny day, his wife smiling and Twain with a book or notebook stuffed into the large pocket of his overcoat (see photo six). These physical views of his emotionally laden past life and emotions would have abundantly stimulated a work of memory built through the process of association like his autobiography. Even before Twain definitely decided to commence his autobiography proper with Paine, his physical location thrust recollection upon him, for process of association is a largely involuntary process. A house or a neighborhood of past emotional importance, made more important by loss, will awaken memories in all but the most preoccupied men.

As noted, the number of dictations decreased in each year from 1906 through 1909 by fifty percent, probably because of declining interest on the author's part as well as fewer memories left untapped. But another reason for the decrease in dictations might have been the fact that Twain moved away from 21 Fifth Avenue in June, 1908. After that month he stayed in the Fifth Avenue house on visits to New York

and kept the lease until the year's end, but he lived in Stormfield, the house built for him in Connecticut (Shelden 236). In other words, he lost the geographical location which contributed so much to his process of association when he moved to a house built expressly for him with no associations at all. He still dictated, but he had less to remember, so he was thrown upon his daily emotions for material, as when he dictated his raging resentments against Mrs. Henry Aldrich on July 3, the day after his return from her memorial for her dead husband. In moving away from his source of memories Twain knowingly or not closed himself off from continuing his project on a professional basis. In a letter to Howells of August 12, 1908, he seems to understand the connection between his physical relocation and the effective end of the *Autobiography*: "I have retired from New York for good, I have retired from labor for good, I have discharged my stenographer [Josephine Hobby], & have entered upon a holiday whose other end is in the cemetery" (Twain *Mark Twain-Howells Letters* v.II, 833). This is compelling evidence for the importance of his physical location to his plan by which he created his work. After Twain moved to Stormfield, the dictations occurred only occasionally, like a hobby, not an occupation, and their content often was thin.

For whatever reason Josephine Hobby was dismissed, whether to cut expenses in a time of decreasing dictations or because Twain thought he had dictated enough to fulfill his plan for copyright extension, it is apparent when and why Twain regained interest in dictating. In September of 1908, one month after Hobby left his employment and three months after he left 21 Fifth Avenue, he hired stenographer Mary Louise Howden to record his thoughts about a burglary upon his Stormfield home two days before (Scharnhorst, ed. *Twain in His Own Time*, 319-20). The significance is that Twain had a subject he thought recording for the first time in more than a month, indicating that the previous slowing pace of dictations was due to flagging inspiration rather than lack of interest or copyright concerns. Hobby had been paid \$25 weekly, and Howden was paid \$15 weekly (Lystra 146), but the duration of passed time between dismissal of one and hiring of the second argues that Hobby was dismissed because Twain had little to say rather than because of economics. When he had something to say, he hired Howden.

His immediate emotion upon leaving the source of his autobiography was revulsion towards the Fifth Avenue house. In a letter of summer, 1908, to Mary Rogers, he termed it, “crude and rude, and its too pronounced and quarrelsome colors broke the repose of my spirit and kept me privately cursing and swearing all the time, even Sundays” (Shelden 250). This emotion likewise may be viewed as related to declining interest in his autobiography. Leaving the physical location that inspired so much reminiscence brought immediate relief because so much of the reminiscence had been bitter. It had been therapeutic, but having vented his emotional memories, he no longer had attachment to the place that reminded him of them.

This separation from the physical location of so much personal history had an unintended effect. Although he said he had “retired from labor for good,” he discovered he still wanted to dictate, but because his work depended so greatly upon the process of association, his material tended to consist of present concerns and enthusiasms. When burglars robbed Stormfield and stood trial later, he dictated because the events excited him. When the English author Elinor Glyn allegedly misrepresented his words in a private conversation, he dictated because he considered his words and reputation to be a type of property requiring defense. Without the past and the physical locale that stimulated his associations, his autobiography had a dwindling present.

PAST AND PRESENT

At the age of nineteen while in St. Louis Twain wrote in his notebook a rumination describing how “A thousand years from now this race may have passed away, and in its stead, a people...wearing the skins of animals...eating the berries that may grow where now stand the prouder buildings of this town” might unearth a steam boiler and “wonder who made it; what they made it for; whence they came, and whither they are gone” (Twain *Mark Twain, Business Man* 22). The notebook entry pertains to one type of human mental process that occurs when the present meets the past, in this case literally. In his autobiography the workings of the past upon the present through the human quality of memory became a consciously

realized dominant theme. Autobiographies are traditionally about the writer's past, but Twain's is seldom purely about memory; it's almost always about memory and some impact of memory upon the present, or vice-versa. As previously quoted, he intended this feature to be one of his autobiography's primary innovations, so much so that he included his words as the introduction to the *North American Review* chapters: "a form and method whereby the past and the present are constantly brought face to face, resulting in contrasts which newly fire up the interest all along, like contact of flint with steel."

So strongly did his mind respond to contrasts afforded by past memories that he assumed he could furnish his readers of the distant future with the same phenomenon, as he did when he dictated his thoughts concerning "the Morris incident" in January, 1906. A woman named Morris had been injured while being forcibly expelled from the Roosevelt White House, and Twain's dislike of the President and his Victorian chivalry towards women assured his ire and interest. "[H]ow unexciting the Morris incident will be two or three years from now – maybe six months – and yet what an irritating thing it is today...It brings home to one this large fact: that the events of life are mainly small events." He muses that if all a day's events were transcribed, "It would be a volume," with as much the next, because life "consists mainly of the storm of thoughts that is forever blowing through one's head," and this is why "a full autobiography has never been written, and it never will be" (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 256). Then he says, "I wonder what the Morris incident will look like in history fifty years from now...I am confident that by that time the nation, encountering the Morris incident in my autobiography, would be trying to remember what the incident was...it will then have taken its place with the abortive Russian revolution" (257). He's aware he's dictating a subject of the moment's interest to him, which is part of his plan, but he wishes to invoke the same phenomenon as described in the notebook entry. He hoped some dictated subjects might be read a century or more in the future as the primitive people in the notebook entry regarded the unearthed steam boiler, as an artifact that conveys the distant past with immediacy. Or as he said in the 1899 interview about the Stratford shoemaker diary, time would distinguish the memorable from the ephemeral. To this purpose he inserts in a subsequent dictation a

newspaper account of the political furor that surrounded Mrs. Morris' treatment. "The reason I want to insert that account," he says,

is this. Some day, no doubt these autobiographical notes will be published...even if it should be a century hence – I claim that the reader of that day will find the same strong interest in the narrative that the world has in it today, for the reason that the account speaks of the thing in the language we naturally use when we are talking about something that has happened...whereas if this thing had happened fifty years ago, or a hundred, and the historian had dug it up and was putting it in *his* language, and furnishing you a long distance view of it,, the reader's interest in it would be pale." (281)

It's a speculation that Twain may have in part formed his thoughts about the importance of immediacy in conveying a sense of the past through his fascinated multiple readings of Carlyle's *The French Revolution*, a work known for its similar goal. Even if not, his excitement in "My Debut as a Literary Person" about rereading the diaries of the castaway sailors after thirty-two years indicates he grasped his principle years previously.

As for how Twain described the phenomenon's effect upon himself, in the dictation of April 6th, 1906, Twain describes an occurrence of "Yesterday". While crossing the street to a corner of Washington Square he notices a "fat little woman" with white hair and an "aged and homely face". The woman had known him many decades before and asks about Orion and his wife, both long dead. And then she identifies herself as Etta Booth, and Twain has a Proustian moment. He sees the thirteen year old Etta Booth he knew, "almost as if she stood alongside of this fat little antiquated dame" with "hair in plaited tails down her back and her fiery-red frock stopping short at her knees...And immediately another vision rose before me, with that child in the center of it...The scene was a great ballroom in some ramshackle building in Gold Hill or Virginia City, Nevada" where Etta and her mother were the only females among a crowd of dancing frontier men, one half wearing handkerchiefs around the left arm to designate them for the purpose of dancing as women. "And in the midst of the turmoil Etta's crimson frock was swirling

and flashing” as she danced, the one female among a hundred men (Twain *Mark Twain’s Autobiography* v.II, 326-7).

This theme of past and present was more than a literary concept the author devised to help structure his autobiography. It was his inescapable mode of thought, and it credits his insight and literary craftsmanship that he realized its inescapability and therefore placed it at his autobiography’s center, where it served as theme, structure and aptness to his psychological portrait. Remembering the past is a function of the process of association, yes, but its particularity to Twain was that his recalled past always stimulated his present reflection. That this quality was inescapable for the author is testified to by the fact that even in his historical fictions such as *A Connecticut Yankee* and *Huckleberry Finn* there is much to suggest Twain was thinking about issues of his time of writing as well as the time of his fictions’ settings. *The Prince and the Pauper* originated in the author’s mind as a tale of his own century, not the sixteenth, and with a significant living person as a main character. The author began the novel’s first draft with Prince Albert, the future Edward VII, trading places with a boy who is “a product of London’s industrial slums,” but after writing at least twenty manuscript pages he typically altered the setting while keeping the plot. He “followed back through history, looking along for the proper time and prince” (Twain *The Prince and the Pauper* 3). In other words, his primary interest was not the historical setting of his eventual novel, but the means and effect of the past’s relationship with the present. If something became artistically inappropriate about elements of the present in the presentation of his themes, he would find a past correlate. A byproduct of this method meant he could pause for years during the composition of major works because the result lost nothing in timeliness. What had been meaningful would be as or more meaningful.

So variously did this phenomenon occur in Twain’s mind that a poem he wrote in 1902 about a “bereft and demented mother” mourning a dead daughter exemplifies it. “O, I can see my darling *yet*...It was a summer afternoon...She flits before me *now*...” [italics mine]. The mother recalls a play the daughter wrote and performed and recalls how the play recalled to the parents’ minds their own emotions when they were their daughter’s age. Within a memory the mother is remembering herself at the play’s

performance recalling the emotions she felt when she was the age the daughter is when she gives the play. In other words, this is a depiction of the past recalled *within* the past recalled. “We see the little forms as once they were... We miss them as we miss the dead, We mourn them as we mourn the dead” (Paine *Mark Twain* v.III, 1660-62). The “little forms” that are missed are not the persons because the persons are dead and missed in their own right. The “little forms” are the persons in memories, which are separate entities from any actual persons whether dead or living. The poem suffers from the same Victorian maudliness Twain satirized in the furnishings of the Grangerford home in *Huckleberry Finn*. However, it expresses a sophisticated idea about the relation of persons in memory to persons in reality as well as a sophisticated realization that persons can recall a memory which recalls emotions felt at the time of the memory’s occurrence about an earlier memory. This preoccupation with the past as it affects the present denotes uncommon reflectiveness.

INTROSPECTION

As discussed in Chapter Three, one view of Twain’s unfinished fictional fragments of the late 1890’s and turn-of-the-century is that they portray portions of the author’s psychology such as his fears, frustrations and alienation. “The Secret History of Eddypus”, written in 1901-2, begins as a political prophecy and veers off into disguised autobiography with references to Twain’s pocket-sized biographies and to a fictionalized self. Twain portrays himself as a long dead writer who left a literally buried manuscript bearing some of his own maxims. Of course, the author’s idea for his posthumous autobiography would resemble this in that he speculated it might not be published for one century. In describing the maxims the document’s narrator finds them nonsensical because he obtusely misses their irony. For example, the narrator’s response to the maxim, “We should never do wrong when people are looking” is “The first five words are true, and admirably stated; the rest of the maxim is idiotic. Idiotic because it almost as good as conveys the idea that when people are *not* looking, we are privileged to do wrong” (*Fables of Man* 339). In other words, Twain is writing about how people don’t understand him

because he couches his thoughts, for fear of reproof, in double edged irony, one edge laugh and one edge sting. It's an expression of frustration similar to that apparent in his newspaper interview quoted in the first two pages of Chapter One when Twain says even his family doesn't understand what he's attempting in his autobiography. "The Secret History of Eddypus" is therefore significant to this study because it shows Twain writing autobiographically, if in disguised mode, a few years before the Paine dictations.

Also, "Eddypus" partially answers critics who say Twain's autobiography lacks introspection by providing evidence that introspection need not announce itself as such and in fact can come disguised. If a man believes no one understands him regardless of how many words he uses to express himself, and if he believes his true opinions would bring him opprobrium if made public, these are elements of introspection. If a man spends a lifetime wrapping his opinions in satire and humor so as to elicit laughter and deflect criticism, his actions stem from introspection. Twain explicitly told the public this was his modus operandi. In a newspaper interview of 1900 Twain explained himself under the subhead "Do Not Believe the Truth": "I have found that when I speak the truth, I am not believed...I have, therefore, been forced by fate to adopt fiction as a medium of truth...I disseminate my true views by means of a series of apparently humorous and mendacious stories" (Twain *Life as I Find It* 333-4).

Consider once more the proposition that the charge of lack of introspection arises in part from Twain's heightening of expectations through his ballyhoo for his long delayed work. Twain caused his audience to expect more than could be provided. The fact that modern critics like Garrison Keillor express disappointment that the *Autobiography* isn't shocking in its language or opinions is a tribute to Twain's advertising skills, but doesn't equate with evidence of being non-introspective. After all, any number of noted autobiographies display striking reticence without attracting the charge Twain's has. Anthony Trollope, for example, mentions in his autobiography his wife and his marriage, but is so stingy of details that the reader doesn't know for a fact whether Mrs. Trollope had two eyes or not. Here is Trollope's account of his wedding: "I commenced the book in September 1843 and had only written a volume when I was married in June 1844. My marriage was like the marriage of other people, and of no special interest to anyone except my wife and me. It took place at Rotherham in Yorkshire, where her father was the

manager of a bank. We were not very rich, having about 400 pounds a year on which to live” (Trollope, 55-6). No anecdote or encomium of Mrs. Trollope appears. Granted, Trollope by his own admission wasn't aiming at revelation. The fourth paragraph from last in his book reads, “It will not, I trust, be supposed by any reader that I have intended in this so-called autobiography to give a record of my inner life. No man ever did so truly – and no man ever will. Rousseau probably attempted it, but who doubts but that Rousseau has confessed in much the thoughts and convictions rather than the facts of his life?” (256). Aside from sounding like Twain in his assertion that no man ever recorded his inner life truly, Trollope was saying he considered autobiography to be a record of facts, not thoughts or convictions, a belief in which Twain differed.

In a second example of notable autobiographical reticence, Henry Adams marks only with an absence his spouse's suicide and her existence as well. His wife is never mentioned, although she's implicitly in the text since Adams skips his life during the years of his marriage entirely, breaking off with a chapter covering the year before his marriage and resuming with a chapter beginning seven years past her suicide. These two chapters are titled “Failure” and “Twenty Years After”, and Adams is clearly dealing with his marriage by not addressing the years of its existence (Adams 299-300). That Adams sent his manuscripts to friends for comment before publication, friends who would have known his wife and Adams' feelings about her suicide, more clearly displays what he hoped to achieve by this autobiographical absence. To erase someone from history intentionally one does not leave a historical gap about which nothing is said. One instead mentions everything except the person, as Paine mentioned Isabel Lyon once in his three volume biography of Twain.

Trollope states he's not introspective, and Adams hints at a traumatic event by skipping it, but both escape the criticism Twain has come in for. Some who charge the autobiography lacks introspection resemble in their literal-mindedness the narrator of “Eddypus”. They say Twain talks endlessly without revealing his true conflicts and motivations. But in the same fashion in which the executioner in *The Mikado* assured Nanki-Poo that fireworks would follow his execution and would be visible even if the condemned man wouldn't see them, so in the autobiography the introspection is there even if some can't

see it. He definitely was “fiendish” and “caustic” in his opinions about many persons, substantiating a portion of the expectations he had raised, but he never claimed he would compete with Rousseau in terms of speaking frankly about animal appetites and functions. On January 14th, 1906, one week after beginning his dictations, Twain told his secretary that he was not going to emulate Rousseau. As Isabel Lyon noted in her diary, “Mr. Clemens said that he was going to be frank – not once but many times – (There were Rousseau confessions – but I am going to leave that kind alone, for Rousseau had looked after that end – “ (Trombley 93). He meant he would be “frank” often, but would express sexual views only rarely and circumspectly, as in the dictation where he gave his version of his interview with the young, attractive, sexually emancipated English author Elinor Glyn in which the two discussed human sexual urges. Rousseau, Twain once wrote, “confesses to masturbation...& attempts made upon his person by Sodomites,” (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 6) and it’s presumably that arena of private desires or fears that Twain intended to keep private. His words to Lyon don’t indicate when he decided not to be competitive with Rousseau, but it might be suggested that Twain was not amending his vow of complete frankness with this statement to Lyon by noting that although he was no stranger to the animal appetites and functions, he was always an American Victorian. From the time of his marriage he aspired to acquire tastes and values of the genteel class, at least to the extent of being thought to possess them. His childhood and young adulthood passed in frontier environments and ungentlemanly occupations, but his family was middle class even in a frontier environment. He loathed men who seduced young women, describing Stanford White as “a born scoundrel” (Twain *The Autobiography of Mark Twain*, 309) and thought men typically accepted as romantic icons, like Abelard of France, were similarly scabrous. In Twain’s words, Abelard “came under that friendly roof like a cold hearted villain as he was, with the deliberate intention of debauching a confiding, innocent girl” (Twain *The Innocents Abroad*, 114). He enjoyed dirty jokes, but only among other men, and he was disgusted by Titian’s *Venus* because of its apparent portrayal of female masturbation, “the foulest, the vilest, the obscenest picture the world possesses” (Twain *A Tramp Abroad* 317).

Bernard DeVoto’s opinion about Twain and sexual matters was,

I have come to believe that Mark himself was responsible for many of the euphemisms...in his work, and I am satisfied that the sexual timidities were his. I believe that even the obscenities of his conversation and after-dinner speeches have been overemphasized. I am sure that his conception of what was proper to written literature was more prudish than that of his mentors...He resented Livy's correction of vivid expressions that were not sexual...But the taboo of sex was his own." (DeVoto *Mark Twain at Work* 85-6)

Twain so strongly disfavored any book or art that might endow females with sexual interest or knowledge that he might be considered prudish. If he told Isabel Lyon that he intended to avoid "Rousseau confessions", then he's giving insight into his personality, as he intended to do in his autobiography. Reluctance to speak frankly and openly about areas of human life which embarrass a person gives insight into him. Twain had knowledge of animal functions and appetites, but he disapproved of most expressions of them, and talking about them explicitly would be out of character. Twain would trust in previously stated dictums about the nature of autobiographical revelation. He would reveal himself through the choice and tenor of his subjects, and a paucity of discussion about sexual matters is revealing in itself. As Paine noted, Twain was never salacious, and the evidence argues that his thoughts about animal appetites occupied a small, perhaps repressed, region of his psychology. Armchair psychologists understandably have read Twain's comment in "Letters From the Earth" that after age fifty a man's "performance" in sexual intercourse "is of poor quality, the intervals between are wide, and its satisfactions of no great value to either party" (Twain *Collected Tales, Sketches, Speeches, & Essays 1891-1910*, 915) to be a reference to his own waning powers. However, it may also refer to his waning interest as he aged, which would of course cover the years of the dictations.

An example of Twain's attitude toward mildly sexual situations appears in a letter to William Dean Howells in 1881, when Twain was age forty-six. Karl Gerhardt's young and attractive wife asked Twain to render an opinion upon her husband's sculpture. Twain accompanied her to Gerhardt's studio to view a semi-nude female sculpture for which the wife had modeled. "Well, sir," Twain wrote, "It was

perfectly charming, this girl's innocence & purity – exhibiting her naked self, as it were, to a stranger & alone, & never once dreaming that there was the slightest indelicacy about the matter. And so there wasn't" (Twain *Mark Twain-Howells Letters* 353). At the letter's beginning Twain wrote "*Private & Confidential,*" and at the end he wrote, "keep it quiet – I don't think Livy would mind my telling you these things, but then she might, you know, for she is a queer girl" (350, 355). The author fretted because his wife might learn he had accidentally been in the presence of a semi-nude statue and the girl who modeled for it. This is so far from salaciousness as to approach prudery and illustrates the author's distance from Rousseau.

In old age he became more accepting of human sexual fragility, thanks to his belief in Determinism, without becoming subject to this fragility himself. This is pertinent to his 1908 dictation regarding his interview with the English author Elinor Glyn and her subsequent public description of their talk, whose details he disputed. Glyn had written an unsurprisingly best-selling novel about an adulterous affair with uncommonly frank description and without condemnation. When she visited Twain at 21 Fifth Avenue in 1907, his point of view that her characters had acted according to the law of their natures largely agreed with hers. But when Glyn later published an account of their talk, Twain replied that their talk had been private, and her quotations of him were false. She reported the author as saying, "you have shown what is God's law against man's law, and in this crazy world...every law that is made, is to trample under foot God's laws and the laws of Nature...The tiger is ferocious, the rabbit is timid – each has its characteristics" (Schmidt "Mark Twain and Elinor Glyn"). This sounds like words Twain would write later in "Letters From the Earth" right down to the same animal imagery. She also reported him saying she had portrayed how "crazy" the world is by making the adulterers "pay a heavy price for the breaking of man's laws – but who knows? They may have completed one of God's laws and made it perfect in the doing" (ibid). In other words, Glyn asserted Twain approved of the adultery in her novel. In light of Twain's reaction to Gorky's public censure, he certainly would have been unhappy with having this reported publicly even if he really said it. Glyn also printed his private written reply to her public report: "nobody can be reported even approximately except by a stenographer...If you had put upon paper what I

really said it would have wrecked your type-machine. I said some fetid and over-vigorous things, but that was because it was a confidential conversation” (ibid).

Nothing in the dictation, of January 13th, 1908, sounds likely to wreck a typewriter even though it was to be read posthumously. He says the novel’s characters “get to obeying” Nature’s laws “at once and they keep on obeying them and obeying them, to the reader’s intense delight and disapproval”. He also says, “It was one of the damnest conversations I have ever had with a beautiful stranger of her sex, if I do say it myself that shouldn’t” (Twain *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* 354-5). Probably this last statement answers the question about Rousseau confessions in his autobiography best. Twain may never have had a candid conversation about sex with any female of non-intimate status, and when he spoke with an attractive female of progressive sexual opinions, he probably spoke in terms both honest and measured, with no inappropriate language and the comfort level of a first time sex education instructor.

When a reporter asked him eight months later for further comment, he said, “She put into my mouth humiliatingly weak language, whereas I used exceedingly strong language – much too strong for print, and also much too indelicate” (Schmidt “Mark Twain and Elinor Glyn”). Of course this would be good publicity for sales of the *Autobiography* someday, but it’s a bit illogical. He was unhappy that she reported a private conversation about a controversial subject, but unhappy also that she hadn’t reported his profanity or obscenity or anatomically accurate terminology – something. It’s more in keeping with Twain’s known behavior that he wanted to appear transgressive while actually being conventional, at least in matters sexual. As for the dictation concerning Twain’s interview with Elinor Glyn, it may not have occurred had Glyn maintained discretion.

Twain’s autobiographical truth and honesty, as he purported at different times it would be, might exist in five types. First, it might be descriptions and judgments of other persons or institutions, such as his attacks upon Charles Webster, Theodore Roosevelt, Bret Harte or Mrs. Henry W. Aldrich. Second, it might be expressions of philosophical or religious belief, such as his propoundments about Determinism or elements of Christianity which he believed to be or actually were controversial. Third, it might be the form of the *Autobiography*, which would mirror his mind in its subjectivity and process of composition

and thereby furnish what the author believed to be an honest type of autobiography because he conceived of his life as his mind's processes. Fourth, it might be information about bodily appetites and functions, which he said he didn't intend to discuss. Fifth, it might constitute a pattern in which memories or incidents invoking his shame or guilt about failures and faults are discussed in disguised or indirect form.

Some critics miss these nuances and by doing so misunderstand the nature and types of Twain's introspection in the autobiography. Everett Emerson wrote "the author was laboring under a mistaken notion in believing that he was at last telling the whole truth" and quoted Howells asking the author if he thought he could tell "the black truth" or "the whitey-brown truth" or "the nice, whitened truth of the shirtfront". Emerson decided "It is a whity-brown truth that Twain tells, at best" (*Mark Twain: A Literary Life* 288-9). Emerson gives as an example of Twain's whity-brown truth a dictation in which Twain acknowledges his hunger for attention to the extent of urging his daughter Clara to bill herself as "Mark Twain's daughter" for a singing engagement and reports how he "made a plunge for the stage" when she finished singing so he could "get my share of the glory". As Twain said in a different dictation, "I like compliments, praises, flatteries" and was "grieved and disappointed" whenever mail arrived without compliments (289). In answering Emerson's charge, in this instance Twain is explicitly displaying a sizable component of his personality, one so prominent that denial would be ludicrous. Therefore he capitalized on it for humor, as when his fictional scholar in "Eddypus" writes of the fictionalized author, "he thought his main feature was an absence of vanity amounting to poverty, even destitution, whereas we are aware that in this matter he was a person with a close approach to independent means" (Twain *Fables of Man* 342). Inasmuch as Twain understood this feature in himself and recognized its obviousness, he chose to highlight it for use. Emerson appears to think Twain failed at telling the whole truth because the author talks explicitly only about personality characteristics which are readily apparent and not prodigiously shameful. But if introspection is self-awareness, why would critics expect its depiction necessarily to be explicit?

The final dictation Twain made is about painful and bitter guilt expressed in deeply disguised form similar to the "invisibles" he had said texts always contained. The dictation's point is easily missed

unless one recognizes the tangled jealousies, ambitions, tensions and accusations surrounding him in the year preceding the dictation's date, April 16, 1909. Twain's epileptic daughter Jean had been exiled to different sanatoriums because her aged father couldn't deal with her affliction, and his secretary Isabel Lyon convinced him Jean was physically violent. Lyon apparently embezzled about two thousand dollars from Twain even though she worshipped him, and she viewed his daughters as rivals to be marginalized in their father's life or subjected to her own control. Twain's daughter Clara resented Lyon for controlling her allowance and believed the secretary wanted to marry her father. Twain's business manager Ralph Ashcroft obtained the author's signature on documents giving him complete financial control over all Twain's assets and formed an odd alliance including marriage with Lyon that may have aimed at protecting them both from Clara, her father and the law. Twain refused Jean's pleas to come home because he believed Lyon's allegations. Clara angered Twain because she may have had sexual relations with a married man, and she made accusations against his trusted secretary who had lived with him since before his wife's death and whom he depended upon for both business and personal reasons. By Christmas, 1908, the secretary and business manager had supplanted the daughters in the author's life to the extent that they and not the daughters appeared in photographs mailed to the author's friends.

Twain increasingly became the unwilling center of complaints and accusations between these combatants and intriguers through the winter of 1909. Typically, it affected his writing, as will be discussed in the following chapter. But Clara began to win her father's belief. As his position became precarious, Ashcroft convinced Twain to sign documents formalizing his and Lyon's positions and duties. This saddened Twain initially because his emotions towards his employees had become familial. As he wrote at the time, "Stormfield was a home; it is a tavern, now, & I am the landlord" (Lystra 169).

The documents didn't protect Ashcroft and Lyon for long. On April 15th in response to Clara's urging Twain dismissed Lyon (Trombley 207), and Ashcroft's last day of any professional duty came on the 17th (Hill 223).

The ostensible subject of his final dictation, of April 16th, is Clara's singing recital two days earlier and his role therein. A newspaper reported Twain had carried flowers to his on-stage daughter, to which

Twain comments he had “filched a credit properly belonging to Mrs. [Henry] Rogers,” who had given him the flowers. The audience applauded his presentation, and

I recognized that it meant, ‘here is a father who loves and admires his daughter and has the courage to testify it before all the world, instead of employing a hireling to do it for him; a father, too, who is considerate and thoughtful, and brings his flowers with him, instead of forgetting all about it, as other fathers would.’ That cordial praise went straight to my heart, and did as much good as if I had deserved it. Providence does take care of us, and I am grateful.”

(Autobiographical dictation microfilm reel 69)

This dictation serves on its face to contradict the critics who assert the *Autobiography* lacks introspect. In disguising and expressing simultaneously his feelings about abandoning Jean and not believing Clara in a dictation about unjustly being praised for bringing flowers to Clara’s recital, Twain is proving his statements about the nature of autobiography: “[A]n autobiography is always two things: it is an absolute lie and it is an absolute truth. The author of it furnishes the lie, the reader of it furnishes the truth – that is, he gets at the truth by insight” (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 378).

To the contrary of critics’ assertions, the *Autobiography* is so introspective that this final dictation’s meaning would escape readers unaware of Twain’s history with his daughters and employees. It’s akin to Joyce’s *Ulysses* in this regard. The ability to read a human mind without the aid of annotation would create obscurity rather than clarity just as one might be unable to say where a person was going just by following the person for a few blocks. Observation is different from understanding. Twain’s choice of individual words in the dictation, such as “loves...admires...considerate” and “thoughtful” emphasize his bitter self-reproach. These words describe what he thought he had not done and been with his daughters. This was his last great blame and shame in a lifetime of great blames and shames, underscored in this instance because he bore all blame himself. True to his boastings, he depicted his innermost feelings. And true to his analysis, his readers need to exercise insight. This is a prime example of the “invisibles” Twain mentioned in “Reflections on a Letter and a Book” which he was to use increasingly in his writing.

His rupture with Lyon and Ashcroft ended the dictations because they had been created while those persons had been emotionally intimate with him, and his new feelings about them and his own failures as father and judge of character justify a description of the experience as traumatic. The period of 1906 into 1909 had become another type of dream to him, as in the letter he wrote to Susan Crane, and a nightmarish one. Because the dictations summoned up so many unwelcome associations after this falling out, he would rationalize them as “tedious long labor” in the document Paine titled “The Death of Jean”. However, in this highly stressful time he would immediately formulate plans to continue his autobiography in another unorthodox form, as will be explored in the chapter following.

A dictation in which Twain’s true thoughts are less disguised than in the example just given but yet short of explicit is that of January 11th, 1906, his third with Paine. The dictation’s subject and treatment indicates that the “absolute lie” which the “author furnishes” in autobiography is not only furnished to the reader, but often swallowed by the author as well, even if the author has trouble keeping it down. Although the dictation appeared in the *North American Review* chapters, Paine omitted it from his edition, perhaps because Clara objected to its discussion of one of the author’s great mortifications, his alleged vulgarity at a formal dinner honoring John Greenleaf Whittier. That Twain chose it to form part of the final chapter published in the magazine indicates he wished to deny he had committed any faux pas or believed evasion of the subject might be more damnatory than discussion, inasmuch as his speech had been publicized at the time of its occurrence. The subject pained him for so long that it appears to be one of those scars the bearer believes to be much more disfiguring than reality warrants.

In 1877 in Boston Twain made his first speech before the literary elites of that period, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Whittier, whose seventieth birthday constituted the occasion for the dinner. Twain’s speech was a joshing fiction about how he arrived at a miner’s house in his California days and was accused by the miner of being the fourth rude and uncouth literary man to arrive in the past day, the others being Holmes, Longfellow and Emerson. These fictional representations of the present elite “had been drinking” in Twain’s telling, and Emerson was “seedy,” Holmes “fat as a balloon” and Longfellow “built like a prize-fighter,” an illegal occupation at the time. In

Twain's tale the litterateurs alternately acted boorishly and spouted famous lines from their works. His conclusion was a protest to the miner that the visitors had been imposters, to which the miner's retort was, "Imposters, were they? Are *you*?" (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 261-4).

According to Paine in his biography, the speech was "unfortunate" and "a bombshell...a sort of hoax – always a doubtful plaything" bringing "quicker and more terrible retribution than usual" (*Mark Twain* v.II, 603). He quotes Howells as describing the speech as "the amazing mistake, the bewildering blunder, the cruel catastrophe", during which the audience "became petrified with amazement and horror. Too late, then, the speaker realized his mistake. He could not stop, he must go on to the ghastly end" (604). If Paine's account, taken from Howells, is accurate, and Twain appears to have accepted it as such, then his speech had been in extremely poor taste, and that fact had been made clear to him. At a moment when he had great literary popularity but modest literary rank, he had shown vulgarity, disrespect and poor judgment before the literary elite whose ranks he wished to enter, and his failure had become widely publicized. The speech appears inoffensive to modern readers, but such readers overlook conventions of Twain's time and his audience. If the prestigious men whose names were used in his speech took offense, our age might regard them as pompous. But Twain didn't consider the humor of a western lecture hall wasn't to the taste of eastern gentility. In his naturalness he hadn't considered his audience. This was his sin, brought to his attention immediately, and because his shame was so public it burned him for thirty-eight years. It's difficult for a modern observer to understand the extent to which he felt ashamed, and an observation is that either Twain characteristically exaggerated his offense or else the modern observer doesn't understand the social customs of that time and place. He had met Whittier, Holmes and Longfellow previously (Kaplan, F. 309), so Twain should have realized those men would not think he had gratuitously insulted them as they might have thought of a stranger. But he believed he had insulted custom, which he later stated was more inflexible than law itself. Five days after the dinner he wrote to Howells, "It seems I must have been insane when I wrote that speech & saw no harm in it, no disrespect toward those men whom I revered so much" (Twain *Mark Twain-Howells Letters* v.I, 212). Howells gave him the kind of well-meaning consolation that makes an offender feel worse. "Every one with

whom I have talked about your speech regards it as a fatality – one of those sorrows into which a man walks with his eyes wide open, no one knows why” (213). Twain apologized in writing to the grantees, and Holmes, Longfellow and Emerson’s daughter replied with partial or whole sympathy. Holmes did say the speech had gone “a little farther than what some would consider the proper limit of its excursions,” but the “world owes you too large a debt...to quarrel with you”. Longfellow said, “The newspapers have made all the mischief”. Emerson’s daughter wrote that her family held “no shadow of indignation,” but “We were disappointed” (Powers 412-3). But despite these partial exonerations, until the 1906 dictation Twain couldn’t pretend to forgive himself.

The dictation begins with Twain’s insertion into the text of a recently received letter from a Laura K. Hudson asking for a copy of his speech “which to me seemed the best and funniest thing our great favorite had ever written” (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* v.I, 260). Resembling Novalis, who wrote “It is certain my conviction gains infinitely, the moment another soul will believe in it,” Twain uses the letter to commence his defense. He recites his letter in return, in which he claims to have banished the incident from his thought because his “pain and shame were so intense...But your suggestion...moved me” to obtain a copy of the speech. “It came this morning, and if there is any vulgarity about it I am not able to discover it. If it isn’t innocently and ridiculously funny, I am no judge” (260-1). The transcript is inserted, followed by Twain’s subjective account of his reception. “The expression of interest in the faces turned to a sort of black frost. I wondered what the trouble was. I didn’t know. I went on, but with difficulty...always hoping - but with a gradually perishing hope – that somebody would laugh, or that somebody would at least smile, but nobody did” (261). Of course this is the nightmare of all persons who have ever made a performance, amplified by subsequent publicity.

Benvenuto Cellini’s autobiography contained a childhood memory which influenced Twain in his use of the power of association to recall memories. Cellini and his father saw a salamander within a flame, and his father slapped Cellini’s palm with the explanation that the pain would make him recall the incident. Twain not only understood and gave credit to Cellini for this contribution to his own autobiography, but because his own experience and Cellini’s both involved painful recollection, he

artistically alluded to Cellini's episode: "It was an atmosphere that would freeze anything. If Benvenuto Cellini's salamander had been in that place he would not have survived to be put into Cellini's autobiography" (266).

There is no doubt Twain's account is subjective, knowingly or not. He says the next scheduled speaker, William Henry Bishop, could not complete his own speech because Twain had rendered the atmosphere so frigid, and after a few sentences he "slumped down to a limp and mushy pile" (ibid). However, the Project discovered Bishop was the evening's final speaker, and a newspaper reported that "he closed very gracefully the list of regular speakers" (556). Also, "newspaper reports do not confirm that Clemens' speech was generally perceived to be a 'disaster'" (555). Boston's *Daily Globe* reported the speech brought "violent bursts of hilarity", and the same city's *Evening Transcript* spoke of "the hearty fun elicited by the droll attitude in which these literary lights were represented" (Powers 411). Out of town newspapers either saw a different dinner or corrected the excessive politeness of Boston's newspapers. The *Springfield Republican* said the speech had been like a "fly in amber" and raised the question "how the devil it got there" (Duckett 169).

However, if Twain had regarded his speech as deserving the *Springfield Republican's* comment for most of the years since he spoke it, at this point in his dictation Twain agrees with the Boston newspapers. "Now, then, I take that speech up and examine it...I have read it twice, and unless I am an idiot, it hasn't a single defect in it from the first words to the last...There isn't a suggestion of coarseness or vulgarity in it anywhere. What could have been the matter with that house?...Oh, the fault must have been with *me*, it is not in the speech at all" (267). It wasn't the speech, so it must have been the audience, or if it wasn't the audience, then it must have been some flaw in his delivery or appearance. Twain is speaking for the record questions that have nagged him since the dinner with the letter serving as the rationale for going into the issue. It has bothered him so persistently that he can't render a permanent judgment even in 1906. And he isn't finished. On January 23rd he dictates, "I have examined that speech a couple of times since, and have changed my notion about it – changed it entirely. I find it gross, coarse...How do I account for the change of view? I don't know." And after he reverses his previous position, which itself

had been reversed, he adds in a postscript “*May 25. It did remain – until day before yesterday; then I gave it a final and vigorous reading – *aloud* – and dropped straight back to my former admiration of it” (310).

Twain’s recitation of his feelings at the time and his defense of himself as he rereads the speech are example of his ego’s self defense. His memory embarrasses him so greatly that he still can’t accept his fault decades later. Irrationally he thinks his blunder is significant thirty-eight years after the event, and rationally he contrives to convince himself he didn’t blunder. In the record of his life he attempts to absolve himself of shame he felt for three decades by claiming there was nothing offensive in the original act. It’s not really important in terms of understanding his autobiography whether or not he was offensive long ago; what’s important is his portrait of himself remembering his shame and attempting to expiate it.

The introspection in the Whittier dinner dictation and the final dictation becomes visible if one understands a convoluted series of statements Twain made about his theory of autobiography. The author advised Orion regarding the latter’s autobiography in a letter of 1880: “The supremest charm in Casanova’s Memoires...is that he frankly, flowingly and felicitously tells the dirtiest & vilest & most contemptible things on himself, without suspecting that they are other than things which the reader will admire & applaud” (6). Twain explained this statement in the dictation of February 23rd, 1906.

I urged Orion to try to tell the truth...he *couldn’t* tell the truth of course – that is he could not lie successfully about a shameful experience of his, because the truth would sneak out between the lies...an autobiography is always two things: it is an absolute lie and it is an absolute truth. The author of it furnishes the lie, the reader of it furnishes the truth – that is, he gets at the truth by insight.” (378)

In other words, the ideal and nearly unobtainable state of self-revelation would require lack of self-consciousness, a sort of autobiographical amorality, for which Twain credits Casanova and which he thinks superior to Rousseau for the following reason. In the 1880 letter above he wrote that Rousseau “tells it as a man who is *perfectly aware* of the shameful nature of these things, whereas your coward &

your failure should be happy & sweet & unconscious” (6). But because nobody (with the exception of Casanova perhaps), can be free of self-consciousness, nobody can “lie successfully about a shameful experience,” and therefore nobody can tell the truth totally. Since almost all persons possess some conventional ideas of right and wrong conduct, almost all persons would lie about their behavior when describing circumstances about which they feel shame or guilt. However, the good reader will exercise insight and divine the person’s true attitude, sighting the “invisibles”. This convoluted idea explains what is happening in Twain’s final dictation and the Whittier dinner dictation. The author is depending upon the reader to unveil his thoughts because the author can’t say them bluntly, and he can’t disguise them entirely. In the February 23rd dictation quoted above, Twain asserts confidence no autobiographer can attain ideal truthfulness because in his opinion nobody has. He adds the caveat that Benvenuto Cellini and Rousseau had told disgraceful or shameful things about themselves, but he’s confident those autobiographers didn’t think they were disgraceful or shameful (378). In other words, when Twain says nobody has done it, he means so very few have done it that they constitute an ideal. If an autobiographer lacks self-consciousness, which is well-nigh non-existent, his readers will know him more objectively than he knows himself. If an autobiographer has self-consciousness, he will evade and distort all episodes in his life he feels guilt or shame about, but his readers will still sense his evasions and distortions, much as the reader senses evasion in Twain’s dictation about the Whittier dinner. And Twain’s evasions and distortions, in his concept, are part of his autobiography’s truth because they portray him faithfully endeavoring to warn his readers to employ the simple expedient of not taking him at face value. His final dictation shows him expressing his feelings about himself in relation to his daughter, but it doesn’t explain the depth of his emotions nor what generated them. Twain expected his readers to divine those painful elements without his explicit statements because if readers could do that, then they would truly understand Twain. If this explanation sounds implausible, consider how frequently one person will tell another that the second doesn’t understand the first even when the first hasn’t been explicit about the subject under discussion.

For sake of comparison with the fashion in which Twain expresses strong emotion, examine *The Secret Diary of Harold L. Ickes*, Secretary of the Interior under Franklin Roosevelt during the Great Depression. Ickes kept throughout his service a diary which he dictated to secretaries. The secret aspect occurred in his confiscation and burning of the secretarial notes after his dictations were typed (Ickes v). Ickes created entries for each day although he saved his notes and memories for dictation at each week's end, a not uncommon practice among diarists including James Boswell and Samuel Pepys.

Ickes began his diary entry for September 6, 1935 thus: "(I had reached this point in this dictation about eight forty-five at night, Saturday, August 31, when word came to me that Anna [Ickes's wife] had been killed in an automobile accident on the Taos road, about forty miles north of Santa Fe)" (Ickes 429).

The next paragraph begins "To resume, Morgenthau and Hopkins are, of course, fighting me on different fronts" (ibid). Ickes then writes twenty-seven typed lines about political dealings before returning to a detailed description of the sequence of events in which he heard of his wife's accident, called the hospital and learned of her death from the ambulance driver. Ickes then recounts details of his wife's car journey, the accident due to "loose gravel on the shoulder of the road," with the car flipping and the heads of the driver and his wife going through the roof. Then Ickes writes, "She never regained consciousness and within a short time she was dead" (430).

There is less emotion expressed in the entry than there is in entries describing turf wars with Harry Hopkins and Henry Morgenthau, but readers may assume Ickes felt deeply about his wife's death. Presumably Ickes was restraining himself, and the effect of the restraint makes the description more poignant. Evidence that Ickes had great discipline appears later in his dictation when Ickes writes that his son, "taking part with his team in the state skeet shoot," calls Ickes and is told to "finish his contest" rather than joining his father because he "could not let his teammates down" (431). Writers have different means of expressing interiority. For Ickes, who had a week to compose himself before narrating the events, the means was facts and sequence, and in this instance they convey deeper emotion than histrionics would because the facts and sequence speak for themselves.

For Twain, matters of the deepest feeling were often expressed disguised. Readers who look only upon the surface of his written words fail to exercise the judgment of humans which they presumably exercise in daily life, where most people train themselves to listen for nuances and hidden meanings. Such readers make the same mistake college students without the habit of reading fiction make in approaching fiction. They expect fiction to be as explicit as their other textbooks and thus, to the frustration of their teachers, switch off their ability to infer.

A professional critic such as Dwight Macdonald might resent being compared to such students, but it apparently escaped Macdonald that Twain's ingrained mode of expression was concealment. Twain always thought he was transgressing against what people held sacred when he spoke what he believed, but he couldn't stop expressing his beliefs. Therefore, for self-protection he habitually disguised his words with irony, understatement and humor, thereby making of himself the sort of court jester who can speak what would earn others outrage. Only when he indulged in the liberty of the aged, when he wrote from patriotic concerns, did he write without this protection, and it brought him criticism, as shown in Chapter Two.

It's likely that the posthumous nature of the *Autobiography* contributed to charges about lack of introspection because critics didn't remember the reticence and euphemism of Twain's time when they read it thirty, forty-nine and one hundred years past his death. Taking Twain's ballyhoo literally, they read the text likewise, expecting their time's explicitness. Casanova tells in his own autobiography of being ordered by a man to presumably stop urinating against a wall because a woman was watching him. Arthur Machen's translation of 1889 phrases it "as I was standing close to the wall" when he was ordered to "go somewhere else to finish what I had begun". This is euphemistic. When Casanova asked the man why he spoke thus, the man called his attention to the woman standing four floors up from the ground. Casanova's opinion was that even while holding a telescope she couldn't have detected whether he was Jewish or Christian (Casanova *The Memoirs of Jacques Casanova* v.I, 526). This should inform even mildly alert readers exactly what he was doing against the wall, yet Machen's translation displays his period's sometimes prissy discretion.

Furthermore Twain's internal censor ensured that his blasphemous comments about organized religion, expressed in "Letters From the Earth" and six dictations in June, 1906, remained unpublished while he lived because he knew these particular thoughts actually *were* "fiendish" and "caustic" beyond the appetite of his era. Even in our time a college dean of faculty voiced this reluctance to appreciate Twain's candid sentiments when he said to this writer that Twain was a good writer "until he got old, when he became grouchy" (personal interview, 1998). If Twain seldom expresses emotional language in his autobiography outside of his personal invective, it doesn't indicate a superficial caste of mind. With Twain, particularly deeply felt emotions typically appeared through indirection when he expected a public audience, and he found this life-long habit of checking himself to be difficult to alter even for the autobiography.

THE RELIGIOUS DICTATIONS

However, Twain did not check himself in six dictations concerning Christians and the Bible made in the summer of 1906 in Dublin, New Hampshire. On June 17, 1906, Twain wrote a frequently quoted sentence to William D. Howells: "To-morrow I mean to dictate a chapter which will get my heirs and assigns burnt alive if they venture to print it this side of 2006 A.D. – which I judge they won't." This postscript to the letter typifies the delight Twain took in all new enthusiasms. In this instance his delight with his plan to skewer traditional Christian beliefs bubbled over into renewed love for his autobiography.

This book is already perfectly outrageous, in spots, but that's nothing – it's going to be worse by & by if I live beyond my appointed date. I don't care for my other books, now, but I dote on this one as Adam used to dote on a fresh new deformed child after he was 900 years old & wasn't expecting any more." (Twain *Mark Twain-Howells Letters*, v.II, 811)

Although he had planned to continue dictating about Brett Harte inasmuch as Harte was part of his previous dictation, Twain wrote he would “break into that with a newer & hotter interest tomorrow” since “the newest & hottest interest takes precedence of *anything* I may be talking about” (ibid). One immediate genesis of the dictations, “the newer & hotter interest,” occurred in Twain’s reaction to a June, 1906 *North American Review* article by Rev. Dr. Charles Augustus Briggs concerning the doctrine of Immaculate Conception. However, the religious dictations have a second genesis and one which the author spoke to first. Mention is frequently made of the five religious dictations of June, 1906, but the dictation made the morning after his letter to Howells is a sixth one. Its opening words determine it as one of the group.

On June 18th, Twain began to act upon his words to Howells with a dictation beginning, “Let me consider that I have now been dead five hundred years. It is my desire, and indeed my command, that what I am going to say now shall not be permitted to see the light until the edition of A.D. 2400” (Autobiographical dictation microfilm reel 66). Because the dictation following these words is free of blasphemy, it would seem Twain was thinking of his dictations to follow that would supposedly require his injunction. The fact that his twentieth century editors repeatedly referred to these words heightened expectations of scathing blasphemy many years before the religious dictations appeared. Perhaps when he said this, the author sincerely believed his words needed a cooling period of half a millennium, but as it occurred his daughter Clara would permit their appearance after about one tenth of that time span.

Emphasizing the fact that his dictations are not so structureless that critics have claimed, Twain begins with a reference to Bret Harte, his temporarily discarded subject, in order to create a segue to his newer interest. “In some of his characteristics he reminds me of God...our own God,” not the deistic one in which Twain professed belief. “I mean the little God whom we manufactured out of the waste human material”. He then makes an apparent digression into a discussion of five letters he has somehow obtained, the content of which forms a vivid human drama. He says these letters have lain uninspected for the last five years in a sack filled with similar letters from other people he doesn’t know, and he says he opened the sack and read these five that morning. One wishes the author had explained how he came

to possess a sackfull of unread letters from persons he didn't know, and one suspects he hadn't read these particular letters for the first time that morning. His words to Howells the day before indicate he had already planned the next day's dictation, contradicting the charge that his autobiography was composed spontaneously. Considering his letter to Howells the previous day and considering that his subsequent dictations would dissect Christian theology, the suspicion is that Twain chose the letters as an avenue of attack into his subject. He probably read the five letters sometime prior to that morning and decided they would function well to approach his thoughts on religion. If he informed Howells of his plan the day before, it would be extremely serendipitous to find material the next morning to form the first dictation of his plan.

The letters tell how a widow, Mrs. Hunt, had been boarded by Mrs. Williams during her confinement due to an illegitimate pregnancy. A Mrs. Griffiths later wrote a letter to Mrs. Williams asserting that Mrs. Hunt had subsequently questioned how faithfully Mrs. Williams adhered to Christian ideals because she had charged Mrs. Hunt a higher sum than agreed after having entered the bargain, presumably because Mrs. Hunt's condition rendered her powerless. The irate Mrs. Williams wrote to Mrs. Hunt that, "you know very well you paid but a nominal sum for your accommodations while...nothing like...what you ought to have paid considering the deception you practiced to get to stay until after your confinement". In her letters, Mrs. Griffith tells Mrs. Williams that Mrs. Hunt had a small boy at the time she became intimate with a married man and twice asks if Mrs. Hunt had a living child in her company while Mrs. Williams boarded her and the sex of the child if she had one (ibid). This inquiry would apparently be intended for the purpose of either blackmailing or blackguarding Mrs. Hunt.

Twain comments he feels "uncompromising detestation of that old cat" who informed Mrs. Williams that Mrs. Hunt questioned her charges. "I feel disrespectfully toward that machine-made Christian," Mrs. Williams. "I think that in her heart she [would have] turned the friendless refugee and the baby into the street in the raw March weather...sure she would have" if not for the probable subsequent "censure of the community". He thinks the "majority of the community would have secretly approved the act while publicly denouncing it" (ibid).

Twain's purpose with these letters is to begin his attacks on Christian belief with an example of professing Christians who don't practice their beliefs. The subsequent dictations have a dual approach. They analyze what the author perceives as absurdities of Christian belief and mock current examples of failure to live up to Christian ideals.

On the following day Twain dictated "About the character of God, as represented in the New and the Old testaments". His point is that the biblical God, which in Twain's term refers to a manufactured and imaginary God, is both illogical and without morally good characteristics. "He is always punishing...innocent children for the misdeeds of their parents, punishing unoffending populations for the misdeeds of their rulers...harmless calves and lambs and sheep and bullocks." Threatening Adam with death if he ate the apple had as much meaning for Adam as telling him "he would be transformed into a meridian of longitude" (ibid). This is why he referred to Bret Harte in the previous dictation as "our own God". He meant humans created a God with no morally good characteristics and irrational also. It is already apparent Twain's argument is with human behavior and thought in relation directly with the religion they created and indirectly with actions by humans who profess to be religious.

In his dictation of June 20th, Twain attacked the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception and Briggs also, although he habitually confused Immaculate Conception with the Virgin Birth. Twain said,

[Briggs's] idea was that there could be no doubt about it, for the reason that the Virgin Mary knew it was authentic because the Angel of the Annunciation told her so...

If there is anything more amusing than the Immaculate Conception doctrine, it is the quaint reasonings whereby ostensibly intelligent human beings persuade themselves that the impossible fact is proven. If Dr. Briggs were asked to believe in the Immaculate Conception process as exercised in the cases of Krishna, Osiris, Buddha and the rest of the tribe, he would decline with thanks and probably be offended...and yet this bright man with the temporarily muddled mind is quite able to believe an impossibility whose authenticity rests entirely upon human testimony...one human being, the Virgin herself, a witness not disinterested...the young peasant wife whose husband needed to be

pacified.” (ibid)

On Twain’s mind in the following dictation was a current pogrom in Russia, and he typically managed to address multiple issues in one discussion: “Christianity has been repeating in Russia the...massacre and mutilation with which it has been successfully persuading Christendom...for 1900 years that it is the...only religion of peace and love.” And he castigated the militarism and arms race of his time: “the surest way to get rich quickly in Christ’s earthly kingdom is to invent a gun that can kill more Christians at one shot than any other existing gun.” He blamed international statesmen for not reducing armaments so that “even the Savior could come down and walk on the seas, foreigner as He is, without dread of being chased by Christian battleships”. The Christian religion was only the latest of a thousand, he said, and “Ours is by long odds the worst God that the ingenuity of man has begotten”. Christian Science was but the latest, and “At this very day there are thousands upon thousands of Americans of average intelligence who fully believe in ‘Science and Health’, although they can’t understand a line of it” (ibid).

On June 23rd he discussed “the real God...the authentic creator of the *real* universe” who did not concern himself with the human race any more than would China’s Emperor be interested in “a bottle of microbes”. This God was neither “a moral being according to our standards of morals” nor “just, charitable, kindly, gentle, merciful, compassionate”. This God was simply a creator. And Twain managed a strike against the efficacy of prayer and imperialism in one blow by saying “If the eighty thousand English clergy had shut up and gone to the field” in the Boer war, then England might have won (ibid).

The following and final religious dictation is largely a précis of Determinism as Twain understood it. A human, he said, was “purely a piece of automatic mechanism as is a watch...He is a subject for pity, not blame...No one would think of such a thing as trying to put the responsibility upon the machine itself...God, and God alone, is responsible for every act and word of a human being’s life” (ibid).

Briggs’s article and the five letters may have spurred Twain to talk in 1906, but underlying the bulk of the religious dictations was his long term scepticism about religious doctrine and fury at the gullibility of

conventional believers, exacerbated by keeping his silence publicly for decades. For example, in the dictation of July 8, 1907, Twain described in the same spirit as in the earlier dictations his reaction to the purported Holy Grail during the England sojourn when he received his honorary degree from Oxford. He begins by telling of his visit to Henry Stanley's widow and her conviction that Stanley's spirit was always nearby "and talks with her about her ordinary daily concerns" (Twain *Mark Twain in Eruption* 340).

Twain then asks himself if the learned Archbishop Basil Wilberforce could likewise so easily accept the miraculous without evidence. To this point Twain's words have been the equivalent of the story told before a joke's punch line. The Holy Grail has been found, Archbishop Wilberforce has it in his possession, and Twain is invited to see it. "A young grain merchant, a Mr. Pole, had recently been visited in a vision by an angel who commanded him to go to a certain place outside the ancient Glastonbury Abbey, and said that upon digging in that place he would find the Holy Grail" (342). Mr. Pole and Archbishop Wilberforce look on as Twain views "the very vessel...secretly delivered to Nicodemus nearly nineteen centuries ago...which the stainless Sir Galahad had sought...and here it was at last, dug up by a Liverpool grain merchant at no cost of blood or travel and apparently no purity ...above the average purity of the twentieth-century dealer in cereal futures" (344). Twain sees "a saucer of green glass enclosing a saucer of white silver" with "small flower figures in soft colors" and reports Wilberforce has "no room for the slightest doubt" about its authenticity (ibid). As for the author, his assessment is

I have long suspected that man's claim to be the reasoning animal was a doubtful one, but this episode has swept that doubtfulness away; I am quite sure now that often, very often in matters concerning religion and politics a man's reasoning powers are not above a monkey's." (345)

His mocking of religious relics had been recorded in *The Innocents Abroad* almost four decades before 1906, so there can be no question that his scepticism preceded old age. The measure of his tension and relief at finally speaking for posterity is recorded in his letter to Howells when he finished the six dictations. On June 26th, back at 21 Fifth Avenue in New York for business purposes, Twain wrote, "I

have been dictating some fearful things for four successive mornings...But I got them out of my system, where they had been festering for years - & that was the main thing. I feel better now” (Twain *Mark Twain-Howells Letters* v.II, 815).

As if heeding his own words to Howells about bringing persecution upon his distant descendents, Twain had entered into the typescript of the first religious dictation “my command, that what I am going to say now shall not be permitted to see the light until the edition of A.D. 2400”. As a matter of fact, it took fifty-seven years, not five centuries, for the dictations to appear in print when they appeared in *The Hudson Review* with the title “Reflections on Religion” in 1963. Even at that date, past Twain’s demise and his daughter’s as well, they caused considerable controversy. Clara had refused Bernard DeVoto permission to publish the religious dictations in *Mark Twain in Eruption* and refused also when Charles Neider asked to include them as an appendix in his edition of the autobiography. However, she relented in 1960 when Neider repeated his request (Miller 37). Clara’s letter of permission to Neider stated that her second husband, Jacques Samossoud, believed publication would result in

many types of resentment hurled at me by those who disagree with these splenetic outbursts of Father’s. My objection was merely that I think the word of a famous man should be to *uphold* rather than destroy the vision of something so spiritual and needed as God. I should hurry and die and thus the coast would be entirely clear. I personally advise their (his writings on this subject) appearance in print, simply because I don’t wish to be an intruder in this matter and because if Father were living he probably would say ‘go ahead’.” (Neider *Mark Twain* 149-50)

However, Neider’s battle to publish the chapters didn’t end with this apparent triumph. His editor at Harpers, which would publish his edition of the autobiography, told Neider “she had read the religious chapters and was worried about them. She said she didn’t like them, they were so different in tone from the rest of my edition of the autobiography, which was a ‘family book’...now they were not shocking, yet they would offend just as many people,” and she suggested publishing them in another book (151-2).

Twain may have felt better when he had finished the religious dictations, but the printed reaction to their publication, sometimes personal, would likely have reactivated the pent up rage that generated the dictations in the first place. The *Philadelphia Sunday Bulletin* published an entire page of news about the dictations, five columns and two stories, bearing the headlines, “Mark Twain’s Bitter Attack on Religion” and “Churchmen Deplore Twain’s Views, Call Him Bitter and Confused”. Under the subtitle “Bitter Old Man,” the main article states Twain died “a sad, pessimistic and frequently bitter old man. His rich stream of humor...had been drying up for some time” (Miller “Mark Twain’s Bitter Attack on Religion” 137). The subtitle is inaccurate at least to the extent that Twain had expressed in prototype form in the 1870’s many of the opinions expressed more acidly in 1906. During the earlier period he wrote an unpublished manuscript either to clarify his ideas or for the same reason he wrote so much that remains unpublished: he didn’t dare speak his thoughts and feelings, so he put them on paper to relax his tension. Twain may have reread the document in preparation for the religious dictations or else retained some points of the earlier piece flitting around his mind for decades. The title, “God of the Bible vs. God of the Present Day” signals the similar demarcation between the Gods of the Old and New Testaments in the 1906 dictations, although in the earlier document the demarcation is between the God of the Bible, in his hypocrisy and malice as Twain perceived it, and “the true God”. This latter deity “has uttered no promises,” but his “beneficent, exact, and changeless ordering of the machinery of his colossal universe is proof that he is at least steadfast to his purposes” (Twain *The Bible According to Mark Twain* 317). The earlier document also bears the same argument as the later document that God’s warning to Adam not to eat from the forbidden tree was “unfair and absurd since Adam couldn’t comprehend the nature of sin before disobeying the order” (315). It bears the same argument that God’s “most consonant employment” was in “superintending the minute domestic affairs of a small coterie of vicious and turbulent fantastics” (316). The earlier document is condensed in length in comparison to the 1906 dictations, its language is less inflammatory, and its statement of belief in an impersonal God is consoling in comparison to the nihilism expressed in 1906, but it considers many similar or identical ideas. Therefore it’s not accurate to

attribute Twain's blasphemy entirely to the disappointments of old age because he was a documented doubter of traditional Christian theology while in his thirties.

As for the churchmen who deplored Twain's views, the article's writer said they described the author as "a sick, bitter, disillusioned man who apparently did not understand the teachings of the Bible" (Miller "Churchmen" 37). Dr. Eugene Carson Blake of the United Presbyterian Church said, "in his reflections on religion he 'takes it out' on God for his loneliness, his sadness, and his despair. His error in confusing the doctrine of the Virgin Birth with that of the Immaculate Conception is not nearly as serious as his failure to acknowledge the wonder of the mystery of the Incarnation itself" (ibid). Dr. Norman Vincent Peale of the Reformed Church said, "it is a highly emotionalized outburst by a man sick with hate and anger, and the disappointing thing is his spinelessness, his pathetic lack of guts to publish this diatribe in his lifetime. He talks tough, but hides behind the cover of time" (ibid). Rt. Rev. Horace W.B. Donegan, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New York, said, "it is easy to see why anyone attached to him would not want this rather pathetic meandering published, but it is difficult to believe that the 'anti-religious' will receive any aid or comfort from it" (ibid). Finally, Dr. Ralph W. Sockman, a "retired Methodist radio minister" said, "Twain took the language of the Bible literally without understanding the spirit and symbolism. Furthermore, the loss of loved ones and the ills that flesh is heir to dropped him into a mental depression which distorted his view of religious verities...the faulty interpretations of the Scripture which he heard preached insulted his intelligence and aroused his anger...It is not much wonder Twain's temper became overheated by so much hell-fire kindled by the pulpits" (ibid).

The assorted opinions quoted appear to be largely ad hominem attacks and implications that Twain wasn't completely responsible for his blasphemies because he was bereaved and physically aged, and they don't directly address Twain's charges. Only Sockman attempts a semi-plausible explanation of Twain's anger, even if it ignores the author's long-term religious scepticism, and only Sockman raises the point that Twain's charges were structured upon a literal Biblical interpretation. But the opinions in the news article show that Twain's fears of vehement disapproval were well-founded.

Revenge

The retorts of organized religion to the religious dictations ironically leveled upon Twain long after his death invective similar to that of his own which was intended to be read about people he despised long after those people died. There's little doubt that revenge functions as a substantial theme in the *Autobiography* regardless of the author's demurral in his instructions. Much of Twain's invective was therapeutic. He needed to unburden himself about perceived swindlings, slights, irritations, pomposities, and deceptions brooded upon for decades. But his instructions regarding future posthumous editions ensured that his victims would be powerless to rebut his allegations, as he was powerless to rebut the deploring churchmen, and therefore it's near certain than Twain planned to take an eternal revenge by providing a perverse monument to all persons he castigated. If Twain created the reputations of his targets for history, he would hurt them more than he would with temporal revenge. He wrote in the second part of his autobiography's preface that "This book is not a revenge-record," (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 221) but he sounds like Rockefeller recovering from his anger and saying he only pities Ida Tarbell rather than despises her. Twain's denial is belied by the range of his victims and the intensity of their denunciation, an intensity in which his delight is often apparent. He intended to pay back the supposed slights and cheats of his lifetime by fixing in the mind of posterity a spattered legion of persons. For example, John T. Raymond was the deceased actor whom Twain described in the *North American Review* chapters as "empty and selfish and vulgar and ignorant and silly, and there was a vacancy where his heart should have been". Raymond had earned a high place in Twain's pantheon of the damned three decades earlier by supposedly cheating the author through padded expenses while performing as Colonel Sellers. At the time Twain told his wife he hated Raymond and Bret Harte equally (Kaplan, F. 333), and he hated Harte so much that he once wrote a letter to the President in an attempt to deny him a consular appointment.

And Twain took revenge on himself as well. In keeping his vow to reveal himself, he portrayed himself as a life-long gull and naïf, as a victim of every large or petty chiseler who crossed his path. This

self-loathing for being manipulated, strung along, naively believing every fraudster, is as caustic in sum as it is for his victims with the exception that the author portrays himself as always foolishly honest. Samuel Charles Webster, son of Twain's publishing company partner Charles Webster, made an insightful comment about the link between revenge upon others and the author himself. Webster believed that when Twain placed blame, he did so because he felt remorse, and his remorse stemmed from his sense of guilt over his own mistakes. "To get away from his own feeling of guilt he sometimes made the injured party the scapegoat. My father was the logical scapegoat from this illogical point of view, for Mark Twain felt guilty about the failure of Webster and Company and also about my father's breakdown and death. Mark Twain never forgave anyone he had injured" (Twain *Mark Twain, Business Man* viii). Because the autobiographical tirades so often involve injuries or inconveniences in which the author cooperated, Webster's words appear to bear some accuracy. When Webster & Company failed, Twain fled his country to escape harassment from creditors and made a world-wide lecture tour to pay them back. At the tour's completion, just as the author felt some financial security for the first time in half a decade, his daughter Susy died. One month later Twain wrote in a notebook "Write my autobiography in full & with remorseless attention to facts and proper names" (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 12). In modern terms this might be called denial or displacement. Twain had invested so much money in the failed typesetter that when the economic downturn of the 1890's occurred he couldn't borrow enough to keep the publishing firm running. He'd been separated from Susy by the necessity to pay his debts, and she died without seeing him after he'd largely completed his task. Someone had to be blamed, and his notebook entry forecasts a state of mind that would resolve the conflict between blaming himself and blaming others in favor of the latter, largely in the person of Charles Webster. This would emerge in his autobiography as his revelation of self through subjective venting against those who allegedly caused his afflictions.

His victims include the large and the petty both. The accuracy of his characterizations has been frequently disputed. Books have been written disputing Twain's characterization of Bret Harte and Charles Webster, for example, and DeVoto defended Twain's publishers from some of Twain's charges.

DeVoto says regarding the charges against Elisha Bliss that though “the firm did indeed make a good thing of its property in Mark’s books, it...gave him as good terms as any writer could have got from any publisher – very likely, if I know Mark Twain, better terms.” On the other hand, DeVoto believes Twain’s publishing company “need not have failed” if managed with “ordinary publishing sagacity,” and the author’s charges against Webster were “much more realistic than the one he had built up against Elisha Bliss” (Twain *Mark Twain in Eruption* x-xi). And then there is the anomaly of G.W. Carleton, the publisher who rejected one of Twain’s books, yet escaped autobiographical censure. After Carleton rejected *The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* in 1873, Twain called him a “Son of a Bitch” in a letter and predicted he would swindle Bret Harte, whose book Carleton had accepted (Duckett 47). The reason for Carleton’s absolution, as given in a dictation of May 21st, 1906, is that Carleton apologized to Twain twenty-one years after his rejection. As the author described it, Carleton said, “I refused a book of yours and for this I stand without competitor as the prize ass of the nineteenth century” (Twain *Mark Twain in Eruption* 145). Carleton’s apology and realization of his missed profits was greater revenge than invective.

Chapter Forty Nine of Neider’s edition contains portions of a dictation from April 5th, a date covered by Paine’s volumes, but omitted by him because of the content’s malice and sacrilege. Most of the chapter contains Twain’s attack upon Charles Webster, the publishing partner Twain blamed for the firm’s failure precipitating his bankruptcy. The attack’s tone is conveyed by Twain’s statement that Webster’s ignorance “covered the whole earth like a blanket and there was hardly a hole in it anywhere” (247). By dint of examples the reader should grasp by now the degree to which the *Autobiography* is fueled by Twain’s desire to fix his victims’ images for posterity, but it must be emphasized the work is a perverse form of revenge by the author upon himself as well, for Twain liberally blames himself continually for carelessness, helplessness and naiveté in business dealings as he did here:

Webster had suggested we abolish the existing contract and make a new one. I probably never read it nor asked anybody else to read it. I probably merely signed it and saved myself further bother...Under the preceding contract Webster had been my paid servant;

under the new one I was his slave...I could no longer give orders...I could not even make a suggestion with any considerable likelihood of its acceptance” (ibid).

Of course Twain was also absolving himself of blame for his business catastrophe by confessing to the lesser sin of carelessness because in that fashion he could forgive himself for his nightmare of the 1890's. The accuracy of his charges will be discussed shortly. But Twain uses the passage to segue into one of his numerous instances of meta-theory, comments upon his autobiographical method, as well as a declaration of belief about what state would follow death, and these comments Paine and/or Clara Clemens considered unsuitable for view in 1924: “I am dead. I wish to keep that fact plainly before the reader. If I were alive...I should be feeling just as malicious towards Webster...but instead of expressing it freely and honestly I should be trying to conceal it: trying to swindle the reader and not succeeding. He would read the malice between the lines and not admire me” (248). Other writers than himself (Twain refers to them as historians) would be restrained in their words because

They believe death is only a sleep, followed by an immediate waking, and that their spirits are conscious of what goes on below...But I have long ago lost my belief in immortality...when I speak from the grave it is not a spirit that is speaking; it is a nothing...it can speak frankly and freely, since it cannot know that it is inflicting pain, discomfort, or offense of any kind” (248-9)

Although Twain assumes an air of Olympian impartiality in this passage, he protects himself, his editors and the sensibilities of his victims and their living relations in his conclusion when he says he expects “my future editors to...suppress all such chapters in the early editions...until all whom they pain shall be at rest in their graves. But after that...they can do no harm” (ibid). In other words, the author wanted the ultimate last verdict upon the reputations of victims large and small by publishing these verdicts when he couldn't be attacked himself and his victims couldn't protest. Only in this fashion could he avenge insults and perceived swindles that occurred decades earlier. Of course Twain has not been

unique in efforts to affix permanent stains to others' reputations. Gibbon cites an odd attempt in his own autobiography. An ancestor tried to dishonor three female relatives who had sued him through altering the family coat of arms, a vehicle he expected to carry his opinion through the decades. The aggrieved ancestor removed from the coat of arms three scallop shells and added "three *ogresses*, or female cannibals" (Gibbon *The Autobiography of Edward Gibbon* 33).

It's unknown whether or not Twain had the insight that some of his victims might be defended long after his own death, thereby denying him the last word. If he did have the insight, he might have said he wouldn't care, being dead and nothing himself, but because he hated his victims so much as to attempt to vilify them for eternity and hated criticism so much himself, he likely would have been distressed to contemplate a time when his verdict was contradicted. And contradicted it has been in multiple instances, as will be described in this chapter's section "Factuality and Subjectivity".

Twain's animosity for fellow writer Bret Harte can be divided into what Twain said about it and what others said in contradiction of Twain. Obsessive as well as vindictive are suitable words to describe the author's reaction to Harte once their friendship fractured. He wrote to Howells in 1878

What do the newspapers say about Harte's appointment [as consul to Germany at a period Twain and his family were in that country]?...Harte is a liar, a thief, a swindler, a snob, a sot, a sponge, a coward...to send this nasty creature to puke upon the American name in a foreign land is too much...it seems only fair that after the letter I wrote last summer the President should not have silently ignored my testimony but should have given me a chance to prove what I had said...Harte shan't swindle the Germans if I can help it. Tell me what German town he is to filthify with his presence; then I will write the authorities there that he is a persistent borrower who never pays" (Twain *Mark Twain-Howells Letters* 235-6).

One regrets the letter he wrote to the President is not available for view. Evidently Twain realized his excess because the next recorded letter between Howells and himself three months later begins, "Have I offended you in some way? The Lord knows it is in my disposition, my infirmity, to do such things"

(239). In *My Mark Twain* Howells commented upon the quality of his friend exemplified in the first letter above: “In his frenzies of resentment or suspicion he would not, and doubtless could not, listen to reason.” And in a well-known passage from the same work and page he wrote, “Clemens did not forgive his dead enemies; their death seemed to deepen their crimes, like a base evasion or a cowardly attempt to escape...he would like to dig them up and take vengeance upon their clay” (69).

Perhaps Howells touched a significant motive for such enormous animus when he wrote “I cannot just say why Clemens seemed not to hit the favor of our community of scribes and scholars, as Bret Harte had done...but it is certain he did not, and I had better say so” (47). If Twain began disliking Harte through feeling professional envy, he could have had Harte’s condescension to aggravate him. Howells remembers attending a meal with Twain, Harte and others which “was in every way what a Boston literary lunch ought not to have been” with “eager laughter,” indifferent food and “discourse, so little improving”. In the midst of the commotion Harte said, “Why fellows, this is the dream of Mark’s life” (6-7).

In addition, Twain asserted he had personal experience of Harte as “a persistent borrower who never repays”. On February 4th, 1907, Twain dictated an account of how Harte had visited him during his Hartford residence to ask a loan of \$250 to pay his “butcher and baker”. Twain said that since Harte also owed his landlord at the time, “he would better accept five hundred which he did. He employed the rest of his visit in delivering himself of sparkling sarcasms about our house, our furniture, and the rest of our domestic arrangements” (Twain *Mark Twain in Eruption* 274). Five pages later in the same dictation the sum has accumulated to “fifteen hundred dollars at that time; later he owed me three thousand. He offered his note, but I was not keeping a museum and didn’t take it” (280). And six pages later in the same dictation is a smaller yet telling example. Instead of delivering their co-authored play *Ah Sin* to its producer in person, Harte asked Twain for one dollar to pay a messenger’s fee of ten cents. Offered the change, which belonged to Twain, “Harte gave his hand a ducal wave and said, ‘Never mind it. Let the boy keep it’” (286). Of this cause of the author’s hatred it may be said that it is often the pettiest slights that irritate most.

Twain accused Harte of abandoning his wife and daughters while he lived in Europe for decades (265). He accused him of living off women (268). He accused him of shirking his contractual obligations (267). He also told funny anecdotes about Harte and strung together a series of positive adjectives to describe him, such as happy, contented, ambitious, hopeful, “a Bret Harte to whom it was a bubbling and effervescent joy to be alive. That Bret Harte died in San Francisco” (267). Translated, Twain means he liked Harte only during the period when they worked in San Francisco during their young manhood and for a limited number of years after, and since their friendship ended he can find nothing good about Harte whatsoever. This is a kind of subjectivity. He’s describing one person, but he’s asserting there were two. It’s his own feelings which changed, apart from anything Harte may have done, which means it’s the former aspect of his own emotions which metaphorically died. The distinction is worth mentioning because the quantity of denunciation Harte receives in the *Autobiography* equals that leveled against any other target with the possible exceptions of Charles Webster and Theodore Roosevelt, and in Harte’s case it’s apparently all personal.

Margaret Duckett wrote a book about the authors’ relationship that questioned much that Twain said. For example, in answer to Twain’s charge that Harte abandoned his wife and lived off women, Duckett finds that Harte wrote hundreds of letters to his wife “over a period of thirty-two years,” and lots of these letters had not been published by the time of her book “largely because they so monotonously concern sums of money which he sent her regularly” (132). Harte’s grandson asserted that while the author lived overseas for fifteen years, he aided his family with “over \$60,000” (232).

In a dictation of 1907, Twain said Harte had been sarcastic about the Clemens house and furnishings during a visit in 1877 when he owed Twain money and capped his insults with a “slight and vague and veiled satirical remark with Mrs. Clemens for a target”. At this Twain said he had upbraided Harte with a speech uninterrupted for hundreds of words, calling Harte “a shabby husband to [his wife]...you often speak sarcastically, not to say sneeringly, of her...a born bummer and tramp...a loafer and an idler...go clothed in rags...sponge upon your hard-working widowed sister...have lived in the Jersey woods and marshes...as do the other tramps” and so on (130-1). It’s questionable that Harte would have stayed

silent during this string of abuse and probable that Twain was saying in 1907 what he wished he'd said earlier. Duckett questions Twain's account because in a letter to Howells following the period in which Harte visited Twain, the latter says the two authors are collaborating on a play (131). Would the two have worked together after such an outburst? Twain's dictated words may not be fabricated, but may rather be the product of things Harte said to which Twain kept quiet at the time. Twain had a personality whose anger increased over any perceived slight or double dealing with time. He typically had to stew for long periods before releasing anger, at which time it typically emerged disproportionately to whatever had caused it.

Duckett locates the break between the two authors as occurring within eight days after Twain's letter to Howells, and the vehicle of the break was a letter from Harte to Twain in which Harte accuses Twain of not looking after the former's business interests in dealings with Elisha Bliss. "Now, this is somewhere wrong, Mark, and as my friend you should have looked into Bliss's books and Bliss's methods, quite as much with a desire of seeing justice done your friend" (134-5). In addition, Harte refers non-specifically to comments he finds unsatisfactory in a letter from Twain to him and declines further dramatic collaboration.

No, Mark, I do not think it advisable for us to write another play together...I think I'll struggle on here on \$100 per week – and not write any more plays with you. As to the play, already written, - except a protest against your marring it any more by alterations until it is rehearsed...you can do with it...as you may deem best for both of us – subject to my endorsement." (136-7)

Perhaps Harte had said words that created simmering resentment during his stay with the Clemens'. Even if he didn't, in the letter quoted he questioned Twain's responsibility to him as a friend, rejected an offer to work together with the implication that something was unsatisfactory on Twain's part and accused Twain of "marring" their play. Twain would have been sensitive to all these charges. Also, in consideration that Harte held higher literary repute at that point, and the recipient felt insecurity regarding

his own repute, Twain's animus seems explained, even if he thought it too self-revealing to describe all the actual reasons in his dictation. Perhaps he had even convinced himself that the reasons he gave were the actual and only reasons.

Twain reached one form of closure regarding his bankruptcy in another dictation rich in vitriol, that of June 2nd, 1906, in which he tolled through his perceived deficiencies of Charles Webster and his contribution to his ordeal. He concluded with

There – Thanks be! A hundred times I have tried to tell this intolerable story with a pen, but I never could do it. It always made me sick before I got half-way to the middle of it. But this time I have held my grip and walked the floor and emptied it all out of my system, and I hope to never hear of it again.” (Twain *Mark Twain in Eruption* 195)

Every psychoanalyst would recognize what the author meant and intended to accomplish with this paragraph. Twain had multiple purposes in his dictations, and in this one his revenge purpose occurs so closely in parallel with its therapeutic value for the author that this dual purpose might be mistaken for being only the latter. In other words, readers might believe the author merely sought the release for emotions obtained by psychoanalysis, the clichéd talking cure, and overlook in doing so the fact that Twain created a finished literary work, one of whose prominent themes is revenge. In a similar fashion, critics have frequently used the author's words and the *Autobiography's* unprecedented form to overlook the fact that it's a flawed but finely crafted work of literary art.

The Craft of Seeming Spontaneous

The dictations by no means were as spontaneous or rambling as often asserted. This is a frequently repeated misstatement of the facts which has greatly contributed to the *Autobiography's* mixed reputation. Michael Kiskis provided quite insightful editorial work to his edition of the *North American Review* chapters, but he erred in saying the dictations began as a means of furnishing Paine his biography (Twain

Chapters from My Autobiography 7). This can't be correct because the dictations detracted Paine from his biographical labor even if they proved somewhat useful over time. Interviews would have aided Paine more expeditiously than the dictations did. Secondly, Twain announced at the outset he was composing his autobiography, which he did. Thirdly, the dictations are composed too carefully to primarily constitute aid to Paine. The dictations are literary work, and to have been doing them primarily for Paine would be like writing chapters of a novel for the purpose of aiding the critics. Twain didn't help his own case to have his autobiography acknowledged as polished literature by making public comments such as, "I have given up all work, you know...my idleness consists in dictating two hours a day for five hours a week" (Twain *Life as I Find It* 390). He meant by these words that he enjoyed his compositional process and its conditions of creation, particularly because this project had thwarted him for decades. He did not mean his work was artless, and close inspection of the dictations reveals many instances where he planned for effect and labored to achieve his stated plan. He would interrupt the direction of dictations to discuss new interests, but this was craft in that he was simulating his mind's movement. There are instances where he changes direction in order to discuss an apparently unrelated subject only to conclude with a point in the latter subject that emphasizes his first. He told those readers who were attentive this was his method: "[N]arrative should flow as flows the brook ...a brook that never goes straight for a minute, but *goes*...sometimes fetching a horseshoe three-quarters of a mile around and at the end of the circuit flowing within a yard of the path it traversed an hour before." He also revised the dictation typescripts, further evidencing that his notebook and autobiography were not equally vessels of his random thoughts. Multiple copies of dictation typescripts exist with one bearing the author's written corrections and revisions and another bearing those corrections and revisions in type.

In his biography Paine offers insight into the means and method by which the author achieved apparently artless segues between subjects in his lectures and dictations both. On one morning in 1906, significantly after Hobby had concluded her short hand duties, the biographer listened to the author tell a story while shaving.

“A very curious thing has happened – a very large-sized – joke,” the author said. He had once been asked by a reporter for his definition of a gentleman, and although he gave none, the reporter “printed it just the same”. Twain forgot his anger because “the definition was a satisfactory one...Now to-day comes a letter and a telegram from a man who has made a will in Missouri, leaving ten thousand dollars to provide tablets for various libraries...on which shall be inscribed Mark Twain’s definition of a gentleman...and he wants me to tell him in which one of my books or speeches he can find it”.

At that moment, said Paine, another telegram arrived announcing the imminent death of Patrick McAleer, who had served Twain as coachman for thirty-six years, causing Twain to reminisce about his servant’s faithfulness. Within the week McAleer died and became one of the subjects in a speech given at the Young Men’s Christian Association immediately after. As Paine records Twain’s performance, the author “took some papers from his pocket and started to unfold one of them; then, as if remembering, he asked how long he had been talking. The answer came, ‘Thirty-five minutes.’ He made as if to leave the stage, but the audience commanded him to go on”. The paper he held was the telegram from the aforementioned Missouri man. Twain said he hadn’t answered the telegram because he hadn’t ever given any definition of a gentleman, and then he eulogized his dead servant, ending with the words that McAleer was his “idea of an ideal gentleman” (v.III, 1275-8).

Paine’s account of Twain’s platform performance illustrates the author’s thespic talent, his ability to mimic spontaneity while he knew exactly what his audience as well as he himself would do next. It as well displays his ability to weave actual experience into satisfying narratives with the appearance of artlessness. This leads to the dictation Twain made concerning his phantom definition and the YMCA speech. Twain had waited for Hobby to leave before he told Paine about the Missouri man’s telegram because he knew he could make it part of a subsequent dictation which would utilize his upcoming speech to the YMCA. In other words, his dictations were so unspontaneous that he would save subject matter until it could be developed for more artistic use. In the dictation of March 15th, Twain describes his speech and includes an excerpt from the next day’s newspaper report: “Mark Twain went on to speak of the man who left \$10,000 to disseminate his definition of a gentleman. He denied that he had ever

defined one, but said if he did he would include the mercifulness, fidelity, and justice the Scripture read at the meeting spoke of.” Then Twain spoke those words in application to McAleer (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 412).

It appears superfluous to point out the planning displayed by the author. He told an amusing story to Paine while shaving and used it in his speech and again in his dictation, with the artistic addition of weaving into it the death of McAleer and his encomium to that man. Further evidence of the author’s planning also occurs in his apparent misdating of the dictation. In Paine’s edition the supposed and inaccurate date on which the events are being recorded is March 5th (v.II, 200-3). And in his dictation Twain says his speech occurred “yesterday”, and the speech was on the fourth (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 411, 619). But the correct date of the dictation is March 15th. Why obscure this point? Twain ended his dictation of February 26th with mention of a trip to Washington. His next dictation, of March 5th, resumes with talk of the Washington trip. Twain wanted to continue the appearance that the *Autobiography* was dictated through associative flow, so he continued his story linked by “Washington”, even though he had given his YMCA speech between the two dictations. “Yesterday” was not a mistake, but Twain’s stratagem to give the appearance that he dictated in a combination of recollection and reflection upon contemporary events. In this case, he wished readers to think he was discussing something that happened the day before. Furthering this impression that the events of the March 15th dictation occurred the day before are the news clippings reporting the March 4th speech, as though Twain’s speech was prodded by his morning’s reading. Paine, often accused of omitting and changing information in his edition, in this case provides the correct information, albeit confusingly, that helps clarify Twain’s craftsmanship. At the beginning of the dictation is “[Monday, March 5, 1906” with “(Dictated March 15th)” one line beneath (v.II, 200). By this Paine wished to show his awareness that the subject matter concerned the earlier date while the speech occurred on the later one.

Attempting to amend a century of misunderstanding about the *Autobiography*’s craftsmanship is probably as quixotic as tilting at some persons’ assessment of professional acting as a matter of standing up straight and speaking clearly. As if the *Autobiography* were not a strange enough literary creation in

its disregard for chronology and reputation for loquaciousness, it also makes plentiful use of lengthy excerpts from diaries, newspapers and letters, adding to its misconception as a work dependent upon the ephemeral so the author has something to say.

The Use of Excerpts

Before the first Paine dictation begins, Twain inserted a “Note for the Instruction of Future Editors and Publishers of This Autobiography”. It reads, “I shall scatter through this Autobiography newspaper clippings without end. When I do not copy them into the text it means that I do not make them a part of the autobiography – at least not of the earlier editions.” His theory, he said, was they might become more interesting as time passed (*Twain Autobiography of Mark Twain* 250). For once he wasn’t exaggerating. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the Mark Twain Project simply found it impractical to follow Twain’s instruction to insert in the authoritative text the thirty-two page issue of *Harper’s Weekly* honoring his seventieth birthday. His various editors have tended to regard these insertions of excerpts as annoying intrusions, as yet another example of Twain’s eccentric notions, and they typically have ignored them, except for the Project and Paine to a lesser extent. Charles Neider noted in his edition that Twain originally intended to include “whole small books, such as *Is Shakespeare Dead?*” (ix) before electing to publish them separately. But the autobiography’s excerpts were not an innovation, but a continuation of a career-long practice for Twain. In *Life on the Mississippi*, for example, one half of the first three chapters are lifted from his work in progress, *Huckleberry Finn*. Fiction is inserted within a non-fiction work, where it serves both as an advertisement for the coming work and as an evocation of atmosphere which is truer to Twain’s nostalgia than the facts could be. Also, he found himself short by hundreds of pages of what the publisher expected, and the book’s second half relies extensively upon excerpts from the works of others for that reason.

In his autobiography, however, the reliance upon extensive excerpts is not for the purpose of padding because padding wasn’t needed. Twain’s flow of memories and emotions continued for thousands of

typescript pages before his flow and interest ebbed. In his autobiography the excerpts are pertinent to his plan because he used them to evoke his thought and emotion while dictating. Whether his morning's subject was memories reawakened by a letter from an acquaintance of years before or thoughts generated from an article in that day's newspaper, the inclusion of the source within the text was Twain's attempt to bring his reader as close as possible to his mind's process. Because subjectivity and process of association were his tone and method, he was attempting to create an unprecedented degree of identification between reader and subject in an autobiography. Twain intended that the reader understand how the author's thoughts, memories and emotions were evoked by reading the sources Twain read. It was a new use with a new purpose of a previously used device, and it recalls Twain's mention in 1899 that his autobiography was going to resemble the "cinematograph" in that he would be attempting a new way of portraying human personality. Excerpts commonly appeared in biography and autobiography even at the time of Twain's work. The life in letters had long been a staple of biography under the reasoning that biographical inquiry benefitted from the subject's own written words and thoughts through time. Numerous autobiographers have inserted all sorts of excerptory material in their life stories, as H.G. Wells published many pages of his own cartoons in his autobiography and Gibbon included blurbs extolling himself as a historian in his. However, Twain differs from such examples in that he made his conscious choice to employ excerpts as a result of his theory of autobiography. He considered the excerpts to be essential to his plan even though they have usually been considered as eccentric or annoying by critics who don't grasp their purpose. Gimmick and artistic idea both, they were a new autobiographical idea, and a logical one. The reader was brought as close to the creator's mind during the act of composition as had ever occurred.

This is not to say that Twain's use of excerpts occurred without influential examples he drew upon. He could not have been influenced by Boswell's *Journals* because those hadn't been published by the date of Twain's work, but he was influenced in several respects by Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. In words that might have been written about the *Autobiography*, Daniel J. Boorstin wrote, "The enduring success of Boswell's work is precisely in its artless surrender to chronology...By committing the flow of his

narrative to chronology, Boswell allows us to share the randomness of daily experiences...Boswell recaptures the manifold qualities, contradictions, evasions, passions, and prejudices of the living person” (*The Creators* 596-7). The parallel is apt even though Twain eschewed Boswell’s type of chronology. Boswell tells Johnson’s life moment by moment to create in the reader the feeling of living with Johnson, whereas Twain tells his thoughts moment by moment to create in the reader the illusion of understanding his thought process. Another parallel between both works is the use of spoken words, of which Boswell said the “quantity” of “Johnson’s conversation” was “the peculiar value” of his biography (ibid).

As for the use of excerpts as an influence upon Twain through their feature in Johnson’s biography, Boswell wrote,

I cannot conceive of a more perfect mode of writing any man’s life, than not only relating all the most important events of it in their order, but interweaving what he privately wrote, and said, and thought, by which mankind are enabled as it were to see him live, and to ‘live o’er each scene’ with him, as he actually advanced through the several stages of his life.” (Sisman 170-1)

To this end Boswell included excerpts from “working notes,” “discarded drafts,” “essays, biographies,” “decisions on literary disputes, legal opinions, an appeal for votes, poems, a novel, obituaries” and more, “accompanied by Johnson’s asides, comments, diatribes, expostulations...homilies, jokes, observations, sermons, tirades” and his responses to questions from Boswell (171).

Twain used this influence from a novel biography to make a sort of bricollage in his own unorthodox work with the intention of bridging the gulf that ever exists between readers and the autobiographer’s mind. It’s clear Twain conceived this procedure before the Paine dictations began because he uses it frequently in his preliminary pieces, as described in Chapter Three. It’s equally clear he understood the purpose of his procedure in a craftsman’s sense because he kept for future use items that might be helpful in future autobiographical work. For example, the author kept for decades two pages of notes he recorded while watching a baseball game before giving them to Isabel Lyon in 1905 with the words, “Someday we’ll talk about that Hartford game for the Autobiography” (Twain *The Bible According to Mark Twain*

349-50). Lyon had recorded his Florence dictations, and the author had no idea Paine would succeed her. He expected “someday” to dictate his current reflections with the exact words of the associative spur visible to the reader. This example never made it into a dictation, but substantial excerpts from Susy’s biography did, with consequent influence upon the work.

Susy’s biography has a large influence in the *Autobiography*. Not only did Twain use about ten percent of Susy’s work in his own, but the fact of Susy recording her father’s words likely suggested to him his future use of dictation (Powers 502). Because the author had substantial ego, using his daughter’s usually complimentary words adds not only anecdotes to his self portrait, but also further delineation of his vanity. It also served the author’s utilitarian purposes. Twain’s method in using excerpts from Susy’s biography is to paste in passages and then reminisce about their content, using his daughter’s different voice to prod his current reflections and to bring back associated memories. Once he discovered the uses of his daughter’s diary in February, 1906, he mined them extensively.

They could function as a prod to self-analysis. In one excerpt she notes her father “has the mind of an author exactly, some of the simplest things he can’t understand”. She gives the example that her father couldn’t understand why he shouldn’t test their home’s burglar alarm by opening a window. Her father muses that her characterization has always been true. “I have, to this day, the same dull head in the matter of conundrums and perplexities...I cannot get far in the reading of the commonest and simplest contract...before my temper is all gone.” He relates his daily confusion with a current lawsuit he’s conducting and then devolves into an anecdote from the time of Susy’s childhood about how he couldn’t envision whether his carriage seat would be closer to his house steps or further away until the moment his carriage deposited him there. And then he recollects the irritation of the burglar alarm that wouldn’t stay in working order and his advice to his wife on a night when a burglar actually visited them that should the burglar ascend to their floor that they should then leave through the bedroom window (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 342-4).

Susy’s biography could also unintentionally demonstrate her father’s controlling personality. In the dictation of February 26, 1906 Twain inserts a passage from his daughter’s biography describing her visit

to the dog show followed by a meeting with General Grant. These are the events alluded to in Twain's notebook entries as mentioned in Chapter One. Susy's passage ends with the words, "papa has written an account of his talk and visit with General Grant for me to put into this biography". Twain then inserts into his autobiography the description he wrote for Susy to insert into her biography of the writer (381). Not only is this an obvious example of meta-literature, an author writing a passage for his daughter's biography of the author with its subsequent use by the author in his own autobiography. It also emphasizes a facet of Twain's character. Not only had he been posing for his own biography, preparing his comments to be recorded in an attempt to influence it, but he took the even more direct action of writing a portion himself.

Susy's biography also furnishes to the *Autobiography* an extract to be discussed at length in the following section, "Factuality and Subjectivity". One sentence in which Susy notes the declining health of her younger brother Langdon, shortly to die, elicits a confession from her father that has a questionable rational basis. The issue of authorial subjectivity has been raised often in this study because its existence contributes heavily to the contention that the *Autobiography* is a modernist work. The following section examines the authorial motives for subjectivity and explores the degree to which the author himself knew or didn't know he was altering the facts.

Factuality and Subjectivity

In 1902 at a gathering including Twain and Helen Keller, Richard Watson Gilder stopped while describing his summer home and said, "I wonder what sort of pictures my words are projecting upon Helen's mind". Twain ventured that the "pictures" in the mind of the deaf and blind Helen "were far more beautiful than the reality". When he saw the Taj Mahal, he continued, "it looked like a rat hole in comparison with what I thought it was going to be". Another person "ventured the view that Helen's concept of things outside the reach of her hands must lack reality. Perhaps, drawled Mark Twain, 'but a well put together unreality is pretty hard to beat'." (Lash *Helen and Teacher* 306). By this point readers

should understand the significance Twain's comment bears upon the issue of his autobiography's factuality. If further commentary is desirable, consider the following. In the same month as his last dictation in 1909, the author was deposed in a lawsuit concerning the Tennessee Land of his first autobiographical document. Upon being asked if his written remarks about the land were true, he answered, "literarily they are true, that is to say they are a product of my impressions – recollections. As sworn testimony they are not worth anything; they are merely literature" (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 57).

William Dean Howells wrote following Twain's death that after some indefinite period of work on his autobiography the author said his work was a failure because he had begun to lie (Howells *My Mark Twain* 93). Critics have often seized upon this comment to discount the work's value inasmuch as Twain repeatedly said its honesty would be a paramount virtue. The meaning of Twain's statement is puzzling and also inaccurate because he began to lie in the conventional sense of knowingly misstating facts quite early in the process.

Paine printed in his edition, as if it were a preface, an authorial explanation of uncertain date which qualifies some words in the Project's prefaces and casts light upon the author's evolving realization of truthfulness. The Project doesn't print the explanation because it wasn't among typescripts two or four, indicating in its reasoning that Twain didn't want it in the *Autobiography*. In Paine's edition on page ii, preceding his own introduction and bearing no title is a facsimile in the author's handwriting: "I am writing from the grave. On these terms only can a man be approximately frank. He cannot be straitly and unqualifiedly frank either in the grave or out of it."

Obviously Paine thought this message helpful to readers beyond Twain's actual "Preface" and his own introduction, and he thought it appropriate enough that it merited appearance following only the title page. The interesting feature is the explanation's qualification, which is a deviation from the author's previous written and spoken words. Twain had elsewhere made grand claims for his work's frankness. Here he modifies it to "approximately frank" and asserts it's impossible to be "unqualifiedly frank". As usual, the exact meaning is ambiguous. Did he here acknowledge that at some point in the

Autobiography's composition he could not fulfill all previous promises, which would make sense of his statement to Howells? Inasmuch as he said every autobiography was an "absolute lie," did he mean there were incidents and subjects he discovered he couldn't discuss even within his idiosyncratic parameters of truth? Or was it another instruction to readers about the absolute truth and the absolute lie of all autobiographies? Paine's choice to begin his edition is certainly thematically and poetically appropriate in its message and its placement and would have saved critics copious ink had they focused upon it. Perhaps some guidance can be obtained through reference to Huckleberry Finn's famous words, "You can't pray a lie." These five words are senseless if considered objectively because one moment's thought will demonstrate that tens of millions of lies are prayed every day. Of course Twain often expressed his sentiments through Huck's language, and Twain is stating in these five words that a supplicant can only pray what that person believes to be truthful. What is prayed may look false to the person next door to the supplicant, or to all the persons on the planet for that matter, but to the supplicant it's true. This is another phrasing of Twain's statement quoted in the Introduction that, "a man's private thought can never be a lie; what he thinks, is to him the truth, always" (Paine, ed. *Mark Twain's Letters* v.II, 498). This means that as of the writing of those words in 1888 Twain had analyzed the quality of subjectivity to an extent that it became a paradoxical element of his autobiography's honesty to state, as he did, that he possibly imagined some of the things he said.

But this hasn't satisfied the *Autobiography's* critics. Twain's veracity in his autobiography has been so frequently questioned and found deficient that the issue has become virtually as commonplace as the observation that most of his fiction has autobiographical origins. Yet writing about the self, be it memoirs, autobiographies, diaries or any writing in which the author is observer or participant invites self-serving memories or outright fabrication in the degree to which the Internet invites borrowing by the modern student. The reward appears larger than the risk, at least at the moment of action, and motives for altering fact can be so obscure and varied that they may be impenetrable. As an adolescent Lincoln Kirstein kept a diary in which he confessed to entering fabricated stories, as if his diary demanded of him he be honest about his instances of dishonesty. "I have often made up stories to put in", he wrote, "which

might have easily happened, but didn't" (Duberman 632). This would appear to be an innocent practice aside from the fact that scholars presumably approach diaries as implicitly trustworthy, at least as far as assuming that diaries contain the writer's honestly expressed viewpoint. A diary is assumed to encourage candor, but in Kirstein's case it encouraged candor about lack of factuality. Sophisticated scholars are aware that documents such as diaries, if the writers expect readership at some point, resemble other allegedly private modes of communication: They are good vehicles for deception, much like Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger are captured on tape assuring each other the United States had nothing to do with the overthrow of Chile's President Allende: "As [Nixon] said on the phone to Kissinger on September 16, 'Well, we didn't – as you know – our hand doesn't show on this one though.' To which Kissinger replied, 'We didn't do it'" (Falcoff "Kissinger and Chile").

But Kirstein's example has bearing upon Twain's autobiographical practice because it's about fiction "which might easily have happened, but didn't". Kirstein felt the attraction of the creative instinct which all fiction writers possess, the compulsion to improve upon fact by molding it into art. That Twain possessed and used this artistic improving compulsion is so evident it doesn't need stating, but an apt example exists in a document he entitled "Villagers of 1840-3". The document's original purpose hasn't been conclusively determined, but it appears he compiled a directory of persons he had known or heard of in Hannibal in his boyhood with a possible aim of using it for fiction because some real persons are given false names, and the document concludes with a fragment of a story. One of the villagers is Mary Moss, who wanted to marry one man, but was forced by her parents to marry a lawyer. The lawyer educated her to his assumed standards while keeping her isolated until he thought she would show well in society. Mary "begged to be left alone. He compelled her – that is, commanded. She obeyed. Her first exit [to meet society] was her last. The sleigh was overturned, her thigh was broken; it was badly set. She got well with a terrible limp, and forever after stayed in the house and produced children. Saw no company, not even the mates of her girlhood" (Twain *Hannibal, Huck & Tom* 29). The book's editor, Walter Blair, wrote in the volume's notes that in a 1906 autobiographical dictation Twain omitted "any mention of the sleigh ride" (360). Surmise might suggest he omitted the sleigh ride because it didn't happen, and it

didn't suit his autobiographical purposes to fabricate in this particular instance. The author's artistic temperament probably invented Mary's fate in his earlier document because it fitted his conception of a deterministic universe that she be thwarted of happiness and live a stunted life. His compulsion to improve upon fact was this strong even when writing a private document filled with instances of fact. The dictation itself, ironically stating the ambiguity of establishing certainty in what humans say, reads, "Everybody said she accepted him to please her parents...everybody again, testifying, said he continued her schooling all by himself, proposing to educate her up to standard and make her a meet companion for him. These things may be true. They may not be true" (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* v.I, 400).

As for the degree to which sophisticated readers believe autobiography is nothing but the facts, Daniel J. Boorstin in his book about the arts, *The Creators*, titled one chapter "The Arts of Seeming Truthful: Autobiography" (577). If Boorstin speaks for masses of readers, then his chapter title would seem indicative of two points. First, as Vivian Gornick was quoted in Chapter One, "Truth in a memoir is achieved...when the writer is working hard to engage with the experience at hand". Limited factual inaccuracy is acceptable if the writer is displaying some type of sincerity. Second, Twain's work exceeds in degree or type the acceptable factual inaccuracy in autobiography, and the evidence for the second point is the abundant commentary about his excess.

Could readers have been less sophisticated seventy years ago, at the time of Webster's book defending his father, and thus more agitated by Twain's excess than readers might be today? In 2012 the *New York Times* published a negative review of a non-fiction book for the reason that it contained much that was non-factual. The book, *The Lifespan of a Fact*, by John D'Agata and Jim Fingal, is a lengthy essay by D'Agata with Fingal's record of his fact-checking correspondence with the author. D'Agata's license pertains to minor items like changing a van's color from pink to purple because he wanted a color with two syllables. And he changed a bar's name from "Boston Saloon" to "Bucket of Blood" because the latter is "more interesting". And he changed a business name from "Tweety Nails" to "Famous Nails". However, the reviewer focuses on the issue that the book is about a young man's death by suicide, and when D'Agata changes another suicide by falling in the same city on the same day into a suicide by

hanging so as to not detract from his main subject, the reviewer prints Fingal's admonishment: "You are writing what will probably become the de facto story...Don't you think that the gravity of the situation demands an accuracy that you're dismissing as incidental?" (McDonald "In the Details"). It would appear that today's readers still expect literary designations that accurately describe the work's content.

Evidence exists that Twain treated factual matters expediently in his non-fiction literature at least as early as his composition of his second book, *The Innocents Abroad*. When he realized the letters he had written for a newspaper during the trip "would comprise only about half the length he had promised for the subscription book," he solicited diary material from fellow passengers in hopes of stretching his material and memories to the necessary length. In one solicitation he was candid about his willingness to be untruthful: "If you can't recollect accurately, *invent – invent*...I think that book of mine will be full of inventions anyhow" (Kaplan, F. 222). The motive for untruthfulness in this instance differs from that in his autobiography, where untruthfulness was an artistic principle as well as a depiction of himself, but it serves as warning to the reader that factuality habitually occupied a less than paramount status with him. His motive may not have been as cynical as that displayed by reporters for a Hearst newspaper who invented a story about destitute street children and found the story so popular they subsequently had to produce the children (Swanberg 82-3), but Twain's words illustrate an attitude which should caution readers to be sceptical.

A case could be easily made that readers should assume the *Autobiography* is replete with exaggerations, distortions and fabrications, yet it is not a work of fiction, nor should its merit rest solely upon Paine's estimation of it in his biography. He wrote, "It is amazingly truthful in the character-picture it represents of the man himself," (v.III, 1269) which reveals Paine's astute recognition of the author's use of subjectivity. As a biographer himself, supposedly dedicated to factuality, Paine probably felt compelled to explain the factual fallibility of this work in which he had played a substantial role, and he wrote pages addressing this feature. He said Twain would tell the worst about himself, "to the last syllable" and more, "for his imagination would magnify it and adorn it with new iniquities" each time he spoke of the subject "until the thread of history was almost impossible to trace through the marvel of that

fabric”. Also, “he would do the same for another person just as willingly”. Paine’s explanation was that Twain’s “gift of dramatization had been exercised too long to be discarded now,” a true but incomplete assessment of the author’s types of and motives for unfactuality. The biographer could make distinctions between strict fact and the essence of a character or situation much as Twain could, as when Paine wrote, “The things he told of Mrs. Clemens and of Susy were – marvelously and beautifully true, in spirit and in aspect – and the actual detail of these mattered little in such a record”. But his final judgment beyond these points was, “The rest was history only as *Roughing It* is history, or the *Tramp Abroad*; that is to say, it was fictional history, with fact as a starting point” (ibid).

Paine’s assessment is useful, but understanding and appreciating Twain’s full use of inaccuracy in his autobiography, its types and motives, needs a rough taxonomy and is here attempted. First, the author’s faulty memory resulted in numerous inaccuracies that any person recalling persons and events of decades before might make. Twain probably fooled his biographer into believing that one of his inaccuracies regarding his father’s death fell into this innocent category. Paine’s 1935 edition of his biography begins with five pages of “Author’s Notes”. Since he primarily answers criticisms from Bernard DeVoto in these pages, his tone is defensive, which accounts for why Paine starts by stating of his first edition,

I believed its history in all cases to be authentic. Later developments have made certain corrections necessary. Mark Twain died convinced that his father had been elected to the clerkship of what he remembered as the Surrogate Court of his county and that unhappily he had not lived to be installed...But a dozen or so years [after his first edition] some old news files turned up and showed clearly, among other things, that John Marshall Clemens had not been elected to the office he sought, but had in fact died before Election Day.” (xxxix)

Twain might have convinced his biographer of his sincere belief in this inaccuracy, but it appears probable that he perpetuated an untruth knowingly in this case, leaving his biographer with the task of retraction, for reasons to be explained in the third category of the taxonomy below.

In the second category of inaccuracy, a mind which wished strongly to justify its owner's point of view might unconsciously distort events. When Twain contracted to write *The Innocents Abroad*, he ignored the fact that the newspaper for which he wrote letters containing the bulk of his memories and impressions owned copyright to the letters, even though his book publisher apparently brought the topic to his attention. The newspaper asserted its right of ownership, prompting Twain to respond in a private letter that his previous employers were "thieves" and had cost him thousands of dollars by not allowing other newspapers to reprint his letters, which would publicize his lecture tour (Kaplan, F. 223-4). In his autobiography he remembered the proceedings thusly: "I speak of the proprietors of the *Daily Alta Californian* having 'waived their rights' in certain letters which I wrote for that journal... There were rights, it is true – such rights as the strong are able to acquire over the weak and the absent... the thrifty owners of that prodigiously rich Alta newspaper had *copyrighted* all those poor little twenty-dollar letters" (Twain *Mark Twain's Autobiography* v.I, 242-3). Twain alludes here to the fact that he was overseas while his letters appeared, but he would have seen the printed letters upon his return and noticed they had been copyrighted. Therefore he made a contract for a book while planning to use material that he knew belonged to the newspaper.

He obtained the newspaper's waiver for the use of the letters, but in his autobiography he says the newspaper asked him to thank them in the book's preface and he refused this point. "I could not with any large degree of sincerity thank the *Alta* for bankrupting my lecture raid." (244-5) Did Twain believe the newspaper treated him unfairly by copyrighting his letters? Did he resent the copyrighting because denying other papers the privilege of reprinting lessened publicity for his lecture tour? As in so many instances, he probably knew after the fact it had been his own mistake in not negotiating for rights beyond the newspaper's first payments for each letter. The *Alta* gave him permission to use the letters without payment in the *Innocents Abroad*, so it was probably a case of the author blaming himself for not foreseeing the means to make additional profits later and displacing his anger upon the entity involved. Decades passed, each with their poor investment decisions by the author, and he eventually became obsessed by every dollar he calculated he could have had if his employers and business associates of long

ago had granted him every arrangement that he imagined in old age would have yielded more profits. If a person wishes strongly enough for something to be true, eventually his mind may make it appear so, and the person may genuinely believe it happened thus.

This second type of and motive for inaccuracy is typically entwined in the *Autobiography* with dictations displaying desire for revenge. Twain hated hundreds of people and entities in his lifetime and wished to take revenge by immortalizing their dishonesties, vanities, insults and annoyances in his autobiography. He intended that his portraits of these targets last longer than their gravestones would. With this powerful motive as one of his key motifs, Twain may often have convinced himself that his exaggerations and distortions were true, which would make these instances examples of the second type of falsity, as distinct from knowingly blackguarding a target.

A tricky point involving subjectivity emerges here which perhaps the author himself could not answer. As said in Chapter One, apparently Twain could will himself, like Method actors, to recall emotions such as guilt, resentment or anger about situations whose facts didn't warrant such emotions. In his dictation of March 22nd, 1906, after reading from Susy's biography her words regarding her sickly brother, Twain makes the startling assertion that he caused his infant son's death. In his words,

I was the cause of the child's illness. His mother trusted him to my care and I took him a long drive in an open barouche...It was a raw, cold morning, but he was well wrapped about with furs, and in the hands of a careful person, no harm would have come to him. But I soon dropped into a reverie and forgot all about my charge. The furs fell away and exposed his bare legs...The child was almost frozen. I hurried home with him...I have always felt shame for that treacherous morning's work...I think it most likely that I have never confessed until now." (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* v.I, 433)

This dictation powerfully displays why Twain believed his would be the most honest of all autobiographies in terms of its subjectivity. He was expressing his deep sense of guilt felt regarding his son's demise, even if evidence suggests his guilt was baseless. His son died in early June of 1872 of

diphtheria, a contagious disease, which could hardly be caused by exposure to the elements. Also, in a letter of 17th May he writes, “The babies are both of them quite well. Susie is a healthy little thing and Langdon is as well as his teeth will let him be”. Two days before he had written Langdon had “a heavy cough & the suffering & irritation consequent upon developing six teeth in nine days...but he is pretty jolly about half the time” (Twain *Mark Twain’s Letters* v. 5, 92, 86). By the 29th Langdon was very ill (97), and he died June 2nd. This sequence of facts indicates the son grew ill in the second half of May while the incident in the carriage occurred in cold weather. But on April 20th Twain wrote, “Our tribe are flourishing” (77), indicating Langdon’s health caused no alarm at this date. On the 22nd, Langdon was “brisk and strong” (79). When did the carriage ride in cold weather occur? Did it in fact occur? It’s difficult to believe Twain would use his son’s death as an occasion for histrionics in his autobiography, and therefore his guilt appears genuine. Did he really believe at the time of his dictation he had caused his son’s death, or was he consciously recalling and evoking feelings he experienced at the time of his son’s sickness? He was a quite careless person, as anyone who studies his business decisions or late life relations with his daughters can discern. He may have been recalling in 1906 an actual carriage ride somewhat earlier in 1872 in which his son became chilled without lasting effects and conflating his minor guilt for that incident with his grief at the time of his son’s death.

Or was his dictation about his feelings toward himself for a lifetime’s worth of missteps due to this personal flaw of carelessness, perhaps generated by the words of his daughter who had died while he was absent as a result that carelessness? Was he confessing to Susy’s death for which he did feel responsible? If this is the case, he couldn’t name his daughter in the dictation because he felt he’d abetted the circumstances surrounding her death, and this he couldn’t say despite his need to confess. Because he was composing the most honest of all autobiographies, he couldn’t stay silent regarding Susy, but he couldn’t directly confess his feelings either because he felt his offense to be too large for speech. Therefore he confessed to a mistake less painful, forgetting momentarily the welfare of his infant son, which was less painful because he knew he really hadn’t caused his death. If this sounds implausibly

convoluted, remember this is the author who said every autobiography contained the absolute lie and the absolute truth.

The third type of untruthfulness is poetic aptness. This is the creative lie of the artist, similar to Kierstein's diary stories that could have been or Twain's stated fate of Mary Moss in "Villagers", which exists so far as is known only in the document he wrote. These cases involve rearranging strict facts so as to achieve the poetic justice existing in fiction, for example the poetic justice displayed in Maupassant's "The Necklace". The differences in his dictations regarding how he came to be aware that Ulysses S. Grant had decided to write his memoirs, as discussed in Chapter Three, occur out of poetic aptness. Paine noticed this distinction in Twain's accounts when he wrote, "curiously enough, there were occasional chapters that were photographically exact...such chapters were likely to be episodes intrinsically so perfect as to not require the touch of art" (v.III, 1270). The retraction Paine made in his 1935 edition regarding John Marshall Clemens' election which did not occur is an example of the third type. Misremembering the sequence of his father's death and his judicial election was Twain's poetic aptness. His words in the dictation of March 28th, 1906, explain this clearly.

When my father died, in 1847, the disaster happened - as is the customary way with such things - just at the very moment when our fortunes had changed and we were about to be comfortable once more, after several years of grinding poverty and privation which had been inflicted upon us by the dishonest act of one Ira Stout, to whom my father had lent several thousand dollars...My father had just been elected County Judge. This modest prosperity was not only quite sufficient for us and for our ambitions, but he was so esteemed - held in such high regard and honor throughout the county - that his occupancy of that dignified office would, in the opinion of everybody, be in his possession as long as he might live. He went to Palmyra, the county-seat, to be sworn in...In returning home...a storm of sleet and rain assailed him...Pleurisy followed and he died...Thus our splendid new fortune was snatched from us and we were in the depths of poverty again. It is the way such things are accustomed to happen." (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* v.I, 454)

In “The Tennessee Land”, which the Project identifies as the earliest preliminary manuscript, from 1870, the Ira Stout mentioned above is said to have received a loan from the author’s father and “deliberately took the benefit of the new bankrupt law...a deed which ruined my father, sent him poor to the grave, and condemned his heirs to a long and discouraging struggle” (63). The Project notes about this passage that the elder Clemens bought “property from Stout, at an inflated value, which he had to sell at a loss in 1843 to pay his creditors”, but “The transaction by which John Clemens became responsible for Stout’s debts has not been identified” (470). In other words, it’s not certain that the loan occurred, but Twain’s animus is understandable because the verified business deal his father made is the type of poor financial decision that Twain himself often made and which he always blamed upon the other party.

“The Tennessee Land” also contains a different chronology of the elder’s Clemens’ death. In 1870 Twain wrote that his father “was candidate for county judge, with a certainty of election, when the summons came which no man may disregard” (62). Twain knew the facts in 1870, but improved them for his 1906 dictation. He improved them to become thematically congruous with his words immediately following his account of his father’s death:

When I became a bankrupt through the ignorance and maladministration of Charles L. Webster, after having been robbed of a hundred and seventy thousand dollars by James W. Paige...we went to Europe in order to be able to live on what was left of our income...often as low as twelve thousand a year...it improved considerably [by the time of their return to the United States in 1900], but it was too late to be of much service to Mrs. Clemens...She was stricken down, and after twenty-two months of suffering she died” (455).

In the dictation of March 28th, 1906, Twain misstates the facts of his father’s death to create a parallel with his own misfortunes. His father died on the verge of financial security just as his wife died on the verge of his same, and father and son both were reduced financially through the dishonesty of others. Twain perceives it thusly.

The fourth type of untruth stemmed from a personality which delighted in telling comically palpable fibs, untruths intended to be discerned. Obviously related to the tradition of tall tales so plentiful in his American region, Twain enjoyed this type of fakery all his life. In an 1870 issue of the *Galaxy* magazine, Twain wrote a fictitious English review of his own *Innocents Abroad* which the reviewer praises for informativeness about the United States. The reviewer mentions “the moving of small farms from place to place at night in wheelbarrows to avoid taxes” and “cows and mules...that climb down chimneys and disturb the people at night. These matters are not only new, but are well worth knowing”. Twain adds, “Yes, I calculated they were pretty new. I invented them myself” (Fishkin, ed., *The Mark Twain Anthology* 22-3).

For one example, this type of untruth occurs in his autobiography in the dictation about his failed Boston speech of 1878. After a telling which appears subjectively true if factually inaccurate in part, the author emphasizes his allegedly public disgrace in words even he could not possibly believe factual. “All gaieties ceased, all festivities; even the funerals were without animation. There has never been so awful a time in Boston. Even the Masseur did not produce a like effect” (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* v.I, 267).

If Howells is accurate, the facts of that same failed Boston speech may not have been so much to the discredit of Twain as the author alternately believed and defended himself against. After Twain wrote to the honored literary men apologizing for his poor taste,

They all wrote back to him, making it as light for him as they could. I have heard that Emerson was a good deal mystified, and in his sublime forgetfulness asked, Who was this gentleman who appeared to think he had offered him some sort of annoyance? But I am not sure that this is accurate. What I am sure of is that Longfellow, a few days after, in my study, stopped before a photograph of Clemens and said, ‘Ah, he is a *wag!*’ and nothing more.” (*My Mark Twain* 61)

Holmes told Howells he replied to Twain “there had not been the least offense” (62). Probably these contrasting accounts, the reactions stated above and Twain’s memories, can stand as a metaphor for the

distance throughout the entire *Autobiography* between how the author reminisced and how the facts existed. Some particle of fact at a minimum lay under each dictation, but subjectivity consistently took precedence.

Twain inserted many warnings in his autobiography that readers take care in accepting everything he said as completely factual. In the dictation of January 13th, 1906, Twain relates a dream he had in 1858 in which he saw his younger brother Henry dead in a coffin, followed soon after by Henry's actual death as a result of injuries suffered in a steamboat accident. In the following dictation of the 15th the author describes how an acquaintance responded to Twain's earlier relation of this apparently prophetic dream. The acquaintance asked the author how often his dream had been told and then said he had his own oft-related dream which he noticed grew longer with time. The acquaintance therefore examined his dream and discovered "its proportions were now...one part fact, straight fact, fact pure and undiluted, golden fact, and twenty-four parts embroidered". Twain in response said his dream lacked embroidering. "I think it is all just as I have stated it, detail by detail." The acquaintance responded, "I wouldn't tell it any more; because if you keep on, it will begin to collect embroidery sure" (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* v.I, 275-7). In passages like this Twain is stating that even when he says he speaks factually his readers should remember his warnings to be sceptical, particularly in that human memory improves its details with retellings in order to emphasize and justify points the teller desires to make. This dictation is, of course, a paradoxical example of the *Autobiography's* peculiar definition of honesty.

Examples of deviation from the factual truth are omnipresent. In *Mark Twain's America*, DeVoto wrote, "It seems likely that the memory of Samuel Clemens, in his old age, included something that was the creation of Mark Twain – as the works of Mark Twain, the artist, demonstrably supplied old friends with biographical data about Samuel Clemens" (78). Twain told Paine that as a boy he had sold the same coonskin repeatedly to a store clerk by reaching through a window after each sale and stealing the coonskin and returning into the store. DeVoto said, "the story was old in American folklore when Sam Clemens was born" and attributed in print to Davey Crockett (79). DeVoto also wrote that Twain's story of his comical duel, in which a gun was loaded with paper wad, not bullets, exists in a number of variants

and “is as widespread as any I have found in American humor” (159-60). And DeVoto wrote this: “A sentence in a letter to [a friend] of 1870 records ‘our dismal sojourn in the mud and ruin of Angels’ Camp’, but in the “Autobiography”, the record of the visit in the works, and the anecdotes which Mr. Paine sets down are wholly idyllic” (171-2). This is an example of the importance of nostalgia to memory. What at the time had been “dismal” became in old age a time of youthful happiness.

Twain said in *Roughing It* he left Nevada in order to promote a silver mine. But in his autobiography he said his leave-taking came as a result of a comic duel and a law against dueling. Justin Kaplan notes there’s no evidence for either the silver mine or the law Twain said he fled. Also, in the *Autobiography* Twain said his dueling opponent backed down because he mistakenly assumed that when he heard a pistol shot and saw a falling bird that the author fired the shot. But Kaplan said these details came from a “popular comic story” (Kaplan, *J. Mark Twain and His World* 58).

In his February 1st, 1906 dictation the author described his old and close friend, the minister Joseph Twichell, as having been intimidated by the opinion of his parishioners into voting for a presidential nominee against his conscience in those times of non-secret balloting. He had followed his conscience once and faced a motion for his removal in consequence. “Twichell has never made any political mistakes since,” Twain said (*Twain Autobiography of Mark Twain* 315-20). But this “did not happen,” according to Edward Wagenknecht. “Twichell opposed Blaine and voted the Prohibition ticket,” said Wagenknecht in reference to the election in question. “There is nothing to indicate his congregation objected” (227). This indicates Twain invented the anecdote merely to illustrate his conviction that laws are more easily broken than customs, and he made Twichell the leading character for verisimilitude’s sake, apparently giving no thought to how this might affect Twichell’s historical reputation. As noted, Twain could report an incident that actually happened to one person as having happened instead to a person of Twain’s choice. If Twain had heard the incident happened to a different minister, it still doesn’t compliment Twain that he chose to portray his close friend as the man who voted against his conscience to maintain his position. Also, Wagenknecht’s finding naturally creates suspicion about numerous other

autobiographical anecdotes, such as Twain's story about how Twichell unknowingly dyed his hair green and preached to his congregation coiffed thus, a story which already sounds suspiciously like an old joke.

However, it may be that Twain's decision to name Twichell as the pliable minister is related to a political, or perhaps patriotic, disagreement the two men had years before. Throughout 1901, shortly after Twain published "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" and "A Greeting from the Nineteenth Century to the Twentieth", both castigating imperialism and its attendant hypocrisy, Twichell was Twain's "constant and unremitting critic" (Hill 24). The minister wrote, "your milk is also pretty sour it seems to me, old fellow. Really you are getting quite orthodox, on the doctrine of Total Human Depravity, anyway." Twain responded, "if you teach your people – as you teach me – to hide their opinions when they believe the flag is being abused and dishonored, lest the utterance do them and a publisher a damage, how do you answer for it to your conscience?" (25). In this light, Twain might have been altering the facts in his autobiography to express his feeling that Twichell sold his conscience in the earlier instance just described. Also, by altering the facts, he is conveniently voicing his opinion about the power of public opinion. A point may also be raised that Twain couldn't accept that Twichell's belief was honestly held if it contravened Twain's. The fervor of invective regarding persons in so many instances throughout his life indicates he had difficulty understanding others might hold honorable reasons for differing with him. Not until Twain wrote *Is Shakespeare Dead* in 1909 did he learn to mockingly express the idea that people of sharply divergent opinions often descend to violent name-calling when it's each's ideas they loathe.

The example above of how Twain used Twichell inaccurately to make his own points speaks poorly of the author's judgment and sense of fairness because it appears he knowingly and falsely made his friend look bad. However, Twain could in other cases nurse an irritation so long that he would become confused about the facts and remember accurately only his anger. This is the case with his dictation of July, 1906, in which he recalls a review of his first novel, *The Gilded Age*. Twain said the review in the *New York Daily Graphic* "did not deal mainly with the merit of the book or the lack of it but with my moral attitude toward the public. It was charged that I had used my reputation to play a swindle upon the public – that

[Charles Dudley] Warner had written as much as half of the book and that I had used my name to float it and give it currency". Worse, the *Graphic's* opinion had been copied by all other American critics (Neider *Mark Twain* 39-40).

Charles Neider found the actual review, which doesn't bear out Twain's charges. It is a negative review, calling the novel "a failure" and "an incoherent series of sketches," and the review attributed this to the report that Warner and Twain had composed the book by writing alternate chapters "without any previous consultation. They then met and pieced those chapters together". The novel they produced thus was "frequently clever and amusing," but in sum "a rather dreary failure" (40-1). Twain's dictation had all to do with his rage at a negative review, not the reason he mentions because that charge exists nowhere except apparently in Twain's mind.

The book Samuel Charles Webster edited to exonerate his father from Twain's autobiographical allegations is useful in this study because Webster adroitly opposes passages from the dictations with letters by the author that undercut the latter's case. For example in the dictation of May 29th, 1906, Twain explains how the failure of his publishing firm began with his success with General Grant. First Charles Webster rented luxurious and unneeded offices. Then he negotiated a new contract with Twain: "I probably never read it nor asked anybody else to read it...Under the preceding contracts Webster had been my paid servant; under the new one I was his slave, his absolute slave, and without salary...I furnished all the capital...but Webster was sole master...I could not even make a suggestion" (Twain *Mark Twain in Eruption* 179-81).

This contract allegedly prevented the author from obstructing Webster's decisions that eventually ruined the company. If his allegations were true, Twain could be asked how he ceded such power to someone he treated as an errand boy as recently as 1885. In a letter of that year he asks Webster to locate a company that sold Mrs. Clemens a water heater and expedite its delivery. The store operated "in Broadway...between Aitkin's & Arnold & Constable's...hunt up that place right away & have them start that water-heater along immediately. She don't know the name or address" (Twain *Mark Twain, Business*

Man 327). In other words, if Twain believed his partner had time and acumen to locate his wife's household appliances, why would he sign a contract from such a man without close inspection?

At another point in the dictations Twain says Webster impeded the publishing of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* for unspecified reasons and "finally published it so surreptitiously that it took two or three years to find out there was any such book". But as Webster notes, his father had left the firm a year before the novel was completed (356). This mistake on Twain's part can probably be explained by saying he had convinced himself of Webster's culpability in general and became genuinely confused about the sequence of events.

In another complaint Twain says "I found that Webster had agreed to resurrect Henry Ward Beecher's LIFE OF CHRIST. I suggested that he ought to have tried for Lazarus because that had been tested once and we knew it could be done...He also advanced to Mr. Beecher...five thousand dollars". Webster answers that the said book was actually a new venture, that it was to be Beecher's autobiography, not a biography of Christ and Twain had approved the advance (375).

Webster's book is a convincing assembly of rebuttals similar to the examples above, but it should be borne in mind he's defending his father against printed words intended to define his father negatively for the ages. Some scholars have found partial truth in Twain's allegations against Charles Webster, and there is also partial evidence that before Webster became the author's partner he was involved in a fraudulent stock scheme involving some of Twain's relatives. It's possible that the vitriol of Twain's dictations reflect his resurrected questions about Webster's character that dated to a period before the two were partners.

To read Twain's autobiography first and then study its divergences from expected factuality is to gain a sense of puzzlement. It may not be the strangest autobiography ever printed, but it is so different from the norm in multiple ways that one has the sense of entering new literary territory, and this perhaps is the reason why so many critics have refused wrongly to call it an autobiography at all.

To Douglas Grant, who wrote a concise biography of its author, the *Autobiography* was in its nature resistant to criticism. It is not a work but a collection. He followed no particular order in his dictation...though the passages can be arranged to follow in general a chronology [Grant wrote after Neider's edition]. And the confusion of time is matched by that of subject: anecdotes, speculations, recollections, diatribes and characters are inextricably knitted together...evolving out of association. It is most fairly described as a 'document'". (Grant *Twain* 108)

Although Grant described accurately most characteristics he mentioned, he missed what the sum of his words described. Even though he wrote in 1962, he didn't understand he was describing a literary work that, had it been fiction, he would have called modernist. Because it was autobiography and not fiction, he termed it to be a "document" and a "collection" and said it was "resistant to criticism" in the same sense a mammoth legal document or a series of weather forecasts would be resistant to literary criticism. Yet examine his words: "confusion of time" and "subject" and "evolving out of association". Grant even writes that the work's "rapid changes of mood and subject...give an extraordinary impression...of the man" (109), per Twain's intention, yet he doesn't understand he is describing the subjectivity and process of association that literary modernism often employs.

In a book subtitled *Varieties of Culture in Modern Times*, Norman F. Cantor listed fourteen characteristics of modernism in general. Modernism, he wrote, "did not believe that truth lay in telling an evolutionary story," and "This negation of temporality was precisely opposed to the Victorian proclivity to place everything in sequential time." It possessed a "preoccupation with what is called self-referentiality or textuality, meaning that anything that is examined constitutes a self-enclosed world," and had "a penchant for the fragmented" and "foregrounded...the unfinished". It showed a "lack of predetermined pattern. Modernism favored random access...A sequence may be ultimately established, but this must be done empirically from within the object itself." It rejected "absolute polarities.

Victorians assumed the polarity of male and female, the higher and the lower...time and space...Modernism questioned this notion by claiming that these polarities were integrated with one another” (*The American Century* 44-7)

Of the fourteen characteristics Cantor lists, the *Autobiography* strongly resembles the five cited above, and may share two more, a “recognition that culture had changed as a result of...the revolution in transportation and communication systems” and a tendency “toward pessimism and despair” (48, 50). Even though literary criticism lacks a scale as quantifiable as that psychology uses for identifying sociopaths, in which a series of questions is scored between zero and two points, the correlation between Twain’s work and modernism is more than incidental. Five of fourteen characteristics exceeds one third, and one third of any object or quantity, be it a single pie or pints of blood in the human body, is significant. It may be coincidental that the *Autobiography* was composed and published in “the great era of the modernist novel,” which Cantor terms “from about 1905 to 1930,” (56) even though the modernist novel began as a response to ideas and pressures of the same time period that produced the *Autobiography*. But it’s likely not coincidental that Twain’s work resembles “the fundamental characteristic of the modernist novel” as “stated by Marcel Proust in 1918. He said that the purpose of the novel was the discovery of what he called ‘a different self.’ The aim is not to tell a story” (53). In Cantor’s view, “The modernist novel communicates not a programmed narrative, but the confusion, hesitations, and partial perception of fragmented individual experience...If, after reading five pages, we...have a close perception of someone’s consciousness...we are in a modernist novel” (54). As for the functioning and portrayal of memory in modernist novels, “chronological time sequence is normally interrupted and distorted,” and it “abandons” “comprehensiveness and sequentiality. The focus of the modernist novel is on the memory of a compelling short-term experience (second, minute, day) and reflection on the implications of that experience” (55). If we substitute the word autobiography for the word novel in the quotations above, Twain’s work closely resembles every comment, as should be readily apparent given the extended study of examples given herein.

A point to be emphasized is that the elements the *Autobiography* shares with modernist works are the elements found confusing or annoying by critics. Norman F. Cantor found another characteristic of modernism to be “complexity and difficulty,” (47) and it appears that critics are confused or annoyed because the work is complex and difficult. The critics don’t recognize a work of literary modernism in the genre of autobiography because they don’t expect an autobiography to have the form and process of literary modernism. In other words, the *Autobiography* disappoints the same expectations that its author often does. Neither the work nor the author conforms to what’s expected because its author has a widespread, cast bronze image which inspection of his oeuvre only partially supports, and the work is founded upon the assumption that it will not supply the most casually expected aspect of a life story.

To illustrate a point of resemblance between the *Autobiography* and a classic of literary modernism on the assertion that both are complex and difficult in a significant rather than trivial fashion, let us return to Twain’s final dictation of April 16, 1909. The statement was made in the discussion of the *Autobiography*’s introspection that the final dictation shares with Joyce’s *Ulysses* the characteristic that both need annotation because in both the reader is in effect asked to read a human mind. *Ulysses* happens to have such a volume of annotation amounting to well over five hundred pages in double columns of type. The volume begins with an amusing quotation from Joyce: “I’ve put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant, and that’s the only way of insuring one’s immortality” (Gifford and Seidman *Notes for Joyce* 1). Joyce’s words resemble Twain’s that his autobiography’s form would be studied for centuries, of course, but more significantly both authors realized that a depiction of a person’s limited point of view rendered reader understanding more difficult than an omniscient point of view. This is not a claim for any equivalence between Twain and Joyce, but an observation of a similarity. In like fashion, when Twain began his dictation of February 6th, 1906, he made a brief reference to how he entered the competition to publish Grant’s *Memoirs* before resuming his subject under discussion (as described in Chapter Three). Like many a modernist writer, this narrator alludes to information that he says will be expounded upon at an unspecified future date and

trusts the reader to forget the matter he is less than explicit about until the moment the narrator recalls it to the reader's attention as promised.

As said in Chapter Three, Twain produced autobiographical pieces during the 1890's with tentative chapter numbers. These had large chronological gaps between the numbers representing gaps of time in his life which he supposedly would someday fill in. As it happened, some of these pieces eventually were transcribed into Paine's dictations or discarded. Twain was in effect building individual boxcars and planning at some indefinite future time to build other boxcars and fit them into the missing slots to make a complete train, which would be a semi-conventional autobiography. By progressing as he did Twain was laboring under a modernist frame of mind without the critical vocabulary to understand why he couldn't complete his plan. He was conceiving of his life as fragments, with fragments' gaps and lack of sequence, but he was futilely planning to produce a work his age considered appropriate for an autobiography. The fact that his modernist sensibility conflicted with his practical experience as a writer produced the creative deadlock that existed until Paine's dictations. After these ended, for reasons stated before, he tried one more scheme of autobiography, and after that, for a reason he certainly didn't anticipate, he wrote his conclusion.

Concluding

As noted, "The Death of Jean" became the ostensible end to an autobiography proposed as not possessing any save the cease of verbiage at its author's death. Twain's youngest daughter died in a bathtub on December 23rd, 1909, four months before her father. Twain's wish that "The Death of Jean" conclude his autobiography seems clear considering that the manuscript begins, "Closing Words of my Autobiography. *Stormfield, Christmas Eve, 11 a.m., 1909. Jean is dead!* And so this Autobiography closes here. I had a reason for projecting it, three years ago: that reason perishes with her" (Lystra 247). Three paragraphs follow describing how the *Autobiography's* purpose was copyright extension with the aim of adding "about 10,000 words" to each existing book as it neared copyright, but Congress' addition

of fourteen years to the existing term had rendered his work “wasted”. The paragraphs’ last sentence was, “Man proposes, Circumstances dispose” (ibid).

As argued in Chapter Two, copyright extension as the reason for the work’s composition appears highly dubious, most strongly because Twain never made any arrangements about the said additions even to the day he wrote this document. Also, it’s possible that he wrote the document first and added the title, dateline and four paragraphs following at a later moment. Twain typically wrote first and planned later. His words here sound like a rationalization. He had finished with the *Autobiography*, so he formed a utilitarian reason for its creation and for the fact he had finished. Also, the final two sentences are poetically apt to his idea of Determinism. He had wasted his hard planned labor, he said, because larger forces had rendered them pointless.

He had also violated his original words about the work’s concept. He had given it an ending. But what does “The Death of Jean”, a title conceived by Paine, contribute to the *Autobiography*, and what relation does it bear to that work’s processes and ideas? It is shot through with process of association, not randomly, but regulated by comparisons between past and present events and emotions. Therefore it resembles the larger work in process and theme. First he alludes to the copious amount of daily experience which he said no person could ever transcribe for a genuine autobiography: “Has anyone ever tried to put upon paper all the little happenings connected with a dear one – happenings of the twenty-four hours preceding the sudden & unexpected death of that dear one?...Would two books contain them?” (ibid). Then appears a stunning sequence of past and present associations with interruptions and resumptions during the process of writing:

Last night Jean all flushed with splendid health...At half past 7 this morning I woke...Then Katy entered [and said] ‘*Miss Jean is dead!*’...It is noon, now. How lovable she looks...In England, thirteen years ago [he received news of Susy’s death]...Four days ago I came back from a month’s holiday in Bermuda in perfect health [newspapers mistakenly reported he was ill, and he sent] a humorous paragraph by telephone to the Associated Press denying the ‘charge’ that I was ‘dying’...This morning I sent the sorrowful fact of this day’s irremediable disaster to the

Associated Press. Will both appear in this evening's paper?...I lost Susy thirteen years ago. I lost her mother...five & a half years ago...& now I have lost Jean...Seven months ago Mr. Rogers died – the best friend I ever had...Jean lies yonder, I sit here; we are strangers under our own roof; we kissed hands good-bye at this door last night...I have looked at her again...She looks just as her mother looked when she lay dead in that Florentine villa...Jean was on the dock when the ship came in, only four days ago. She was at the door beaming a welcome, when I reached this house the next evening...& now she lies yonder...'*Miss Jean is Dead!*' That is what Katy said. When I heard the door opened behind the bed's head...I supposed it was Jean coming to kiss me good morning...I have been to Jean's parlor. Such a turmoil of Christmas presents...I used to slip softly into the nursery at midnight on Christmas Eve & look the array of presents over. The children were little, then. And now here is Jean's parlor looking just as that nursery used to look...the rim of the sun barely shows above the skyline of the hills...I have been looking at that face again...Why did I build this house two years ago? To shelter this vast emptiness?...Susy died in the house we built in Hartford...I have entered it once since, when it was tenantless & silent & forlorn...It seemed to me that the spirits of the dead were all about me...*Christmas Day. Noon.* Last night I went to Jean's room at intervals...& remembered that heart-breaking night in Florence...when I crept down stairs so many times, & turned back a sheet & looked at a face just like this one...*Christmas Night.* This afternoon they took her away...From my windows I saw the hearse & and the carriages wind along the road [carrying her] to her distant, childhood home, where she will lie by her mother's side once more, in the company of Susy & Langdon...The funeral has begun. Four hundred miles away, but I can see it all...Jean's coffin stands where her mother & I stood, forty years ago, & were married; & where Susy's coffin stood thirteen years ago; & where her mother's stood, five years & a half ago; and where mine will stand, after a little time." (Lystra 248-258)

Twain has, like Proust, drawn time and space together in a moment encompassing past, present, future, here and there, as if time and space existed in overlaid films within his mind.

Paine titled the piece “The Death of Jean” for its first appearance in *Harper’s* magazine in December, 1910 and also gave that title to the chapter in his biography describing its creation (*Mark Twain* v.III, 1684, 1547). But the author’s first words are the actual title, appropriate to his previous statements or not. The title states the document contains the author’s finishing words, which he had said he wouldn’t furnish until death, and they finish his life story, which he’d denied his life contained.

In Chapter Two it was said that Paine created a literary griffin in his edition by including many preliminary manuscripts and dictations which the Project excluded. If the Project’s accurate in terms of what pieces Twain rejected, then Twain’s autobiography as the Project plans to publish it is a more artistically unified work than Paine’s or DeVoto’s editions because Twain’s plan envisaged a book consisting only of dictations, instructions, explanation of methodology and two manuscripts as bookends. Twain’s book begins with a manuscript describing portions of his early life and concludes with the manuscript “The Death of Jean”. This is significant because it means the autobiography is not “a ragbag of scraps,” as Garrison Keillor criticized it, but is a balanced and unified work of literature. Critics may reasonably object to the volume, ephemeral content or the method of recollection through process of association without reference to sequential narrative, but to object that the autobiography is not unified is falsely construed. The book is a unified work in literary modernism’s terms; the consistent form contains the work’s meaning, a point missed by a century of critics who value only portions of its content. Had it been published in the form the Project believes Twain intended, if Twain had definitely made such plans clear to Paine and had Paine complied, then in all probability the autobiography would have had a much less complicated twentieth century life, although its critical fate probably would have been the same. It would have been reviewed in its totality long ago and probably exist along with those other works by Twain which have displeased critics from Harry Thurston Peck to Dwight Macdonald to Garrison Keillor.

Twain's working method in all his literature has been called artless and formless by so many that it's a truism, and it's also partially true. His literature emanated from an imagination that resembled the flame of a match in its intensity and all too frequent brevity. When the flame burned, he wrote obsessively, but he couldn't control the flame to the degree that many literary artists can, and he couldn't extend its life except artificially. In other words, he could force an ending upon a work, but such endings always appeared artificial, and that's why in his later years, when he had largely escaped the financial need to publish, he wrote thousands of pages of uncompleted manuscripts. The *Autobiography*, which was supposed to have no ending, seemed ready to resemble his other uncompleted manuscripts as Twain lost imagination and interest as he entered the project's fourth year. He didn't know he would write "The Death of Jean", nor did he know the dictations would end in 1909. He didn't know he would complete two more lengthy autobiographical documents, one envisioned as a continuation of his autobiography in the form of unmailed letters, nor did he know his life's last published literary work would be autobiographical. With the exception of "The Death of Jean", these autobiographical documents form the subject of the final chapter, accompanied by an exploration of the fragment form in which Twain excelled and which contributed so much to his autobiography's conception.

Chapter Five

Other Works by the Same Builder

As asserted in the previous chapter, when Twain moved to Stormfield, he lost the source of the memories which had largely constituted the *Autobiography*, with a result of fewer dictations and less significant content to them. In addition, a stew of tensions between his daughters and his associates began to distract his attention and finally make him question his own state of mind during the period of the *Autobiography*'s composition. The outcome ended the *Autobiography* as it had existed, but his autobiographical urges continued in a different form.

A few months before he began the new form, he created a short, non-fiction book, *Is Shakespeare Dead?* and originally planned to insert it within the formal *Autobiography*. It has a sub-text, or perhaps two sub-texts, that reflect his practice of revealing himself by building a text of camouflage. As actual camouflage renders the wearer indistinct but not invisible, so did Twain's.

He partially dictated the brief book and subtitled it "From My Autobiography". It is autobiographical on several counts beyond his dictation and subtitle. In one sense it illustrates Twain's attitude toward posthumous fame, which he believes is established during the subject's lifetime. Briefly, the author posits his case that Shakespeare did not and could not have written the literature for which he's famed, and Francis Bacon was likely the person who did. He says Shakespeare owned no books, left no manuscripts, received little education and had no fame in his own hometown. He says Shakespeare resembles Satan in that both left facts too few to provide biographies based upon evidence. He says all portraits of both figures depend overwhelmingly upon maybes, perhaps and probablys, a comment that seems aimed at countless historians, scholars and biographers. Perhaps the numerous instances in which Twain had led his own biographer away from strict factuality had made him aware of the fallibility of historical certainty and the terms of caution by which uncertainty is consequently expressed.

This study won't address the strength of Twain's argument aside from noting it's ahistorical in that he assumes what was probable in his own day would have been probable in Shakespeare's. For example, he assumes that because we lack evidence of Shakespeare's fame in Stratford in contrast with his own renown in Hannibal that Shakespeare must have been unremarkable. This writer could say in rejoinder he possesses a book about Fifth Avenue published in 1915 which makes no mention of the recently demised world-famous author who lived on the said street fewer than ten years prior to the book's publication, even though it mentions many other notables.

However, it hardly explains *Is Shakespeare Dead?* to address it as literary detective work because the book has too many odd filigrees, and it probably would be missing Twain's point to spend time countering his argument. A visit by Helen Keller and companions was the ostensible genesis of the book. Keller wrote that Twain "was greatly interested when we told him that a friend of ours, Mr. W.S. Booth, had discovered an acrostic in the plays, sonnets, and poems usually attributed to Shakespeare, which revealed the author to be Francis Bacon. He was at first sceptical and inclined to be facetious at our expense" (Fishkin, ed., *The Mark Twain Anthology* 165). In light of Twain's stated initial scepticism, the entire book may be an exercise in adopting a point of view he didn't at first hold, with the point of the exercise being that by its conclusion he came to believe his assumed view. In other words, it might be an exercise in examining an accepted fact and discovering the fact isn't supported by the evidence, or at least by the evidence the author perceives. After all, the author by no means consistently made his literary theses explicit and frequently did the opposite.

Another autobiographical premise is that he might have been making a statement about irreconcilable viewpoints that elicited fierce passions, not only literary, but like those that surrounded him during its composition. Lyon had been spreading rumors that both Jean and Clara were mentally ill (Lystra 159). She had undermined Twain's faith in Paine by suggesting he was "reading letters he hadn't any business to read" (144). Clara criticized Lyon without success except for the fact her father heard her words (159). A trace of the author's tension can be sensed by his words when Keller reprimanded the author during her visit for not dressing warmly enough for the winter. "He seemed pleased that I thought about him in that

way, and said rather wistfully, ‘It is not often these days that anyone notices when I am imprudent’.” (Fishkin, ed., 162). In other words, Twain wasn’t getting the attention he desired and felt neglected because those surrounding him were bickering, and he was the unwilling vessel for their words and emotions.

Following the publication of *Is Shakespeare Dead?* Twain wrote Keller a letter which offers a hint of his motives for writing the work. “[E]ven the most gifted human being is merely an ass, and always an ass, when his forebears have furnished him an idol to worship. Reasonings cannot convert him, facts cannot influence him. I wrote the booklet for pleasure – *not* in the expectation of convincing anybody that Shakespeare did not write Shakespeare” (Lash 362). This letter accords with Twain’s beliefs about conformity in that he asserts humans receive opinions rather than think for themselves and adhere vehemently and irrationally to opinions received even while asserting they take logical positions. In this light *Is Shakespeare Dead?* could be a statement about the limits of logical reasoning when it encounters emotional belief and the human passion for argument regardless of the inability to reach an unassailable answer. The anecdotal passage concerning his riverboat co-worker George Ealer supports this. “He was fiercely loyal to Shakespeare and cordially scornful of Bacon...So was I – at first.” Ealer initially enjoyed having Twain as a like believer, but “Then the atmosphere began to change... You see, he was of an argumentative disposition. Therefore it took him but a little time to get tired of arguing with a person who agreed with everything he said and consequently never furnished him with a provocative to flare up and show what he could do when it came to...*reasoning*”. Twain therefore took the opposing view, and “Ealer was satisfied with that”. However, Twain discovered that “Study...enabled me to take my new position almost seriously,” and soon he became “wedded to my faith, I was theoretically ready to die for it... You see how curiously theological it is” (Twain *What Is Man?* 301-2). At least here the book seems to be about human inability to accord simple respect toward beliefs differing from those a person holds sacrosanct. In *Christian Science* Twain wrote, “When I, a thoughtful and unbiased Presbyterian, examine the Koran, I know that beyond any question every Mohammedan is insane...I know exactly where to put my finger upon his insanity. It is where his opinion differs from mine” (Fishkin, ed., 383). These

words could easily have appeared in the conclusion of *Is Shakespeare Dead?* without distorting the tone or message.

Also, as Karen Lystra points out, after many pages of apparent seriousness Twain employs words such “thugs”, “troglydites”, “blatherskites” and “buccaneers” to characterize those who hold the opposite view, and “this excessive rhetoric of attack is obviously absurd...yet it has been taken at face value” (161). Employing such terms actually detracts from the strength of his previous semi-logical arguments, and he probably employs them for that reason. This ploy indicates he’s not entirely serious about his topmost argument. He’s making a disguised point about logical arguments degenerating into name-calling. As if to emphasize this point, he writes, “I cannot call to mind a single instance where I have ever been irreverent, except towards the things which were sacred to other people” (Twain *What Is Man?* 367). Two pages later he writes that if he respects the position of the Shakespearians, “it will presently come to be conceded that each man’s sacred things are the *only* ones, and the rest of the human race will have to be humbly reverent toward them or suffer for it...It would be better if the privilege were limited to me alone” (369).

If the letter to Keller offers one motive for writing, it doesn’t establish his position on the Shakespeare-Bacon issue. Did he really believe Bacon wrote Shakespeare? It doesn’t matter. *Is Shakespeare Dead?* is about issues beyond its stated subject, and it’s another demonstration of his tendency to camouflage his sentiments. As an example of how Twain disguised his thoughts when writing about emotion-laden issues, the perplexing message of *Is Shakespeare Dead?* resembles the conclusion of the Ashcroft-Lyon manuscript, the document he wrote later in 1909 to excoriate his former employees for eternity.

The Ashcroft-Lyon manuscript began, despite its four hundred page length, as a letter to William Dean Howells. Immediately after his final autobiographical dictation of April 16th, 1909, Twain conceived yet another unorthodox method to continue his work in the form of unmailed letters to friends. As described in Chapter Four, the author’s dictation of that date became his last because he lost faith in Lyon and Ashcroft and realized his own derelict treatment of his daughters. This trauma severed his attachment to

the dictations because he believed he had created them in yet another dream state, this one lasting years, and he had awakened to discover much he believed to be true in that period had been false. His following words and actions explain further why he ended the dictations and how he began another form. At “3 in the morning” that same night of the 16th, waking from sleep, he wrote to Howells asking if the latter had written to him two days before, “or did I dream it? In my mind’s eye I most vividly see your handwrite...but there is no such letter [In his restlessness he has left his bedroom and searched the house]. Was it an illusion?” (Twain *Mark Twain-Howells Letters* v.II, 843). He might as well have been asking the same of his recent years, so greatly was he disoriented. He wrote of a volume of letters he was reading in his wakefulness and signed off to Howells.

At 10 a.m. the next morning he wrote a second letter to Howells that captures the intensity with which all fresh enthusiasms seized him.

When I wrote to you at 3 this morning I did not know I was laying an egg that would hatch in the course of a few hours...the mind works automatically & plans & perfects many a project without its owner suspecting what it is about...It is this: to write letters to friends & *not send them*...Dictating Autobiography has certain irremovable drawbacks...A stenographer is a lecture-audience; you are always conscious of him [referring to the performance aspect of his dictations]...You are not talking to yourself; you are not thinking out loud...If it’s a she person [he can’t say some things]...because they are indecent...If it’s a religious person, your jaw is locked again.” (844)

As for “intimately personal, & particularly private things,” which the immediate past made him burn to communicate, he could speak them only to friends like Howells, Joseph Twichell or Rogers. Inasmuch as he had unburdened himself theologically in the dictations, and his recorded indecencies in any medium and to any person are modest in number, it appears his final dictation thwarted him. So intimate and private were his feelings at that moment that he could not speak of them without camouflage. But his “splendid scheme” just hatched would let him “fire the profanities at Rogers, the indecencies at Howells,

the theologies at Twichell” with total freedom because he wouldn’t mail the letters. Since Howells wouldn’t read the letter the author wrote, “you can make it really indecenter than he could stand” (845).

Twain’s recent schism and self-knowledge created a need for unprecedented intimacy, and he needed to communicate with his oldest friends. But he conceived of a plan to put his need to practical use in continuing his autobiography. He wrote first to Howells because that friend had played a small and sympathetic role in the recent events. In his final dictation Twain read aloud a reporter’s words that Howells had attended Clara’s described recital and “applauded as if he belonged to a paid clique” (846). Twain would have noticed that gesture of friendship at a moment when he discovered he had been remiss in his closest personal relations, noticed it for its irony and poignancy both.

The author’s letter is doubly significant. It indicates Twain needed a *form* through which to impart his personal narratives, and it’s significant in that it shows he didn’t consider himself finished with his autobiography. He could at this late date still not address his life conventionally, and he was still fascinated with unorthodox literary vehicles. This latest scheme appealed to him for autobiography because he envisioned letters to intimate friends as a vehicle through which he could speak most honestly of painful issues, such as he had recently endured. In this case pouring out regrets and recriminations to close friends, who would, importantly, never see them, liberated him. He hoped thus to avoid any inhibitions he might have felt had its pretext been more literary and thus continue his quest for truthfulness. Furthermore, it is of course not coincidental that he woke at 3 a.m. thinking of a letter from Howells he could not find and that he consequently read a volume of letters in the night to soothe his unquiet. Twain dreams of the letter from Howells he can’t find when he wakes. He reads a volume of letters. He writes a letter to Howells describing his disquiet. Five hours later he announces a scheme of autobiography via unmailed letters. There can be no clearer example of how Twain used the process of association creatively. Even the fact that Howells’ letter was missing is significant to the scheme in that so far as is known it was unmailed, that it to say it existed only in Twain’s mind.

The vehicle Twain chose for the Ashcroft-Lyon manuscript, the unmailed letter which excited him immediately upon conception, appears to have confused the author’s lawyer, Charles Lark. He wrote in

1911 that the 428 page document was “the only complete manuscript which [Twain] wrote personally” after *Is Shakespeare Dead?*, and it was “a very lengthy letter addressed to W.D. Howells,” (Hill 228) thus providing evidence that Lark was a lawyer rather than a literary scholar. Lark apparently didn’t realize he had examined a piece of literature in the form of a letter, or else he was exercising lawyerly prudence in describing it as only what it appeared to be. The manuscript’s preface should have been a clue to Lark because it begins “To the Unborn Reader”, indicating the length of time Twain meant the document to be unread (Shelden 363). The dedication came true. Twain scholar Hamlin Hill, born in 1931, discovered the manuscript in a shoebox in 1970, sixty-one years after its writing. The vehicle also appears to have confused the *New York Times*, which stated on June 25, 1970 that it was “possibly the last he ever wrote” and “in the form of a letter written in the fall of 1909 to William Dean Howells”. Twain composed the Ashcroft-Lyon manuscript between May 2nd and October 21st (Hill 230), and he wrote several pieces afterwards, complete and not. As for details of its finding, the *New York Times* wrote

The letter had been found in a shoebox among the papers of a long-time business associate of Edward E. Loomis, whose wife, Julia Langdon, was a niece of Mark Twain’s wife. Apparently, Mrs. Loomis gave the manuscript to the associate, Harold R. German, for safekeeping. It was Mr. German’s daughter who found the manuscript and offered it for the sale [to the Berg collection of the New York Public Library] through a dealer.” (Gent “Newly Found Mark Twain Letter Accuses Business Aide of Theft”)

As for the manuscript’s contents, the Ashcroft-Lyon manuscript documents his feelings following his delayed choice between siding with Lyon and Ashcroft or with his daughters. Since he was a man seldom given to moderation, the manuscript has been called a screed, its tone amplified in the degree to which he felt betrayed and regretful. He had been angered by supposed cheatings and insults many times, but because he had trusted and liked Lyon and Ashcroft to the extent of preferring them to his daughters, the manuscript’s tone is frequently beyond livid. Everett Emerson called it “a sad document” and believed it had four purposes: continuing the autobiography, as a possible legal weapon for Clara against her father’s

former employees, as a mea culpa for his behavior to Clara and “to express his resentment and anger against Lyon for having married Ashcroft,” which she had done a month before Twain dismissed them both (*Mark Twain: a Literary Life* 295). Hamlin Hill called it “a literary curiosity” and noted that although it began as “a chronological account of the couple’s treachery,” more became known of the couple’s activities with time so that the document “dissolved into random and often contradictory accusations” (230). Hill thought there were no further unmailed letters to friends following the Ashcroft-Lyon manuscript because the author “finally realized that his new scheme for autobiography had a flaw: It was more self-incriminating than self-revealing...It condemned a gullible and foolish man for misplacing his trust for so long in such obviously corrupt antagonists as the Ashcrofts whom he created in his own mind” (232). On the other hand Karen Lystra believed it held more autobiographical significance. She termed it “raw and uncrafted” with “several full-scale evasions,” but “it also contains the most painful personal disclosure he ever committed to paper...his confession... that he abandoned his own daughter [Jean]...Only in recognizing Twain’s massive vanity about his public image can one gauge the force of this remarkable revelation” (220). As the author put it, “Jean made many an imploring and beseeching appeal to me, her father, & could not get my ear, that I, who should have been her best friend, forsook her in her trouble to listen to this designing hypocrite whom I was coddling in the place which should have been occupied by my forsaken child” (Shelden 363).

At one point in the writing process Twain realized the enormous irony that he, an author, had just lived through the real life incarnation of a melodramatic novel.

Doesn’t it sound like print? Isn’t it exactly the way it would happen in a book? Howells, this great long Lyon-Ashcroft episode is just as booky as it can be; so booky that sometimes its facts and realities seem...as if they hadn’t ever happened, but had straggled into my half-asleep consciousness out of some paltry & fussy & pretentious old-time novel.” (Trombley 213)

This is genuinely autobiographical. He means by these words that he recognized he had lived through a melodramatic plot, as in an author-created plot, with himself as both author and tragically flawed main

character. In his view there had been genuinely dastardly villains plotting to rob virtuous heroines, and at the center had been a careless and clueless old man who realized the truth in the very nick of time, long after he should have. That he refers to his “half-asleep consciousness” also supports the assertion that he ceased dictating because of his emotional severance from the past few years. He believed he had been in a state of delusion about the everyday conditions of his life during the period of the dictations, and his painful awakening forced him to disown Lyon and Ashcroft and his most sustained literary product of the period as well.

Karen Lystra made a convincing exegesis of the conclusion of the Ashcroft-Lyon manuscript, a conclusion which Hamlin Hill, the document’s discoverer, termed an “irrelevant and almost irrational comment about Peary and Cook both discovering the North Pole” (Hill 231). The conclusion is without doubt confusing, but Twain was once again drawing upon current events to veil his actual meaning, as he did in “Reflections on a Letter and a Book”. He was writing invisibly and trusting his readers to infer his actual thoughts. It is pertinent to know that Twain’s rupture with his employees had become public knowledge thanks to legal proceedings against Lyon and Ashcroft and Ashcroft’s resort to newspaper interviews in retaliation. As Lystra explains the pertinence of these events to the manuscript’s conclusion, in early September, 1909, the polar explorers Frederick Cook and Robert Peary both claimed to have reached the North Pole. On September 1st, Cook announced he’d reached the Pole on April 21st, 1908. Peary announced five days later he’d reached the pole on April 6th, 1909. In the manuscript Twain wrote, “I believe both are speaking the truth,” meaning he believed both had accomplished the feat. However, world opinion would acclaim Peary, he wrote, because Cook “sat down among the icebergs to waste a year – in writing about the discovery?” In other words, even if Cook had made the discovery first, his delay in making the news public meant Peary would be believed more. Lystra wrote that Twain meant he and Cook had both failed “to push their claims at the start”. They “were passive when they should have been aggressively pushing validation...His little parable suggests that the Ashcrofts, who aggressively pursued their story in the press, paralleled Peary...while he was like Cook, who foolishly sat around working on a manuscript for months in obscurity” (234-5).

If this interpretation is correct, at the end of the Ashcroft-Lyon manuscript the author found one more issue to blame himself for. Also, it means in Twain's view the Peary-Cook dispute was about two differing beliefs which each seemed impossible of proof though each would be debated endlessly, like the Shakespeare-Bacon dispute. The conclusion of the Ashcroft-Lyon manuscript resembles the earlier book in terms of its invisible content, as Twain had termed the inexplicit meaning most texts carry. Also, the manuscript's conclusion is yet another instance of addressing his past and present with reference to a current event.

Twain's plan to continue his autobiography with unmailed letters to friends ceased with the Ashcroft-Lyon manuscript. It served the purposes he needed during its time of composition, and afterwards he didn't need to communicate so intimately. The Ashcroft-Lyon manuscript was the last vehicle specifically designated as autobiography in the author's life. "The Death of Jean" was the final document he considered for his autobiography. However, he wrote other autobiographical documents between those two.

The last finished literary work of Twain's life, absent "The Death of Jean", is the essay written for magazine publication titled "The Turning Point of My Life". One among a number of prominent men invited by *Harper's Bazaar* magazine to address the title's topic, Twain used his invitation to expound upon the thesis that his life hadn't had one turning point, but innumerable turning points (Twain *Collected Tales, Sketches, Speeches, & Essays 1891-1910* 1014, 929). Everything that had changed his life, he said, had been a turning point. This essay therefore supports the rationale that powered the autobiography. If his life had been a chain with an uncountable number of links, each constituting a turning point, he couldn't write a life story without violating his artistic integrity.

The turning point of a life is one of the hoariest conventions in autobiography, along with the convention of beginning with some words about the author's ancestry and first memories. Frederick Douglass used the convention of beginning with his ancestry to make thematically apt comments about his lack of definite knowledge of who his father was or even what his birth date was (Douglass *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* 1). As for his turning point, he chose his physical struggle with the slave

breaker to whom he had been lent, with the obvious implication that although he remained physically a slave after the event, he was mentally and spiritually a free man. For Douglass, therefore, a physical action with inner ramifications was his turning point. As for H.G. Wells and his own chosen turning point, he wrote, "Probably I am alive to-day and writing this autobiography instead of being a worn-out, dismissed and already dead shop assistant because my leg was broken". This accident gave Wells weeks of immobility at the time when "I had just taken to reading," and this enforced leisure presaged a life of intellectual pursuits rather than the life of lower middle-class drudgery his birth predicted (53).

Twain, in contrast, claimed his life had been nothing but the chain of all the events of his life, and it began in fact long before his birth. He said one link had been Caesar's decision to cross the Rubicon because an unnamed man blew a trumpet and crossed first. "If the stranger, with his trumpet blast, had stayed away" Twain wrote, "Caesar would not have crossed. What would have happened, in that case, we can never guess. We only know the things that did happen would not have happened...I would not be *here*, now, but somewhere else; and probably black" (Twain *Collected Tale, Sketches, Speeches, & Essays 1891-1910* 930-1).

This insistence that every event in his life had constituted a turning point not only justified his inability to create a conventional life story, thus providing an after the fact explanation for the form of the *Autobiography*, but it also satisfied his personal belief in Determinism. If every event that ever happened to him had sent him to the following link, then he could claim he had not been responsible for any or all. He could define his role in life as the acted upon rather than as the agent. This Determinism was expressed even more strongly in a preliminary version of the essay which Twain discarded at the request of Paine and Jean. In this rejected version more than one half of the essay is about "The Parable of the Two Apples". Thomas Crab and William Greening fall from trees and roll downhill, meeting different fates along the way. Although Greening appears more fortunate for most of his life, he ends up eaten by a pet monkey. Crab, however, is found by Luther Burbank and used to produce a new strain of roses (Rees and Rust 525). Twain had already deleted upon his own judgment his first plan for a hog to eat Crab,

who “resumed digestion & presently slept with his fathers,” but even with this deletion the first version displeased Paine and Jean (529, 526).

“The Turning Point of My Life”, besides offering obviously autobiographical content and psychological insight, contains evidence that the \$50 bill that determined the course of his life, as related in the dictation of March 29, 1906, almost certainly didn’t exist. In the essay, Twain says he read a book “about the Amazon” while working as a printer in Keokuk and conceived of the idea of journeying to South America to “open up a trade in coca”. He “tried to conceive ways to get to Para and spring that splendid enterprise upon an unsuspecting planet,” but lacked resources until he found the \$50 bill in the street. “I advertised the find, and left for the Amazon the same day,” he states (*Twain Collected Tales, Sketches, Essays, and Speeches 1891-1910* 912-13). This by itself contradicts his statement in the *Autobiography* that he waited approximately four days after placing the advertisement before leaving Keokuk (v.II, 288), but a repeated memory often misstates details. However, Fred W. Lorch disproved one part of Twain’s account of the found \$50 when he discovered that no ads for lost valuables were posted in local newspapers during Twain’s residence in Keokuk, as Twain had asserted he had done (“Mark Twain in Iowa” 420-21). Furthermore, Twain unintentionally casts doubt on his own veracity further when he states he “started for the Amazon...by the way of Cincinnati,” a city he remained in for more than four months (*Twain Collected Tales, Sketches, Essays, and Speeches 1891-1910* 934, 954). In his autobiography’s account of his leaving Keokuk, he says, “I felt that I must take that money out of danger. So I bought a ticket for Cincinnati” (v.II, 289). But no person of even average geographical knowledge would leave Keokuk for New Orleans and spend four months in Cincinnati first. Either something is being left unstated, or else part of Twain’s story is fabricated. In a letter of August, 1856, written while in Cincinnati, he says “I can start to New York and go to South America!” and speaks of his mother’s “willingness to allow me to go to South America” (*Twain Mark Twain, Business Man* 28-9). Perhaps he intended New York to be his port of departure for the Amazon at the time he wrote, but his words in “The Turning Point of My Life” are probably intended as his neat explanation for why he ended up on the Mississippi next, and they don’t account for his stay in Cincinnati. And the \$50 bill is nowhere

in the letter either. His half year in Cincinnati was not a step towards New Orleans; it was a way station along a wandering life, no more, and the concoction of his thwarted plan to reach the Amazon is for the purpose of supporting his literary point. If Twain ever found a \$50 bill, it almost certainly didn't happen in Keokuk, and it didn't fund him for an aborted trip to the Amazon.

The tale is especially suspect because it is reminiscent of another found object in Twain's life, a page torn from a book about Joan of Arc, which allegedly generated Twain's near obsession with that historical female. As Albert B. Paine told the story in a chapter of his biography titled, not coincidentally, "The Turning Point",

There came into his life just at this period [adolescence] one of those seemingly trifling incidents which, viewed in retrospect, assume pivotal proportions. He was on his way from the office to his home one afternoon when he saw flying along the pavement a square of paper, a leaf from a book...It was a leaf from some history of Joan of Arc...He had never heard of the subject before. He had never read any history...it meant the awakening of his interest in all history...a passion which became the largest feature of his intellectual life." (v.I, 81-2)

Paine's subsequent words, significant in this discussion of Twain's probable fabrication, are "A few months before he died he wrote a paper on 'The Turning-Point of My Life.' *For some reason he did not mention this incident* [italics mine]. Yet if there *was* a turning-point in his life, he reached it that bleak afternoon on the streets of Hannibal when a stray leaf from another life was blown into his hands" (82). The reason Twain "did not mention this incident" in his essay was probably authorial prudence. Two life-altering found objects in one short essay might strain reader credulity, and a wise author might elect to mention only one if he were fictionalizing either or both of the found objects. Allegedly the Confederate plans for the battle of Gettysburg fell into Union hands because they were found in a field wrapped around cigars, and this telling might be true. On the other hand, if perchance the Union obtained the battle plans through the agency of a spy, the truth might never be known. Life is full of coincidences beyond any probability, yet Twain demonstrably purveyed fiction as factual numerous times. Some of his

accounts might never be disproven, yet they appear as implausible as the found battle plans that altered the nation's history. The account of the \$50 bill, told twice, falls short of being acceptable as true absent proof except with the admission that it's a true statement of Twain's belief about the powerlessness he had exerted over his own life. That his months in Cincinnati were just a way station in a life of numerous way stations asserts his point about his own life in the essay more than the item of the \$50 bill. In that degree of truth, it's significant about the author's stance toward life near the end of his own.

Huckleberry Finn would appear to bear little upon the *Autobiography* aside from the facts that the novel's contents are heavily autobiographical and both works possess unorthodox structure. The difference between them in regard to their structures is that the *Autobiography*'s unorthodoxy proceeds from theory, whereas the novel's is the result of authorial desperation. The novel has been called picaresque as often as *Don Quixote*, and it is famously divided into three sections. The first takes place in a stationary setting, Huck Finn's hometown. The second, probably the most praised and loved, is the Mississippi journey, subdivided into culturally oriented adventures ashore. The third is a widely criticized failure which many critics regard as an embarrassment with its little rascals buffoonery and total eschewal of seriousness. When biographer Fred Kaplan taught *Huckleberry Finn*, he modified this near unanimous criticism in saying, "I wish I could write two thirds of a great novel" (graduate school seminar 2001). Kaplan was voicing a standard for evaluation; a work can be mediocre in sum but perfect in all its parts or great in portions although flawed as a whole. John Updike in his own memoir said critics regarded him as an excellent writer with nothing to say (Updike 86), illustrating how writers may be appreciated for virtues even while flaws exist. One defender of the novel's ending was T.S. Eliot, who wrote, "it is right that the mood of the end of the book should bring us back to that of the beginning. Or, if this was not the right ending for the book, what ending would have been right?...Huck Finn must come from nowhere and be bound for nowhere" (Grant 74). Douglas Grant wrote of Eliot's statement that "the mood of end of the book returns us to that of the beginning" (ibid), which happens to be also true of a series, which Huck and Tom Sawyer became.

But the importance of *Huckleberry Finn*'s last third to the *Autobiography* is that the former book illustrates the author's tortured relationship with structure throughout his career. Failure to conceive a fitting conclusion or even a congruous second half to his works was a norm. Ernest Hemingway noted this aspect in *Huckleberry Finn* when he said, "you must stop where the Nigger Jim is stolen from the boys. That is the real end. The rest is just cheating" (Fishkin, ed., 5). Hemingway meant that "cheating" was Twain's act of forcing a conclusion upon the novel for the sake of not leaving it unfinished, which raises the possibility that *Huckleberry Finn* might easily have become another of Twain's fragments, especially in that he paused for periods of years during its composition.

But with modesty incumbent in light of the critical literature devoted to *Huckleberry Finn*, it's asserted here that the key to understanding the failed last third of the novel lies in Chapter XXXV and that understanding this key demonstrates that the failed last third actually proceeds by a logical if tortured plan. The key lies in Tom Sawyer's unhappy contemplation of the conditions pertaining to Jim's liberation: "Blame it, this whole thing is just as easy and awkward as it can be...makes it so rotten difficult to get up a difficult plan. There ain't no watch-man to be drugged...ain't even a dog to give a sleeping mixture to. And...all you got to do is to lift up the bedstead and slip off the chain...it's the stupidest arrangement I ever see. You got to invent *all* the difficulties" (200).

This is meta-writing. The author is discussing his problems with plotting through his character's voice. He has failed to contrive a natural conclusion and knows it, and his recourse is to stage a circus act in effect to get him through, even as he discloses his structural problem to the reader. The author is joking about how writers of romances, like *The Count of Monte-Cristo* for example, lack the problems of serious novelists because they can rely upon devices like sleeping potions and watch-men to maintain reader interest as they unreel their plots. Their plots typically proceed through complication, much as Tom is about to complicate his author's plot. Serious novelists, in contrast, depend upon their characters to develop their novels through to the end, and Twain's have failed him. He clearly states this: "Well, we can't help it," Tom and his author continue, "we got to do the best we can with the materials we've got. Anyhow, there's one thing," Tom and his author console themselves. "[T]here's more honor in getting

him out through a lot of difficulties and dangers, where there warn't one of them furnished to you by the people [the characters] who it was their duty to furnish them, and you had to contrive them all out of your own head [the author's]" (ibid). Twain can't with a straight face resort to the devices of romances because he's allegedly writing a serious novel, so he concludes in a burlesque of romances for the simple necessity of ending his novel. He is reduced to this because his characters haven't furnished him their duty, and he bravely tells his readers the same. If this premise is accepted, the last third of the novel makes sense, not to a New Critic perhaps, but as a study of the author's work habits and limitations.

It's no critical secret that Twain had odd notions of structure and problems in structuring literary works, and these peculiarities also crept into his thinking about his lectures very early in his career. He wrote to his wife in 1871 that his lectures should "be a running narrative-plank, with square holes in it, six inches apart... & then in my mental shop I ought to have plugs (half marked 'serious' & and the other marked 'humorous') to select from & jam into these holes according to the temper of the audience" (Twain *Love Letters of Mark Twain* 165-6). Not only is it striking that he thinks of his literary work as a piece of carpentry, but it's revealing of how he conceived of his work's purpose and construction: a basic form should have bits available to be inserted at regular intervals to obtain desired effects upon specific audiences. His metaphor emphasizes not only his focus upon the utilitarian, but also the plan's necessarily extemporaneous nature. He would choose the most appropriate plugs during the course of his lecture. He was wildly successful as a lecturer, but the application of his metaphor to writing would display the limitations that a "narrative-plank" and absent audience entailed. When writing he had to seek forms inherent in the material because his imagination couldn't provide them, and the last third of *Huckleberry Finn* demonstrates what could happen when his audience wasn't present with immediate cues to guide him.

Henry Nash Smith said that Twain "conceived of a book as a longer discourse with an identical structure" to his lecture narrative plank, and that when he couldn't expand upon previously written letters, as with *The Innocents Abroad*, "he believed he must make an actual journey – to England, to the

Mississippi – in order to get the material for it” (Smith *Mark Twain: The Development of a Writer* 71).

Twain thought he took these trips to get material, but he also travelled to find his books’ structure.

Douglas Grant also noted Twain’s structural difficulties. The first half of *Roughing It* was “essentially autobiographical” with “strength and poetry which is lacking in the second, the account of the Sandwich Islands, taken largely from the reports he wrote [during the period he lived in California and visited Hawaii]”. Grant meant the first half is stronger because the author had the material in his memory, whereas the portion borrowed from his travel letters reflects his need to pad *Roughing It* to a requisite length. Grant also noted that because this second half was revised from work written before *The Innocents Abroad*, the earlier book is better than the later book’s last half because of the writer’s increased writing experience (Grant 53-4). *Huckleberry Finn*, *Roughing It*, *Life on the Mississippi*, *The Mysterious Stranger*, “Letters From the Earth”, the 1890’s fictional fragments, the autobiographical pieces and the *Autobiography* itself are not an exhaustive list of works which have incongruous conclusions, missing conclusions, padded portions or unorthodox structure. *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* is one of his few ideas carried through to novel length, and even it has shifts in tone and action. *Pudd’nhead Wilson* and *Those Extraordinary Twins* began as one book until the author discovered “it was not one story, but two stories tangled together...I was afraid it would unseat the reader’s reason.” When he realized his structural problem, he solved it by pulling “one of the stories out by the roots, and left the other one – a kind of literary Caesarean operation” (Bradbury, ed. *Pudd’nhead Wilson and Those Extraordinary Twins* 229-30). He accounted for this structural difficulty by stating his novels began as little tales, “which [the author] is not acquainted with, and can only find out what it is by listening as it goes along telling itself...til it spreads itself into a book. I know about this, because it has happened to me many times. And I have noticed another thing: that as the short tale grows into a long tale, the original intention (or motif) is apt to get abolished and find itself superseded by a quite different one” (229). Twain rephrased this conviction in 1900 when a reporter asked if he would write more books about *Huckleberry Finn* and *Tom Sawyer*. “Perhaps,” the author answered, “But one can’t talk about an unwritten book. It may grow into quite a different thing from what one thinks it may be” (Twain

Hannibal, Huck & Tom 14). He meant that he perceived his career-length problem with structure as his norm. This is clear in words from the same interview. “I write the story and then fill in the place, like blanks in a railway form” he said. “It is astonishing how much can be filled in. I rewrote one of my books three times, and each time it was a different book. I had filled in, and filled in, and the original book wasn’t there. It had evaporated through the blanks, and I had an entirely new book” (Twain *Life as I Find It* 335). Although the author sounds blasé in this explanation, he apparently doesn’t understand how his stated work habits result in large amounts of labor without artistic completion.

These 1900 comments occurred during the period in which his writing largely consisted of fragments, which may explain his casual attitude. But because this phenomenon exists throughout Twain’s career in different manifestations, one might contend that the fragment form was his métier – the promising start, the idea struck off at white heat, like a coin with a flawed or even blank reverse face. Bernard DeVoto grasped this aspect when he noted that Twain’s “published works are not much greater in bulk than his unpublished manuscripts, the books he finished fewer than the ones he broke off and abandoned...he had little faculty of self-criticism and but small ability to sustain or elaborate an idea. He was best at the short haul.” DeVoto noted that his “personalized narratives” shared this “episodic” quality, and when his pen carried him beyond the limit of his first conception of a piece, he improvised. “The serious artist could become a vaudeville monologist in a single page without being aware that the tone had changed” (Fishkin, ed., *The Mark Twain Anthology* 215-16). It’s revealing of his frequently rudimentary sense of structure that he originally planned to write *A Tramp Abroad* as “a diary or journal” (Kaplan, F. 345). This reveals that he could often create structure only within the chronological harness of relation of events in the sequence they occurred. He chose for his autobiography a structure he contemplated for a book published two and a half decades previously, a simulated diary, because he couldn’t relate his entire life as a narrative sequence except as it pertained to his mind’s movement. In light of this consistent authorial predilection/failure, Twain’s fragments deserve attention in a study of his autobiography because it resembles the fragments insofar as being the product of its writer’s problem with structure. His autobiography largely conquered this problem because it was propounded, happily for him, upon the idea

that it would have neither plot nor conclusion. In addition, the fragments often contain autobiography, typically cloaked in fictional guise and furthering their appropriateness for this study.

After Twain completed *Following the Equator* in 1897, his creative life to a large degree consisted of writing fragments. Nine years passed before he completed another book, *What Is Man?*, which was an unprecedented passage of time between book-length works. In the interim he worked on *Tom Sawyer's Conspiracy*, uncompleted, *The Mysterious Stranger*, uncompleted, "Which Was the Dream?", "Eddypus", "3000 Years Among the Microbes", "The Enchanted Sea-Wilderness", "The Great Dark", "The Refuge of the Derelicts" and others, all uncompleted, and the *Autobiography*, which he envisioned would end only with his death. He wrote much else, but all of it was the length of essays or short stories. He was far from written out, but *Following the Equator* marked the near end of a capacity for book length works and the growth of his absorption with fragmentary works. He had either an increasing inability to form a completed plot and focus long term on ideas or an increasing comfort with not doing so. Even in a work without a plot like *What Is Man?*, finishing was problematic inasmuch as he began writing it in 1898, as he did *The Mysterious Stranger*, and continued sporadically with revisions, additions and reorderings in different years until 1905 (Twain *Collected Tales, Sketches, Speeches, & Essays 1891-1910* 1011-12).

DeVoto noted that the fragments' autobiographical basis and incomplete states held almost unique value for the purpose of examining Twain's gestation of art. "Criticism is usually altogether unable to say how a writer's experience is transformed into works of art. In these manuscripts we can actually see that transformation while it is occurring. We are able to watch Mark Twain while he repeatedly tries and repeatedly fails to make something of experiences that were vitally important to him" (*Mark Twain at Work* 105).

As for how the fragments concern autobiographical material, DeVoto conjectured that Twain composed "Villagers of 1840-3" as planning for his autobiography (114), which may be true. However, it's highly interesting that by the document's conclusion the author has segued from his directory of persons and events of his Hannibal boyhood into a nascent fiction, a fragmentary story. This shift between genres, preponderant fact becoming fiction illustrates a peculiar authorial quality similar

although not identical to that displayed by President Ronald Reagan, who repeatedly told as if they were fact tales that existed nowhere but in movies. When addressing a military society in 1983, for example, Reagan talked of a World War II B-17 pilot who elected to die rather than desert his trapped ball-turret gunner, a tale taken from a movie (Fitzgerald 22). If this was not political cynicism, then it indicates a bizarre cast of mind in Reagan, a near inability to distinguish fact from fiction. In Twain, the related phenomenon indicates that his artistic mind so constantly acted to improve fact that he didn't always observe fact and fiction's boundaries and in fact enjoyed moving between them without notice, as he did at the end of "Villagers". This would explain of course how the *Autobiography's* subjectivity grew so prominently, but it also gives insight into the different type of elision between fact and fiction in action in the fragments.

Some of the fragments are fictions stemming from a dream or including a period of sleep by the main character, and the subsequent fictions significantly display anxiety, a distortion of actual life with nightmarish elements. In other words, they bear resemblance to the theories about dreams postulated by Sigmund Freud, who coincidentally lived in Vienna during the years when Twain lived there and wrote some of these fragments. One might almost believe that Twain wrote "Which Was the Dream?" under the influence of Freud, but *The Interpretation of Dreams* appeared in 1899, whereas the author began the fragment three to four months before moving to Vienna in September, 1897. Intriguingly, he paused in his writing before reaching his tale's nightmarish aspects, and it's tempting to imagine the author meeting the psychoanalyst before resuming. However, John Tuckey decided upon examination of the paper used in writing that Twain resumed "Which Was the Dream?" in August (Twain *Which Was the Dream?* 38). Also, he began the fragment with a description of the main character falling asleep momentarily while writing and waking to continue the narrative that readers view, which means Twain introduced his sleeping motifs months too early to speculate about influence from the psychoanalyst he's not known to have met. The speculation that Freud influenced "Which Was the Dream" is a tantalizing near miss of synchronicity.

Because these fictions frequently include references to the author's life recorded in his non-fiction, the autobiographical element is irrefutable. The author thus created fictions combining facts of his life with the traumatic fears induced by the period he had recently lived through. For example, the action in "Which Was the Dream?" is nightmarish and autobiographical both. A famous and respected man is made bankrupt because his trusted relative through marriage puts his savings in fraudulent stocks, allows his accident insurance to lapse and burns his house down. This is autobiographical primarily in terms of the author's feelings about Charles Webster and his belief that Webster had caused his financial ruin. But there's no doubt the famous and respected man is Twain because, for one example, he puts actual words Susy spoke as a child into the mouth of the fictional man's daughter. In the fragment the main character's wife tells the daughter, "There, there, child, you must not cry for little things," and the daughter asks, "Mamma, what *is* LITTLE things?" (46). In the dictation of February 2nd, 1906, Twain says his wife told Susy, "There, there, Susy, you mustn't cry over little things," and Susy said, "Mamma, what is '*little*' things?" (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 326). As for a house fire as the agency of ruin, in a letter of 1881 Twain wrote,

a week ago today. A coup-kettle set fire to Bay's crib & canopy, and Rosa snatched Bay from the midst of the flames, just in time to save her life. Then Rosa and I threw the burning bedding out of the window – though it looked, for awhile, as if the *house* must go...Well, a couple of hours ago, Julia the wet nurse snatched the sleeping *Jean* from *another* flaming crib...A spark had flown through the fire-screen...she & I flung the bedding out the window & stamped out the fire on the floor with our feet. We got our hands burned *again*...for the blazes on the floor were thick & lively" (Mark Twain, *Business Man* 149-50)

This fragment also contains a fascinating bit of subconscious autobiography, subconscious because the author evidently senses an unfortunate quality in himself which would manifest itself in the author's actual life more than one decade later. As mentioned in the prior discussion of Twain's dealings with his business manager Ralph Ashcroft, in 1908 the author signed a power of attorney that gave his business

manager complete control of his finances. Months afterward Twain denied any memory of having signed such a document even though he couldn't deny the genuineness of his signature: "the most amazing document that has seen light since the Middle Ages...hands me and all I own and all I ever *shall* own over to Ashcroft and Miss Lyon. Until June 1 [1909] I had never heard of the paper – yet I *signed* it" (Hill 212). In the fragment the main character's creditors similarly question the main character's abnegation of financial responsibility to the man who ruined him: "you ask credit for these several most extraordinary assertions...your wife's whole property and your own, into the hands of a man – *any* man – empowering him to originate and write letters for you in your own handwriting, sign and endorse your name upon checks, notes, contracts...without your most casual supervision [?]" To which the main character responds, "it seemed incredible, impossible, even to me. And yet it was true, every shameful detail of it" (Twain *The Devil's Race-Track* 71). In light of this example of how the author could know himself but not amend himself, perhaps he had reason to believe in Determinism.

Determinism motivates the appearance in "Which Was the Dream" of a brief but significant appearance by Ulysses S. Grant, although not quite the Grant of real life. This Grant is young, since the story happens in 1854, and "a soldier of the best sort, the sort that is coolest in circumstances which make other people lose their heads" (56). This Grant served under the main character, a retired general, in the Mexican War, and "he had in him the stuff for a General," but "he achieved no distinction in the war – but then, such things go a good deal by luck and opportunity...With the Mexican war, his only chance for success in this world passed away" (57). This is Twain's Determinism speaking. How Twain perceived Grant is apparent here in this gloomy fiction – a man of immense personal virtue – but this Grant never realized his ability because circumstances prevented the opportunity. Grant's appearance in the fragment is like a sad reunion between the two men because now both the author and Grant had been broke and in debt. Both failed in actual life, and both failed in the fiction. Also, in actual life both men achieved high station in life before suffering financial ruin. In the fiction Grant failed for lack of opportunity and the main character failed because he trusted someone wrongly. In the fiction Twain has Grant fail through the deterministic nature of life. Because this failure is not Grant's fault, and because Grant associates

with the main character, who is actually the fiction's author, Twain is attempting to expiate his real life fault through a deterministic fiction by creating some type of connection between the two men.

Apart from the thematic use made of this pseudo-Grant, it's significant in literary terms that Twain chose an important real historical figure with personal meaning to use in a fiction and then changed the figure into a person who never was. In other words, the author did nothing like Tolstoy did with Napoleon. He did not imagine a real person as a fictional historical character he might have been, but as a fictional character the real person wasn't and never could have been except in this author's specific fiction for his particular purposes. It's a literary act that to this writer's knowledge hadn't previously been done, and appears similar to literary acts done many decades after in genres such as science fiction. Furthermore, the creation of this Grant who never was is particularly apt to this fiction because it's exactly the type of conflation of reality with unreality that occurs in dreams, and this fragment, as per its title, is about the relationship between reality and dreams.

In explanation of the title of "Which Was the Dream?", the fragment is more complex than a narrative within a dream because it questions whether waking or dreaming is the human state of reality and asks how one is distinguishable from the other. Early in the fragment the main character writes in reference to his edenic family life, "Our days were a dream, we lived in a world of enchantment" (38). Two pages later he writes, "Every morning one or the other of us laughed and said, 'Another day gone, and it isn't a dream yet!'" (40). In other words, the family's happiness is so complete it appears unreal, as the author nostalgically recalled the period when he was prosperous and his children were little. Eden will end, however, as is foreshadowed when a daughter has dreams of being eaten by a bear, and the main character writes, "while you are *in* a dream it *isn't* a dream – it is reality, and the bear-bite hurts" (47). This means a dream or nightmare is indistinguishable from reality during its duration, as the main character discovers.

After he discovers the extent of his loss and is accused by one creditor of forgery, the main character enters a coma and awakes eighteen months later in a rudely furnished log cabin, dressed as an army private and with his loving family. They inform him he has a new name, Edward Jacobs, "my stage name," and his children happily cry, "he's in his right mind!" (76, 77). This is about the author's loss of

one component of his identity through financial and personal calamity and his reduction to core values of love and loyalty.

Without joining the chorus of critics who assert the author had a split personality, this passage may indicate the author at this period felt he had lost either Mark Twain or Samuel Clemens, whatever those names may have meant to him, and become Samuel Clemens or Mark Twain, whichever was his “stage name,” which is a manufactured identity. The entire long-lasting discussion of whether or not the author had multiple personalities seems almost as fruitless as discussing whether it is Stephen King or Richard Bachman who did one thing or another. The issue has gained purchase because the author under discussion adopted a pen name which came to signify a public performer as well as author, his fame being large in both fields. His public made Mark Twain so popular that Sam Clemens became eclipsed, and the author acquiesced. He had an unsettled literary reputation. After experiencing a calamitous period of life, he lived through the beginning of organized psychotherapy. These factors and a keen interest in psychology on the author’s part combined to make Twain an apt subject for psychological discussion. But the issue for the main character/author in “Which Was the Dream?” is his question of which life had been the illusion or dream, not whether the author had a split personality. The title’s question is about the nature of physical reality.

Twain knew the term duality and attempted to puzzle out its meaning in a lengthy notebook entry he made in January, 1897, which is the year marking the beginning of his sustained work with literary fragments. He believed he had misunderstood the term when he had envisioned it as his own conscience in human form in “The Recent Carnival of Crime in Connecticut” because his conscience was “a mere machine, like my heart...It is not a separate person, it has no originality, no independence” (Paine, ed. *Mark Twain’s Notebook* 348-9). Robert Louis Stevenson’s personification of duality in the persons of Jekyll and Hyde had greater validity, he said, but still was inexact because “the two persons in a man are wholly unknown to each other, and can never in this world communicate with each other in any way” (349). Twain’s “new notion” of duality, he said, was of “a spiritualized self which can detach itself and

go wandering off upon affairs of its own...I am not acquainted with my double,” but he could take “possession of our partnership body and goes off on mysterious trips” (349-50).

Twain was not referring to a spiritualized self whom he might blame for signing the comprehensive power of attorney with Ashcroft, but to an idea he would explore in numerous fictional fragments. The spiritualized self was “my dream self” – “my ordinary body and mind freed from clogging flesh and become a spiritualized body and mind” (350). But even though Twain believes in this spiritualized self existing only in his dreams, that spiritualized self is himself, as if an entity he terms spiritualized is paradoxically corporeal. In his dreams, “I am always *myself*, not that other person who is in me”. To grasp Twain’s concept of duality expressed here, it helps to recall the letter he wrote in this same year to the psychologist John Adams asking which was “I” and which was his mind. His dream self, which he terms “spiritualized,” in fact has a type of corporeality, but only in immaterial dreams. “Myself” always inhabits the dream self, which has bodily and mental capabilities the waking Twain lacks. Therefore in dreams Twain can experience activity and behavior impossible otherwise – “insult the weak...cringe to the strong...go into awful dangers...in battles and trying to hide from the bullets...go to unnamable places...do unprincipled things”. But his dream self also exists independently of the waking Twain because “When my physical body dies my dream body will doubtless continue its excursion and activities without change, forever” (351).

“Which Was the Dream?” and the fragments Twain wrote afterwards don’t mirror his notebook entry, but they express a similar sense of an alternative reality which resembles dreams and often ask which reality is primary. Characters in these fragments typically display disorientation amounting to the fragment’s title question.

The end of “Which Was the Dream?” has a psychological similarity to Lincoln’s dream or illusion of seeing a different self in his mirror after his elevation to the Presidency. The author/main character experiences a disparity between edenic past and reduced present, and the inability to accommodate the oneself in two realities expresses itself in a sense of living in a dream. It’s a fictionalized reiteration of Twain’s query to Susan Crane in 1891, as described in Chapter Three.

The ending that exists constitutes a reasonable conclusion, so why is “Which Was the Dream?” a fragment? The answer is that Twain left notes to continue the narrative by having the main character make a fantastic sea voyage (Twain *Which Was the Dream?* 11). While sailing to Australia the retired general and his family get sucked into a gigantic and eternal vortex called “the Devil’s Race-Track,” and at the vortex’s center is “the Everlasting Sunday,” a circle of eternally calm water from which escape is impossible (12). These notes signal a change with similarities in a group of fragments to come. Whereas the previous fragment consisted of life which appeared dream-like, future fragments described fantastic sea voyages which could only occur in dreams or nightmares. Characters make sea voyages without stated purpose and without conclusion, fragments in which the voyages, endless and other-worldly, are the only world the characters have. If in the previous fragment Twain described how he felt his life to be dream-like, in these sea voyaging fragments he describes his life *as* a dream, and often as a nightmare. In the first explanatory note to his final selection for his autobiography, he wrote, “Whereas the side excursions are the life of our life-voyage, and should be, also, of its history” (Twain *Autobiography of Mark Twain* 203). The author’s choice of description of his life as life-voyage, a sea metaphor, casts light upon his dream narratives involving journeys by sea. As noted earlier, he had circled the earth on his lecture tour and made so many additional trans-Atlantic voyages that he had spent about a year of his life on board ship. A substantial amount of his life had passed on the oceans. It would have been natural to Twain to have conceived of life spent entirely aboard ship, particularly during a European exile without a termination date and during a period when his life had changed so radically that he couldn’t reconcile his past and present.

He wrote at least five fragments of varying lengths dealing with these dream sea voyages, all containing some similarity in incident or theme. In two fragments a dog warns the ship’s passengers of a disastrous fire, only to be left aboard to die. Most of the fragments make references to dreams. In “The Mad Passenger” the ship’s crew is said to be navigating by “a chart of Dreamland,” and the passenger of the title says his own country is the “counterpoint” of “dreamlands like the World,” which is “that unreal planet,” containing place names like “England, America, and so, and an ocean called Atlantic” (Twain

The Devil's Race-Track 135, 130) . In other words, reality and all its physical components are “unreal” to this passenger. As for the narrator’s reaction to this information, he says, “It seems manifest, from all sorts of evidences, that I have been under a delusion since I don’t know when. Years, no doubt. I think I have lived in dreams so long that now that I have got back among realities I have lost the sense of them and *they* seem dreams too” (131). This disorientation the narrator describes is not only autobiographical of the author, but characteristic of modernistic literature also. The narrator has been living in unspecified dreams, but is now in reality, which appears dream-like also and which the passenger calls Dreamland. The fragment breaks off with a description of a very dream-like photograph album the narrator chances upon, containing photographs of the passenger, “his family, and many lady and gentleman friends: in some cases beautifully clothed, but in most cases naked!” (136). Not only is this archetypal dream imagery combining shame, unease and erotic elements, but it’s a symbol of the fragment’s primary question: are the people in the photographs really themselves when clothed or unclothed? The people are the same individuals in both states, but the difference between states is significant and unsettling.

The lengthiest of the sea-voyage fragments is 1898’s “The Great Dark”, a title bestowed by Bernard DeVoto and taken from Twain’s notes for the fragment (*Twain Letters From the Earth* 231). The fragment’s genesis is described in a notebook entry of August 10, 1898: “Last night dreamed of a whaling cruise in a drop of water...This would mean a reduction of the participants to a minuteness which would make them nearly invisible to God, and He wouldn’t be interested in them any longer” (Paine, ed. *Mark Twain’s Notebook* 365). The fragment contains all elements in the entry, not merely the plot, but also the statement about Divine desertion and the occasion of the plot through the medium of dream.

The fragment begins with the subtitles “BEFORE IT HAPPENED” and “STATEMENT BY MRS. EDWARDS”. In “Which Was the Dream?”, when the main character was told in the conclusion that his new name was Edward Jacobs, he initially repeated it as Jacob Edwards, which may explain the last name of the couple in “The Great Dark”, inasmuch as Twain planned to continue the former fragment as a sea-voyage. The first words are “We were in no way prepared for this dreadful thing. We were a happy family”. Henry Edwards has bought a microscope for his daughter’s birthday, 19th March, which was

Susy Clemens' birthday also (80). Henry examines under the microscope a drop of water mixed with Scotch, falls asleep, wakes and begins writing. The fragment continues as his own statement. "Which Was the Dream?" likewise began with a brief statement by the main character's wife and continued with the husband's.

After Henry describes viewing the microscopic life in the drop of water, he falls asleep thinking of "An ocean in a drop of water" and is visited by one "Superintendent of Dreams". This figure sends Henry and his family on their dream ship voyage in the ocean of water beneath the microscope. The mood throughout is disorientation. The captain and crew are baffled because they can't find the lands on their charts, and they're lost in a permanent region of darkness and storm. This circle of darkness is the rim of the microscope pressing on the water upon the glass slide. In the center of the circle of darkness is a deadly area of heat and desert, "The Great White Glare," which is the area under the microscope's illumination. There are attacks by microscopic sea creatures grown whale-sized and mutinies by the crew, intriguing science fiction of the Jules Verne and Edgar Rice Burroughs variety, but the aforesaid disorientation provides a complexity combining the eeriness of ghost stories and the frisson of psychological horror.

At one point aboard ship the narrator refers to the voyage as a dream and asks to have it ended, and the Superintendent of Dreams replies, "You have spent your entire life on this ship. And this is *real* life. Your other life was the dream". In response the narrator muses, "we consider with pride our mental equipment, its power of analysis, its ability to reason out clear conclusions from confused facts...and then comes a rational interval and disenchant us...our best-built certainties are but sand-houses and subject to damage from any wind of doubt that blows" (Twain *The Devil's Race-Track* 102-3). The narrator's perplexity increases when his wife agrees with the Superintendent and accuses her husband of believing the elements of his dreams to have been real. This is the scene described in Chapter Three when his wife tells the narrator, "There is something the matter with your mind" (109). But eventually he accepts what wife and Superintendent tell him: "An incident of my American life would rise upon me, vague at first, then grow more distinct and articulate...then in a moment it was gone, and in its place was a dull and

distant image of some long-past episode whose theatre was the ship – and then *it* would develop, and clarify, and become strong and real”. At last only one type of memory “persistently gathered strength and vividness – our life in the ship!” (117).

At this point the narrative becomes “Book II”, and the narrator says his “little boy” tore the pages of Book I out and fed them to the sea breezes, “but it is no matter”. In other words, the dream life is his real life, and his previous real life and period of confusion and doubts, as described in Book I, is as inconsequential as any description of dreams. Six years have passed, and he remembers his period of adjustment to his new reality as “greatly troubled, for a time, because my wife’s memories still refused to correspond with mine”. But she understands the importance of his dreams to her husband, so the couple discuss for recreation their “double-past – particularly our dream-past” (118-9).

The remaining pages appear to signal yet another loss of direction for the author. The narrator’s children disappear during an attack by one of the giant sea creatures. The captain quells a mutiny. The fragment stops.

However, the provisional end of the narrative is known because Twain left eight pages of notes which DeVoto wrote a summary of, even though he wasn’t positive “which of alternative devices” the author might have finally chosen had he written a completed fiction (Twain *Letters from the Earth* 226). The narrator’s ship visits another filled with treasure, *The Two Darlings*, but a snowstorm separates the ships with the captain’s daughter and the narrator’s infant son aboard the other ship. For ten years they search for *The Two Darlings*, sometimes sighting other ships but never making contact, as the voyagers turn grey and old. They glide into the “Great White Glare,” where they find the other ship with all passengers dead and mummified. The captain and others go mad. The narrator’s aged wife dies. Only the narrator and his servant remain alive, “and we are sitting with our dead. It is midnight. Alice and the children come to say goodnight. I think them dreams. Think I am back home in a dream” (226-7).

Devastation is the sum of the ending described in Twain’s notes. It combines personal tragic loss, delusion, endless fruitless effort, lethargy and the depthless sadness of defeated old age.

If Twain left notes for the conclusion of “The Great Dark”, the question arises why he didn’t follow through in his twelve remaining years of life. He allowed numerous literary projects to sit static for comparable periods of time or much longer, but most of those simply stopped in progress, whereas his notes for “The Great Dark” are extensive enough that another writer could easily complete the fragment. In Twain’s own metaphor, he could easily have filled in the blanks himself. If its permanent fragmentary state was not a loss of authorial interest, then the author may have doubted the wisdom of publishing such strange and sad fiction. Or it may have been too revealing in that it portrayed too nakedly the turmoil of its writer during this period. This last proposition suggests “The Great Dark” was imaginative and therapeutic both. Its author didn’t stop thwarted at midpoint, as so frequently occurred, but he instead imagined its conclusion, a conclusion as cathartic as *King Lear*’s, and having done so gave its author sufficient benefit. If in the end Twain wrote “The Great Dark” for himself, then its final state makes sense. He didn’t need the satisfaction of fleshing out his notes because envisioning the ending afforded a satisfactory psychological and artistic closure.

Twain’s fragments of the late 1890’s explain the desultory character of most of the autobiographical pieces he wrote during the same period. The pieces exist as they do because his primary autobiographical efforts appeared in his fragments, wittingly or not. These were his psychological portrait, more truly autobiographical than his autobiographical pieces and truer than the pieces of this period to his final conception.

Not only did the completion of *Following the Equator* mark a near end of the author’s capacity to create book-length works, but its composition proceeded uniquely for him. Like his lecture tour, the book helped pay his bankruptcy debts, and this pecuniary incentive caused unprecedented focus during labor. In an 1897 letter he said, “It was the only book I have ever confined myself to from title-page to Finis without the relief of shifting to other work meantime.” He had four new books in mind to commence, and he would “begin an emancipated life this afternoon, & shift back and forth among them & make them furnish me recreation and entertainment for three or four years to come” (Kaplan, F. 549). The author is

stating here that he habitually used process of association to shift not only between subjects and tones in his autobiography and fragments, but also between individual works as he composed them. In his letter of the same year to the psychologist John Adams he had claimed that any intruding object might divert his attention from the object under conscious consideration, and here he reveals that he derives enjoyment from using the phenomenon to practical purpose. As said, he never had problems writing per se, but he always had problems maintaining focus. Shifting from work to work, which imitated the process of association in the sense of giving precedent to the newest influence, afforded him relief, recreation and entertainment. This explains why he wrote so many fragments and produced so many ungainly books, and it argues that his decision to compose his autobiography as he did was not only a natural development, but for him a practical and artistic victory.

In his introduction to an edition of Twain's fragments, John Tuckey noted that all the selections were written between 1896 and 1905 (Twain *Which Was the Dream?* 1). In other words, the *Autobiography* as defined by Paine's dictations was the effective end of the fictional fragments. The inference is that the final conception of the *Autobiography* allowed Twain to subsume the psychological tensions of the fragments into the integration of the dictations. He progressed from work he could not complete to a unified book-length work he did, no matter how tangled a publishing history it endured. This calls into question the opinion of Everett Emerson, who said, in another devaluation of the *Autobiography*, that the latter work "had one definite effect on Mark Twain's career: it all but stopped him from writing anything for some time" (*Mark Twain: a Literary Life* 291).

In a summation of the evidence, the case is to the contrary. His autobiography was his reasoned work of choice following the fragments. Emerson could as well say that *Tom Sawyer* or *The Prince and the Pauper* stopped Twain from writing anything for some time. His autobiography allowed him to fulfill a hope that had thwarted him for almost half his life. He escaped the conceptual illusion that his life was a story and signifiable through writing by way of a second illusion, this one artistic, which was that his life was open-ended and tellable, in the mimicry of the sequence of his thoughts. As interesting as the fragments are, as evidentiary as they are of the author's imagination and psychology, it was the

Autobiography that allowed Twain to progress beyond his literary roadblock and finish his life with a polished and complete work both valuable to scholars and triumphant for the author.

At approximately the period in 1906 in which Twain was dictating about religion, he wrote a letter to Henry Rogers making manifest his pride in his autobiography and his awareness of its modernistic novelty: “I would like the world to see (as Howells says) that the *form* of this book is one of the most memorable literary inventions of the ages...It ranks with the steam engine, the printing press and the electric telegraph. I’m the only person who has ever found out the right way to build an autobiography” (Twain *Correspondence with Henry Huttleston Rogers* 611). This hyperbole, with its imagery of inventions that revolutionized life through conceptual leaps, emphasizes the author’s literary ambition. He thought he was stepping into a new age, as did a number of writers about to appear. The difference between Twain and the others is that he was stepping forward at the end of his career and doing so in a genre the others wouldn’t, and that has made all the critical difference.

In paraphrasing Roy Pascal, James Olney asks of the nature of autobiography, “Is there such a thing as design in one’s experience that is not an unjustifiable imposition after the fact? Or is it not perhaps more relevant to say that the autobiographer half discovers, half creates a deeper design and truth than adherence to historical and factual truth could ever make claim to?” (Olney 11). With reference to these words, if the title to this study asked which of Twain’s autobiographies consisted of facts, then the answer would be none do. But since the title asks which of Twain’s autobiographies is the truth, then the answer is they all do. His fictions, fragments, non-fiction narratives, autobiographical pieces and his *Autobiography* itself all portray the author as faithfully or more than any collection of facts could, and the author finally and consciously knew so, even if his critics still don’t. As a last word in a study of a work in which the history of its critical reception plays a part, it is reasonable to assert that many critics appear to have studied more closely what the critics before them have written than to have studied Twain’s autobiography itself.

Photo one: 1966 paperback illustration art for *The Innocents Abroad*

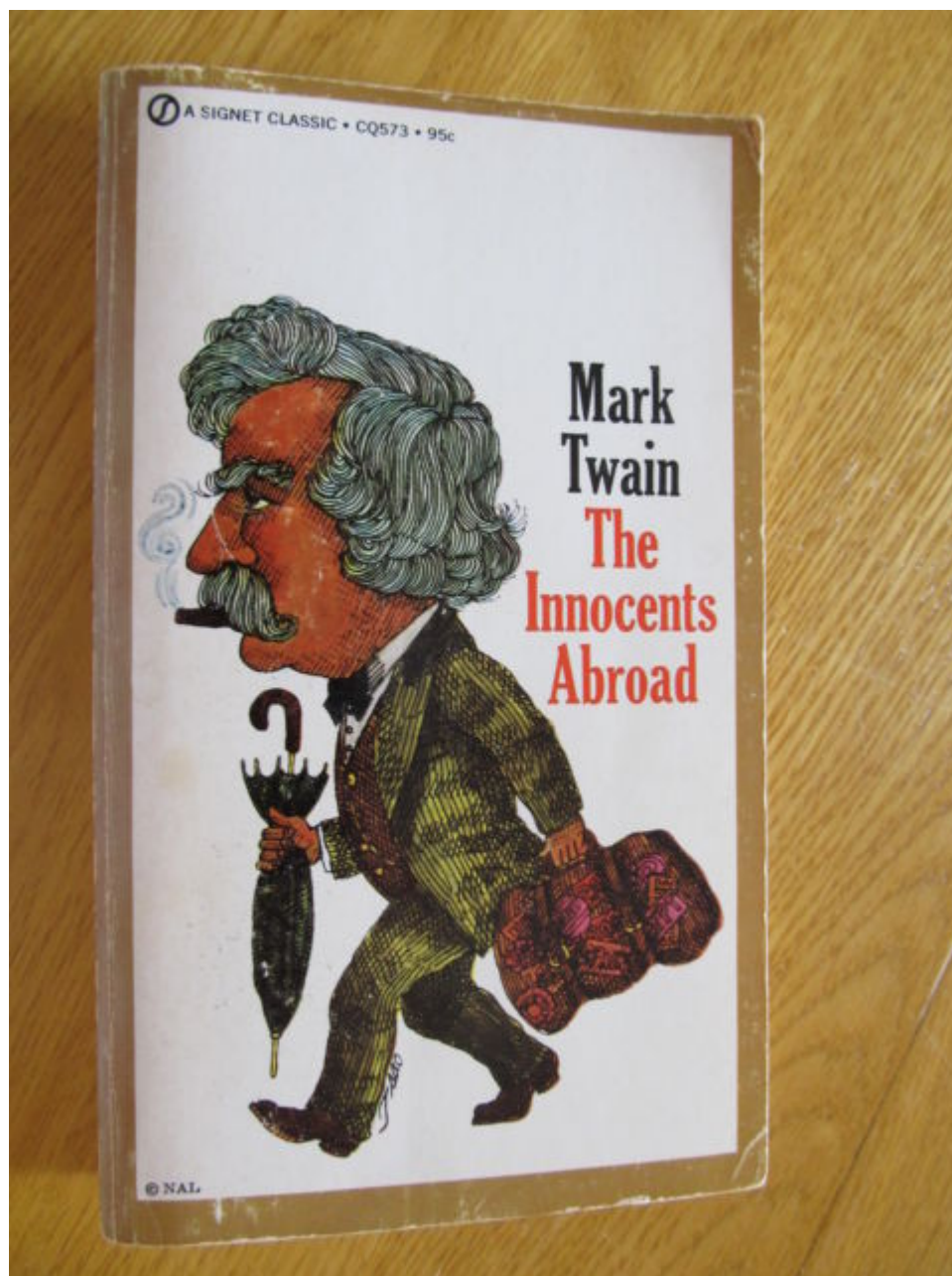


Photo two: *Huckleberry Finn* comic book crediting Samuel L. Clemens rather than Mark Twain as author due to incorporation of name of Mark Twain



Photo three: 21 Fifth Avenue on left corner



Photo four: House diagonally opposite 21 Fifth Avenue at corner of Fifth and Ninth Street



Photo five: Church of the Ascension

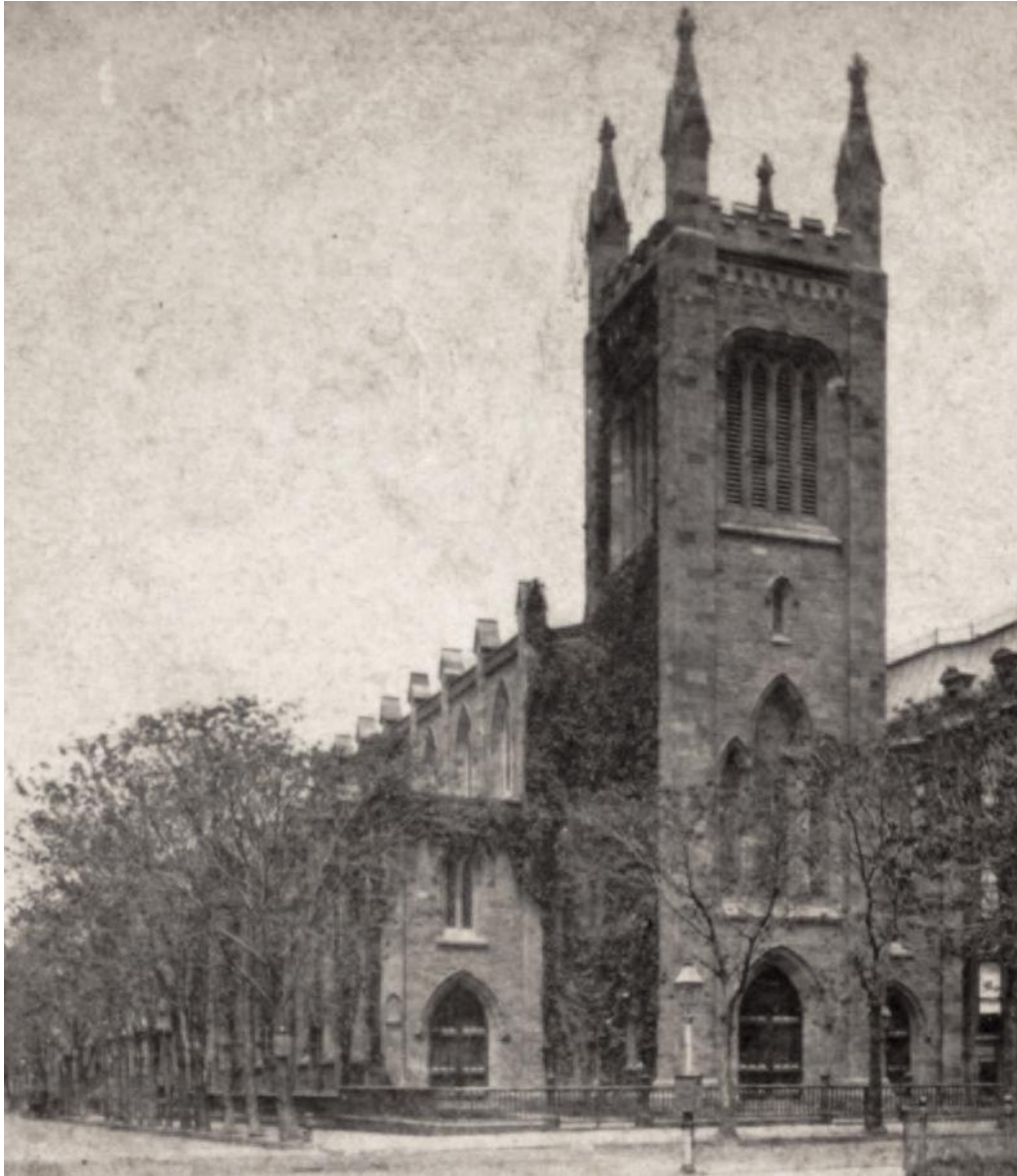


Photo six: Mark Twain and wife on rectory side steps of Church of the Ascension



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