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Mark Twain, Richard Irving Dodge, and the Indian: Myth and disillusionment

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MARK TWAIN, RICHARD IRVING DODGE, AND THE INDIAN: MYTH AND DISILLUSIONMENT

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of American Studies

The College of William and Mary in Virginia

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

by

Carol Van Dessel Vaughn

1984
APPROVAL SHEET

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

Mark Twain has been accused by critics of racism against the American Indian. While his writing does include derogatory descriptions of the Indian, Twain transcended racism by using savage stereotypes of the Indian as metaphors for a universal savagery. By equating Indian and European-American forms of cruelty, Twain implicitly criticized white ethnocentric claims to civilization.

The scholarly opinion that Twain favored extermination of the Indian is belied by his respect for Richard Irving Dodge, a humanitarian authority on Indians who was popular in the 1870s and the 1880s. In a personal letter to William Dean Howells, notations, and a fragment entitled "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer Among the Indians," Twain expressed agreement with Dodge's portrayal of the Indian. However, in his own writing, Twain extended Dodge's observations about the Indian's lack of morality to his own white race.

Through rhetorical use of popular concepts of the Indian, Twain attempted to disillusion his readers of their false notion that all Indians were savage and that they themselves were civilized. In the end, Twain approached a kind of despairing cultural relativism, expressing in his writing his belief that civilization, as defined by his contemporary reformers, was missing from white society almost as much as from "savage" Indian societies.
MARK TWAIN, RICHARD IRVING DODGE, AND THE INDIAN: MYTH AND DISILLUSIONMENT
CHAPTER I
SHATTERING THE IMAGES

A time of growth and disillusionment, of widespread reform movements as well as widespread atrocities, the last third of the nineteenth century in America may be seen now as a cultural watershed. One of the most helpful perspectives for understanding this complex period may be had by viewing it through the writings of its creative thinkers, who necessarily distanced themselves somewhat from their world as they commented on it, but who nevertheless were products of and influences upon that world. Of these thinkers, one of the nineteenth century's major legacies to the modern world is Mark Twain. In studying Mark Twain, we view late nineteenth-century America from three distinct perspectives: first, we are examining the literary figure created by Samuel L. Clemens, who was himself a man deeply involved in the most characteristic aspects of his culture;¹ second, we are responding to the wit that had great popularity and influence among a diverse

¹Namely, business and invention, the Westward thrust of the American people, and the guilt of the Old South.
A major socio-political crisis in Mark Twain's America was "the Indian problem." In his writings, Twain acknowledged the reality of the problem, suggested solutions both serious and jocular, and, most importantly, recognized the problem's metaphorical significance for all Americans and ultimately for all humans. Mark Twain's contemporaries—reformers and advocates of Indian extermination alike—agreed that the Indian lacked "civilization," and that "civilization," synonymous with material progress, had to be defined in terms of orthodox white American behaviors such as individual property-holding and weekly church-going. Mark Twain, looking at the Indian, also found little civilization in him. But, unlike many Americans, Twain took a broader view and found little civilization in any of the Indian's fellow humans either. That Twain was able to express this conclusion in his writing without seriously alienating his readers is a tribute to the subtlety of his wit. Perhaps, indeed, his wit was too subtle. Most critics have misinterpreted Twain's Indian writings, arriving at the erroneous conclusion that Twain was a racist. Some critics have conceded that Twain moderated his views over the years, becoming more enlightened toward the end of his career. Actually, as
Twain became more thoroughly disillusioned of the idea that any human group was truly civilized, Indian shortcomings ceased to seem so uniquely disparagable to him, and he began increasingly to use the Indian for metaphorical purposes.

Because European-American treatment of the Indian has always been a much-debated issue in United States domestic policy, and because as one of our national literary heroes Mark Twain has proven to be a figure of similarly debatable dimensions, one would expect a lively and varied critical discussion of the crux of two such controversial elements of American culture—that is, Mark Twain's writings about the Indian. Compared to the enormous body of Twain scholarship, however, the amount of detailed attention given to the Indian writings is quite small. Mention is made of Twain's Indians in only a dozen or so journal articles and in brief passages of half a dozen books. Of these treatments, only one article, "Mark Twain's Response to the Native American," by Helen L. Harris, attempts a comprehensive review based on an analysis of a majority of the texts. Harris' study, unfortunately, is marred by its dogmatic thesis that Mark Twain was "unfailingly hostile" to the Indian. In view of Twain's topical

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or rhetorical use of Indians in at least nineteen writings, including major emphasis in "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer Among the Indians," an unfinished sequel to the Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, the attention paid the topic has been insufficient.

What criticism there has been of Twain's Indian writings has derogated the author more than it has praised him. Apparently, it is almost impossible—perhaps not even desirable—to write neutrally on these texts. Critics almost inevitably take sides either with the Indian or with Mark Twain. The present study, while not attempting complete objectivity, proposes neither to condemn Twain wholeheartedly nor to exonerate him from all taint of racism. Upon close examination, the texts reveal Mark Twain not so much opposing the Indian or championing him, but observing human nature in the Indian and utilizing him or white images of him metaphorically to criticize whites. It is important for a basic understanding of American culture to define further the position of the late nineteenth century's preeminent American author on "the Indian problem" and the active Indian reform movement of his era.

Mark Twain used Indians more sympathetically than has generally been acknowledged. In many instances, his portrayal of them reveals disapproval of his own rapidly developing industrial society and its values. He criticizes this society by employing the Indian as a symbol, not of a more humane way of life, as the Noble Red Man myth would
have it, but of white inhumanity. The message the reader often receives is, "Indians may behave savagely, but we whites do worse."

Twain experienced an ideational conflict between his society's ethnocentric belief in "progress and civilization" and his own disillusionment with his country's policies, as a result of which his satire centers upon the paradoxes and contradictions he saw as inherent in American values. A major part of these paradoxes, especially in Twain's active years as a writer, has centered upon the meaning of the American West and its aboriginal inhabitants.

In defining Twain's position on the Indian, an examination of the functions of rhetoric and humor is indispensable to an accurate understanding. Twain's critics rarely have conjoined discussion of his political views on the Indian with scrutiny of his literary techniques for expressing those views, specifically his use of humor. They have ignored the rhetorical nature of those writings wherein Twain uses an image of the Indian to make a political or metaphysical statement unrelated in any direct way to Indian affairs. The two roles of the Indian writings, as indicators of culture and as transcendent statements about human nature, need to be recognized simultaneously. Twain's talent lay in using popular accounts, well-received authorities, and common occurrences
to explore broad truths about humankind. In the Indian writings, Twain expanded the implications of popular conceptions of the Indian from the merely racial to the universal.

Two critics, Maxwell Geismar and Leslie A. Fiedler, have made especially interesting studies of Twain's Indian writings—interesting partly because each recognizes the complexity of Twain's position, and partly because each has a well-defined ideology of his own from which he works. Fiedler's interpretation is basically Freudian, while Geismar's is Marxist. Because these critics deal with the contradictions inherent in Twain's works, different portions of their scholarship can be quoted in support of different theses—from that of the Twain-as-Indian-hater school to that of the Twain-as-humanitarian school.

This has happened especially in Geismar's case. In her attempt to prove Twain's absolute hostility to the Indian, Helen L. Harris has expanded upon an observation that Geismar made about one work, Roughing It. Geismar, discussing a single passage of Roughing It, mentions racism as a possible reason for Twain's harsh tone towards the Goshoot Indians described in the passage:

For a writer like Twain, who was so early attracted by the Negro slaves and their descendents,
was there even an element of frontier guilt in his hatred of the Indian?³

Although this question is raised tentatively and early in his study, Harris' characterization of Geismar's entire book becomes this:

Some Twain scholars, reluctant to accept Maxwell Geismar's conclusion that Twain's writings reflected "hatred of the Indian," have cited instances of Twain's sympathetic response to Indians...⁴

So, without considering Geismar's remark in the context of his total study, Harris uses it erroneously to support her own thesis that Twain was an Indian-hater.

In Mark Twain: An American Prophet (1970), the study which Harris cited, Geismar's treatment of Indians concentrates on the problem of their exploitation as a race. To Geismar, Twain appears to have been contradictory in his opinions of the Indian. Geismar suggests that Twain in his early years represents the American Western character. The critic asks whether the harshness Twain shows towards the Goshoot Indians might not show "hatred of the Indian" which possesses "an element of frontier guilt." Geismar apparently recognizes that in some of Twain's early writing the author does not come across as the radical thinker that Geismar has set out

⁴Harris, p. 495.
to prove him. But, although the critic posits the well-worn theory that Mark Twain was the representative Western American, his final solution to the *Roughing It* material which he finds contradictory to his thesis of Twain's radicalism is to conclude that Twain in the early works was more an entertainer than a moralist. After plumbing Twain's psyche for possible "frontier guilt," Geismar admits that "such ambiguities hardly concerned the young Sam Clemens who simply wrote as he felt."\(^5\) Geismar sums up the early Twain writings:

> If violence and force...were at the root of the frontier code, the early Clemens was more concerned with their esthetic color than with their cultural implications.\(^6\)

That Geismar considers his neglect of cultural implications an indictment is indicative of his own modern Marxist idea that literature should have a political purpose. In Twain's own day, on the contrary, both in the lecture hall and in his writing, Twain felt it necessary to present his criticism of the culture behind the mask of humor, in order to make it palatable to his audience. "Cultural implications," or what Howells in the *Atlantic* once called Twain's "growing seriousness of meaning," were of course what made Twain's humor

\(^5\) Geismar, p. 23.

\(^6\) Geismar, p. 21.
lastingly meaningful. When Twain included the Indian in his writing, however, he did not always intend to moralize upon the native himself, but sometimes used exaggerated, unrealistic, white images of the Indian in order to satirize some other human group, most often white Americans themselves.

Geismar writes that Twain "forgot his own prejudice against the American Indian in the account of their persecution" given in *Life on the Mississippi*. That the man whom Howells praised for his memory and imagination—the author whose greatest works draw heavily on his own remote boyhood—would *forget* his prejudice is unlikely. Twain merely criticized a perceived injustice, at the same time refusing to champion or mythologize the Indian consistently.

From criticizing Twain's neglect of content in favor of esthetics in *Roughing It*, Geismar proceeds to describe *Life on the Mississippi*—a loosely-strung, subscription-published book similar in style to *Roughing It*—as having a literary form of "pure association or inspiration, or of simple padding when inspiration was lacking." Here, Geismar begins to seem self-contradictory himself. In *Life on the Mississippi*, Geismar finds that "the value of the form, at polar opposites

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7Geismar, p. 72.
from the cunning and calculated Jamesian esthetics of 'effects,' was determined by the value of the content.\textsuperscript{8} Geismar apparently thinks that Twain did not satisfactorily combine well-planned literary style with adequate attention to "cultural implication" in either of these early works. In these and other Indian writings, by using popular images of the Indian metaphorically, Twain did in fact integrate his satiric style with political and transcendent meaning, even in his early years as a writer.

After wading through the earlier works, in discussing which Geismar seems puzzled by the young Twain's harshness towards the Indian, the critic has little trouble finding support in the later writings for his thesis that Twain thought radically on the subject of Indians. "Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven" and Twain's speech "Plymouth Rock and the Pilgrims" provide Geismar plenty of evidence that Twain eventually disassociated himself from racism. In analyzing Twain's part in writing \textit{The Gilded Age} (a collaboration with Charles Dudley Warner), Geismar hits upon a key to more accurate comprehension of Twain's Indian writings: although continuing to be puzzled by Twain's apparent vindictiveness against Indians, Geismar has the insight to note the author's equal purpose in

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{8}Geismar, p. 73.
\end{flushright}
his Indian writings of criticizing white American culture. "And here Twain's hatred of the noble savage was equaled only by his savage ridicule of American civilization." In "Captain Stormfield," in which Stormfield finds an overwhelming majority of Indian angels over white angels in the American part of heaven, Geismar reads an "indictment of the white man's colonial exploitation of the darker peoples." Geismar believes that "Plymouth Rock and the Pilgrims" shows Mark Twain identifying himself with Indian and Black Americans, and disassociating himself from the Puritans' history of intolerance and injustice. Geismar finds this progress from Roughing It to "Captain Stormfield" and the Pilgrim speech stunning—"a remarkable opening up of the ignorant frontier mind." But Geismar does not delineate how and why such marvelous progress should have been made in Twain's thinking. Without presuming to determine the truth of his supposition, Geismar suggests (the most important suggestion in his analysis of Twain's Indians) that Twain's later Indian writings may really reflect "an open disclosure of some thoughts perhaps privately held in the 1870s." A close

\[9\] Geismar, p. 36.
\[10\] Geismar, p. 286.
\[11\] Geismar, p. 317.
examination of the early works will show that Twain in the 1870s did have thoughts beyond mere racism on the subject of Indians, and that these thoughts even found fairly straightforward expression from time to time in Twain's writings of that period.

A complete exegesis of Twain's Indian writings was not Geismar's intention. As with most critics who have mentioned Twain's relationship with the Indian, the issue of Twain's racism was only one of many questions about the author which Geismar was concerned to answer. The importance of An American Prophet lies in Geismar's recognition of Twain as a political thinker, and in his definition of the mystery—how could the same author have written both Roughing It and the Pilgrim speech? As Geismar suggests, Twain's scorn and sympathy for the Indian were bound up with his complex doubts about the value of American civilization.

In The Return of the Vanishing American (1968), Leslie A. Fiedler arrives at the opposite conclusion from Geismar's, declaring that "Twain is, by instinct and conviction, an absolute Indian hater." Like Geismar's, Fiedler's study covers much more than just Twain's Indian writings, and does not analyze all of them.

Fiedler's purpose is "to define the myths which give a special character to art and life in America."^13 An emphasis upon myth is essential to comprehension of Twain's Indians, because many of them are caricatures of one popular myth or another. Focusing on the character Roxana's humorous recital of her line of descent from Pocahontas (in _Pudd'nhead Wilson_), Fiedler accurately characterizes Twain as a debunker of the Pocahontas legend—one of the most popular forms of the Noble Red Man myth in America. Fiedler adds:

The ironies he brings to bear on the fantastic revision of the [Pocahontas] legend contained in _Pudd'nhead Wilson_ are complex to the point of confusion.\(^14\)

After he lauds Twain's successful debunking of the Pocahontas myth through irony, however, Fiedler himself subscribes to that very myth, relinking Roxana with Pocahontas, and placing both in the role of Fertility Goddess.\(^15\)

Fiedler's unique idea that Jim, in _Huckleberry Finn_, is "an Indian in blackface," a Good Companion to the white outcast from society, links Mark Twain to, of all things, Cooper's Leatherstocking tradition.\(^16\)

\(^{13}\)Fiedler, p. 1.

\(^{14}\)Fiedler, p. 82.

\(^{15}\)Fiedler describes Roxana as "a kind of reborn Pocahontas," p. 83.

\(^{16}\)Fiedler, p. 19.
This theory seems untenable in view of Twain's long-standing hatred for Cooper. Also, when speaking of Twain's attacks on Cooper elsewhere in his study, Fiedler notes that

what primarily irks Twain is "Cooper's Indian," which is to say, Cooper's mythology of the Indian, especially (what he affects not even to notice) the woodland romance between White Man and the Indian... 17

If Jim were indeed "an Indian in blackface," would not Twain be just as disgusted by his own characters' latent homosexuality as he supposedly is by that of Cooper's Leatherstocking and Uncas? Huckleberry Finn certainly gives no evidence of Twain holding this type, or any type, of disgust for Jim and Huck. Fiedler again seems to be fabricating some myths of his own, by trying to apply white mythology of the American Indian to other races.

Fiedler's major point of emphasis with regard to Twain is that Twain hated Indians because he felt an obligation to defend the females of his own race from the red savages. Twain's uneasiness with the relationship between Indians and white females is apparent in some of his writing. In "The Californian's Tale," for example, Twain elaborates on the evil consequences for a whole community of a white woman's rape and murder

17 Fiedler, p. 122.
by Indians. Indian rape of white women was the issue that probably prevented Twain from completing "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer Among the Indians," his sequel to The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. When it became obvious to Huck, Tom, and the reader that the book's heroine had suffered rape by Indians, Twain stopped writing. The "facts" of Indian rape and torture were laid before Twain by authorities whom he read respected, such as Dr. Keim and Richard Irving Dodge. Twain did not dwell upon the issue of rape in his other Indian writings, however, and the writings do not indicate, as Fiedler insists, that "Twain was, as a matter of fact, obsessed by a hatred of Indians from the very beginning of his literary career."^{18} "The Dervish and the Offensive Stranger" and "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" are two works that show Twain to be more bitter towards the white man's role than the Indian's in Indian/white relations.

Fiedler is one of the few scholars who recognize that a large part of Twain's purpose in the Indian writings was to destroy white people's myths of the Indian; however, he believes that Twain attacked these myths only in order to get rid of "any image of Indian life which stands between White Americans and a total commitment to genocide."^{19}

^{18}Fiedler, p. 123.
^{19}Fiedler, p. 123.
"Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven," "Plymouth Rock and the Pilgrims," "The Dervish and the Offensive Stranger," and "To the Person Sitting in Darkness," among other works, all absolutely disprove this hypothesis of Fiedler's. Moreover, if Twain had advocated "a total commitment to genocide," would he have admired the politics and the anthropological authoritativeness of Richard Irving Dodge, one of his major sources for information about the Indian and a sincere, if somewhat shortsighted, humanitarian reformer in favor of helping the Indian to survive in a white-dominated world?

Dodge provides insight into both the political and the mythic aspects of Twain's relations with the Indian—aspects which Geismar and Fiedler, respectively, have brought to critical attention. Dodge's books serve in a way as the non-fictional, non-transcendent counterparts to Twain's writing in regard to the Indian question, and as such, are a useful introduction to a discussion of Twain and the Indian. 20

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20See the Appendix for a more comprehensive review of criticism relevant to Twain's Indian writings.
Perhaps inevitably, "Indian" remained the utmost antithesis to an America dedicated to productivity, profit, and private property. —Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*, p. 37.

Because of the treaty system's failure to reconcile white Americans and American Indians, the last third of the nineteenth century saw the rise of popular Indian reform movements in America, especially of a widespread movement in support of the policy of assimilation. This policy sought to solve "the Indian problem" by replacing traditional Indian lifestyles with European-American cultural values. Reformers reasoned that if Indians could be induced through education to exchange their "savage" social codes for supposedly better white values, conflict and massacre would cease, and the Indian would be able to survive the rapid growth which white American civilization was experiencing. Nineteenth-century Americans referred to this process as "educating" the Indians in morality, and as "civilizing the Red Man." From the twentieth century's perspective, the policy of
assimilation is seen to have been founded upon the ancient myth of savagery versus civilization, which plays an important role in European-American descriptions of the Indian from the early days of exploration and colonization.¹ This myth was modified and given the scientific guise by its association in the nineteenth century with the theories of Herbert Spencer (author of Synthetic Philosophy, 1860). Social Darwinism, as Spencerian ideas are labelled, assumes that man as a moral creature is evolving from a degraded state to ever more advanced, complex forms of society.

Some thinkers of the mid-nineteenth century used social Darwinism--more or less regretfully, according to their individual character--to justify extermination of the "savage" Indian in order to make way for the Westward progress of the "superior" white race in America. For example, William Blackmore, an upper-class writer and self-proclaimed philanthropist from London, criticized the United States' government for its incompetent handling of Indian affairs, which he believed was the major cause of the Indians' imminent destruction as a race. Nevertheless, in his introduction to Richard Irving Dodge's

Plains of the Great West, Blackmore concluded on a Spencerian note in favor of "progress and civilization:"

All authorities who have investigated the subject are unanimous in predicking that the Red Men are a doomed race. The edict has gone forth, "Delenda est Carthage;" and the Indians will as surely disappear before the progress of the more energetic and aggressive Anglo-Saxon, as the snows of winter melt away before the summer sun.

But sad as the fate of the Red Man is, yet, even as philanthropists, we must not forget that, under what appears to be one of the immutable laws of progress, the savage is giving place to a higher and more civilised race. Three hundred thousand Red Men at the present time require the entire occupation of a continent as large as Europe, in order that they may obtain an uncertain and scanty subsistence by the chase. Ought we, then, to regret if in the course of a few generations their wigwams, tepees, and mud lodges, rarely numbering more than one hundred in a village, are replaced by new cities of the West, each equalling, perhaps, in magnificence, in stately structures, and in population (exceeding that of all the Indians), either St. Louis or Chicago? Or if in supplanting less than 300,000 wandering, debased, and half-naked savages we can people the self-same district with a population of many tens of millions of prosperous and highly civilised whites?

Some adherents to this deterministic view of progress came to believe that the Indian himself could take part in the advance; but in order to become "civilized" and so to survive white America's relentless march Westward, the Indian would have to accept white values and morality in place of his native social codes—a substitution which

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would result in cultural rather than physical annihilation of the Indian. In the post-Civil War nineteenth century, American anthropology, in its embryonic stage, was just beginning to recognize that Indians possessed moral codes at all, and there was virtually no question that white values were superior. The most important white values Indians would have to accept in order to become civilized in the reformers' opinion were Christianity and respect for individually-owned property. In the 1870s and 1880s, reformers in favor of assimilation organized to obtain federal legislation which would individualize Indian land-holdings, at that time held tribally in the form of reservations, and which would provide a Christian education for the Indians. In 1887, these efforts culminated in the passage of the Dawes General Allotment Act, which reformers at the time thought "contemplated and went far to make certain the abolition of all the civil and political disabilities of the majority of the Indians."³

Paradoxically, at the same time that assimilationists were seeking through political means to force the incorporation of the individual Indian into mainstream American culture, ethnographers and early anthropologists

were beginning to uncover the diversity and cultural wealth of Indian societies. The findings of the Bureau of American Ethnology, formed in 1879 under the direction of John Wesley Powell, especially advanced modern concepts of cultural pluralism and relativism. Powell himself (to heap paradox upon paradox) joined assimilationist reformers in proposing a program of "civilizing" the Indian by inducing him to work and to learn English. However, another contributor to the Bureau's reports, Lewis Henry Morgan, went so far in the direction of cultural relativism as to suggest the "next higher plane of society" in the Spencerian scheme would be "a revival, in a higher form, of the liberty, equality, and fraternity of the ancient gentes." ("Gentes" was Morgan's term for the basic social units of Indian societies, which we call an extended family.) Morgan, though basically a social Darwinist, felt that we owe our present condition, with its multiplied means of safety and of happiness, to the struggles, the sufferings, the heroic exertions and the patient toil of our barbarous, and more remotely, of our savage ancestors.

So as far as white attitudes toward the Indian were concerned, America stood at a watershed in the decade.

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5 Quoted in Trachtenberg, p. 36.
At this time a dilemma presented itself to informed "Friends of the Indian." In their ethnocentricity, supported by the theories of social Darwinism, they assumed that white morality was superior to Indian morality, if, in fact, Indians possessed any code of morals at all. In their humanitarianism, nurtured by American Christianity, they felt that they must try to insure the Indian's survival and salvation by "civilizing" him. Meanwhile, increasingly professional observations of the Indian were beginning to suggest to these well-meaning whites the intrinsic worth of at least some Indian habits and values.

1876 was the year in which General George A. Custer's troops were annihilated in battle with the Northern Sioux. At that point, Army officers themselves were not blaming the Indians for the incident, but were complaining that the federal government's failure to keep its treaties with the Indians had brought about this massacre and six other major disturbances between Indians and whites in the fifteen years preceding it. Ten years after the Custer incident, in February, 1887, the United States government definitively rejected the reservation and treaty system (Congress had already discontinued the practice of making new treaties with Indian tribes in 1871) when

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Indian reform advocates won passage of the Dawes General Allotment (Severalty) Act, which provided for the gradual individualization of ownership of all Indian lands formerly held tribally as reservations. Incidentally, the Dawes Act also provided for the opening of surplus lands (after Indians had received their allotments) to white settlers. A great deal of land ended up being denominated "surplus," causing the Indians to lose ownership of thousands of acres. 

The federal government's development of a radically new Indian policy in the 1870s and 1880s reflected a complex of contemporary intellectual, political, and scientific attitudes of white society towards the Indian. These attitudes manifested themselves in government organizations (the Board of Indian Commissioners, created by Congress in 1869, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs); in reform societies (The Women's National Indian Association, organized in 1879, the Indian Rights Association, 1882, and the Indian Defense Association, 1885, among the more important national groups); in the Lake Mohonk Conferences (summer meetings organized in 1883 by Indian Commissioner Albert K. Smiley with the purpose of coordinating the efforts of Indian reformers); and in the published opinions of authors of fictional, journalistic, and scientific inclinations. By the 1880s, 

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all the organizations named above approved of the policies of allotment and assimilation, with slight variations in the specific programs that they proposed for "civilizing" the Indian.

In the midst of this growing public support for Indian assimilation, an Army Lieutenant Colonel named Richard Irving Dodge made himself known as an Indian authority by writing two books about the Western Plains and the Plains Indians—The Plains of the Great West and Their Inhabitants (1877) and Our Wild Indians: Thirty-Three Years' Experience Among the Red Men of the Great West (1882). Although Dodge is now one of the lesser-known authorities on Indians, his writing had an important influence on American culture in two ways: first, it was read by Senator Henry Laurens Dawes (author of the Dawes Act) and General William T. Sherman, among others, and it provided them with evidence given by a first-hand observer to support their proposals for a radical change in government policy towards the Indian; and second, some of Dodge's opinions as well as his information were absorbed and used by a more famous author, Mark Twain. Dodge's books, which included tales of high adventure on the Plains as well as ethnography and political statements in support of assimilation, were a mixture of science and entertainment palatable to the public of the 1870s and 1880s.
Dodge was a contemporary of Mark Twain, and his private life bears resemblance to the tragic aspects of Twain's last years. As Twain lost his wife and his daughter Susie (and also Jean and Clara, in an emotional sense), ending his life as a lonely writer and an often-cantankerous critic of society, so Dodge lost close contact with his wife and his two children in 1870, when the wife, Julia, refused to follow him west where his military duty and personal inclinations led him. Just as Twain had to lecture and write his way out of debt in the 1890s, Dodge, too, perceived his writing partly as a means of extricating himself from a perpetually tight financial situation. On January 20, 1883, Dodge wrote to his wife that an unexpectedly good payment on his new book (presumably Our Wild Indians) was helping him to pay off $2,500 of the debts Julia chronically was contracting in his name back East. Perhaps these biographical coincidences help account for a certain cynicism about human nature evident in the writings of both authors, although this cynicism is struggled against by Dodge but developed and celebrated by Twain.

Twain apparently bought two copies of The Plains of the Great West seven years apart and extensively annotated both of them as well as his copy of Our Wild Indians. Contemporary reviews from various sources unanimously acknowledged Dodge as an authority on

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8Richard Irving Dodge to Julia Dodge, January 20, 1883. (New Haven: Yale University, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Collection of Western American Literature, Richard Irving Dodge letters).
Indian affairs, a unanimity remarkable at a time when heated controversy existed over what specific program of action would best solve "the Indian problem."

A New York Times reviewer wrote of The Plains in 1877:

...it is an authentic document, by an unquestionable authority, in regard to one of the most serious public questions now at issue...One is ready to say that his book is indispensable to a correct understanding of the Indian and the Indian problem.

About Our Wild Indians the Times declared:

If any soldier be competent to judge of Indians it must be one like Col. Dodge, who has passed the greater part of his military life among them...his work will be not without value as a record of military exploits, as it certainly is an authority on the social life, habits, traits, and customs of the wild Indians of the Plains.

The Nation's reviewer wrote of The Plains:

He has made an interesting book, whose very simplicity attests its truth, and the subjects discussed give it value.

The Saturday Review approved more vigorously:

A great part of his book is devoted to the "noble savage," of whom, we may remark in passing, he entertains the meanest opinion. But we doubt whether any man since the days of Catlin has written on the subject with better information or authority; while the vivacity and evident fidelity of many of his picturesque descriptions remind us greatly of the inimitable Ruxton, and we can scarcely give them higher commendation.

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General Sherman, then a great popular hero, wrote a complimentary preface to *Our Wild Indians*, in which he declared that Dodge's was "the first attempt of which I have knowledge, to treat the Indian as he exists in fact." Sherman added:

> I am sure that your work will be of inestimable value to the army, and to members of Congress, who alone can legislate so as to save what is valuable in the Indian's character, and provide against the everlasting conflict necessarily incident to his clinging to his prejudices and habits in the midst of a race so dissimilar as ours.

In March, 1881, Dodge entrusted to Senator Dawes several chapters which he had deleted from *Our Wild Indians* because they were not of interest to the general public. That he considered the senator the one person who would put this information to good use indicates that Dodge himself was aware of the political import of his literary endeavors.

Mark Twain expressed his approval of Dodge early, in a letter written to William Dean Howells on February 22, 1877. The date and content of this letter indicate


that Twain read Dodge's book, *The Plains of the Great West*, very shortly after its publication in this country (it had been published the previous year in London).

Upon ascertaining the victory of Hayes in the disputed Presidential election of 1876, Twain wrote to Howells:

> I hope he will put Lt. Col. Richard Irwin sic Dodge (Author of "The Great Plains and their Inhabitants") at the head of the Indian Department. There's a man who knows all about Indians, and yet has some humanity in him—(knowledge of Indians, and humanity, are seldom found in the same individual). 12

According to Alan Gribben, Twain had purchased a copy of *The Plains* on January 21, 1877. In July, 1884, Twain had his business agent, Charles L. Webster, purchase another copy of *The Plains*, as well as a copy of *Our Wild Indians*. Twain's correspondence with Webster about the latter purchase indicates that, although Twain was rather inexact about the titles of Dodge's books, he felt that the books and their author were well enough known to be found "in the catalogue of any big library, no doubt." 13 Twain's copy of *Our Wild Indians* contains 375 marginal notes in Twain's handwriting, according to

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Walter Blair, and both his copies of *The Plains* are annotated as well.\(^{14}\) Twain's note at the end of his second copy of *The Plains* summarizes his admiration for Dodge's common sense and his disgust with the state of Indian affairs in general. "Very well put forth," Twain writes. "Such a man's relation of his experience is worth a whole winter's sic talk in Congress."\(^{15}\)

Despite the *Saturday Review*'s statement that Dodge "entertains the meanest opinion" of the Indian, Dodge's views on Indian character are ambivalent: he admires some traits ascribed to the Indian, such as endurance, affection, and a superior mental capacity, just as much as he despises other characteristics, such as filthiness and deceitfulness. Dodge does reject unequivocally the romanticized portrayal of Indians by the generation of writers preceding him—especially Cooper—and he explicitly disclaims prejudice towards any mythical interpretation of the native. Dodge writes in *Our Wild Indians*:

> My desire is to delineate the Indian exactly as he is...I bring to this task a mind which I believe to be unbiased by enthusiastic admiration for the "noble Red Man," or prejudice against the ignoble savage.

\[^{14}\text{Walter Blair, editor, Mark Twain's Hannibal, Huck and Tom (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 85.}\]

\[^{15}\text{This notation is written on page 410 of Mark Twain's second copy of The Plains of the Great West, found in the Special Collection of the Mark Twain Library, Redding, Connecticut.}\]
Of Cooper he adds:

His stories are strikingly artistic, but they will not bear the test of consistent criticism. He assumed his ideal, clothed him in moral and Christian virtues, and placed him prominently in contrast with his surroundings. How he could possibly have arrived at those good qualities, when born and reared among savages without a moral code, is a question that admits of but one answer—"no such individual could possibly have existed."\(^{16}\)

This anti-mythic quality in Dodge's writing must have appealed to Mark Twain, who of course is famous for his own tirades against Cooper's inconsistencies.

In spite of his professed objectivity, Dodge's life was symptomatic of the ambivalent emotions and attitudes his era held towards the Indian. A career army officer who gave up his family to pursue an active role in the military subjugation of the Plains Indians, Dodge at the same time stood out among his contemporaries as a great humanitarian reformer. In his books, Dodge denounced the government policies which, as a military officer, he was helping to carry out. Perhaps this discrepancy is not so strange as it at first appears. As a military officer stationed on the Plains with only a few brief interruptions from 1849 on, Dodge actually was in the best position to see the adverse effects government

corruption had upon Indians and upon white relations with Indians. It was the soldiers who had to put down Indian uprisings caused, according to William Blackmore, by:

First. Nonfulfillment of treaties by the United States Government. Second. Frauds by the Indian agents, and Third. Encroachments by the whites. 17

Perhaps Dodge was motivated to speak out for reform in Indian policy because of the very irony of his own position in his vocation.

In his descriptions of Indians as well as in his career, Dodge shows a mixed reaction towards the Red Man. On a single page of Our Wild Indians, Dodge describes the Indian pejoratively as "vain, crafty, deceitful, ungrateful, treacherous, grasping, and utterly selfish," and also praises him for being "affectionate, patient, self-reliant, and enduring." In the Indian's favor, Dodge avers that "the Indian is as religious as the most devout Christian," and that "the mental capacity of the Indian is of a superior order." Ultimately, however, Dodge concludes that in spite of his good traits the Indian "remains a savage simply from lack of a code of morals." 18 So, although his personal observations convinced Dodge that the Indian possessed both good and

17 William Blackmore, Introduction to The Plains, p. xlii.
18 Dodge, Our Wild Indians, pp. 56, 100, 50, 57.
bad qualities—in some areas of behavior even surpassing whites—he persisted at last in denominating the Indian a savage because he lacked any perceptible (to Dodge) moral law.

Dodge's conclusion actually gave him hope for improvement in the status of the Indian, since, with his superior mental capability and religious sensibility, the Indian might become civilized quite readily through education in the whites' moral laws. Unlike other assimilationists, Dodge did not include conversion to Christianity as a prerequisite to the Indian's becoming civilized.

He is already as religious as the most devout Christian, and if our good missionaries would let him alone in his religion, cease their efforts to proselyte him to their particular sect, and simply strive to supply him with a code of morals, his subsequent conversion might be easy and his future improvement assured. 19

We have seen that Dodge's ideological purpose in writing The Plains of the Great West and Our Wild Indians was two-fold: he wanted to dispel false images of the Indian from the mind of his readers, and he wanted to advocate a policy of civilizing and assimilating the Indian by supplying him with a moral code. Shattering false images and ascertaining the role of morality—

19Dodge, Our Wild Indians, p. 58.
what Twain called "the Moral Sense"— in the life of man were also among Mark Twain's priorities in his own writing. Because Twain's 1877 letter to Howells and the marginalia in his copies of The Plains and Our Wild Indians indicate that Twain developed a significant degree of respect for Dodge's opinions during the late 1870s and early 1880s, it will be profitable to examine Twain's use of Dodge in developing his own theories on myths and on morality, particularly as they regard the Indian. Especially illuminating in this area of study is an analysis of Twain's use of Dodge in the circa-1884 fragment, "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer Among the Indians." This work, the only one which shows evidence of extensive direct use of material from Dodge's books, is also, according to critic Paul Delaney, the turning point in Twain's literary career between the "innocent eye" perspective on the world of Huck Finn and the disillusioned self-isolation of Twain's later transcendent heroes, such as No. 44 in The Mysterious Stranger. 20

Mark Twain apparently intended to use "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer Among the Indians" to continue his old

20Paul Delaney, "You Can't Go Back to the Raft Ag'in Huck Honey!: Mark Twain's Western Sequel to Huckleberry Finn," Western American Literature, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Fall, 1976), pp. 215-229.
battle against Cooper's Noble Red Man myth. Although Twain did not derive this iconoclastic bent from Dodge, he certainly found in Dodge both a similar attitude towards Cooper and an abundance of narrative detail to use in dispelling the myth of the Noble Savage.

Cooper's "ideal Indian," Dodge believed, was a creation of his own prolific brain. No such savage as Uncas ever existed, or could exist, and no one knew this better than Cooper himself. All hostile Indians—Tingoes, Iroquois, etc.—are painted as fiends, in whom the furies themselves would have delighted.

In the fragment, Twain makes Tom Sawyer the mouthpiece for Cooper's romantic notions, a part which fits in with Tom's usual role in Twain's writing as the gullible but also persuasive believer in sentimental myths. "Among the Injuns, life is just simply a circus," Tom declares to Huck and Jim at the outset of their adventure. His enumeration of Indian virtues is the first half of Twain's "Noble Red Man" essay translated into the Missouri boy's dialect:

...they're the noblest human beings that's ever been in the world. If a white man tells you a thing, do you know it's true? No, you don't; because generally it's a lie. But if an Injun tells you a thing, you can bet on it every time for the petrified fact; because you can't get an Injun to lie, he would cut his tongue out first... An Injun is all honor. It's what they're made of... They're awful strong, and fiery, and eloquent, and wear beautiful blankets, and war-paint, and

21Dodge, Our Wild Indians, p. 54.
moccasins, and buckskin clothes, all over beads, and go fighting and scalping every day in the year but Sundays, and have a noble good time, and they love friendly white men, and just dote on them, and can't do too much for them... they're the most giftedest people in the whole world, and the hospitablest and the happiest, and don't ever have anything to do from year's end to year's end but have a perfectly supernatural good time and piles and piles of adventures!22

As he had in the "Noble Red Man," Twain juxtaposes to this rendition of the Cooper myth the "facts" of Indian deceit and vengefulness supplied him by an "authority"—in this case, Dodge. Whereas in other parts of the Huck/Tom/Jim saga Tom is able to persuade his more down-to-earth companions at least to go along with his romantic dreams, in "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer Among the Indians" Twain precludes that possibility by introducing extreme violence into the plot. In The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Jim and Huck could "let on" that Jim was a medieval prisoner without causing serious, lasting damage to themselves or to others; but in "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer Among the Indians" it becomes impossible for the boys even to pretend to cling to illusory notions of the Noble Red Man, because Twain causes his adolescent protagonists to confront violent death and the rape of a white woman by Indians—both intrinsically disillusioning, adult subjects.

In the nine chapters of the fragment, Twain makes direct use of information from Dodge's books in at least seventeen instances, including all the major incidents of the narrative. The precipitating event upon which the rest of the plot depends—the massacre of the Mills family and the abduction of Peggy Mills by Indians—corresponds to William Blackmore's description of the germain family's massacre on September 10, 1874, given in his introduction to Dodge's Plains of the Great West.23 In this and in the less prominent instances of his borrowing from Dodge's books, Twain chooses to use exclusively pejorative images of Indian life, although both Dodge and Blackmore included some sympathetic depictions of the Indian in their writing.

Twain's casting of Indians in a stereotypically savage, bloodthirsty role was probably done partly to stimulate readers' interest early in his proposed novel. As Twain had once remarked, in a sketch entitled "My Bloody Massacre,"

We never read the dull explanatory surroundings of marvelously exciting things when we have no occasion to suppose that some irresponsible scribbler is trying to defraud us; we skip all that, and hasten to revel in the bloodcurdling particulars and be happy.24

23Blackmore, Introduction to The Plains, pp. 1-li.

In his desire to capture his readers' attention, Twain also used events described by Dodge which were not pejorative to the Indian, but merely full of suspense. By paraphrasing Dodge's accounts of a flash flood, of Plains travellers getting lost in a fog, and of a man feigning insanity (by sewing insects to his clothing) in order to repel hostile Indians, Twain hoped to capitalize on Dodge's popularity as a teller of adventure stories, as well as drawing on his expertise as an Indian authority. As in "The Noble Red Man" (1870), Twain's characterization of the Indian as debased was at least partly a case of fighting hyperbole with hyperbole—in this instance, countering Tom's romantic notions of Indians' nobility with an equally monolithic depiction in the plot of their ignobility. In order to deflate Tom's (i.e., romantic Easterners') exalted notions of Indian life, Twain appropriated Dodge's characterizations wholesale, perhaps realizing that he had already overworked his own limited Nevada experiences with real Indians.

In "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer Among the Indians," Twain adheres to Dodge's characterization of the Indian

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25 Walter Blair, editor, Mark Twain's Hannibal, Huck and Tom, pp. 328-337.

26 Twain had used virtually the same description of the verminous chief "Hoop-de-doodle-do" in an 1862 letter to Jane Clemens, in "Niagara," and in "The Noble Red Man," as well as similarly criticizing the Indian's appearance and habits as he had known them in Nevada in several passages of Roughing It.
as patient in vengeance, but demanding immediate
gratification of his desire for a possession; as a
natural thief and as one who delights in torturing
his prisoners. But while both Twain and Dodge agree
upon these "facts" of Indian degradation, they diverge
sharply on the issue of why the Indian character is
what it is. According to Dodge, the Indian "has the
ordinary good and bad qualities of the mere animal,
modified to some extent by reason." In the opinion
of Dodge and other late nineteenth-century Americans
in favor of assimilating the Indian, the Indian lived
a savage life because he lacked the benefit of a moral
code such as the one which whites possessed.

The grand difference between the North American
Indian and the civilized people of the same
continent comes not from degrees of intelligence,
or forms of religion, but from what we call morality.
The intellect of an Indian may be as acute as that
of a congressman, and his religion as austere as
that of a bishop, yet he remains a savage simply
from lack of a code of morals.

Twain, on the contrary, would have modified the last
portion of Dodge's argument to read: "...yet he remains
a savage simply because he possesses a code of morals."
In 1879, in an unpublished portion of _A Tramp Abroad_,
Twain had observed that "cruelty, savagery, and the

27 See Blair, pp. 329-331.

...do not add a grace to the world's partly civilized races, yet at the same time they can hardly be called defects. They grow naturally out of the social system; the system could not be perfect without them...it is hard to draw a line here, with any great degree of exactness, between the French, the Comanches, and several other nations existing upon the same moral and social level.29

Twain saw the Plains Indians' social system, or code of morals, as different from but not necessarily less civilized than the systems of white people—the feudal system, the Southern slaveholders' system, and the system adhered to by turn-of-the-century imperialistic America, to name a few of the codes that excited Mark Twain's disapproval. A careful reading of "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer Among the Indians" reveals that Twain is accepting the facts Dodge gives, but is changing the implication of those facts. For example, Twain writes:

One of the Injuns, named Blue Fox, come up, just then, and the minute he see the dirk he begun to beg for it; it was their style—they begged for everything that come in thir way.30

This passage is derived from Dodge's observation that

By nature[the Indian] is a perfect child, and when he wants anything he wants it with all his heart and soul, immediately and without

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Dodge is straightforward and sincere in his belief that the Indian is unformed, savage, a "perfect child" of nature due to his supposed lack of a moral code. Like any child, therefore, the Indian can be educated in morality, and so grow up to the "civilized" status of white Americans. Twain is more duplicitous in his use of the passage. As the name "Blue Fox" implies, the Indian in Twain's version is wily and very much self-aware. Twain makes it clear from subsequent events in the narrative that Blue Fox's begging for the dirk is in no way childlike and whimsical, but is done deliberately, in order to enable the Indians to carry out their plan of revenge on the Mills family unhindered. If Peggy Mills is unaware of the reason that she must carry the dirk (i.e., innocent of the fact that rape of captured white women is mandatory according to the Plains Indians' social system), Blue Fox is fully conscious of both his own people's code and of white rituals for obstructing that code. If Peggy Mills does not have the dirk, she will not be able to kill herself in the event of capture, and so elude rape by the Indians. Blue Fox actually shows great foresight in preventing this possible obstruction to the Indians' plan for revenge. As Twain has his character Brace

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31 Dodge, Our Wild Indians, p. 263.
Johnson point out, revenge is central to the Plains Indians' social system. Brace, portrayed as an authority on Indians, explains:

"You see, some white man has killed a relation of that Injun, and so he has hunted up some whites to retaliate on. It wouldn't be the proper thing for him to ever appear in war fixings again till he had killed a white man and wiped out that score. He was in disgrace till he had done that..."

Whether revenge historically was central to Plains Indians' morality is a matter for anthropologists to decide. What is important here is Twain's belief that in massacring the Mills family the Indians were merely adhering to their moral code.

The Indians' code, as Twain has Brace Johnson explain it, certainly is no more cruel or savage than is the code duello that Twain later was to criticize in Pudd'nhead Wilson, or than the feuding lifestyle of the Shepardsons and the Grangerfords, which he had just finished describing in The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. As Paul Delaney has observed:

Such a code of Honor which occasions the ritual execution of innocents is debased and corrupt; and it is the code, not the Indians themselves, which bears the ultimate brunt of Twain's wrath.

Twain's conviction that Indian cruelty, like white cruelty, was based on adherence to a well-defined

32Twain, "Among the Indians," p. 41.

33Delaney, p. 221.
set of moral laws gave him less hope than Dodge and the other assimilationists had for the improvement of the Indian through education. Education in white ways, Twain believed, would merely mean that the Indian would exchange one corrupt set of moral laws for another. Huck had fled the restrictions and violence of Missouri's white "civilization" only to find a different but equally restrictive code among the Indians. Perhaps Twain never finished "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer Among the Indians" because it had become the story of innocence disillusioned. Life "among the Indians," the American boy's last great hope for freedom, had proved just as cruel and binding as "civilized" life. Perhaps Twain was caught in a deadlock between the hope that he had expressed in 1877, that someone with Dodge's knowledge and humanity could ameliorate the Indians' condition, and the conviction that would dominate his thinking on "civilization" in his later years, that "there are many humorous things in this world, among them the white man's notion that he is less savage than the other savages."  

Whereas Dodge believed that he was describing a people without morals, Twain's reading of Dodge reinforced his own theory that every human society operates by its own code of morals, most of which,

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Twain felt, only served to justify members of that particular society in their particular methods of expressing cruelty to their fellow humans. Twain's despairing relativism—his doubt that the white race was more advanced in morality than other races—proved a more accurate auger of the Dawes Act's actual effect on Indians than was Dodge's optimism.

Dodge, and the general tide of public opinion which led to the Dawes Act, believed in a relatively simple correlation between the Indians' learning to follow white moral values, and their improvement as a race.

To advance, the Indian like other men must have an object in life,—an incentive to effort... Give each a farm of his own, and many of them will soon be independent of government support. 35

The Dawes Act, administered by whites according to a white system of morality, failed to convert the Plains Indian into an agricultural, Christian, individualistic American precisely because the Indians already had a value system of their own, to which many of them persisted in clinging. Part of the reason that the Dawes Act failed to create harmony between Indians and whites was inadequate funding and the allotment of infertile land to these Indians who were supposed to become ideal American farmers. A great part of the

35Dodge, Our Wild Indians, p. 645.
program's failure, however, lay in the conflicting values held by the two peoples involved: white Americans, ever-hungry for land, and valuing real estate highly, soon found a way to obtain lands which had been allotted to Indians through Congress' decision to allow Indians to lease their allotments. Indians, in their turn, did not lose their sense of tribal solidarity when their lands were individually apportioned, and therefore did not place the high value which white Americans would have placed on their new right of land ownership. As a result of both sides clinging to their original cultural prejudices, leasing of Indian allotments became common practice, leaving the white American as exploitative and the Indian nearly as impoverished and "uncivilized" as before the act had been passed.\footnote{For a detailed history of the Dawes Act, see Delos Sacket Otis, The Dawes Act and the Allotment of Indian Lands, second edition edited by Francis Paul Prucha (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1973). Originally published in Washington, D. C. in 1934.}
Perhaps no issue in the study of Mark Twain is more deeply fraught with emotion than the issue of what Twain's opinion of the Indian really was. Certainly Twain's Indian writings reveal the author at his most paradoxical. Twain's complex position on "the Indian question" developed out of his own experience with the Digger and the Gosiute Indians of his Roughing It days; out of his reliance upon various books by authorities on Indians; out of his exposure through the media to the political agitation of the Indian reform movement of the 1870s and the 1880s; and out of his readers' changing opinions on the subject. However, more important than any of these factors to an understanding of Twain's Indian writings is consideration of where Twain placed the Indian in relation to the rest of the "damned human race." It is not whether or not he criticized the Indian that determines if Twain was a racial bigot; it is where he placed him on the whole human spectrum. Because he often uses derogatory caricatures of the Indian to point out European-American
foibles, Twain at first reading seems more prejudiced against the Indian than he really is. As the white man's elevated, "civilized" status is brought into question through Twain's use of satire, it becomes progressively more difficult for Twain's reader to define savagery according to racial boundaries.

Mark Twain's Indian writings offer a variety of vistas on late nineteenth-century relations between white Americans and Indians. Sometimes his writing is a tirade, disguised by a thin veneer of humor, against injustices inflicted on the Indian by whites; sometimes it laments the depredations of Indians on whites. In other cases Twain reacts with similar indignation against the romantic notions that naive East Coast humanitarians hold about the Indian. Finally, in his most effective writings, Twain considers popular images of the Indian as metaphors for universal human traits.

In all these writings, Twain embraces, satirizes, or merely uses his society's perceptions of the Indian as it suits his own artistic and didactic purposes. In general, his writings react more often to white images of the Indian than to the Indian himself. Twain was not an Indian-hater, as so often has been argued, but was a despiser of what he believed were false images of the Indian. With the cutting edge of his satire, Twain
exposed—sometimes in subtle ways—what seemed to him to be false myths, whether these myths were favorable or unfavorable to actual Indians. One of Twain's subtlest, as well as most effective means of ridiculing bigoted myths about the Red Man was to show the applicability of those very myths to white men, thereby proclaiming universal those traits which had been considered by the public to be unique to the red "savages." In this way criticizing his own society as well as playing the iconoclast with Red Man myths, Twain proved himself to be more than a mere bigot.

In his article, "Can 'American Studies' Develop a Method?" (1957), Henry Nash Smith called for a combination of sociological and esthetic criticism in the study of literature, and particularly in the study of Mark Twain's writing. The study of how Twain uses the Indian as a literary device, as well as of what Twain says about the actual Indian, is crucial to an accurate understanding of Twain's Indian writings. Twain made three distinct uses of the Indian in his writing: a rhetorical use, a topical use, and direct commentary. In each of these uses, Twain's underlying purpose was virtually always the debunking of white myths about the Indian.

The opinion of some critics that Twain hated Indians results from their failure to recognize certain
Twain Indians as rhetorical figures—vehicles for Twain's satire upon some issue or group not directly related to the Indian. An outstanding instance of critical misjudgment of Twain's rhetorical Indian is Helen L. Harris' conclusion that Mark Twain "explained why Indians were themselves responsible for their poverty and persecution" in his early essay "Niagara" (1871). Elizabeth I. Hanson, in "Mark Twain's Indians Reexamined," concurs with Harris that in this essay Twain "defines his antagonism" to the Indian.¹ What neither Harris nor Hanson mentions is that in "Niagara" Twain actually is writing a criticism of the Irish inhabitants of Niagara Falls, rather than a tirade against Indians. In the essay, after recounting the narrator's mishaps with a group of supposed "Indians," Twain achieves one of his most successful trick endings:

"Upon regaining my right mind, I said: "It is an awful savage tribe of Indians that do the beadwork and moccasins for Niagara Falls, doctor. Where do they come from?"
"Limerick, my son."²

The last sentence makes the entire essay into a burlesque of the white man's expectations for an Indian who never existed. We might criticize Twain for the prejudice


he shows against actual Irishmen in this essay, but that is outside the province of this paper. The only Indian we can justly accuse Twain of criticizing in this essay is not actual, but the mythical Noble Savage, an image imprinted in white minds by Cooper's novels. Through burlesquing Cooper's Indians' language, Twain takes his stand against the romantic image of the Indian given in early nineteenth-century American literature. Twain's narrator, a philanthropic but naive lover of the Noble Red Man, is Twain's vehicle for his burlesque, as he approaches each of the Irish "Indians" he encounters at the Falls with a Cooper-style speech similar to this:

Is the Wawhoo-Wang-Wang of the Whack-a-Whack happy? Does the great Speckled Thunder sigh for the war-path, or is his heart contented with dreaming of the dusky maiden, the Pride of the Forest? Does the mighty Sachem yearn to drink the blood of his enemies, or is he satisfied to make bead reticules for the papooses of the paleface? Speak, sublime relic of bygone grandeur—venerable ruin, speak!

Of course, the Irish answer him in outrage that they should be mistaken for "dirty Injuns." Through such exaggeration and juxtaposition, Twain exposes the incongruity of white expectations for the Indian: the Indian is to be both noble and savage, depending upon how whites find it most convenient to view him at any given moment.

We surmise just how seriously Twain desires us to take his narrator by the unfortunate ending of this

\[3\] Twain, "Niagara," p. 63.
human bundle of romanticism: the "Indians" threw him over Niagara Falls, and, as the poor man says, "I got wet." Finally, Twain uses his famous double-entendre to cue his readers to take his story at other than face value. His narrator, having been fished out of the Falls, concludes:

I am now lying in a very critical condition. At least I am lying anyway—critical or not critical.\(4\)

After all Twain's hints, we can not conscientiously take the farcical "Niagara" as a serious criticism of the actual Indian.

Twain's rhetorical use of Indians becomes a more important factor in the Indian writings which follow "Niagara." In these, Twain uses popular conceptions or his own often negative perception of Indian habits to represent a broader—ultimately a universal—savagery. Over the course of his literary career, Twain expressed his belief that "civilization" is not known to man—red man or white man, or any shade in between.

"The French and the Comanches," A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court, and "To the Person Sitting in Darkness"—works spanning over two decades, from 1879—1901—all go beyond the racial prejudice against Indians of which they have been accused, to bare Twain's criticism of the human race.

\(4\) Twain, "Niagara;" p. 67.
Of "The French and the Comanches," Hanson concedes that "the essay loses much of its virulence as an anti-Indian effusion because Twain ignores the Comanches altogether after the first two pages."\(^5\) This essay is more problematical than "Niagara" as an indicator of its author's opinions because Twain chose to leave it out of *A Tramp Abroad*, of which it was originally a chapter. However, Twain's failure to mention the Comanches after the first two pages, along with the fact that *A Tramp Abroad* treats European cultures, not America, leads us to conclude that "The French and the Comanches" never was intended for "an anti-Indian effusion." Here we have another case of Twain using a popular notion of the Indian rhetorically to make a point about a European group. He is not commenting on actual Indians so much as he is applying the Ignoble Savage stereotype to the French nation. There is certainly no flattery of Indians in the chapter (Twain writes: "I very much doubt if the French are more cruel than the Comanches."\(^6\)); nevertheless, mention of the Comanches is merely a literary accoutrement to Twain's extended argument that the French are savages. The narrative voice in this chapter exhibits, early in Twain's career, that

\(^{5}\) Hanson, p. 12.

quality which the critic Paul Delaney has described in Twain's late writings as "transcendence." Twain's position here, in other words, is not that of particular prejudice against the Comanches, nor even of prejudice against the French *per se*. Instead, removing himself to a critical distance from the whole "damned human race," Twain acts as a "hardened moral arbiter" (in Delaney's terminology), condemning not just nations or particular races, but the social and moral systems which all nations and races obey. He begins his argument with this premise:

Now as to cruelty, savagery, and the spirit of massacre. These do not add a grace to the world's partly civilized races, yet at the same time they can hardly be called defects. They grow naturally out of the social system; the system could not be perfect without them.

By comparing the Comanches, whom the general public considered savages, with the French, who were the public's standard of civilization, Twain has succeeded in making his point: real civilization is almost equally lacking in all peoples due to the corrupt sense of morality which rules all peoples. Pretending nonchalance, Twain continues:

It is hard to draw a line here, with any great degree of exactness, between the French, the Comanches, and several other nations existing upon the same moral and social level. It must in

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7 Paul Delaney, "You Can't Go Back to the Raft Ag'in Huck Honey!: Mark Twain's Western Sequel to *Huckleberry Finn*" *Western American Literature*, Vol. 11, (Fall, 1976), pp. 215-229.

8 Twain, "The French and the Comanches," p. 146.
candor be admitted that in one point the Comanches rank higher than the French, in that they do not fight among themselves...9

Written three years after Custer massacre by the Northern Sioux, in the midst of the Indian Wars and of a massive reform movement aimed at "civilizing" the Indian, Twain's comparison of the most "civilized" race with the least likely candidate, in the public's opinion, for that position is a joltingly egalitarian statement, even allowing for a certain amount of tongue-in-cheek on Twain's part.

This is no racist condemnation of Indians; this is an ironic lament for the civilization to which certain nations have always claimed exclusive right, but which, in Twain's opinion, is mere fiction. The survival of "The French and the Comanches" in Twain's papers disproves the theory of critics such as Louis Budd and Lynn Denton that Mark Twain experienced a steady progress in his career from an early, intense racism to later toleration and even idealization of the Indian. "The French and the Comanches" likewise controverts the assumption that Twain arrived at a transcendent point of view only late in life (in writing The Mysterious Stranger, for example), after a series of personal misfortunes. Transcendence—in Delaney's sense of the ability to perceive and to

9Twain, "The French and the Comanches," p. 146.
comment critically upon the failures of one's society and oneself—is evident in Twain's writing, particularly in the Indian writings, as early as the 1870s.

Ten years after the publication of *A Tramp Abroad*, Twain again made rhetorical use of the Comanche in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1889). He did, as Helen Harris claims, use the Indian as "a stereotype of savage squalor" in this Sir Walter Scott-debunking tale of medieval culture. It seems ironic that Twain used one myth—that of the Ignoble Savage—to discredit another—that King Arthur's was an age of gentility and "civilization." Twain clearly means to imply the cruelty, faithlessness, and shamelessness of medieval society by calling Arthur's court "a bunch of polished-up Comanches." However, the novel is yet another example of the Indian image playing a rhetorical role, of importance mainly as a means of achieving the major objective of demolishing myths about medieval society. The Comanche was an image of savagery easily understood by Twain's readers, who were exposed to such "non-fictional" accounts of Comanches as Dodge's description in his well-received ethnography, *Our Wild Indians*:

...the most cunning, the most mischievously artful, of all the United States Indians, the Comanches. While not so coldly bloodthirsty as some other tribes—priding themselves upon their silent stealth and cunning, and ranking the expert...

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10 Harris, p. 500.
horse-thief above the dashing warrior—the Comanches are at night the most dangerous of all Indians...A shot, or quick plunge of his knife, and, in the confusion and darkness, he vanishes like a ghost, leaving death and terror behind him. 11

Dodge being relatively sympathetic to the Indians' plight, we can surmise that the image of the cunning, thieving, savage Comanche was a common stereotype. In fact, the implications of Twain's metaphor are clear to any twentieth-century reader who has watched Westerns on television, or even read The World Book Encyclopedia's entry for "Comanche Indians:"

Because the Comanches moved about constantly, they lived in skin tepees which could be carried easily. They plundered peaceful Indians, and later stole horses from the Spanish and American settlements. They terrorized ranch owners...12

Twain's use of the Comanche as a symbol of savagery in A Connecticut Yankee suggests that he had less sensitivity to ethnic rights than a modern human-rights protestor would profess. Literarily speaking, however, his metaphor was apt for his purpose, in view of his audience's heightened interest in Indian affairs in the 1880s, and of their exposure, through newspaper accounts and books such as Dodge's, to a savage stereotype of the Comanches and of Indians in general.

11 Dodge, Our Wild Indians, pp. 31-32.

At the metaphor's deepest level of meaning, as in "The French and the Comanches," Twain is deliberately destroying the expected contrast between "savage" Indians and "civilized" Europeans. By insisting that Anglo-Americans' most glorious mythical ancestors were just as barbaric as nineteenth-century Comanches, Twain in *A Connecticut Yankee* has once again transcended racism. In this instance Twain brings his rejection of the European-American concept of civilization even closer to his own Anglo heritage. Again we sense a much broader criticism than ethnic bigotry developing in Twain's writing, and deep doubts about the values which dominate his own culture.

More than a decade after comparing Arthur's court to a bunch of Comanches, Twain employed the Pawnee Indian in similar fashion in "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" (1901). This bitter essay strikes closer to home for Americans than either of the two pieces previously discussed. In it, Twain uses the Pawnee as a symbol for the cruel white American majority. Spurred on by his disgust at the overwhelming revenge wreaked on the Chinese by the American Reverand Ament after the Boxer Rebellion, Twain adopts a much less playful tone than in his earlier burlesques of white "savages." In a stroke of genius, he inverts the stereotypical image of the Indian as ruthless revenger by
comparing white men to the vengeful Pawnees and the unfortunate Chinese Boxers to white Americans against whom Pawnee vengeance is carried out. By eliciting the horror his contemporary Americans felt upon hearing of cruel Indian vengeance being acted out upon some innocent white, Twain tricks his audience into identifying themselves with the many Chinese whom the Reverand Ament was punishing for the crimes of a few in the Boxer Rebellion. The passage containing mention of the Pawnees is an ingenious use of the Indian image to sway popular opinion on a public issue wholly unrelated to Indian affairs. Twain is not, as Helen Harris assumes, giving to the actual Pawnee "credit for originating cruelty in America," but is playing upon the emotion he knew would be drawn from his readers at the mention of Indian atrocities, in order to satirize white ethnocentric ideas of injustice.\(^{13}\)

\(^{13}\)Harris, p. 502.

Burlesquing nineteenth-century Americans' desire to identify themselves with the image of the free, noble Indian, Twain implies that it is the dark side of Indian life that best symbolizes the American spirit. What Americans have accused the Pawnee of doing, Twain declares, they themselves have done in China and in the Philippines. Taking vengeance upon innocent people is what Britain did to the Boers, Twain adds, and what Russia did in Japan and in Manchuria. The Pawnees certainly have no premium on cruelty in Twain's mind. The wrongness of Pawnee actions is given scant attention in contrast to Twain's lengthy condemnation of the blood-baths caused by so-called "civilized" nations, including his own.

"Shall we?" Twain asks. "That is shall we go on conferring our Civilization upon the peoples that sit in darkness, or shall we give those poor things a rest?" What his contemporaries termed "civilization" Twain believes is merely deceit and a grab for money, lands, and power. Like his metaphor of the Pawnee, his description of "Civilization" in business terms is particularly apt for the era and the audience towards which he is writing:

The Blessings-of-Civilization Trust, wisely and cautiously administered is a Daisy. There is more money in it, more territory, more sovereignty, and other kinds of emolument, than there is in any
other game that is played. But Christendom has been playing it badly of late years, and must certainly suffer by it, in my opinion. She has been so eager to get every stake that appeared on the green cloth, that the People who Sit in Darkness have noticed it—they have noticed it, and have begun to show alarm.  

The Pawnee discussion is a fully-conscious political statement by Twain. It is Twain putting the shoe on the other foot of white Americans who are outraged when they themselves are the victims of injustice at the hands of Indians, but who are callous when they are the aggressors in a similar situation. Yes, Twain shows prejudice in this essay: he is intensely prejudiced against his own country's policy of imperialism and his own people's ethnocentric concept of civilization. He remains within the American tradition of symbolizing the country by its natives; but Twain turns the myths against their American believers. That the Indian may conform to some noble ideal Twain discounts, and he ridicules his Eastern audience for ignoring the "facts," reported by first-hand observers, which indicate that the Indian of Cooper's novels is truly fictitious. If the Indian is ignoble and a savage, however, Twain insists that the historical record proves the "civilized" nations of the world at least as ignoble.

Twain stood in disagreement with the American majority who won passage of the Dawes General Allotment

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15 Mark Twain, "To the Person Sitting in Darkness," pp. 79, 80-81.
Act in 1887. In contrast to this majority, who believed that the only hope for the Indian's physical survival lay in his being educated in white ways and civilized, Twain believed that neither Indians nor whites possessed the merits of true civilization.

In 1908, Twain made his last rhetorical use of the Indian in Letter XI of Letters from the Earth, in which he compares Indian atrocities to the work of "the Lord God of Heaven and Earth, adored Father of Man." In this scathing condemnation of American Christian orthodoxy, Twain again conjures up the popular image of the "savage" Indian, only to point out that what white Americans condemn in the Indian, they praise in God, or at least in their concept of God. Twain claims, "The red Indian of America has duplicated God's work, and done it in the very spirit of God." Using as his text the account of the Israelites' slaughter of the Midianites found in Numbers 31, Twain preaches the cruelty of God, or, in essence, that the cruelty charged to Indians alone is actually inherent in the divine order of things. As in "The French and the Comanches," Twain inverts his proposed audience's expectations by demonstrating that God, the paragon of virtue, has ordered deeds more cruel than those of the "savage" Indian. Comparing the

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Midianite slaughter with the 1862 Minnesota Indian massacre (a tragedy which the American public had roundly condemned, to be sure), Twain again assumes a tone which shocks by its matter-of-fact understatement:

The Indian was more merciful than was the Father of Mercies. He sold no virgins into slavery to minister to the lusts of the murderers of their kindred while their sad lives might last; he raped them, then charitably made their subsequent sufferings brief, ending them with the precious gift of death.18

The irony of the words "merciful," "charitably," and "precious gift of death" is obvious. As in "To the Person Sitting in Darkness," Twain adopts Biblical rhetoric in order to expose the moral double-standard of his pious contemporaries. If they condemn the heathen Indian for his savage massacre, can they conscientiously excuse the God who ordered even more horrifying carnage in Midian?

Although he makes no excuse for Indian cruelty, Twain is careful to mention that the Indians had a reasonable motive for the Minnesota massacre:

In 1862 the Indians in Minnesota, having been deeply wronged and treacherously treated by the government of the United States, rose against the white settlers and massacred them...19

The wrongdoing, Twain insists, is on both sides.

The white man's God participates in this universal

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18 Twain, "Letter XI," p. 54.
savagery, just as Indian atrocities are only one example of "all the different kinds of cruelty the brutal human talent has ever invented."\(^{20}\)

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer (1876) is the only published Twain work in which an "Injun" plays a conspicuous role in the plot. Ironically, Mark Twain's most famous "Injun" is not an Indian at all, but a half-breed--Injun Joe. As William J. Scheick has pointed out, the distinction between half-breed and Indian is a marked one in nineteenth-century American literature. In some ways, the half-breed presents more of a threat to white society than does the Indian. The implied theme of miscegenation—as in the case of Tom Driscoll/Valet de Chambres in Pudd'nhead Wilson—makes Injun Joe a figure who threatens "the purity and preservation of white civilization."

The fictional half-blood, like the fictional Indian, embodied both fact and myth, but in contrast to the Indian, he was not so readily depicted as either a "noble savage" or the barbaric antithesis to civilization. By his very nature the half-blood epitomized the integration (whether successful or unsuccessful) of the red and the white races, provided a dramatic symbol of the benign possibilities or malign probabilities inherent in this encounter.\(^{21}\)

\(^{20}\)Twain, "Letter XI," p. 54.

Joe embodies confrontation between two cultures, and as such stands for something more complex than "the typical Indian's treachery, murderousness, cowardice and depravity"—the stereotype to which Helen L. Harris relegates this character.\(^{22}\) Admittedly, Twain does treat Injun Joe as more Indian than white, at least as he is viewed through the eyes of the villagers. In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, as in *Pudd'nhead Wilson*, the race of the villain is more a matter of others' perception than of genetic heritage.

In *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*, Twain presents three distinct perceptions of the Indian—the way Tom and Huck see the "Injun" as a mythical devil; the way Injun Joe sees himself as a justified avenger of wrongs done him by whites; and the way some villagers persist in treating him as a noble denizen of the forest. Twain draws on the American myth of the red man as a demon in the wilderness when he has Injun Joe make his first appearance in the graveyard, where Huck and Tom are waiting to see devils come and carry off Hoss Williams' soul. In Chapter X and subsequently, Huck refers to Joe as "that Injun devil." As Robert Tracy observes of Joe: "A mythical half-breed, he has retained only the savagery of the Noble Savage and has none of the nobility."\(^{23}\)

\(^{22}\) Harris, p. 499.

Nevertheless, while we accept the basically sinister nature of Injun Joe as he is seen through the eyes of Tom and Huck, we must still recognize that Twain at least credited Joe's cruelty with having a motive. As he did in his description of the Minnesota massacre in _Letters from the Earth_, Twain claims that Injun Joe's cruelty is the response of his "Injun blood" to repeated cruelty on the part of white townspeople. Before killing Dr. Robinson in the graveyard, Injun Joe recites to him the wrongs he has done Joe:

> Five years ago you drove me away from your father's kitchen one night, when I come to ask for something to eat, and you said I warn't there for any good; and when I swore I'd get even with you if it took a hundred years, you father had me jailed for a vagrant.24

Injun Joe's is the story in microcosm of the Indian Wars that were troubling America at the time Twain was writing _Tom Sawyer_: after being degraded to a dependent status, then denied the essentials of life, the Indian rose up in revolt.

Dr. Robinson, the representative of the white race in this encounter, is presented as a somewhat unsavory character in his own right. The instigator of a grave-robery, Dr. Robinson actually strikes the first blow

of a midnight fight in the graveyard, and it is he who
"seized the heavy headboard of Williams' grave and
felled Potter to the earth with it." These are hardly
actions proper to one representing the purity of
white civilization.

Likewise, Twain has Injun Joe explain his motive
for seeking revenge on the Widow Douglas:

...her husband was rough on me--many times he
was rough on me--and mainly he was the justice of
the peace that judged me for a vagrant. And that
ain't all. It ain't a millionth part of it!
He had me horsewhipped!—horsewhipped in front of
the jail, like a nigger!—with all the town
looking on! HORSEWHIPPED!—do you understand? 26

Although these explanations are in no way presented as
an excuse for revenge and murder, they do indicate that
Twain was able to see the problem of Indian/white relations
as more than a simple matter of the Indian being innately,
inexplicably savage and cruel. The more Injun Joe is
judged a vagrant and an outcast by whites, the more he
lives up to those stereotypes.

Chapter XXXIII, "The Fate of Injun Joe, Etc.,"
presents a synopsis of Twain's views on "the Indian
problem" at the time he wrote The Adventures of
Tom Sawyer. Twain elicits more pity than hatred with
his description of the "sorrowful sight" of Injun Joe's
corpse, found starved to death in the cave. The epithets

25 Twain, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, p. 69.

26 Twain, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, p. 179.
which Twain applies to Injun Joe in this chapter— "wretch," "poor unfortunate," "flitting human insect,"— show that Twain considered Joe merely human, not some mythic demon, despite his cruelty. Twain portrays Tom as showing both relief and regret at the death of Joe.

At the same time, Twain criticizes those romantic townsfolk (probably readers of Cooper) who had been seeking the governor's pardon for Injun Joe, in spite of the fact that Joe had slain five citizens of the town.

...many tearful and eloquent meetings had been held, and a committee of sappy women been appointed to go in deep mourning and wail around the governor, and implore him to be a merciful ass and trample his duty under foot. 27

In The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Twain's attitude towards the Indian is as mixed as Injun Joe's heritage. Although he cast Joe in a sinister role, he placed part of the blame for Joe's actions on white injustice. In his study of Tom Sawyer, Robert Tracy summarizes Twain's characterization of Injun Joe:

Mark Twain thus expresses the American's ambivalent attitude towards the Indian, presenting him as devil and victim at the same time, an evil figure to be sure, and a threat, but a figure whose evil has been provoked by white injustice and mistreatment. 28

27Twain, The Adventures of Tom Sawyer, p. 203.

28Tracy, p. 540.
In his numerous direct commentaries on the Indian, Twain likewise paid attention to the white race's role in creating and perpetuating "the Indian problem."

Two early letters written for publication show that Twain was critical of white myths of the Indian even in the 1860s. A letter written to Jane Clemens (intended for publication) dated March 20, 1862, presages Twain's later full-fledged attacks on Cooper's Noble Savages. Twain asserts:

If you want a full and correct account of these lovely Indians—not gleaned from Cooper's novels, Madam, but the result of personal observation—a strictly reliable account,...on that subject I am a Fund of useful information.

The description of the raggedy, smelly, verminous chief Hoop-de-doodle-do which follows this assertion of reliability reappears virtually intact eight years later in Twain's Galaxy essay on "The Noble Red Man." As in that essay, Twain's derogatory remarks about the Indians he has seen in Nevada are provoked not only by the Indians themselves, but by the contrast he perceives between the real Indian and mythic portrayals he had absorbed from reading Cooper novels in his youth.

To white romantics (here represented by his mother), who do not know any real Indians but who believe that the Indian is a Noble Savage, Twain protests: "You've got

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the wrong sow by the ear, Madam." (p. 234) Through the humorous hyperbole of his description of Hoop-de-doodle-do, Twain "proves" the Noble Red Man image false. However, as critic James Cox has observed of this passage:

Clemens' Indian is no more real or realistic than Cooper's. The truth of the vision depends not upon its accuracy but upon its commitment to exaggeration and contrast.

Twain's satiric imitation of the romantic writers' style in his descriptions of Indians— one manifestation of his deadpan brand of humor—became an important weapon in his attacks on those very writers. Finally, as another indication that this letter finds Twain in an iconoclastic vein, Twain describes the Noble Red Man myth using the same term, "disease," which he was to use to describe the widespread acceptance in the South of Sir Walter Scott's romanticism.

Now, if you are acquainted with any romantic young ladies or gentlemen who dote on these loves of Indians, send them out here before the disease strikes in. (p. 237)

Because of his derogatory description of Hoop-de-doodle-do, Twain has acquired a reputation among critics for showing an early hatred of Indians. However, a second letter, written in 1867 for the Alta California, shows another side of Twain's call for white realism about the Indian. In this letter, written from the East, Twain belittles the myth of the Ignoble Savage; 

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he believes that "all the fuss" about Indian massacres "is made up out of very slender material."\textsuperscript{31}

It is funny, the absurd remarks people make about the Far West, and the wild questions they ask about it when they are discussing the Indian difficulties. (p. 265)

Critics convinced of Twain's hostility to Indians overlook this early display of irritation at the white tendency to exaggerate Indian atrocities. Taken together, these two letters written in the 1860s indicate impartiality in Twain's early criticism of white mythic portrayals of the Indian.

"The Facts Concerning the Recent Resignation," a burlesque critique of the federal government written about 1867, exposes what Twain saw as the actual objective of Indian extermination lying behind the War Department's rhetoric of humanitarianism. Instead of killing our Indians gradually in small skirmishes, Twain suggests, why not get the Indians more together—get them together in some convenient place, where he could have provisions enough for both parties, and then have a general massacre?\textsuperscript{32}

In the rest of this passage, Twain's subtle satire strikes at both Indian and white man. Twain writes that "soap and education"—the essence of the assimilationists' program for civilized the Indian—would

\textsuperscript{31}Mark Twain, "The Indian Row," in Mark Twain's Travels with Mr. Brown, Franklin Walker and G. Ezra Dane, editors (New York: Russell and Russell, 1940), pp. 264-265.

satisfactorily annihilate the Indian, as well as a general massacre.

Soap and education are not as sudden as a massacre, but they are more deadly in the long run; because a half-massacred Indian may recover, but if you educate him and wash him, it is bound to finish him some time or other. It undermines his constitution; it strikes at the foundation of his being. (p. 322)

Probably Twain was simply intending to ridicule his filthy Indian stereotype, Hoop-de-doodle-do, when he asserted that such marks of civilization as soap and education would kill the Indian; nevertheless, the passage proved strangely prophetic of the disastrous results for Indian cohesiveness which the policy of assimilation would have.

In his next two comments on the Indian, Twain used derogatory descriptions of Indians in order to reduce the credibility of Cooper's depictions of Indians as Noble Savages. In "The Noble Red Man," an essay published by the Galaxy in 1870, Twain is at his most critical, both of Indians and of whites. Here Twain comes closest to expressing overt hatred of the actual Indian. He declares that the Indian is "ignoble—base and treacherous, and hateful in every way." As in his description of Hoop-de-doodle-do, however, part of Twain's purpose in exposing the sordid side of

Indian life is to counter the unrealistic, romantic idea some Easterners have of the Indian, and to criticize the inefficient government policy based thereon. This debunking intention is evident in the essay's structure: Twain begins his essay by dismissing the Noble Red Man as an Indian who exists only in books written by romantic whites, and he ends with criticism of "humanitarian sympathy from the Atlantic seaboard whenever the Indian gets into trouble." (pp. 427-428)

In "The Noble Red Man," Twain makes early use of what was to become a classic satiric technique of his—the deadpan recital of beliefs held by some group (in this case, he enumerates the virtues that romantics ascribe to the Indian), immediately followed by a list of "facts," often validated by some scientific authority, which one by one ridicule the beliefs listed in the first section. In this harshest of his descriptions of the Indian, Twain counters the hyperbole of romantic depictions of the Noble Savage with his own hyperbole: "...the Indian is a good, fair, desirable subject for extermination if ever there was one." (p. 427) A great deal of adverse criticism of Twain has been based on the above statement.34 Twain certainly held Indian habits

34See Helen L. Harris, Elizabeth I. Hanson, and Sydney Krause, for example.
in contempt at the time at which he wrote this essay.
Nevertheless, his writing both before and after "The
Noble Red Man" suggests that Twain was not throwing out
a political gauntlet for the cause of extermination here
so much as he was embarking on a lifelong attack on
literary falseness-to-life. The Indian had been portrayed
as "a being to fall down and worship;" in order to
disparage this image, Twain uses the formula of "scientific"
description and appeals both to his own authority as a
Westerner and to the authority of a published expert,
Dr. Keim, to prove the Indian to be

a poor, filthy, naked scurvy vagabond, whom
to exterminate were a charity to the Creator's
worthier insects and reptiles which he oppresses. (p. 427)

By inverting the romantic writers' picture, Twain obliquely
ridicules white delusions that the Indian Wars are
heroic battles against a noble race of gods. Rather than
conquering pagan nobility, Twain implies, whites
participating in the wars are squashing annoying insects.

Twain's comments on the arrival of white "civiliza-
tion" among the Indians show his doubts about the
ennobling effects of such "civilization" upon the Indians.
In Twain's experience, "civilization" among the Indians
has resulted only in an odd costume composed of various
white people's cast-offs used in astonishing, inappro-
priate ways. It is this half-"civilized" native whom
Twain finds a "desirable subject for extermination." (p. 427)
So, while Twain does expouse a derogatory stereotype of Indians in "The Noble Red Man," he does so for two reasons: to debunk the white myth of Noble Savagery, which he believes has led to grave errors in Indian policy, and to express his doubt that the coming of white "civilization" will improve the condition of the Indian.

"The Noble Red Man" remains an embarrassment to critics positing Twain's sympathy for the Indian. Even Sydney J. Krause's claim that the essay is an example of "Swiftian irony" does not fully take away the sting of its contemptuous description of the Indian. "The Noble Red Man" stands as an example of how petty Twain's literary relationship to the Indian would have been had he consistently concentrated upon destroying the particular myths about this single group of people, instead of using the Indian's situation to symbolize mankind's failures, as he did in many of the Indian writings. In venting his indignation about this specific set of facts (i.e., the Indians' degradation and the white man's idealization of him), Twain momentarily lost sight of the larger truth that his humor usually explored—the truth about humankind's evil and self-deception, of the Indian and white myths of him are merely exemplary.
Roughing It (1871), which includes his next commentary on Indians, contains fewer mentions of the Indian than one would expect in a Far-Western travelogue; those it does contain show that Twain had not yet resolved his own negative feelings towards the Indian (he never did, fully), but was beginning to develop a satiric style that linked Indian shortcomings with white foolishness and misplaced pride. Twain's descriptions of Indians in Roughing It give the impression that he found these far-Western natives somewhat repulsive and utterly pitiful curiosities. He also was beginning to recognize hyperbole about Indians in other whites' descriptions, even though his own depictions purposely exaggerated the facts for the sake of humor and literary showmanship. For example, in Chapter 8 Twain ridicules white people's tendency to exaggerate accounts of Indian atrocities, and especially the titillation these people seemed to receive from maximizing the injury they had suffered at the hands of Indians. Twain's strategic use of understatement undermines the credibility of the Ignoble Savage image, which these whites use for romantic effect, just as they sometimes used the image of the Noble Savage. By affecting to subscribe to their myth, Twain exposes its foolishness in this paragraph:
We crossed the sand-hills near the scene of the Indian mail robbery and massacre of 1856, wherein the driver and conductor perished, and also all the passengers but one, it was supposed; but this must have been a mistake, for at different times afterward on the Pacific coast I was personally acquainted with a hundred and thirty-three or four people who were wounded during that massacre, and barely escaped with their lives. There was no doubt of the truth of it—I had it from their own lips. One of these parties told me that he kept coming across arrowheads in his system for nearly seven years after the massacre; and another of them told me that he was stuck so literally full of arrows that after the Indians were gone and he could raise up and examine himself, he could not restrain his tears, for his clothes were completely ruined.35

In his passage on the Goshoot Indians in Chapter 19—perhaps his most notorious derogatory description of the Indian—Twain drew heavily on local popular lore about this tribe. As Fred Lorch has pointed out, Twain reported more (pejorative) facts about these Indians than he possibly could have gotten from his own observation of them from his stagecoach seat. His description, pejorative though it is, basically agrees with official reports of the years just previous to Twain's 1861 trip. Lorch relates that the Indian Agent's annual report for 1857-1858 described the Goshoots in these terms:

They were without exception the most miserable set of human beings I have ever beheld...They have heretofore subsisted principally on snakes, lizards, roots, etc.36


Twain's description of Goshoots as "the wretchedest type of mankind I have ever seen" echoes this official opinion, although Twain probably learned his views from popular rather than official reports. The "disgust" and "nausea" (in his own terms) which the Goshoots gave to Twain was described not only for its own sake, but was put to two subordinate uses by the author: 1) a by-now familiar attack on Cooper's idealization of the Indian, and 2) a rhetorical comparison of Goshoots with a group of whites whom Twain wished to discredit.

Casting himself in the role of "a disciple of Cooper and a worshiper of the Red Men—even of the scholarly savages in the *Last of the Mohicans,*" Twain again uses understatement to ridicule the romantic view of the Indian.

I say that the nausea which the Goshoots gave me, an Indian-worshiper, set me to examining authorities, to see if perchance I had been overestimating the Red Man while viewing him through the mellow moonshine of romance. The revelations that came were disenchancing. (p. 134)

This disenchantment, or disillusionment, which Twain imputes to himself, is exactly what he has conceived to be his mission towards his readers in most of his Indian writings. Through humor, hyperbole, and comparison of stereotyped Indians with whites, Twain reveals to his readers not only what he perceives as the true image
of the Indian, but the true image of themselves. For example, in the passage describing Goshoots, Twain goes on to compare the filthy, sneaking Goshoots he has portrayed with the Baltimore and Washington Railroad Company—an obvious joke, but one which subtly mitigates Twain's supposed racism. The point of the joke is that the Goshoots' reputation is injured by such a comparison. However much in jest Twain may be in this passage, a kernal of criticism of whites and of white institutions lies within his humor.

A sarcastic aside in The Gilded Age (1873) shows that two years after the publication of Roughing It Twain was beginning to consider both the part that whites played in causing "the Indian problem" and the corruption of the federal government's Indian policy:

The Hon. Higgins had not come to serve his country in Washington for nothing. The appropriation which he had engineered through Congress for the maintenance of the Indians in his territory would have made all those savages rich if it had ever got to them.37

In Life on the Mississippi (1874) Twain pursued his attack on the romantic portrayal of Indians, and also made his first full-blown criticism of white injustice to the Indians. Twain's summary of the history of

exploration and colonization in the New World might better be called the history of exploitation in the New World:

For more than a hundred and fifty years there had been white settlements on our Atlantic coasts. These people were in intimate communication with the Indians: in the South the Spaniards were robbing, slaughtering, enclaving, and converting them; higher up, the English were trading beads and blankets to them for a consideration, and throwing in civilization and whiskey, "for lagniappe;" and in Canada the French were schooling them in a rudimentary way, missionarying among them, and drawing whole populations of them at a time to Quebec, and later to Montreal, to buy furs of them. 38

Twain shows low esteem for the lofty ideals of Anglo-American "civilization," implying that, in the minds of the English colonizers, "civilizing" the Indians was only incidental to obtaining their trade, and that bribing them with alcohol was just as high a priority as improving their social status. Later in *Life on the Mississippi* Twain insists that the essence of "civilization's" westward progress in America lay in the establishment of outposts to sell whiskey to the Indians:

"Westward the Jug of Empire takes its way."
This great van-leader arrived upon the ground which St. Paul now occupies, in June, 1837. Yes, at that date, Pierre Parrant, a Canadian, built the first cabin, uncorked his jug, and began to sell whiskey to the Indians. The result is before us. (p. 491)

Chapter 59 of *Life on the Mississippi*, "Legends and Scenery," and Chapter 60, "Speculations and Conclusions," constitute a short but significant bridge from the harshness of "The Noble Red Man" to Twain's polished satire on "Cooper's Literary Offenses" twenty-five years later. In these chapters, Twain attacks romantic renditions of Indian legends. As he would do later in "Cooper's Literary Offenses," he points out logical discrepancies in romantic literature about the Indian. After retelling the "most idiotic Indian legend" of White Bear Lake, and pointing out that its plot is illogical, Twain criticizes its white preserver by saying: "A dead man could get up a better legend than this one." (p. 494) Twain presents "a distinct improvement upon the threadbare form of Indian legend," in which the traditional lovelorn Indian maiden who leaps off a cliff lands on top of her heartless parents, killing them instead of herself.

She was a good deal jarred up and jolted; but she got herself together and disappeared before the coroner reached the fatal spot; and 'tis said she sought and married her true love... (p. 482)

Compare Twain's iconoclastic ending with William Cullen Bryant's romantic version of the legend in his poem, "Monument Mountain:"

...Beautiful lay the region of her tribe
Below her—waters resting in the embrace
Of the wide forest, and maize-planted glades
Opening amid the leafy wilderness.
She gazed upon it long, and at the sight
Of her own village peeping through the trees,
And her own dwelling, and the cabin roof
Of him she loved with an unlawful love,
And came to die for, a warm gush of tears
Ran from her eyes. But when the sun grew low
And the hill shadows long, she threw herself
From the steep rock and perished. There was scooped,
Upon the mountain's southern slope, a grave;
And there they laid her, in the very garb
With which the maiden decked herself for death,
With the same withering wild flowers in her hair... 39

Nevertheless, Twain admits to having enlarged his
"respect for the Indian imagination" after reading
several legends preserved by Schoolcraft, among them
"The Undying Head" and "Peboan and Seeguan," which he
recounts in an appendix. (p. 483) Apparently it
was only the sentimentalism incorporated into Indian
legends by some white preservers that Twain found objectionable,
and not the genre of Indian legendry itself.

From the late 1870s through the 1880s—the era of
greatest political agitation for Indian reform—Twain's
attention turned towards political aspects of the
Indian question. Two letters and a speech from this
period show that Twain was distressed by white injustice
to the Indian, although at the same time he continued to
believe that whites should cease to idealize the native.

The letter which Twain wrote to William Dean Howells
on February 22, 1877 (in which Twain supports Richard
Irving Dodge for the position of head of the Indian

39 William Cullen Bryant, "Monument Mountain" (1824),
reprinted in The Norton Anthology of American Literature,
Vol. 1, Ronald Gottesman et al., editors (New York: W.W.
Department) praises Dodge for being well-informed about Indians, and simultaneously humane towards them—a combination which Twain admired as being difficult to achieve. By implication, Twain is expressing the belief that most humanitarian reformers are ignorant of the real Indian, and that most "informed" people, as he considered himself to be, find it hard to be fair to the Indian because of personal prejudice against their lifestyle and habits.

In a circa-1886 letter to Grover Cleveland, however, Twain's indignation at white injustice overcame his reservations about the merits of Indians themselves. Louis Budd reports that this letter was "an angry note about the report that a New Mexico town was paying a bounty for Apache scalps." When Cleveland was elected to the Presidency in 1884, as when Hayes had been elected in 1877, Twain expressed hope that a new Administration would produce a stop to the corruption that beset the government's dealings with Indians.

On December 22, 1881, Twain gave a humorous speech before the New England Society. In this speech, "Plymouth Rock and the Pilgrims," Twain claims as his ancestors an Indian, the early Quakers, Roger Williams, and Black slaves—all social outcasts from Pilgrim society, which his audience had gathered to celebrate.

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Twain claims:

My first American ancestor, gentlemen, was an Indian—an early Indian. Your ancestors skinned him alive, and I am an orphan.41

Twain does not linger over this image of Pilgrim cruelty; in reality, he is creating a family tree of social outcasts only to satirize New Englanders' propensity for celebrating their ancestry. Nevertheless, the passage does show Twain's awareness of a discrepancy between the white version of American history and the way the same events appeared to non-dominant groups such as the Indians. Also, it shows that Twain was willing to identify himself, even if in jest, with the darker races. He claims in the same passage: "I am of a mixed breed, an infinitely shaded and exquisite Mongrel." (p. 494) In deciphering the meaning of this speech, we might do well to apply a statement which Twain made about himself in 1900:

I disseminate my true views by means of a series of apparently humorous and mendacious stories.42

In 1895 Twain turned back briefly to his earlier emphasis on literary realism about the Indian, culminating his public campaign against Cooper in a direct attack


entitled "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses."
Together with an unpublished, unfinished companion piece, "Cooper's Prose Style," this essay criticizes Cooper's verbosity, illogic, and inaccurate observations as Twain believes they are evidenced in The Deerslayer and, to a lesser degree, in other Cooper writings. Twain does not concentrate upon Cooper's portrayal of his "good" Indians (such as Uncas, and Chingachgook) as Noble Savages in this essay. However, he does ridicule Cooper for having some of his Indians accomplish humanly impossible feats, such as following a man's trail through running water (in The Last of the Mohicans), while others of them react to simply resolved situations in totally illogical ways. Twain laments:

In the matter of intellect, the difference between a Cooper Indian and the Indian that stands in front of the cigar store is not spacious."

In summary, Twain's complaint in this somewhat pedantic essay is that Cooper's Indians—both the superhumanly skilled ones and the hopelessly illogical ones—are neither realistic nor believeable.

After 1895, Twain adopted a tone of moral condemnation towards whites in his comments on the Indian, usually, however, without championing the native himself. At that

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point in his career, Twain had decided that the white race suffered from delusions of superiority, and that savagery was a universal human trait. He had never claimed that the Indian was not "uncivilized," but he did claim in 1897 in *Following the Equator* that:

> There are many humorous things in the world, among them the white man's notion that he is less savage than the other savages.\(^{44}\)

In an entry in his notebook, Twain, like Dodge, even claimed that in some areas of social behavior, Indians were superior to white people. Specifically, he wrote:

> The kingly office is entitled to no respect... The system of our Indians is high and juster, for only merit makes a man chief, and his son cannot take his place if there is another man better fitted for it.\(^{45}\)

In a portion of his *Autobiography* edited out by Charles Neider, Twain explained that Thanksgiving Day (a holiday that epitomizes American pious patriotism) was the result of the white man's succeeding in gaining the upper hand over the Indians, although the attempts at extermination had been mutual:

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Thanksgiving Day became a habit, for the reason that in the course of time, as the years drifted on, it was perceived that the exterminating had ceased to be mutual and was all on the white man's side, consequently on the Lord's side; hence, it was proper to thank the Lord for it and extend the usual annual compliments. 46

Hence, the white man was "superior" only because he had proved himself more successful at his savagery.

Twain's last two substantial comments on the Indian speak, again, mostly about the white man's perception of his own relationship to the Indian—a perception which Twain believed was flawed. In these works, as in the Pilgrim speech of 1881, Twain's satire depends for its success on his taking concepts well-known to American whites—in this case, the concept of civilization and the orthodox Christian concept of heaven—and showing how different those concepts appear when viewed from a perspective other than the white American one.

In "The Dervish and the Offensive Stranger" (1902), the Indian's supposed savagery ceases to be the major issue under consideration. Instead, the white man is under judgment for his colonization of Western America, which has led to impoverishment and starvation for the Western Indian. This dialogue extends Twain's preoccupation with duality to the Indian problem. As is often

the case with Twain's writing, the reader of "The Dervish and the Offensive Stranger" is not sure where straightforward discussion turns into irony, well-camouflaged as that irony is by Twain's deadpan style. Taken at face value, the dialogue presents Twain's opinion that good intentions bring about good results and evil results in equal measure. For example, Twain writes that white colonization of America has benefitted the white race, but has resulted in the extermination of the Indians.

The Offensive Stranger. "Columbus discovered a new world and gave to the plodding poor and landless of Europe farms and breathing space and plenty and happiness—"
The Dervish. "A good result."
The Offensive Stranger. "And they hunted and harried the original owners of the soil, and robbed them, beggared them, drove them from their homes, and exterminated them, root and branch."
The Dervish. "An evil result, yes."

As the dialogue continues, however, irony takes over, and the good and evil results of actions given as examples become the opposite of what the reader expects. As in "To the Person Sitting in Darkness," Twain's theme in the last half of the dialogue is that the "blessings of white civilization" are curses to the supposedly "uncivilized" people on whom they are inflicted. Again, as in "To the Person Sitting in Darkness," Twain uses his

favorite examples of "uncivilized" people on whom such blessings have been inflicted--the Chinese, whom Twain implies were better off without white civilization (The good result of white missionaries' efforts in China, according to the Offensive Stranger, is that "by the compassion of God four hundred millions have escaped our Civilization." (p. 52)); and the Indians, about whom, as always, Twain is more ambivalent. In "To the Person Sitting in Darkness," Twain avoided the Indian issue by using only an image of the Indian as a point of comparison with white's lack of civilization. In the later essay, "The Dervish and the Offensive Stranger," Twain confronts the historic Indian and finds that he has been destroyed by white "civilization." Twain's obvious irony about the four hundred million Chinese's fortunate escape from "civilization" suggests at least some doubt in Twain's mind that the statement of the White Chief from Utah--"How noble, how beneficent, is civilization!"--should be accepted at face value, especially in view of the Indians' starvation brought about by that same civilization. (p. 51) Also, when we read Twain's statement that Columbus' discovery of new land for Europe's masses was the good result which counterbalanced the extermination of the Indians in America,
we should remember that in *Pudd'nhead Wilson's Calendar* Twain had placed doubt on the real value of Columbus's find:

October 12. The Discovery. It was wonderful to find America, but it would have been more wonderful to miss it.\(^4^8\)

In any case, at whatever point the use of irony becomes clearcut, "The Dervish and the Offensive Stranger" definitely questions the benefits of white American "civilization" for other peoples, and presents the history of American colonization from a viewpoint sympathetic to the Indian.

Finally, in "Extract from Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven" (1907-1909), Twain enlarges upon his earlier ironic inversions of his audience's concepts of the Indian and of civilization. Just as many Americans of the 1870s and 1880s had believed that "civilizing" the Indian was synonymous with Christianizing him, here Twain epitomizes white "civilization" in the orthodox American Protestant version of heaven. He counters the notion that heaven is the reward of only "civilized" (i.e., Christianized) people; Twain's heaven is an egalitarian immensity, populated by all

sorts of beings. In fact, in the American section of heaven, Indians outnumber whites overwhelmingly, simply because more Indians than whites have died in America over the course of history. In Twain's version of heaven, white angels are considered by the heavenly dwellers as diseased Indians—a curious reminder of Twain's earlier idea that the Noble Red Man myth was a white disease. As Twain has his character Sandy tell Stormfield:

"You can't expect us to amount to anything in heaven, and we don't. Now that is the simple fact and we have got to do the best we can with it. The learned men from other planets and other systems come here and hang around a while, when they are touring around the Kingdom, and then go back to their own section of heaven and write a book of travels, and they give America about five lines in it. And what do they say about us? They say this wilderness is populated with a scattering few hundred thousand billions of red angels, with now and then a curiously complected diseased one. You see they think we whites and the occasional nigger are Injuns that have been bleached out or blackened by some leprous disease or other—for some peculiarly rascally sin, mind you. It is a mighty sour pill for us all, my friend—even the modestest of us, let alone the other kind, that think they are going to be received like a long-lost government bond, and hug Abraham into the bargain."  

As he had done throughout his career, using various genres and various stylistic techniques, Twain speaks

49 See page 69 of this thesis.

through this late fable about the importance of perspective in Indian/white relations. Twain had from the beginning recognized the illusions which other people held about the Indian—the Noble Red Man myth, the savage stereotype, and the idea that the Indian was a moral tabula rasa waiting to be impressed with the values of white "civilization." Now, at the end of his life, Twain proved himself able to transcend even his personal prejudice by ridiculing the narrowness of vision which engendered his bias. In their own eyes, turn-of-the-century white Americans loomed large and powerful in relation to other human beings. Twain suggested, and was able to imagine, another, transcendent point of view, from which white America might not seem so grand, and from which her imperialism would seem petty. Perhaps from that point of view, it would even be the despised Indians who would be considered the norm for this continent. It was "a mighty sour pill" to swallow, but one which Twain felt compelled to prescribe for himself and for his fellow Americans who were suffering from inordinate ethnocentric pride.

The Indian had served Twain well throughout his literary career. At first an object of burlesque,
the Indian had almost immediately become an important rhetorical image in Twain's writing, used by him to disillusion his readers of their false concepts about both Indians and themselves. In the end, Twain also welcomed the Indian into his writing as both a symbol and a tool of his own disillusionment of the idea of white superiority.
APPENDIX
THE CRITICS

The earliest criticism of Twain's use of Indians, written in 1895, is a sharp, negative response to Twain's equally sharp critical article, "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses," published earlier that year. In "Mark Twain as a Critic" D. F. Hannigan labels Twain an irreverent, vulgar iconoclast with "a microscopic rather than penetrative intellect."¹ Hannigan dismisses Twain's attempt as not criticism but "rather bad temper and want of the faculty of appreciativeness." (p. 42) In what is mostly a defense of Cooper's style, Hannigan makes no reference to Twain's own depictions of the Indian. His recognition of Twain's special literary gift of humor is limited to a belittling reference to Twain as "a humorist of a certain kind," by implication not qualified to do the work of truly "literary" authors.

Seventy years after Hannigan, Sydney J. Krause's article "Cooper's Literary Offenses: Mark Twain in

Wonderland" partly justifies Twain's caustic reaction to Cooper. "After observing the regal son of the forest at first hand on the frontier, Twain had had his doubts about him." Conceding that Twain's literary criticism was "grumbling," Krause nevertheless goes beyond Hannigan's equally grumbling article to provide the Cooper criticism with its logical antecedent, a discussion of Twain's essay, "The Noble Red Man" (1870). Krause's is one of the more dispassionate criticisms ever written about "The Noble Red Man." He concentrates upon Twain's techniques of oversimplification and overstatement, and takes the position that Twain's proposal to exterminate the Indians is merely an indication of "the Swiftian complexity of his exaggeration," "intended as a foil to the equivalent hyperbole of the humanitarians and romantics." (p. 139) The only other Twain critic to take such a sympathetic position on this early, admittedly vitriolic essay is Elizabeth I. Hanson, who in a brief article entitled "Mark Twain's Indians Reexamined" borrows Krause's idea of "Swiftian irony."³

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Krause's second look at the Hannigan portrayal of a grumbling, inept Twain stands alone in its suggestion that the very early Twain Indian writings may have been intended to criticize the white myth of the Noble Savage, rather than the actual Indian himself. In a sense entirely unintended by Hannigan, Krause agrees that "Mark Twain has entered the lists as an iconoclast"—not only, as Hannigan meant, as a would-be destroyer of Cooper's literary reputation, but, more importantly, as a writer in his own right who had no qualms about exposing the mythical nature of white Easterners' images of the Indian.

Other early articles on Twain's Western experiences and on his views on Indians are the critical antithesis of Hannigan's. Whereas Hannigan confined his criticism to a single Twain essay, Charles Miner Thompson, in 1897, writes about "the man behind the book," without ever really examining the book. Thompson's "Mark Twain as an Interpreter of American Character" takes an environmentalist approach to Twain's writing: the works are the chief expression of a "shifting and evanescent semi-civilization," that is, of the mid-nineteenth-century Far West.  

does not find Twain to be a significant literary force (whether positive or threatening) so much as a valuable recorder of early Southwestern life. Dismissing his humor as "frivolous," Thompson finds Twain's importance in his underlying abilities as "the keen observer, the serious man, the ardent reformer." Most of all, Twain is "gifted to express...himself, his own thoughts, feelings, experiences." (p. 448) In Thompson's opinion, Twain is the typical American, and his writings, scarcely mentioned by the critic, serve not an esthetic or didactic purpose, but an autobiographical and nationalistic one. Yet his characterization of Twain as an ardent reformer implies that Thompson recognized some skill of political expression in Twain's writings, as they are the major public indication of Twain's opinions, as a reformer or otherwise. Thompson merely failed to realize that Twain's humor was his greatest political weapon.

In the 1913 article "Mark Twain's Relation to Nevada and to the West," Jeanne Wier takes much the same approach as Thompson. In her analysis, Twain "stands today as a representative of a composite

American type that has resulted from a fearfully rapid expansion of territory." (p. 100) That is, Twain is Turner's typical frontiersman returned East. To both Thompson and Wier, Twain's writing is important mainly as an indicator of his character. These two critics leave their readers to infer Twain's response, as a typical Far Western American, to his environment, including the Indians. Neither Thompson nor Wier mentions the complex perspective Twain must have developed on the West because of his having transplanted himself from that region to a highly respected position in Yankeedom's stronghold, New England.

Following the basically eulogistic, Twain-as-history models of Thompson and Wier, Effie Mona Mack's book, *Mark Twain in Nevada*, places the man in his milieu without really being a work of literary criticism at all. Mack does enumerate Twain's first-hand dealings with Indian during his stay in Virginia City and other parts of Nevada—mainly that he and his brother Orion hired an Indian worker at half white man's wages. Mack points out the deprived physical and social status of Nevada's Indians, as did Twain in *Roughing It*, but she makes no comment on Twain's literary portrayal of them.

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More illuminating in the vein of historical discussion of Twain's Indian writings is Fred Lorch's "Mark Twain's Early Views on Western Indians." Long before civil rights and cultural relativism became popular issues, Lorch takes an extraordinarily unbiassed position on both Twain and the Indian. Unfortunately, he has extended his observations only to one early letter to Jane Clemens and to Roughing It. Lorch's method of analysis, well-balanced between literary and historic analysis, might well be used on the entire canon of Twain's Indian writings.

In commenting on Twain's unflattering description of the Goshoot Indians in Roughing It, Lorch makes two revealing observations about Twain:

In considering Mark Twain's appraisal of Indians in Roughing It, two things should be noted:
1) that the many characteristics which he ascribes to the Goshoots are generalized as true of all Indians; and 2) that he is reporting more about the Goshoots than he could possibly have observed of them while passing through their country in a stagecoach. (p. 1)

Lorch concludes that Twain relied too much on popular conceptions of the Goshoots, formed in times of early white settlement, and that the young author willfully ignored the environmental causes of the Goshoots.

depraved condition. Nevertheless, Lorch admits that Twain's depiction of the Goshoots' lifestyle, while unsympathetic, is borne out by government reports of the era. While concentrating on the historicity of Twain's early writing on Indians, this critic astutely recognizes Twain's bent to literary showmanship—not as an excuse for inhumanity, but as an inextricably interwined factor in the creation of Roughing It. Twain's concern with "theatrical effects" is a vital part of his humor, nourished on the Southwestern tall tale. (p. 2) Unlike most critics of the Indian writings, Lorch does not condemn Twain for not abandoning humor, even when he believes that Twain's humor lends too harsh a tone to his writing.

Lorch believes that if Twain had researched the Goshoots' situation as carefully as he later researched his novel topics (e. g., the Middle Ages for Connecticut Yankee), his presentation would have been more sympathetic. However, Lorch himself was writing his article after the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, with its policy sympathetic to Indian lifestyles. Even though Twain later did consult several Indian "authorities" for information which his own Western experience had not afforded him, respected writers such as Francis Parkman, William Cody, General William T. Sherman, and Lt. Col. Richard Irving
Dodge gave Twain ambivalent opinions on the value of Indian lifestyles, the causes of "the Indian problem," and how that problem should be resolved. For example, Dodge's lurid description of the Indian rape of white women did not substantially improve the image of the depraved Indian which Twain had received from popular sources in his Nevada years. The juxtaposition of such a pejorative description with praise for the Indian's intellect and religion, and Dodge's capping off of his observations with a proposed policy of assimilation, or "civilization," of the Plains Indians, only complicated the issue further for Mark Twain.

Three critics should be mentioned who have touched on Twain's Indian writings briefly in the context of their place in literary history. These scholars show concern for Twain's position among other major American authors, rather than for his place as a historical figure in nineteenth-century society as a whole. Two of the critics, Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. and S. B. Liljegren, use the Indian writings to place Twain in the anti-Romantic, Realistic tradition. The third, William J. Scheick, compares Twain's Injun Joe with other half-breeds in nineteenth-century American fiction.
Berkhofer’s only mention of Twain’s Indians in his book The White Man’s Indian (1978) is a reference to the Goshoot description in Roughing It, about which he writes:

The vitriolic racism of literary realism found no more bitter expression than in Mark Twain’s description of the Gosiute in his Roughing It.

Berkhofer concludes that Realism in general (which Twain represents) was neither sympathetic nor truly realistic in its colorful depictions of Indian life. "What is called realism in literature did not necessarily produce realistic Indian imagery." (p. 56)

Of the three critics who place Mark Twain in the context of American literary history, only Liljegren recognizes the complicating role that humor plays in Twain’s literary response to the Indian. Liljegren concentrates not on the Indian, as does Berkhofer, but on Twain’s anti-Romanticism. In "The Revolt against Romanticism in America as Evidenced in the Works of S. L. Clemens," Liljegren uses "Niagara" and "Cooper's Literary Offenses" to demonstrate Twain’s displeasure with the "unnatural and bombastic" expressions put into Indian mouths by Romantic writers. Liljegren’s emphasis is, as was Twain’s, upon rejection of the stylized

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language used by the Romantics.

In his analysis of the two Twain essays, Liljegren points out Twain's use of humor as a masking device for serious literary criticism. Unlike Helen L. Harris, Liljegren recognizes the true Irish identity of the "Indians" criticized in "Niagara." At the same time he perceives Twain's burlesque of Cooper's literary style in the ridiculous language and actions of the sketch's narrator. In discussing "Cooper's Literary Offenses" Liljegren points out (as other critics have failed to do) the significance of Twain's acting as a literary man and a critic for once. "Cooper's Literary Offenses," although it still partakes of Twain's satiric style, is a temporary dropping of Twain's mask of ignorance and self-deprecation. The strong feelings expressed, though humorously, in "Cooper's Literary Offenses" suggest that the reader should take Twain seriously as a literary artist, because here Twain clearly is preoccupied with matters of style and esthetics. Accepting Twain as a fully self-conscious artist whose medium is humor, as well as as a storyteller and a social critic, significantly alters our reading of some of the Indian writings, especially those in which the Indian is used rhetorically.
William J. Scheick's discussion of Injun Joe in *The Half-Blood: A Cultural Symbol in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* assumes a high degree of conscious artistry in Twain's *Adventures of Tom Sawyer*. Scheick believes that the half-blood serves a different, more subtle purpose than does the Indian in nineteenth-century American fiction. The fictional half-blood was not so easily placed into noble or ignoble mythic classifications as was the Indian. The half-blood

...epitomized the integration (whether successful or unsuccessful) of the red and the white races, provided a dramatic symbol of the benign possibilities or malign probabilities inherent in this encounter.10

Scheick believes that the half-blood in American fiction symbolizes the frontier confrontation between white man and red man. In the particular case of Mark Twain's Injun Joe, Scheick goes one step beyond a frontier-oriented interpretation of the fictional half-blood, writing that Twain's half-blood "symbolizes the divided nature of the human self; specifically, Injun Joe objectifies Tom Sawyer's conflicting impulses towards and away from civilization." (p. 24) In these psycho-analytical terms Scheick implies Twain's own tentative identification with the dark races, representing, perhaps,

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the dark, uncivilized side of human nature. The same interpretation can be extended to Twain's speech, "Plymouth Rock and the Pilgrims," in which Twain claims kinship with the Indian whom his audience's Puritan ancestors skinned alive. In that speech, Twain goes on to include in his spiritual family tree the Salem witches, the early Quakers, and Blacks—all, along with the Indian, social outcasts. If Injun Joe is indeed a symbol of Twain's rebellion against the sterile whiteness of his society, the character's horrible ending suggests Twain's return to the fold of conventionalism. Injun Joe's death did not permanently put to rest Twain's rebellion, however. The Pilgrim speech was delivered long after *Tom Sawyer* was written. Huck Finn remains to the end an outcast, squirming within the conventions of St. Petersburg and longing to "light out for the territory."

And in 1884 Twain wrote nine chapters of "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians," actually taking his white outcasts West to meet the red outcasts. When his idyll turned into a nightmare, Twain turned from the West as the place symbolizing rebellion against society, to the world of dreams.

Scheick is unlike the other critics in remarking the distinction between Twain's Indian characters and
his half-blood character. Most often, Injun Joe has been treated as Twain's major Indian character. Helen L. Harris, for example, ignores the mixed nature of Joe, writing:

In the character of Injun Joe, Twain demonstrated the typical Indian's treachery, murderousness, cowardice and depravity.\textsuperscript{11}

Scheick treats Twain's half-blood as a mythical type emerging from the white man's fear of and fascination with the dark alien. Although the half-blood can not be mythicized as a Noble Red Man or as an Ignoble Savage, he is still a mythical figure, being, in Scheick's opinion, an extensively used symbol of American ambivalence towards progress, civilization, and the wilderness. Robert Tracy, in his article "Myth and Reality in The Adventures of Tom Sawyer," has presented a similar mythical interpretation of Injun Joe.\textsuperscript{12}

In his article "You Can't Go Back to the Raft Ag'in Huck Honey!: Mark Twain's Western Sequel to Huckleberry Finn," which treats "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the

\textsuperscript{11}Helen L. Harris, "Mark Twain's Response to the Native American," \textit{American Literature}, Vol. 46 (January, 1975), p. 499.

Indians," Paul Delaney has further explored the idea of Twain's ambivalence towards civilized society. Delaney concentrates on the character Huck, finding in the abortive novel the inception of Huck's loss of innocence. Life among the Indians is depicted at first as "a male's dream," "an escape to a cultural ideal---a dream-escape to completely unbridled freedom." 13 The idyll soon turns into a nightmare of loneliness resulting from the "symbolic destruction of all society" that takes place in the massacre of the Mills family with whom the males fleeing society's confinement have met. (p. 222) Delaney takes the position that Twain was not bent on exposing the depravity of Indians, but was caught and frustrated in an impotent comprehension of the evil universally present in the moral codes of societies. If he could have isolated the evil in the person of some Indian "other" perhaps Twain could have finished the novel. But, Delaney posits, Twain had given his adolescent protagonists knowledge of the evil inherent in all human societies---in the society of the Indians, and in their own society. As Twain has Brace Johnson explain to the boys, the Indians had

13 Paul Delaney, "You Can't Go Back to the Raft Ag'in Huck Honey!: Mark Twain's Western Sequel to Huckleberry Finn," Western American Literature, Vol. 11, No. 3 (Fall, 1976), pp. 215-229; p. 219.
merely taken advantage of the Mills family's coincidental presence in order to enact their revenge, a moral obligation in their society. Likewise, Twain has Huck, Tom, and Brace set out to recapture the surviving Peggy, Flaxy, and Jim, and presumably to destroy the Indians if possible. In the course of the plot, according to Twain's reading of Dodge, not only would the boys necessarily have had to realize the utter futility of society's attempts to eradicate evil in the form of some alien, but they would have had to confront Peggy's rape by Indians, a symbol of the ultimate loss of innocence which Twain came to believe had to occur when one rejected the conventions of his own society.

Delaney traces the genesis of Twain's later transcendent figures to the problems implicit in "Huck and Tom among the Indians." In writing this fragment, Delaney says, Twain realized that once Huck moved from the edges to the outside of his own society, he would not be able to maintain his innocent perspective, but would necessarily see the evil in all societies, thereby becoming an isolated, "hardened moral arbiter." (p. 229) Delaney claims that Twain left the fragment incomplete at the point after which he would have had to deliberately destroy his fictional embodiment of innocence, Huck, in
favor of the harsh, hopeless reality of man's--Indian's and white's--evil.

The most recent group of scholars to critique Twain's Indian writings—six critics altogether—takes a more comprehensive approach to the writings. While not all of them make detailed analyses of all the texts, these critics to make generalizations about Twain's perception of the Indian, tracing trends of progressive cultural relativism, or, conversely, of continuing ethnocentric hostility, through Twain's entire literary career.

None of these critics takes, nor has any scholar taken, a purely New Critical approach to Twain's Indians. Perhaps the New Criticism was never a viable choice for analyzing an author like Twain, whose life and writing were so much influenced by and influential upon his society. Within the consensus that Twain's writing and his milieu are related, however, these scholars have interpreted the works from a variety of vantages—sociohistoric, sociopsychological, biographical, and Marxist.

Louis Budd's study Mark Twain: Social Philosopher raises, among other questions, the question of whether Twain showed ethnic prejudice in his Indian writings. Was Twain prone to accept the opinions of prejudiced elements in his society, or did he stand out against
the nineteenth century's backdrop of ethnocentrism? Critics have taken both positions. Budd posits a gradual progress away from racism in Twain's career. From Roughing It's "darker signs of misdirected bias from Twain's Western years," to "Captain Stormfield's Visit to Heaven," which Budd believes shows that the Indian had "stalked into the circle of his sympathy," Budd finds a slow thawing of Twain's original "glacial contempt for the Indian."\(^{14}\) Budd credits this change of heart to Twain's concern with public opinion, a factor for which, however, Twain did not usually show much respect. In fact, throughout his career, Twain often stood against public opinion—in Huckleberry Finn, in which he violated literary norms by using vernacular speech and social norms by advocating friendship between white people and black people; in his attacks of James Fenimore Cooper, at that time considered one of America's greatest authors; in his mockery of orthodox American Christianity in articles such as "About Smell" (Galaxy, May, 1870); and in his later anti-nationalistic articles, such as "To the Person Sitting in Darkness" (North American Review, February, 1901). The public conscience with which Twain was

familiar was a many-sided entity, if such opposing bodies of opinion could be called an entity at all. Twain certainly must have been aware of, but not necessarily always concerned with catering to public opinion. On the subject of the Indian, Twain could not have pleased all the people all the time if he had wanted to. The Army, the emerging professional anthropologists, and the reformers all had different ideas about what should be done with the Indian. Even the reformers, who agreed amongst themselves that the Indian must be "civilized" and educated, found it difficult to reach a consensus on how civilization for the Indian was to be achieved, and how quickly.

Budd finds little humor in Twain's Indian writings, which contributes to his reading of them as a steady progression. If one reads Twain's "Noble Red Man" as an ironic exaggeration, as does Krause, the picture of progression becomes muddied. Was the early Twain perhaps less racist than has been supposed? If one, then, takes offense at Twain's relatively late description of King Arthur's court as "just a sort of polished-up court of Comanches," he must doubt, as Helen L. Harris does, that Twain progressed at all. Budd voices the frustration of the entire small group of scholars interested in Twain's Indian writings when he laments: "Twain was never to
focus directly on the dark agony of the American Indian, a subject fit for his most trenchant insights" (p. 107). Had Twain left a novel focussed on the Indian (perhaps if he had completed "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians"), we certainly would have had more insight into his opinion of the Indian. Still, such a novel would have been caught in time, and so could not have clarified the sense of progression which Budd seeks. Actually, Twain did focus several times on the Indian, in brief but meaningful statements. He focussed on the Indian through his essays, letters, unpublished fragments, and characters in his major books; through metaphors, his personal reading of other authors, and humor. We must study these many foci in conjunction in order to obtain the truest, complex picture of Twain's understanding of an infinitely complex issue.

Maxwell Geismar has written a Marxist critique of Twain in his book *Mark Twain: An American Prophet* (1970). The portions of this book which treat Twain's relationship with the Indian concentrate on the issue of racial exploitation. His study is not comprehensive in terms of Twain's works, but he does generalize from __________________

*Presumably, Budd means in a novel-length work.*
those passages which he chooses to introduce into his study. Geismar concludes that Twain ultimately achieved an avant-garde attitude towards the Indian. Geismar's colleagues generally disagree with this analysis, refer only to that portion of the book in which Geismar posits Twain's feelings of "frontier guilt" about the Indian.  

An exception to the general critical rebuttal of Geismar is Lynn Denton's brief article "Mark Twain and the American Indian." Denton follows the basic thesis and direction of Geismar's study, writing of Twain:

During his early years, especially while he lived in the West, Twain exhibited strong prejudice against the Indian; that prejudice eventually changed to toleration and then finally to idealism in "Captain Stormfield" and in "Plymouth Rock and the Pilgrims," with which Denton, like Geismar, concludes his discussion. Denton also echoes Geismar's idea that Twain's attitudes toward the Indian were largely dependent on his beliefs about white society. "As he became more disenchanted with Puritan and European

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15 For a detailed discussion of Geismar's position on Twain's Indians, see Chapter I, pp. 7-13 of this thesis.

society, his attitudes toward the Indian mellowed" (p. 2). Denton joins Lorch in recognizing that even Twain's early, apparently prejudiced views on the Indian were "sometimes pointedly humorous"—the work of a literary showman (p. 1).

Leslie A. Fiedler is not so sympathetic. In 1968, Fiedler wrote:

Twain is by instinct and conviction, an absolute Indian-hater, consumed by the desire to destroy not merely real Indians, but any image of Indian life which stands between White Americans and a total commitment to genocide. His only notable Indian character is Injun Joe, that haunter of caves and hater of White females...17

Fiedler takes the Freudian position that Twain was defending "mother," or womankind, by becoming a Colonel Moredock-style Indian hater. This judgment does not explain Twain's later works dealing with Indians, such as the works Geismar discussed or "The Dervish and the Offensive Stranger." Fiedler's recognition of Twain's iconoclastic bent and complex use of irony are valuable. Nonetheless, Fiedler's remains an unusually dogmatic, psychoanalytical argument for the Twain-as-Indian-hater school of criticism.18

18 See also Chapter I, pp. 13-17.
By far the most comprehensive analysis of the Indian writings published to date is Helen L. Harris' 1975 article "Mark Twain's Response to the Native American." Harris elaborates on her bluntly-states thesis—"Mark Twain has been called 'the champion of the oppressed,' but when he wrote of the Native American he was unfailingly hostile"—in a thorough discussion, in chronological order, of almost all the Twain works in which Indians are mentioned. Harris, unlike most of the other critics, takes account of and responds to the opinions of other scholars; for example, she addresses Lewis Leary's concern that "sustained focus on Twain's social reform efforts would diminish his image and detract attention from his literary artistry" (Harris, p. 495). Harris strikes an admirable balance between literary and culturally-oriented criticism of Twain, recognizing the author's complexity:

...if Twain's work is worthy of analysis, both as a complex individual's artistic expression and as literature reflecting nineteenth-century American culture and literary taste--for Twain was a popular writer--then his response to the Indian, usually treated as a taboo subject or ignored, demands investigation. (p. 495)

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Harris, like Fiedler, remarks upon the myth-debunking nature of some of Twain's writing. She also makes a brief foray into Fiedler-like psychoanalysis, conjecturing that Twain did not finish "Huck Finn and Tom Sawyer among the Indians" because its heroine, Peggy Mills, who was to suffer gang-rape by Indians, resembled his daughter Susy Clemens.

Harris places great emphasis upon whether Twain's Indian writings were published during his lifetime or not. She admits Twain's sympathy for the Indian with this reservation:

Twain's late response to the Indian may have been more sympathetic than his early one; but the writings published during his lifetime did not reveal it. (p. 504)

Harris' downfall as a critic of the Indian writings is her failure to acknowledge the important role of humor and rhetoric in Twain's works. She uses Geismar's idea of Twain's early "frontier guilt," but does not find Twain's progress at all remarkable, as does Geismar; maybe this is because she pays a bare minimum of attention to the works which Geismar found so revealing of Twain's true opinion—"Captain Stormfield" and the Pilgrim speech. Despite the discussion of a great deal of material overlooked by the other scholars, Harris is finally selective in her emphasis and biased towards her monolithic thesis in her reading of Twain's humor. Far from accepting
Krause's interpretation of "The Noble Red Man" as a piece of Swiftian irony, Harris reads even the burlesque "Niagara" as serious, straightforward criticism of the Indian.

Harris wrote her essay in reaction to Lynn Denton's article. Instead of lauding Twain's growing idealism of the 1880s and 1890s, as did Denton, Harris insists that "Twain, even in his maturity, could not portray an Indian other than depraved" (p. 503). In her discussion of "The Dervish and the Offensive Stranger," she rejects the possibility of irony in Twain's statement that both good and evil result equally from every good intention. In the dialogue's context, Twain is intentionally ambiguous as to whether the coming of "civilization" to the Indian is the good result or the evil result of the colonization of America by whites; but Harris, reducing the significance of Twain's humor, calls the work a rationalization, and "at last a denial that the colonists were to blame for the results of their 'good intention' for themselves (p. 504).

Even in his late works—written long after the political activity of the "Friends of the Indian" had made overt extermination an unpopular solution to the Indian problem for his Eastern audience—Harris believes
that Twain supported the destruction of America's natives. In so doing, Harris claims, Twain was reflecting "the nation's need to mythologize extermination of the natives and seizure of their homelands as an admirable part of the 'pioneer struggle'" (p. 495). Harris places Twain in firm agreement with the policy of extermination, although she admits that the author saw some bad results coming from this policy. She writes that Twain glossed over and justified these bad results, whereas she herself glosses over important indications of Twain's reservations about white mistreatment of Indians—indications such as his circa-1885 letter written to Grover Cleveland, protesting the paying of bounties for Indian scalps in New Mexico. Harris dismisses this document summarily, adding irrelevantly, "He had also written protests against cruelty to animals" (p. 503).

Harris has applied her partly valid but overly simplified thesis to complex, sometimes self-contradictory writings. As a result, her study, while thorough, is dogmatic, giving a flat, one-dimensional picture of Twain, the man of whom Justin Kaplan wrote: "Twain was capable of supporting two moods of belief at the same time."
More in keeping with the actual complexity of Twain's position is the most recent article on Twain and the Indian—Elizabeth I. Hanson's "Mark Twain's Indians Reexamined." Hanson's essay is too brief to cover all the works discussed in Harris' study, but she selects representative samples which support her thesis:

Essentially, Twain registers several critical perspectives simultaneously whenever he touches on the Indian. To varying degrees self-conscious, these include a tendency to make of the Indian a vehicle for burlesquing romantic conventions of all kinds, a sense of moral condemnation, and a note of esthetic revulsion. 20 Hanson traces the usual progress from antagonism to sympathy in Twain's Indian writings, but she also talks about the myth-debunking purpose in them, and she points out Twain's skill at satiric expression. Hanson's avoidance of monolithicism in her thesis is an important step towards a more complete understanding of Twain's Indian writings.

In the criticism discussed here, no general concensus is achieved on Twain's response to the Indian. Some agreement emerges on several points, however: Twain became at least somewhat more sympathetic toward the Indian as he grew older; his use of the Indian has both social and literary implications; he was influenced to some degree

20 Elizabeth I. Hanson, "Mark Twain's Indians Reexamined," Mark Twain Journal, Vol. 20, No. 4 (Summer, 1981), pp. 11-12; p. 11.
in his attitudes by his own Western experience, by the reports of contemporary "authorities," and by the political climate in which he wrote; and finally, Twain experienced an inner conflict about his own beliefs concerning Indian lifestyles and Indian policy.
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