

The 5th Annual Meeting of The Japan Mark Twain Society
Special Symposium: “Mark Twain and Technology”

**Time and Place: Morioka City Hall (Morioka, Iwate Prefecture) on
October 13, 2001**

Moderator: GOTO Kazuhiko (Rikkyo University)

Panelists: ORISHIMA Masashi (Tokyo Metropolitan University)

TATSUMI Takayuki (Keio University)

TOMITA Naohisa (Miyagi University of Education)

Mark Twain lived through one of the most dramatic technological phases in all of American history. Twain seemed to dive without inhibition into this maelstrom of advancements in modern technology, making great investments — passionate investments, at best, but extravagant and even demonic, at worst — in new inventions. The symposium “Mark Twain and Technology” was an opportunity for re-reading Twain’s texts and analyzing his ambivalent attitudes toward technology’s apparently limitless possibilities. It appears that this attitude oscillated between expectation and anxiety, hope and fear. Participants in the symposium pursued shifts in Twain’s understanding of technology, from his initial naïve beliefs in it to his final bitterness resulting largely from the investment failure in James W. Paige’s typesetting machine, a decision that caused Twain financial disaster.

Many critics have maintained that the shift in tone in Twain’s literary works written around the turn of the century reflects his frustrated attempts to produce a technological “miracle.” However, Goto Kazuhiko, the panel organizer, suggested that Twain’s literary efforts at this time were not only influenced by the contemporary intellectual climate but also necessarily shaped by his development as a writer who constantly felt the psychological need to update and revalidate his trademark mask of innocence. Twain’s increasing frustration with his literary efforts, however, precipitated his deluded and desperate embrace of technology’s apparent omnipotence.

In closely re-reading various Twain works ranging from *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* to *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger*, Orishima Masashi showed that Twain's impulsive attraction to technology reveals the intricate interdependence between Samuel L. Clemens and his persona "Mark Twain." According to Orishima, the novelistic persona "Mark Twain" was a product of the man Clemens who created his persona out of psychological need and a precarious self-identity. Twain made up new illusory identities one after another in order to fabricate the identity of "Mark Twain," a desperate balancing act that even the plasticity of this persona barely enabled him to achieve.

Tatsumi Takayuki contextualized Twain's propensity at the turn of the century to absorb for his literary imagination numerous historic advancements in technology, particularly in the field of telecommunications. Tatsumi, focusing on "From the 'London Times' of 1904" among Twain's works of science fiction, discussed how the "telectroscope," a futuristic invention featured in the story, reflects Twain's own interests and those of his times in the exploration of the human self. The quality and possibilities for the kinds of technology imagined by Twain anticipate present-day globalized Internet communications, not to mention such postmodern concepts as "cyberspace" and "virtual reality."

Tomita Naohisa pointed out that a Twain short story published in 1870, "A Curious Dream," includes a scene that closely resembles the procession of the dead in Chapter 33 of *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger*. Stressing the fact that "A Curious Dream" was made into a motion picture in 1907, the year before Twain wrote the *No.44* chapter, Tomita argued that various supernatural "effects" produced by certain Twain characters — most notably Hank Morgan and of course No. 44 — may well derive from their author's fascination with cinematographic experiments of his day.

The 6th Annual Meeting of The Japan Mark Twain Society
Special Symposium: “Mark Twain and Detective Stories”

Time and Place: Toyo University (Tokyo) on October 12, 2002

Moderator: GOTO Kazuhiko (Rikkyo University)

Panelists: HIRAISHI Takaki (Tokyo University)

**KOIKE Shigeru (Professor Emeritus of Tokyo Women’s
Christian University)**

TSUJI Kazuhiko (Fukui University)

Mark Twain, a self-appointed “literary entertainer,” made frequent use of the detective in such works as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, and *A Double-Barreled Detective Story*. He is known to have admired Edgar Allan Poe’s Chevalier C. August Dupin, be irresistibly intrigued by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes, and show interest in Allan Pinkerton, a notorious real-life detective who was also a hero in Twain’s semi-autobiographical adventure stories. Why was Twain so fascinated with the literary possibilities of the detective story? The symposium, “Mark Twain and Detective Stories,” attempted to explore the ways in which this enterprising writer incorporated the detective story into his literary repertoire and expanded the scope of his literature.

Goto Kazuhiko introduced the panel discussion by pointing out that, without exception, the Twainian detective is exploited as a figure of comedy or even as the object of sarcasm. Goto emphasized that while the protagonists in *The Double-Barreled Detective Story* and “Simon Wheeler, Detective” outdo the real detectives in detection skills and earnestness, both young men are under extended psychological pressure from their fathers. In Goto’s view, this offers a hint to Twain’s ambivalence toward the detective; that is, the detective reflects Twain’s anxiety about his own fragile identity, stemming from his troubled relationship with his father, John M. Clemens.

Hiraishi Takaki, himself the author of a series of detective novels, discussed Twain’s

sustained attraction toward switched identities and then elaborated in detail their final exposure and restitution in his novels. Hiraishi claimed that the use of the fingerprint as the absolute method of identification in *Pudd'nhead Wilson* creates formalistic and thematic inconsistencies in this detective novel, perhaps because Twain's own psychological needs were more invested in the irremediable confusion of identity than in its resolution into any single one.

Koike Shigeru, editor of the complete Sherlock Holmes series in Japanese translation, argued for Twain's ambivalent — perhaps even nihilistic — attitude toward the use of fingerprints as a scientific device of identification. This attitude can be found in Twain's first literary use of the device — *the* first ever, as a matter of fact — in "A Dying Man's Confession," a famous episode in *Life on the Mississippi*. After enumerating later uses of fingerprints by British detective story writers such as Doyle and R. Austin Freeman, Koike arrived at the conclusion that this device in Twain reveals a deep-rooted doubt — more explicit in Twain than in any of his followers -- that "scientific usefulness" might lead to trouble. That trouble might look like our current global plight, Koike conjectured, one where more science means more might, and more might means more violence or policing in the name of "justice."

Tsuji Kazuhiko took up the short story, "A Murder, A Mystery, and A Marriage," written just after the completion of Twain's first novel, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* but not published in book form until 2001. Tsuji discussed how Mark Twain's "detective stories," beginning with this lesser known work, were experiments in a newly invented genre, itself a kind of new literary "technology." Pursuing the development of Twain's detective stories through *Pudd'nhead Wilson* and "Tom Sawyer's Conspiracy," Tsuji made frequent reference to the cultural and political context of this ever-inventive author. Twain's increasing taste for the new detective genre together with his voracious curiosity about technological inventions, according to Tsuji, compelled him to introduce new gadgets into his detective story plots whenever possible.

The 7th Annual Meeting of The Japan Mark Twain Society
Special Symposium: “Mark Twain and Fantasy”

Time and Place: Ouka Gakuen University Information Center (Nagoya, Aichi Prefecture) on October 10, 2003

Moderator: TATSUMI Takayuki (Keio University)

Panelists: ARIMA Yoko (Josai International University)

**SHIMURA Masao (Professor Emeritus of Tokyo University
of Foreign Studies)**

KOTANI Mari (literary critic)

The idea for this symposium was first conceived amidst the controversy waged in the summer of 2002 between Arima Yoko and Goto Kazuhiko in the pages of *Tosho Shimbun* (Book Review Press, June 21 & July 19, 2002). Arima's first book, *Mark Twain Shinkenkyu: Yume to Ban'nen no Fantaji* ([A New Perspective on Mark Twain: Dream and Fantasy in his Later Years]. Tokyo: Sairyusha, 2002), has greatly revitalized the field in examining Twain's late supernatural fantasies and incipient postmodern fabulations such as *No.44, The Mysterious Stranger, Three Thousand Years among the Microbes*, and other works. Her ambitious interpretations argue that Twain's creativity was not exhausted in his later solitary years, as many scholars contend, but on the contrary were re-energized. In contrast, Goto's own first book, *Meiso no Hate no Tom Sawyer: Shosetsuka Mark Twain no Kiseki* ([Tom Sawyer in Metamorphosis: Mark Twain the Novelist]. Tokyo: Shohakusha, 2000), consistently focuses upon Twain's canonical realistic novels such as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. He warns against a critical tendency towards occultism and mysticism in reading Twain, preferring himself the concrete and physical to the metaphysical, the realistic to the fantastic. Goto theorizes that an excessively relaxed or uncritical reception of Twain's supernaturalism may symptomatize the failure of literary criticism itself. Is Mark Twain a fantasist or a realist? This controversy does not seem to have reached any definitive conclusion even now.

Consequently, symposium moderator Tatsumi Takayuki decided to feature Arima

Yoko and her work at this symposium, inviting as panelists Shimura Masao, the author of *Shinpi-shugi to Amerika Bungaku* ([Mysticism in American Literature]. Tokyo: Kenkyusha, 1998) and Kotani Mari, the author of *Fantaji no Boken* ([Adventures of Fantasy]. Tokyo: Chikuma Shobo, 1998). Before the symposium's close, Arima had a chance to defend and update her redefinition of Twain as a fantasist by discussing those late works mostly published after Olivia Clemens's death, such as "The Refugee of the Derelicts," *No. 44, The Mysterious Stranger*, "Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven," and so forth. For more details, read the English version of her symposium presentation included in this issue.

Shimura Masao took this opportunity to situate Twain in interpretations of American literary history itself. According to him, American literature has unwittingly developed a few distinctive genealogies: the logocentric tradition ranging from Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry James to Ernest Hemingway and John Barth; and the anti-logocentric tradition ranging from Herman Melville and Mark Twain to William Faulkner and Thomas Pynchon. Reconsidering Twain as an anti-Aristotelian, Shimura made a fascinating analogy between the life of Twain and that of a Japanese female mystic, Deguchi Nao, born in 1836 near Kyoto, the originator of a cult called "Ohmoto-kyo." Both Twain and Deguchi suffered family disasters that contributed in no little part to their creating their respective alternative worlds around the turn of the century.

Kotani Mari began her presentation by questioning the critical heritage of *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. Since King Arthur was an imaginary character, it is impossible to call Hank Morgan's adventure "time travel" per se, Kotani argued; rather, this novel belongs to what she referred to as "alternate history," a subgenre of fantasy. From this perspective, Kotani explored Twain's medievalism, especially noting the similarity between his Hartford home built in the 1870s and William Morris's Red House built in the 1860s in a quasi-Gothic style. Given that Twain paid a couple of visits to England in the early 1870s, he may well have known something about the pre-Raphaelite tastes so evident in Red House. In conclusion, Kotani speculated on Twain's possible impact upon H.G. Wells, whose masterpiece *The Time Machine* revolutionized modern literary history.