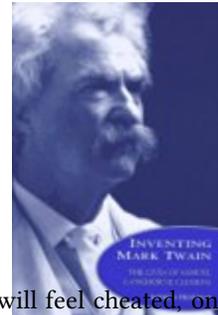


H-Net Reviews

in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Andrew Hoffman. *Inventing Mark Twain: The Lives of Samuel Langhorne Clemens*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1997. xviii + 564 pp. \$30.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-688-12769-5.

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Andrew Hoffman's book was written with the intention, in part, to provoke and to sell many copies. Evidence of provocation has already been present in conversations between Twain scholars on the Mark Twain Forum, on C-SPAN's Booknotes and will almost certainly be echoed in many subsequent reviews of the book. Hoffman's controversial stance in relation to Clemens' life rests on several unsubstantiated claims that he may have experimented in bohemian homosexual activities in his youth and, to a somewhat lesser degree, that he was followed throughout his life by a variety of psychic distresses. In other words, Hoffman's book, coming as it does rather late in the genealogy of Twain biographies, "invents" a host of late twentieth-century concerns to attach to Clemens' life story.

Even at this early stage of audience reception, critical opinion of Hoffman's presentism and dubious scholarship is quite negative. As the author of a book with "invention" in the title, I am usually quite sympathetic to revisionist critical stances, but as any Twain scholar can attest, Clemens' life was extraordinarily varied and rich and such a life needs little embellishment, particularly where the factual evidence of such claims as homosexuality is absent. For a biographer removed from his subject by history and exclusive access to the original archive of materials, it is a common ploy to "invent" eyebrow-raising claims in an effort to secure one's book a place in a crowded field.

Having read the book, I must say in Hoffman's defense, that the sexuality thread that formed the basis of his March 1995 article in *American Literature* is, in the completed biography a small and ultimately insignificant concern of the larger narrative.

In fact, Hoffman's biography strikes out on three

counts. Many readers of the book will feel cheated, on the basis of dubious scholarship and methodology, by the claims about Clemens' psycho-sexuality. But Twain scholars should be at least as concerned by the fact that *Inventing Mark Twain* is a poor literary biography, one that does little to synthesize recent critical opinions with a careful study of Clemens' work as a writer. For a book of this magnitude, the fact that so many opportunities to discuss the range and implications of Hoffman's research by re-reading parts of Twain's own literary output is a stunning omission. Finally, Hoffman's introduction of a sequence of previously unpublished material held by Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company (as trustee of the Mark Twain Foundation) is often shallow and anecdotal.

Persons with a genuine interest in Twain will, naturally be drawn to this book, and the publication of it by a trade publisher will ensure a wide distribution; but for students and scholars of Twain, Hoffman's biography is a weak offering, not only because of his strained argument about Clemens' sexuality, but also because it offers little new in the interpretation of Twain's literary output. Instead of a gripping tale of one of America's most complicated personalities, Hoffman's account is a cynical, awkward and unfocused effort.

To understand Hoffman's "take" on Clemens, it is important to note the adjectives he uses in his Preface to describe the identity politics of Samuel Clemens and his literary double, invented personality and alter-ego Mark Twain. On his first page, Hoffman says "Because he appears to be alive, Twain grows and changes so frequently that writing a biography of him is like writing a biography of a liar" (pp. ix-x).[1] Hoffman goes on to argue a truism in Twain scholarship, that Twain/Clemens can be molded into a variety of forms because he intention-

ally cultivated a confusing and oftentimes contradictory identity. Part of the undeniable fascination of Clemens, I think is the possibility of reading this contrariness in ways that are not as cynical as Hoffman suggests, but are instead, natural consequences of the time in which the writer labored.

For Hoffman, “the unreality of Mark Twain is the primary reason this book cannot be a biography of him ... Mark Twain had a biographical life, but it is a life of a public image, not a flesh and blood man” (p. x). Hoffman therefore places Clemens, and not his double at the center of the book, suggesting that this fact makes his text an improvement over Albert Bigelow Paine’s *Mark Twain: A Biography* (1912) and Justin Kaplan’s *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain* (1966). Hoffman calls Paine’s book “more an autobiography than a biography,” a familiar charge leveled at “official” biographers by others who follow in their wake. Of Kaplan, Hoffman suggests that time has eroded the value of *Mr. Clemens and Mark Twain*, the appearance of new scholarship and the fact that “Kaplan missed the essence of Samuel Langhorne Clemens” suggested that a new volume was necessary.

So then, with the “actual” person of Clemens as the focus, what opinion is conveyed in the opening Preface? Hoffman wants us to take Clemens as “a pioneer of the American soul” (p. xviii) and that soul is portrayed as “[making] it up as he went along, coping with a strange existence;” as an “uncertain self” who “prefigures contemporary neuroses;” as a person plagued by “ephemerality and inherent falseness;” and, most importantly, as a hollow man at the core, resulting from “the odd configuration of his childhood” reinforced later in life by experiences that showed that an image of a person, “likely to be callow, cruel, frightened and selfish” was more important than a man’s essential identity (pp. xiii, xvi-iii). Hoffman’s Clemens is a man about to enter Dante’s *Inferno*, with the aid of a psychoanalyst. Much of what Hoffman claims to be true of Clemens has in fact, been applied to many of the canonical American authors.

Hoffman repeats the conclusions of many scholars that the appearance of new print technologies (and in Twain’s case the viability of a performative lecture and dramatic culture) and ideologies in America enabled the relatively easy production of fictional spectacles. Often, in the case of American Renaissance writers in particular, those older Atlantic Monthly writers Twain would eagerly try and impress, the fictional spectacles created brought the relative social formlessness to expression with new and experimental forms. New categories

of readers (and audiences) interested in “authenticity” were subjected to various episodes of “eventalization,” whereby artistic activity was transformed into proof of American exceptionalism—a new ground where connections, encounters, plays of forces, marketing and business strategies and discontinuity all were essential aspects of cultural fame and audience reception. Thus, for Hoffman, “Twain was as much a cultural phenomenon as a writer” and reflects the huge national ambitions of America as a collective (pp. xiii, xvii). If Hoffman were to adopt this stance and use it to frame his discussion of Clemens, we might have had an interesting, if somewhat derivative and academic biography. Instead, Hoffman chooses to adopt novelistic strategies, not altogether unfamiliar ones at that, since his own brief biography lists “novelist” along with “academic” and “visiting scholar” at Brown University as parts of his own portfolio. Hoffman, paving the way for what many will feel is unlicensed speculation regarding homosexual proclivities, says

Speculation is a necessity in biography. As a biographer, I could blur the facts to create a reason, or I can admit the uncertainty of knowledge—and guess. An interesting thing happened once I began to guess about the uncertainties in Clemens’ life. These surmises—not random choices, but conclusions based on circumstantial evidence—began to form patterns. Earlier guesses determined later ones, forcing certain conclusions. If I had continually guessed wrong—that is, misunderstood the state of Clemens’ mind at these crucial points—it would have become increasingly difficult to make the guesses suit the known facts. In fact, Clemens’ habits of mind became clearer as I went along. I cannot say that I proved myself right; I can only say it began to seem less and less likely that I was wrong (p. xii).

“Less and less likely that I was wrong,” there is the phrase that will separate this book’s detractors and supporters. Many practicing scholars will be profoundly unsettled by this definition of literary and historical method. And they should be uncomfortable. If one is prone to accept speculation and hypothetical reality as an adequate substitute for kinds of material typically expected of undergraduate and graduate essays in American literature, then Hoffman’s book will have been constructed on an adequate premise. Like Twain’s eccentric neighbors in Nook Farm, Hoffman needs a good dose of mesmerism to make his observations align.

Hoffman’s most controversial speculations occur in Chapters Two, Four and the center of the tempest, Chapter Seven. The first fifteen chapters, treating Clemens’

life before his marriage and publication of *Innocents Abroad* form a fairly distinct division. In Chapter Two, Hoffman describes John Clemens, Samuel's father as a befuddled, beaten man facing bankruptcy and addicted to the narcotics found in Cook's pills. For the boisterous young Samuel, Hoffman describes the passing of his father as "an impossible weight, a burden that enraged Sam even more after he obtained a horrifying glimpse, through a keyhole of Dr. Hugh Meredith opening his father's body for an autopsy" (p. 20). To make this claim stick, Hoffman suggests in a note, he took a comment from Sam's brother Orion on the back of a letter sent in February 1861 suggesting that their father had doctored himself to death, consulted with a pharmaceutical historian on the composition of Cook's pills (which were known to include mercurous chloride and laxatives but not, in their typical composition narcotics) and drew the conclusion that because any pharmacist of the time could have added other drugs, "we can guess what else the pills included" (n. 515). Such convoluted reasoning is necessary, because a chemically-dependent father whose failures in finances and prestige make for a good psychological trauma.

In order to make chemical addiction a running theme, Hoffman repeats exactly this theorem for Clemens' brother-in-law Charley Webster, his financial representative in a variety of concerns (and one of several close associates who embezzled from Clemens). In Chapter Thirty-Five, Hoffman claims that Webster took excessive quantities of Phenacetin laced with the narcotic codeine, perhaps because he accidentally shot and killed a three-year-old girl (p. 333). This legacy is combined with the apocryphal tale of the existence of the corpse of Dr. Joseph Nash McDowell's (a founder of a St. Louis medical school) fourteen-year-old daughter in a glass-lined copper cylinder and Sam's inside journalistic knowledge of the pornographic adulterous relationship behind the murder of Thomas Hart by John Wise, key elements in Sam's psycho-social development. The sordid reality of Hannibal as a frontier and liminal community works well, if selectively, for Hoffman's attitude that Samuel's youth contained the requisite combination of repression and shock necessary for a latter blossoming of implicit psychological maladies.

In Chapter Four, Hoffman finds it consequential that Sam's early, idealized (and presumably platonic) love for Laura Wright ended abruptly when she impulsively threw her arms around his neck and embraced him. Circumstantial proof of this, reading the tale "Adam and Eve" as an allegory with Eve standing in for Ms.

Wright, is scattered allusively throughout Hoffman's narrative. In Chapter Five, recounting an 1861 meeting with the fortune-teller Madam Caprell, Hoffman recalls "The fortune-teller astounded Sam by describing Laura Wright perfectly ... Madam Caprell touched a nerve when she said no matter whomever Sam courted, he would always think of Laura Wright first" (pp. 59-60). Much later, after his marriage with Livy and on a trip to the Louvre in Paris, Clemens supposedly "found himself appalled at Titian's "Venus," who stares frankly back at the viewer while apparently masturbating" (p. 267). It is one of the confounding qualities of Hoffman's argument that Clemens, apparently phobic of feminine attention in some places, is in fact just as often guilty of excessive passions. How, for instance, could a scholar responsibly make the following assertion, and more to the point, why would such an assertion need to be made: "Though Sam and Livy were devoted partners, they did not communicate the kind of passion that might inspire an adolescent. In all probability, the sexual component of their relationship had dwindled with Sam's unreliable [an ironic reference to Clement Rice, Clemens' journalist and friend in Virginia City?] performance due to age and business worries" (p. 336).

Let's look at a few more examples of this fascination with sex that permeates the book. The episode sure to raise the most eyebrows is the thesis put forward in Chapter Seven. There Hoffman writes, "The exact nature of sexuality in the American West will remain a mystery, but behavior in Nevada took its cue from San Francisco, which even in its early days showed a surprising acceptance of sexual bonds between men" (p. 77). Clearly at this point, we are not going to be told of bunk-house experiments by eleven-year-olds at lakeside camps, we are instead bringing the issue into a communitarian, even national context. This year, I took a year away from teaching in the US to teach students at the American University in Cairo. The fact that I was writing this review came up in one of my classes. Knowing I would have to account for Hoffman's homosexual hypothesis, my students, many of whom are from Cairo where it is a common sight to see men holding hands, walking arm in arm and kissing in the most public of places like the subway (but nonetheless live in a society where same-sex romantic relationships are considered targets of some of the worst forms of official and cultural oppression) were incredulous. On the mere basis of anthropological misunderstanding, how could Hoffman begin to construct such a hypothesis?, they asked. Hoffman continues his reasoning thus, "Though most western men appear to

have visited female prostitutes, they also typically lived in male pairs, sharing resources and beds ... Many ties between men were strong and loving ... [and] often understood as metaphorical marriages ... There is no simple way to define the sexual connection between two men who visit a bordello together and then go home to sleep in the same bed. Are there any changes detectable between a relationship that moves from simultaneous masturbation to mutual masturbation" (p. 77)? Yes indeed.

This is a novel and thorny issue for Twainians who must ask themselves these questions in connection with Twain's associations with: Artemus Ward, "[t]hrowing himself into a flash romantic attachment with Ward, Sam also watched this traveling star carefully for clues to his success" (p. 85); Clement Rice, "the fact that they lived together in Virginia City, and the fact that they escaped together for a week of revelry in Carson suggested a deeper bond than that of just two friends on a lark" (p. 76); Charles Stoddard (after his marriage to Olivia), "His weeks in England with Sam left only scant evidence as to the nature of the bond" (p. 214) and "Whatever pleasure Sam got from his companionship with Charley Stoddard, he found himself craving Livy's company, too" (p. 215); and Anson Burlingame (the U.S. minister in China who anointed Twain's literary genius) also helped expose Clemens "to the lasciviousness surrounding the burial rites of Princess Victoria [allowing] him to see that his own sexual and social choices had seemed wild only in comparison with the restrictive morality of the American Protestantism" (p. 109-10); Isabel Lyon who "served Sam in more capacities than as secretary and frequent card partner ... it is likely that for more than two years ... Lyon fulfilled many wifely duties for Sam, a relationship known, though not endorsed by members of his circle" (p. 461); and, in a spasm of virility, Gertrude Natkin, "the fifteen-year-old girl he had met outside Carneige Hall ... his relationship with Gertrude was personal and playful, almost romantic" (p. 470). In what has to be considered as controversial chapter as the one in which he replays the homosexual thesis, Hoffman writes in "Heaven is Populated with Angelfish," "Sam's friendship with Gertrude Natkin whetted his appetite for further association with young girls, who replaced his own children, no longer young, and revived the scintillation of courtship that he had enjoyed with Laura Wright, Emeline Beach and Livy. He liked trim, well-educated virgins in their teen years" (p. 476). Hoffman, in his chapter titled "Hostage to Bohemia" implies that Clemens purposefully expunged the record of his two years in San Francisco from the book *Roughing It* perhaps in an effort to cover up his true ac-

tivities, "[t]his suppression leaves a tantalizing vacuum, which the city itself fills with suggestive answers" (p. 91). The critical backlash, even in a protean form, will be long and pronounced on this point, and I think Hoffman should be held to a higher standard of proof than the one he puts forward in this book.

One can see inconsistencies throughout the middle portion of the book itself. Hoffman, whose bibliography lists Laura E. Skandera-Trombley's *Mark Twain in the Company of Women*, appears to have been schizophrenic in his contemplation of that book's conclusions. In particular, Hoffman's suggestions about Clemens' alleged homosexuality selectively ignore Skandera-Trombley's very cogent assertion that Twain was "an author so dependent upon female interaction and influence that without it the sublimity of his novels would have been lost" (p. xvi). Interestingly, in Chapter Twenty-Six, Hoffman begins a thread he will continue in Chapter Fifty-Three, noting that one of Clemens' first acts in his Nook Farm community was the creation of a Saturday Morning Club modeled on one in Boston. Hoffman writes "Young women had always appealed to Sam. Livy's girlishness had attracted him as much as her womanliness" (p. 241). Is Clemens to be considered bisexual? Or is it the fact that Hoffman has latched onto figurative, perhaps even deceptive prose that implies one thing but, in fact, might camouflage privately held concerns?

During the first week of April, there has been a significant exchange of opinion based on Hoffman's comments to interviewers at C-SPAN. Glen Johnson, one Twain Forum correspondent remarked, "For those who are interested, there's a growing literature on same-sex affection or same-sex sex during the nineteenth century and earlier. The concept of "homosexuality" is a late nineteenth century construction. [The] Forum conversation has all the marks ... of the kind of presentism that we find everywhere in academia today. It seems to me that there's not a whole lot to be gained by demanding that Mark Twain or any other person who lived before our time be identified as, or protected from "slander" based on, what are obviously hang ups of our time and (some of) our Twainians ... Maybe we could just skip over the struggle and admit that he didn't have the (enlightened?) sexual attitudes of late twentieth century academics (homophile or homophobic) either" (8 April 1997). No better example of Clemens' own inconsistent opinion could be found than the assumed lesbian relationship between Susy Clemens and Louise Brownell which Hoffman claims began in Susy's freshman year at Bryn Mawr. "Although it is not clear how frank [Susy and Louise] were about the sex-

ual nature of their relationship,” Hoffman writes, “Livy returned to Hartford exhausted and unnerved enough to stay in bed two weeks ... [Sam and Livy] regarded her homoerotic desires as an illness, one that distance and the right spas might cure” (pp. 367-68). Given Hoffman’s evidence, we can assume Clemens gave little thought to sending Susy to Carson Nevada for a restorative.

In a recent article in the *Hartford Advocate* (March 27, 1997), Kathy O’Connell recalls a moment in 1993 at the Mark Twain Conference when Hoffman dropped a “bomb” in Elmira by announcing his belief that while a young man in the West, Clemens might have had a series of homosexual affairs. As O’Connell notes “some of that lingers in *Inventing Mark Twain*, but it’s treated so tentatively it comes close to being irrelevant.” Without doubt, the skies will be filled with puffery on this issue, one only hopes that we don’t succumb to the ill-effects of breathing second-hand smoke. Colleagues, whose opinion on matters pertaining to Twain I deeply respect, have offered little support for the “low-rent, few-bed” hypothesis. Their opinion is not far from that expressed by my Egyptian students: “one shouldn’t judge a book by its cover.” Hoffman’s comments about Clemens’ sexual proclivities, meaning to sound sincere, are rather irresponsible.

Twain’s 1866 journey to Hawaii was a watershed moment in his career. Hoffman’s section has the requisite information on Clemens’ meeting with Anson Burlingame and the fortuitous coverage of the Hornet disaster, but it was disappointingly thin. Since the trip resulted in the culmination of *Roughing It*, this chapter (Nine) points to a larger deficiency in the work as a whole. Hoffman’s descriptions of Twain’s writing is conveyed in a matter of fact style with ample information regarding the publication history of each work, but scant attention to interpretations (his own or those of other critics) of that work. Especially odd is the fact that many of Hoffman’s acute observations are frequently disengaged with the actual content of Twain’s narratives. Invariably, Twain’s works are given a cursory and rather superficial reading in a few pages at most.[2] Such glosses are, sad to say, typical of the book and raise the question of what became of the copious observations listed in the many works cited in the bibliography? One excuse might be drastic editing on the part of Morrow, but the avoidance of such discussions is a serious flaw.

In the end, Hoffman’s text demands both that readers be very familiar with most of the Twain oeuvre (since he does little explication of his own in the book) and

stresses too greatly the economic and chronological order of Clemens’ life. So much material passes undigested that Clemens often looks puckish, little more than a cartoon-figure routinely robbed by his friends, uncertain whether he is solvent or hemorrhaging money, playing out a bourgeois drama of language lessons, spas and clinics for his anemic family, traveling out of urges to escape and, most curiously, germinating a succession of pedophilic, anti-imperialist and nostalgic roles. This apparent contradiction—of Clemens as a nuanced archetype for his age—and as one buried in amalgamated business and personal correspondence and itineraries, is most conspicuous (and annoying) in the last 19 chapters. Hoffman does a good job of comprehensively rendering these later, chaotic years of Clemens’ life. His account is truthful and meticulous, but lacks the same thing as George Bush; the “vision thing” is absent from Hoffman’s text, leaving us with what seem paranoid and even “manufactured” conclusions that might prove more dangerous to future interpretations than helpful. To cite just one of several examples of the bias Hoffman creates, in Chapter Fifty-Three, “Heaven is Populated with Angelfish” he says of Clemens: <blockquote> Schoolgirls represented more than grandchildren to Sam ... They replicated both his platonic sweetheart, the dream ideal of romance first embodied in Laura Wright and then realized in Livy until time had abrogated her youth; and the lost girlhoods of his own children, which Sam missed because of his dedication to writing, publishing, and the typesetter. In his old age, he could recapture a taste of girliness, a chance to remake opportunities he felt badly about having squandered (p. 483). </blockquote> Leaving aside the implications of Clemens as a sort of unbridled Lewis Carroll, looking for children as something to be appropriated or fixed in an adult’s egoistic gaze, such a passage lends an emphasis to Clemens’ activities that seems off-color and unnatural given the pedantic details that make up most of the chapters in the book. Because of an unusually strong bias in Hoffman’s account, I would urge readers to consider also looking at Randall Knoper’s *Acting Naturally: Mark Twain in the Culture of Performance*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995. Knoper’s discussion of Twain’s dramatic experience as a means of managing status-anxiety gives better clues that Hoffman provides for Clemens’ journey eastward after the Civil War. “Twain’s series of poses and unveilings, Knoper asserts, came from an attempt by a white, middle-class male to find his concept of self in the midst of gender, class, and racial identities in a largely unstable social environment” (Britton, Wesley. Review for Mark Twain Forum, 22 February 1996). This approach is central to un-

derstanding at least some of the forms of his relationship with William Dean Howells and the Atlantic Literary circle and the propertied world represented by Elmira and Jervis Langdon.

Richard S. Lowry. *'Littery Man': Mark Twain and Modern Authorship* (Commonwealth Center Studies in American Culture, Oxford University Press, 1996) offers a more insightful view of Clemens' strategies for manipulating the literary marketplace than Hoffman is able to muster. The American Publishing Company figures very prominently in the central chapters of *Inventing Mark Twain*, but rarely does Hoffman's discussion rise above a mere recollection of details to offer a systematic explanation for the rivalry between subscription publishing and the trade press. Finally, Bruce Michelson's *Mark Twain on the Loose: A Comic Writer and the American Self* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1995), gives a far more substantial account of Twain's exhibitionism and its impact on his literary output.

In an otherwise excellent bibliography (the index was omitted from my review copy but I assume this is equally useful) Michelson's and Lowry's books are unfortunate omissions. Hoffman's notes are very good, though it must be said many of his more controversial and risky interpretations are explained in the fine-print. There are no illustrations and, while I heartily endorse Henry James's dictum that one should give an author the latitude appropriate to his own subject, I found many of the chapter epigraphs (many drawn from the more obscure Twain writings, especially given the expected general readership of this volume) to offer little in the way of clarity or to suggest a meaningful anticipation of topics discussed within each chapter. This is also true of Hoffman's use of previously unpublished material held by Manufacturers Hanover Trust. As Hoffman notes near the book's conclusion, many of Twain's remaining unpublished material lies in the hands of private collectors, and so one surmises that his contract with Morrow helped free up some of this material for *Inventing Mark Twain*. Many of the several dozen quotations from the Manufacturers Hanover Trust material are of peripheral interest. Two I found especially interesting: 1) the letter Clemens wrote to Charley Stoddard after Stoddard's publication of *A Troubled Heart* outlining Clemens' "pragmatist's spiritual quest" (p. 2, 327) written instructions for an after-dinner introduction where Clemens asks that the moniker Mr. Mark Twain be used, "for my private name embarrasses me when used in public" (p. 350).

The book deals awkwardly with the important in-

fluences of Langdon family wealth and the Nook Farm faux-progressivism on shaping Clemens' social and aesthetic consciousness. Hoffman realizes the titillating thrills shared by Clemens' community in the Henry Ward Beecher adultery case and the faith healers, but makes assumptions about Clemens that stretch belief. A typical Hoffman formulation oversimplifies as in the following example: the Beecher trial "Sam thought, [might] reprise the illicit pleasures he had found in Richard Blennerhassett's conduct of the Hart-Wise murder trial in Palmyra, Missouri, two and a half decades before" (pp. 226-27). 25 years is a long time for associating any idea, but the assumption that Clemens would connect the dots between two local instances in the manner suggested by Hoffman is awfully presumptuous.

The repetitive pattern of dysfunction—fratricidal jealousy, paternal mimicry, sleepwalking, close encounters with chemically dependent relatives and business associates, implied bisexuality, homosexuality, pedophilia—all without reliable documentary or textual parallels, makes for an unpalatable stew. In his methodology, Hoffman has diminished and made too prosaic Clemens' complicated relationship with William Dean Howells. Aside from communications coordinating advance reviews of Twain's books, the two friends are more frequently spoken of at moments where they share in family tragedy. The distortion, which begins as I said earlier in a limited way in the first thirteen chapters, becomes progressively stronger until, near the end, the reader shares in a disorienting alienation that would surprise even Clemens' himself.

Although Hoffman claims to believe that Twain is the most familiar and internationally recognized author since Shakespeare, those attracted to the man and his work feel protective of him as one might of an uncle accused of abusing neighborhood children. There are highly important intersections that could have been explored: the Twain-Howells juncture, the admixture of entrepreneurial judgment and inherited wealth, the cross-cultural reversal of Anglo-American values Twain managed; but instead, the psychological organization Hoffman insisted on was unfortunate. I still think, a decade after reading it, that John McAleer's literary biography of Emerson, *Days of Encounter* (1986), remains a paradigm for others to follow. Clemens' life was dominated by meaningful encounters, each one of which, according to an inner dynamic, provides insights into the writer and his interests. Hoffman nearly achieves this style in his description of his friendship and lecture tour with George Washington Cable, but in many other instances (notori-

ously Clemens' friendship with Howells and Stoddard) the reader is never fully informed as to the extent (or implication) of the friendship.

I hope the sales of Hoffman's book are encouraging enough to justify his efforts; those interested in viewing the aspects of Clemens' life in genuinely revealing new contexts will be better served waiting for the next effort. In this time of Hale-Bopp and Heaven's Gate it might be wise to read Hoffman's concluding words with a highly cynical eye, "I revere Mark Twain, as I have since I first began reading him seriously, but I love Sam Clemens. If he is gazing down on us from a comet somewhere, I hope he can see that love in this book" (p. 505). Let us also hope Sam Clemens is incapable of reading and communicating easily with the *New York Times Review of Books*. Hoffman, given his unique perspective on Clemens, might hear a grumble or two from the great beyond.

Notes:

[1]. My version of Hoffman's book was comprised of uncorrected bound galleys. Actual page references in the published edition may be different from those I've noted here. In addition, each chapter usually contains between 12-25 footnotes, all of which were unnumbered in my edition. References to Hoffman's notes are, therefore, somewhat incomplete.

[2]. Hoffman discusses the following major works "at length" in these places in his text, *Innocents Abroad* (pp. 159-60); *Tom Sawyer* (242-44); *Prince and the Pauper* (291); *Huckleberry Finn* (pp. 315-17); A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court (pp. 345-46); Pudd'nhead Wilson_ (pp. 387-88).

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