



## Searching for the Ideal Girl: Mark Twain's Lost America

NAKAGAKI Kotaro

Tokiwa University



Mark Twain's views on, and representations of, women have long been subjects of literary research, but in the 1990s the rising tide of influence from feminism and gender studies triggered drastic changes in Mark Twain studies. Feminist scholar Myra Jehlen, a pioneer in this field, revitalized gender studies on Twain with her essay on *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), entitled "Gender" (1990). In this essay, Jehlen demonstrated that even a young *male* character such as Huck Finn, created by Twain, a *male* writer, could serve as an illuminating subject of gender study.

Jehlen's interpretation of the scene in which Huck disguises himself as a girl and meets Mrs. Loftus is revealing for its interrogation of gender. In this scene, Huck dons feminine attire and visits Mrs. Loftus in order to see how the town has reacted to his flight with Jim. Noting that Mrs. Loftus is a stranger recently moved to town from elsewhere, Jehlen points out that it is unnecessary for Huck to disguise himself for her, much less as a girl. In any case, Mrs. Loftus has no trouble figuring out that the girl in front of her is actually a boy:

And don't go about women in that old calico. You do a girl tolerable poor, but you might fool men, maybe. Bless you, child, when you set out to thread a needle, don't hold the thread still and fetch the needle up to it; hold the needle still and poke the thread at it — that's the way a woman most always does; but a man always does t'other way... Why, I spotted you for a boy when you was threading the needle; and I contrived the other things just to make certain. (*HF* 74-75)

In calling attention to Mrs. Loftus's tutelage of Huck, Jehlen argues that femininity itself

is a kind of performance. After all, in advising Huck how to be a better girl, Mrs. Loftus implies that femininity is comprised of socially and culturally constructed roles and functions. The ramifications of Jehlen's reading of this scene are that anyone, regardless of biological sex, can disguise him or herself as a girl just so long as one knows the social and cultural codes and roles that define femininity. Of course, contemporary gender studies has for some time now recognized gender identity as a social construct, the result less of nature than of nurture. What Jehlen did that was groundbreaking was to use Twain's literary text to show how a canonical work by a male writer can demonstrate the social construction of gender with male as well as female characters. Jehlen's analysis of *Huckleberry Finn* opened a new frontier in the academic study of Mark Twain, and indeed a number of significant gender studies of Mark Twain's works appeared in the 1990s.<sup>1</sup>

After the death of Twain's daughter Clara Clemens (1874-1962), a number of late Twain manuscripts that she had refused to publish finally became available to scholars, contributing to new gender studies on Twain. Traditionally, such studies of Twain relied on stock female characters such as Becky Thatcher (*The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, 1876) or Mary Jane (*Huck Finn*) in arguing that the author depicted female characters, both girls and women, in stereotypical or idealized ways in his works. The posthumously published manuscripts from Twain's late career challenged this understanding, presenting a variety of female characters who transgress the codes of "the genteel tradition" that held sway in Twain's time. In general, the female characters in these later works reflect social desires and anxieties regarding both traditional, innocent girls, and also the new, more active women who aimed to become themselves the "New Woman" at the turn of the century. These characters are as active, lively — and, in some cases, even as sensual — as male characters; furthermore, in these manuscripts Twain portrays instances of gender roles being switched.

In order to explore Twain's complex and, in some respects, bewildered attitudes toward women, I examine transitions in his images of women that reflect the changing social conditions at the turn of the century. Moreover, I question gender issues by considering idealized girls both in his real life and in his fictional worlds. Through his fictional searching for ideal girls, Twain reveals a longing for the "Old America" of his childhood, while his images of innocent girls appear to reflect his nostalgia for a

pre-industrial, pastoral America. I therefore ultimately aim to expose the function of girl characters in Twain's later works, revealing how, for Twain, "Old America" in the deepest sense really means "young" America.

## Gender Issues in the Works of Mark Twain

In 2001, an anthology of works by Twain that bear on gender issues was published, edited and with an introduction by John Cooley.<sup>2</sup> Entitled *How Nancy Jackson Married Kate Wilson and Other Tales of Rebellious Girls & Daring Young Women*, this anthology includes both early works such as "Medieval Romance" (1870), with its vivid depictions of tomboyish young ladies, as well as later works that were only published posthumously. The development of Twain's attitudes towards women is certainly evident in the contrast between these earlier and later works' portrayals of female characters.

The period during which Twain applied his journalistic eye to the portrayal of varied female characters was one in which a range of social values was overturned. As America passed through the postbellum period en route to the end of the nineteenth century, the rise of industrialization in particular fostered drastic societal changes, including changes in women's ways of life. Notably, the demands on women to perform household chores gradually lessened, increasing their free time. Moreover, the development of higher education for women provided them with new opportunities. Twain's short stories and sketches reflect these changes. Contrary to traditionally virtuous lady characters such as Becky Thatcher or Mary Jane — the typical female subjects of traditional Mark Twain studies — daring girls and young women are conspicuous in Twain's later works. The female characters in *How Nancy Jackson*, for example, conduct themselves well outside of the codes of "the genteel tradition" of Twain's time, engaging in transvestitism and even same-sex marriage. I would argue that Twain's depictions of women pursuing such activities, not to mention the attitudes these depictions represent, should be understood more in the context of the age in which Twain wrote rather than as exceptional to it.

Let us consider the range of female characters in the later, posthumous Twain

works that appear in *How Nancy Jackson*. The short story “Hellfire Hotchkiss” (1897) is noteworthy — particularly in view of Jehlen’s essay focused on Huck’s disguise as a girl — because it is a story about switched gender roles. In this story, Twain writes about a boy and a girl who have been raised with their genders reversed:

“There’s considerable difference betwixt them two — Thug and her. Pudd’nhead Wilson says Hellfire Hotchkiss is the only genuwyne male man in this town and Thug Carpenter’s the only genuwyne female girl, if you leave out sex and just consider the business facts ....” (“Hellfire Hotchkiss,” *HNJ* 56)

In his later years, Twain employed the motif of gender-switching frequently. Twain’s use of this motif must be understood in the context of his broader inquiry into the essence of social construction in other representative works, such as *The Prince and the Pauper* (1881), *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1885), *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court* (1889), and *The Tragedy of Pudd’nhead Wilson* (1894), in which characters adopt the viewpoints of Others — in terms not only of gender but also class and race — through role-switching. *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, for example, explores racial issues through the device of white and light-skinned black babies being switched at birth. In the case of gender-switching, representations of characters adopting the viewpoint of the Other reinforce the concept of gender as a social construction. Posthumously published works shed further light on the function and varieties of gender-switching in Twain.

“How Nancy Jackson Married Kate Wilson” (1902), for instance, introduces the issue of transvestitism. In this short story, a woman named Nancy Jackson is seen committing a murder, and the witness later threatens to expose her evil act unless Nancy disguises herself as a male for the rest of her life. Submitting to this blackmail, Nancy relocates, changes her name to Robert, and begins living as a man. However, another woman named Kate — who has dated many of the young men in town — takes a romantic interest in Nancy as “Robert.” Unable to disclose her secret, “Robert” is perplexed by Kate’s approach and rebuffs her. This irritates Kate and hurts her pride, thereby making her even more intrigued by “him.” Kate redoubles her efforts to marry “Robert” in revenge for the slighting, and ultimately succeeds. Another short story, “Wapping Alice” (1897), similarly

explores transvestitism. In contrast to "How Nancy Jackson," however, "Wapping Alice" represents the marriage of a pair of men, rather than women, and ultimately the man who is disguised as a woman is unmasked.

Twain wrote these stories of gender-switching marriages as comical farces with slapstick elements. While situations similar to those portrayed in these stories have served as comic material in numerous novels, films, and dramas before and since Twain's time, the author's own popular audience would not have appreciated this vein of humor. The very idea of same-sex marriage thoroughly transgressed the social and cultural norms of the day and, despite Twain's best efforts, his publishers refused to publish "Wapping Alice" because it dealt with homosexual marriage and transvestitism. Indeed, homosexuality and transvestitism were repressed and necessarily covert in Twain's time, as demonstrated by the infamous trial of Oscar Wilde in Great Britain, which resulted in the banning of books dealing with these topics. Since the manuscript of "How Nancy Jackson Married Kate Wilson" was not even discovered until 1986, the study of gender issues relating to homosexuality and transvestitism in Twain has only recently begun.

Gender issues in Mark Twain's literary corpus can now be understood in light of the author's later works' treatment of gender as a social construct, too, and this re-evaluation is appropriate considering Twain's well-known skepticism toward society's conventional beliefs. Ever since the early work that first brought him fame, *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), Twain consistently explored social issues from different angles. In his later years, Twain even questioned the superiority of humans over animals. Even though Twain originally conceived of his gender-switching stories as farces or burlesques, his exploration of gender issues in these works nonetheless represents a significant inquiry into social constructivism. That is to say, Twain must have recognized gender to be a social construct in his contemporary moment in history, and even though his characterizations of female characters sometimes deviated from his personal ideals, his journalistic intuition enabled him to grasp both his own and his contemporaries' fears and confusion on gender issues. Twain's unconscious anxieties were manifested in modern society's parallel to Twain's fictional women, the so-called "New Woman" who appeared at the turn of the century. That Twain even bothered to view gender issues from multiple perspectives and role in his fiction raises intriguing questions about any single normative vision of virtuous

females held by either Twain or “the genteel” in American society.

## **Twain’s Fear of a Female-Dominated Society**

Elizabeth Ammons argues that at the turn of the twentieth century, a “New Woman” appeared whose way of life differed from that of the women of previous generations. This New Woman’s way of life emerged in reaction to then-prevalent Victorian strictures on the economic, sexual, emotional, and political lives of “respectable” women in the United States.<sup>3</sup> New Women obtained higher educations and sought positions of social authority in a society that had previously been wholly male-dominated.

At the time, of course, there emerged a strong reaction against trends toward greater freedom and mobility for women; many men saw the New Woman as a challenge to their authority and to traditional values, perhaps unconsciously fearing that women would rob them of their places in society. This male fear of the New Woman was characteristic of the age, and has intriguing parallels with nativism, the contemporary fear and exclusionism regarding foreigners and immigrants in the United States.

Mark Twain’s female characters are largely marked by predictability and implausibility, which critics have attributed to Twain’s wife Olivia Langdon (1845-1904), a representative woman and mother of the genteel tradition. Twain adored and idealized Olivia, and many scholars believe that his regard for her led Twain to avoid potentially objectionable depictions of women in his writing. Like his wife, Twain’s female characters too are frequently objects of adoration by men, especially as conventional wives and mothers. Yet, in Twain’s real life, his wife Olivia’s influence also seems to have accounted for his supporting the women’s suffrage movement. His own views on women’s rights, as well as changing gender roles in society, appears strikingly ambivalent when we consider his fictional treatment of gender together with his personal life.

One might recall how Twain repeatedly attacked the new religion of Christian Science and its female founder, Mary Baker Eddy (1821-1910); these attacks may reflect as much Twain’s own fear and antagonism toward the New Woman as his contempt for Christian Science.<sup>4</sup> That is, insofar as the careers of New Women were restricted

to the fields of education, charity, and religion, Mary Baker Eddy may be considered a representative New Woman for Twain. Since Twain admired his wife and the three daughters whose lives he shared and to whom he dedicated many of his works, he may well have feared the appearance of such New Women as a threat to the ideals of virtue they represented in American society. Indeed, one of Twain's attacks on Mary Baker Eddy bears further mention here. His posthumous work, "The Secret History of Eddypus, the World-Empire" (1901-02) relates the narrative of a dystopian, female-controlled society. The story is set in the year 2901, a time when the entire world (except for China) is dominated by Christian Science. For Twain, the Christian Science-controlled society that emerges is a female dystopia.

### **Depictions of Sensuality in Twain's Dream Writings**

The female characters in Twain's major works are often criticized, and deservedly so, for being devoid of sexuality, but it is likely that Twain wanted to adhere to the strict social norms and customs of his genteel readership. Within this tradition, sensual description and even mere sexual connotation were not allowed in literary writing. Yet Twain did produce work with provocative depictions of sensuality, even if they remained largely unknown because they were not published during his lifetime, and many not for some time after his death. Without close attention, these scenes of heightened sensuality might even be overlooked since often they are depicted as aspects of a dream world rather than in Twain's trademark mode of realism.

Let us therefore turn now from the traditional focus on Mark Twain as a realistic writer to his posthumously published dream writings. In his later years, Twain devoted himself to studying and analyzing the literary device of dreams. In dreams Twain was best able to escape the restraints of the real world, and allow his imagination free rein. Twain's use of a dream motif in *The Mysterious Stranger Manuscripts* (1897-1908), the most important work of his later years, is of particular interest here. This work depicts the supernatural power of Satan, who has the ability to move beyond time and space, as well as to view the entire history of mankind in a few minutes. The sensual depictions

that appear in the dream world of this narrative, so unique among Twain's works, are especially noteworthy.

In the following passage from "No. 44, the Mysterious Stranger" (1902-08), for example, a man dreams that he passes through his lover's body. In the dream portrayed in this narrative, the "dream-self" of characters does not have a substantial body of its own and cannot make physical contact, but they can experience sensual feelings. For Twain, sensual imagery such as this was possible only in dream sequences:

As she drew near I stepped directly in her way; and as she passed through me the contact invaded my blood as with a delicious fire! She stopped, with a startled look, the rich blood rose in her face, her breadth came quick and short through her parted lips. (*MSM* 336)

For Twain, characters in dreams can experience sensuality more acutely than they can in the real world. Dreams thus offer characters relief from the rules and norms of the real world and the rigid, fixed values it imposes. Dream scenes performed a similar function for Twain himself as a writer, freeing him to depict sensuality even as he was otherwise bound by the codes of the genteel tradition. Only in Twain's dream writings, moreover, do women characters actively express their sexual desires:

My passion rose and overpowered me and I floated to her like a breath and put my arms about her and drew her to my breast and put my lips to hers, unrebuked, and drew intoxication from them! She closed her eyes, and with a sigh which seemed born of measureless content, she said dreamily, "I love you so — and have so longed for you!"

Her body trembled with each kiss received and repaid.... (*MSM* 338)

This "erotic" depiction of a daring woman's aroused reaction to a man challenges traditional fixed ideas of Twain's female characters as asexual or static. However, the posthumous publication of *The Mysterious Stranger* indicates that Twain himself was afraid to disclose such frank expressions of sexuality. Only in dream narratives withheld

from publication did Twain allow himself the freedom to write about desire as he wished.

The depictions of sensuality in Twain's dream writings suggest that the author made use of them to express not only fantasy in literary terms but also his own unconscious sexual desires. Twain's dream narratives contain not only erotic depictions of sensual women but also visions of traditional, innocent girls, complicating our understanding of Twain's representations of women and of his own desires. For example, the dream narrative of "My Platonic Sweetheart" (1905) centers on a male narrator who meets his everlasting love. The narrator, who may be Twain himself, naturally ages as the years pass but his beloved remains fifteen, the age at which he first met her. Although depictions of sensuality like those in *The Mysterious Stranger* occur in "My Platonic Sweetheart" too, the stated emphasis is on the platonic rather than the erotic. According to the narrator, while the affection he shares with his beloved is one more intimate than that between brother and sister, it is also different from that shared by lovers:

The affection which I felt for her and which she manifestly felt for me was a quite simple fact; but the quality of it was another matter. It was not the affection of brother and sister — it was closer than that, more clinging, more endearing, more reverent; and it was not the love of sweethearts, for there was no fire in it. ("My Platonic Sweetheart" 285)

In "My Platonic Sweetheart," as in some other dream writings, Twain thus projects his ideal female as an eternally youthful and innocent girl.

This "platonic" ideal perhaps represents a significant aim in Twain's career over the course of which he finally depicted a wide variety of female characters. That is to say, at one time, Twain's writings reflected his anxieties concerning the appearance of the New Woman but, later, he expressed his hidden and ambivalent desires for women and girls through his dream writings. Taken together, Twain's depictions of female characters are inconsistent, but they constitute nonetheless a vivid portrait of his era's — and his own — confusion about the changing roles of women in society and their expressions of sexuality.

## Searching for the Ideal Girl

After embodying his vision of the eternal girl in the imagined world of “My Platonic Sweetheart,” Twain found a way to pursue this vision in the real world. Late in his life, Twain established a social and literary circle of girls he called “angelfish” as members of the “Aquarium Club.” Twain took great pleasure and pride in the Club, describing it as follows:

As for me, I collect pets: young girls — girls from ten to sixteen years old; girls who are pretty and sweet and naïve and innocent — dear young creatures to whom life is a perfect joy and to whom it has brought no wounds, no bitterness, and few tears. My collection consists of gems of the first water. (*Mark Twain’s Aquarium*, February 12, 1908, xvii)

Twain corresponded with young girls in the Angelfish Club throughout his seventies, indeed, continuing until just before his death. More than a dozen girls belonged to the club, and numerous photographs and accounts of Twain playing billiards, swimming, and otherwise enjoying the company of these girls have survived. Until her own death in 1962, however, Twain’s daughter Clara kept these materials hidden because she viewed the club as scandalous and feared damage to her father’s reputation.

Since Clara Clemens’s death, however, much of Twain’s correspondence with members of the Angelfish Club has come to light, affording a new perspective on the life of the great writer. During Twain’s association with the Club, his beloved wife died and his daughters too either died or moved away; but rather than supporting the conventional view of Twain’s later years — that they were barren artistically and overshadowed by the pessimism that followed Twain’s bankruptcy and loss of his wife and daughters — Twain’s friendships with these little girls suggest an alternative evaluation of Twain’s life at this time. Through his correspondence with the Angelfish Club, Twain regained his energy and feeling of youth, and while many of his writings from this period were not published at the time, they reveal that Twain continued to write and record his thoughts without pause.

Everlasting youth was the most important aspect of the feminine ideal that Twain expresses in "My Platonic Sweetheart"; consequently, it is noteworthy that the members of the Angelfish Club were required to graduate and leave the club when they became twenty. The girls who belonged to the club were thus always of about the same young age, and in this regard embodied for Twain the eternal youth that he idealized in ways not so different from the narrator in "My Platonic Sweetheart."

With his own daughters, Twain always played the role of stern father; his daughter Clara described an episode in which her father scolded her for attracting the attention of unknown men, even when she was already in her thirties.<sup>5</sup> Twain similarly disliked seeing his Angelfish Club girls grow up, and particularly regretted their love affairs and boyfriends. In short, he wished that his Angelfish Club girls would stay young forever, as the following letter to one of its members demonstrates:

8 April 1906

You are the sweetest grandchild I've got, Marjorie dear, & the best. ...So you are 16 to-day you dear little rascal! Oh, come, this won't do — you mustn't move along so fast; at this rate you will soon be a young lady, & next you will be getting married. (*MTA* 24-25)<sup>6</sup>

In her response to Twain's letter, this particular Angelfish Club girl showed keen insight into Twain's desires, writing, "No matter how old I am in years, I shall always be your young little Marjorie as long as you wish it" (*MTA* 29). Marjorie thus played her role as pseudo-daughter just as Twain wished her to do.

Twain's desire for his girls to be eternally young is represented in "My Platonic Sweetheart," where it emerges as intimately related to the narrator's own longing for youth. In the dream world, the beloved remains always the same age: "I saw her a week ago, just for a moment. Fifteen, as usual, and I seventeen, instead of going on sixty-three, as I was when I went to sleep" (295). It is only in dreams that the narrator's sweetheart exists, but it is also only in dreams that the narrator himself remains forever a boy. Twain's obsession with eternal youth is further reflected in an aphorism of his which brings to mind the dream world of "My Platonic Sweetheart": "Life would be infinitely happier

if we could only be born at the age of 80 and gradually approach 18” (Phelps 965). Of course, it is in dreams that the older Twain can once again meet the friends, wife, and daughters he has lost, and this too lies behind his interest in crossing the border between reality and dreams, as the following passage from his autobiography reflects: “How good and kind they were and how lovable their lives! In fancy I could see them all again...” (*The Autobiography of Mark Twain* 375-76). Ultimately, Twain preferred the world of dreams to that of waking life:

For everything in a dream is more deep and strong and sharp and real than is ever its pale imitation in the unreal life which is ours when we go about awake and clothed with our artificial selves in this vague and dull-tinted artificial world. (“My Platonic Sweetheart” 295)

Yet in his friendships with the girls in the Angelfish Club, the wish Twain expressed in the dream world of “My Platonic Sweetheart” was realized in his real life, and it amounted to far more for him than “imitation in the unreal life.” Through the medium of the Angelfish Club, Twain crossed the border between dream and reality.

## **Lost America, Regained Youth**

Clara Clemens reasonably feared that close friendships with the Angelfish Club girls reflected a sexual desire for young girls on her father’s part. Yet we must recall the important stress Twain placed on the platonic element in relationships with the members of the club. Only by maintaining the platonic nature of his interest in the girls could Twain preserve the sweet dream that the club fulfilled for him. What was the dream exactly?

We might say that Twain’s search for the eternal, innocent girl is related to his nostalgia for the pastoral America of his youth. In both his autobiography and autobiographical works such as the Mississippi writings (the *Tom Sawyer* series), Twain frequently recreated scenes of pastoral American life being destroyed by the rise of industrialization during his lifetime. The innocence of the eternal girls in Twain’s

“platonic” vision thus overlaps nostalgically with the “innocence” of antebellum America before industrialization. His longing for the innocence of the past — his sense of an “old present and young past” — is also related to the attractions he sees in crossing the borders of waking life and dreams. For Twain, the pastoral antebellum American past is young because it is associated in his recollections with his own youth, while the present of Twain’s writings at the turn of the century is that of his old age. Twain’s ideal of feminine innocence was thus deeply informed by his ideal of a pastoral America; in his images of young girls, Twain thus recreated visions of a lost America. At the same time, Twain’s visions of the innocence of young America may in turn be understood to be symbolized by his ideal of eternally innocent girls.

Twain recreated the past through autobiography, in the writing of which, in a sense, he met with old friends and lost family members, reconstituting bygone days. Twain enjoyed sharing time again with these people whom he reanimated in the process of writing about them in his autobiography. Twain was himself reanimated, both spiritually and creatively, by the process of exercising his imagination in autobiographical writing. Yet when he stopped writing, his youthful spirit and vitality subsided, and he recognized that the lost past could never be regained in the real world. Twain’s autobiography and dream writings, and even the Angelfish Club he established to surround himself with young girls, were thus an escape from the disappointments of reality. In short, Twain strove in his writing to recreate his past — the past of pre-industrial America — and he virtually lived in the past he thus recreated.

Thus, it is significant that Twain’s ideal, innocent girl never appears as the heroine in Twain’s earlier works, where female protagonists are exemplified by the likes of Becky Thatcher in *Tom Sawyer*. Only in the dream world or in autobiography could Twain meet his beloved, deceased daughter, Susy Clemens (1872-96), for example. In his later years, Twain set out to model a heroine on Susy, but he proved unable to locate the narrative of this ideal heroine in a contemporary, turn-of-the-century setting; instead, he cast her in his *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc*, which appeared in 1896, the year of Susy’s death. In another late work set in biblical times, “Eve’s Diary” (1905), Twain’s recently deceased wife Olivia can be recognized in the protagonist. That Twain chose such legendary figures as Joan of Arc and Eve to represent the beloved women of his

past suggests that he could not portray his heroines in a contemporary American setting. For Twain, America was losing or had already lost her innocence; his ideal, innocent girl could no longer live in such a place, in that new reality. Twain's platonic interest in the innocence of the America of his youth may therefore be understood to have engendered the peculiar fantasies in which he recreated the past.

## Abbreviations

<i>HF</i>	<i>Adventures of Huckleberry Finn</i>
<i>TS</i>	<i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i>
<i>MSM</i>	<i>Mark Twain's Mysterious Stranger Manuscripts</i>
<i>MTA</i>	<i>Mark Twain's Aquarium</i>
<i>HNJ</i>	<i>How Nancy Jackson Married Kate Wilson</i>

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Important studies of gender in Twain's work and life from the 1990s include Peter Stonely's *Mark Twain and the Feminine Aesthetic* (1992), Shelley Fisher Fishkin's "Mark Twain and Women" (1993), Laura E. Skandera-Tronbley's *Mark Twain and the Company of Women* (1994), and J. D. Stahl's *Mark Twain: Culture and Gender* (1994). Susan K. Harris outlines gender issues raised by Twain in "Mark Twain and Gender" (2002).

<sup>2</sup> John Cooley also edited Twain's correspondence with members of his "Angelfish Club" in *Mark Twain's Aquarium* (1991), the definitive study of the circle of girls that the author gathered around himself in his later years. Prior to the appearance of *Mark Twain's Aquarium*, intriguing letters and other correspondence between Twain and individual members of the Angelfish Club had come to light, such as those collected in Dorothy Quick's *Enchantment: A Little Girl's Friendship with Mark Twain* (1961). However, the actual circumstances of the Angelfish Club were not closely examined prior to the publication of Cooley's *Aquarium*. Cooley furthermore offered new perspectives on female characters in Twain based on his close study of the Angelfish Club in "Mark Twain, Rebellious Girls, and Daring Young Women."

<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Ammons provides the basis for the discussion offered here of the "New

Woman” in *Conflicting Stories* (1991). The classic study on women in this era is Carol Smith-Rosenberg's *Disorderly Conduct* (1985).

<sup>4</sup> For more on the relationship between Eddy and Twain, see Cynthia D. Shrager, “Mark Twain and Mary Baker Eddy” (1998).

<sup>5</sup> Cooley describes additional episodes illuminating the father-daughter relationships of Clara, Susy, and Twain in the introduction to “Mark Twain, Rebellious Girls, and Daring Young Women.”

<sup>6</sup> This letter was from Twain to Gertrude Natkin, one of the Angelfish Club girls, whom Twain nicknamed “Marjorie,” his own pet name for her.

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