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Editors' Introduction[†]

Shelley Fisher FISHKIN and TATSUMI Takayuki

The New York Times of July 30, 2006 noted that the North Heights Lutheran Church in Minnesota “was draped in bunting on the Sunday before the Fourth of July this year for a ‘freedom celebration.’ Military veterans and flag twirlers paraded into the sanctuary, an enormous American flag rose slowly behind the stage, and a Marine major who had served in Afghanistan preached that the military was spending ‘your hard-earned money’ on good causes.”¹ Two weeks earlier, on July 13th, Congressman John Murtha, an ex-Marine who has represented Pennsylvania’s 12th Congressional District for 30 years, sent out a widely-circulated email letter noting that “No matter how obvious the mistakes in Iraq become, or how many Americans get fed up, Republicans in Congress and the White House will label you a traitor to your country if you stand up and question them.”²

The moment seemed eerily reminiscent of the “The War-Prayer,” where Mark Twain wrote, “. . . the war was on, and in every breast burned the holy fire of patriotism; the drums were beating, the bands playing, . . . [and] . . . a fluttering wilderness of flags flashed in the sun; . . . [I]n the churches the pastors preached devotion to flag and country, and invoked the God of Battles, beseeching His aid in our good cause in outpourings of fervid eloquence which moved every listener. It was indeed a glad and gracious time, and the half-dozen rash spirits that ventured to disapprove of the war and cast doubt upon its righteousness straightway got such a stern and angry warning that for their personal safety’s sake they quickly shrank out of sight and offended no more in that way.”

Mark Twain would have appreciated Rep. Murtha’s demand that the Republicans “cut the traitor talk” whenever anyone raised questions about the conduct of the war. “The War-Prayer” bears witness to Twain’s understanding of the potentially disastrous consequences of silencing dissent: misbegotten foreign military adventures that could lead us to “lay waste” in “a hurricane of fire” the “humble homes” of people against whom we

[†] “New Perspectives on ‘The War-Prayer’: An International Forum” honors the achievements of Jim Zwick, whose pioneering work on Twain’s anti-imperialist writings and on the anti-imperialist movement in general—both in print and on the web—has played such a crucial, illuminating role.

bore no grudge; ill-conceived wars that could “help us wring the hearts of . . . unoffending widows with unavailing grief” and “turn them out roofless with their little children to wander unfriended the wastes of their desolated land.” Twain himself had been called a “traitor” for his opposition to the Philippine-American War, and had made some caustic comments of his own on “traitor talk” at the time. Twain wrote in 1901, “If the country’s life was in danger, its existence at stake; —then that is one kind of patriotism—we would all come forward and stand by the flag, and stop thinking about whether the nation was right or wrong; but when there is no question that the nation is in any way in danger, but only some little war away off, then it may be that on the question of politics, the nation is divided, half patriots and half traitors, and no man can tell which from which.”³

Twain probably would have relished reading in *The New York Times* on July 30, 2006 of the decision of Rev. Gregory A. Boyd, the evangelical pastor of Woodland Hills Church in Maplewood, Minnesota to refuse to join lockstep with other area churches in turning his sanctuary into a jingoistic celebration of the military. Rev. Boyd preached a series of sermons on “The Sword and the Cross” that reminded congregants that “America was founded by people trying to escape theocracies. Never in history have we had a Christian theocracy where it wasn’t bloody and barbaric. That’s why our Constitution wisely put in a separation of church and state.” Twain might have noted with interest Rev. Boyd’s new book based on his sermons, entitled *The Myth of a Christian Nation: How the Quest for Political Power Is Destroying the Church*; he might have been intrigued, as well, by the fact that the legitimacy of marching off to war claiming God on your side was being questioned in half a dozen new books by religious leaders in the U.S., to say nothing of an increasing secular army of journalists, scholars, and former government officials.⁴ “The War-Prayer,” written a hundred years ago as Mark Twain reflected on the conditions surrounding the U.S. decision to embark on the imperialist venture known as the Philippine-American War, speaks to us across time in strikingly uncanny ways.⁵

Although today “The War-Prayer” is increasingly accessible to readers worldwide, this important piece by Mark Twain has never received the critical attention that it warrants. Neither has it occupied the place that it deserves in the Mark Twain canon, or in the American literary canon. In the years since its first publication in 1923, it has often been reprinted. But it rarely appears in anthologies of American literature,⁶ and it is among the least well-known works by Twain as far as the general public is concerned. Indeed, educated individuals are often startled and shocked when they are introduced to this piece, dumbfounded as to why they never encountered it before. A question worth pondering: How might American history and world history in the 20th century have been different if

“The War-Prayer” had been as familiar to every high school student as *Tom Sawyer*?

The two of us—Shelley Fisher Fishkin and Takayuki Tatsumi—had a memorable conversation in Kyoto in June 2005 on the eve of the annual meeting of the Japanese Association of American Studies. Prof. Fishkin had just gotten off a plane from Kunming, China where, at an American Studies conference on “America at War and at Peace” at Yunnan University, she had just given a keynote talk. Her talk, entitled “Wars of Words: American Writers and War,” had addressed the ways in which “The War-Prayer” laid down the tracks for much of the anti-war writing produced by Americans in the 20th century.⁷ She shared with Prof. Tatsumi the enthusiastic positive response of the scholars at the conference—and the outrage of a visiting official from the U.S. Embassy in Beijing who demanded (and was given) time at the podium to attack her after she gave her speech. Would the official have felt as free to dismiss as aberrant Twain and others who explored similar themes if “The War-Prayer” had been better-known? ⁸ “The War-Prayer” was on Prof. Tatsumi’s mind as well, since he was in the process of writing a paper for an international literature conference to be held the following spring at Chukyo University in Nagoya, Japan, that began with a discussion of “The War-Prayer.” His paper, on postmodern writers’ use of black humor in their efforts “to narrate post-apocalyptic reality in the wake of fatal disaster,” invoked Mark Twain as an important precursor to these efforts, arguing that “‘The War-Prayer’ represents a kind of comic apocalypse by radically mocking the most pious Christian prayer as another site of war.” “The popularity even in the 21st century of Christian manuals of prayer like *Prayer and Spiritual Warfare* (1984) and *Becoming a Prayer Warrior* (1998),” he argued, lent further support to the idea of Mark Twain as a prophet in the use of black humor to undercut Christian rationales for war.⁹ Might an international forum on “The War-Prayer” in *Mark Twain Studies* play a role in prompting broader discussion and debate? We respected each other’s scholarship, breadth of interests, editorial judgment, political vision, and sense of humor, and welcomed the opportunity to work together on this project. The collaboration has been as pleasurable as it has been fruitful.

As editors of this international forum on “The War-Prayer” in *Mark Twain Studies*, we are pleased to be able to give this important work by Mark Twain some of the attention that it has long deserved. Contributors include scholars, in the U.S. and Japan, from the fields of English, History, American Studies, Religious Studies, Comparative Literature, Ethnic Studies, Philosophy, and Sociology/Anthropology—as well as a Twain biographer, a poet and artist born in Vietnam, an independent scholar, a novelist, a rare book collector, and a stand-up political comic. It is appropriate that this reconsideration of “The War-Prayer,” which Twain wrote in large part in response to the “the United States’ first

protracted war in Asia,"¹⁰ appear in this issue of *Mark Twain Studies* devoted to Mark Twain in Asia.

The forum includes a broad range of approaches, from historical to literary to personal, setting "The War-Prayer" in the context of Twain's precursors and contemporaries (writers, preachers, political actors); other writing by Twain and other writers whom he read; 20th-century popular culture; late 20th-century social and political history, and current political issues. Our contributors build on the valuable work of the handful of scholars who pioneered in exploring the origins and significance of this piece in the past. First and foremost of these is Jim Zwick, whose book *Mark Twain's Weapons of Satire: Anti-Imperialist Writings on the Philippine-American War* collected and analyzed Twain's writings on the Philippine-American war in all their complexity, and whose many lucid and erudite commentaries on this topic in print and on the web have added so much to our awareness and our understanding of the Philippine-American war in general, and of the importance of the conflict to Mark Twain.¹¹ Contributors have also drawn on critical studies such as William Andrews' examination of some possible origins of "The War-Prayer."¹²

The Mark Twain Papers provided the manuscript and typescript facsimiles that follow this introduction. Since Mark Twain clearly meant there to be a hyphen in the title of the piece, we have referred to it that way consistently here (with this exception: quotations from printed sources and titles of books and articles retain the form of the title that their authors originally used).

An examination of the manuscript shows that many of Twain's changes and insertions were fairly minor, but they nonetheless added to the piece's effectiveness. For example, the young volunteers "marched the streets" was changed to "marched down the wide avenues," a change that made the pageantry of the scene more grand. The "proud fathers & mothers & sisters & sweethearts cheering them as they swung by" was changed to "cheering them with voices choked with happy emotion as they swung by," emphasizing the intense feelings that patriotism aroused. "Storms of applause" was changed to "cyclones of applause," a louder and more apt image.¹³ The following passage was added on the verso side of the first page: "The toy pistols popping, the bunched firecrackers hissing & spluttering; on every hand & far down the receding and fading spread of roofs & balconies a fluttering wilderness of flags." And this passage was added to the verso of the second page: "their young faces alight with martial dreams—visions of the stern advance, the gathering momentum, the rushing charge, the flashing sabers, the flight of the foe, the tumult, the enveloping smoke, the fierce pursuit, the surrender!—then home from the war, bronzed, scarred, welcomed, adored, submerged in golden seas of glory! With the volun-

teers sat their dear ones, proud, happy, and envied by the neighbors and friends who had no sons and brothers to send forth to the field of honor, there to win for the flag or, failing, die the noblest of noble deaths.” (Twain later changed “bronzed, scarred” to “bronzed heroes” in the typescript).¹⁴ These two key passages make the opening scene and the volunteers’ thoughts much more vivid.

Referring to society’s response to those “half dozen rash spirits that ventured to disapprove of the war and cast a doubt upon its righteousness,” Twain changed the phrase “were instantly so sternly warned” to “straightaway got such a stern & angry warning” and he amended “they shrank out of sight” to “they quickly shrank out of sight.”¹⁵ Both changes, while subtle, work to intensify the reader’s sense of the ominous threat that was directed toward anyone who voiced dissent, thus intimidating any would-be opposition.

Twain made a series of small changes in the “ ‘long’ prayer,” making the cadences more parallel in structure, and the supplication less vague and more concrete.¹⁶ The three changes Twain made in the Stranger’s prefatory remarks to his own version of the prayer were more significant. Twain changed the original charge from the Stranger. “Know this:” to “Ponder this—keep it in mind,” making the Stranger seem less arrogant and accusatory. While the Stranger originally said, “beware! Lest you invoke a curse upon your neighbor at the same time,” the final text has him say, “beware! Lest *without intent* you invoke a curse upon your neighbor at the same time” (italics added). The “without intent” is central to the effectiveness of “The War-Prayer.” Instead of making accusations of willful brutality, the Stranger merely urges the congregation to keep in mind the possibility that simply by not having understood the full import of what they were asking, they may be responsible for these horrible consequences. The Stranger originally commented that “If you pray for the blessing of rain upon your crop which needs it, by that act you are praying for a curse upon some neighbor’s crop which does not need it & can be injured by it.” Twain revised that passage to say, “If you pray for the blessing of rain upon your crop which needs it, by that act you are *possibly* praying for a curse upon some neighbor’s crop which *may* not need rain & can be injured by it” (italics added). The insertions of “possibly” and “may,” like the insertion of “without intent,” serve the purpose of making the Stranger seem more polite and soft-spoken, more calm and matter-of-fact. These qualities make the startling specificity of the “unintended” effects he is about to enumerate all the more shocking when the reader encounters them.¹⁷

It is interesting that a cancelled passage on page 9 of the manuscript appears as a dialogue between “Y.M.” and “O.M.,” suggesting that Twain may have begun “The War-Prayer” as part of “What Is Man?,” which was presented as a dialogue between a “Young

Man" (Y.M.) and an "Old Man" (O.M.). When Twain wrote pages 9 and 10 of the manuscript, he held and wrote on the paper in a different manner than he did when he wrote the rest of the manuscript, lending further support to the idea that Twain may have pulled these pages from an early draft of *What is Man?*, a book which Twain published anonymously in 1906.¹⁸

In addition to cutting the long cancelled passage referred to above, Twain made two particularly interesting changes on page 9 of the manuscript. Twain initially wrote the beginning of the Stranger's version of the prayer as: "O Lord, help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds with our shells; help us to cover their smiling fields with the pale forms of their dead; help us to drown the thunder of the guns with the pleasant music of the shrieks of their wounded, writhing in pain. . . ." In the manuscript, Twain then added "our God," after Lord; inserted "Christian" before "soldiers;" and wrote "patriot" before "dead." Twain crossed out "the pleasant music of the" shrieks on the manuscript, recognizing, presumably, that the Stranger was more effective if he kept his irony less heavy-handed. Twain retained the phrase "O Lord, our God" in the typescript, but deleted "Christian," restoring his original wording, "help us to tear their soldiers to bloody shreds." He kept the reference to covering their smiling fields with "their patriot dead," rather than merely "their dead."

These last two changes merit some attention. First the insertion, and then deletion, of the word "Christian." Why might Twain have added this word here and then taken it out? Perhaps he added the word to intensify the irony of the congregation's asking God's aid to kill fellow Christians, or help them to recognize their kinship with a "foe" who, most likely, prayed a prayer similar to their own before going into battle. If so, Twain may have taken this out as part of his project of letting this piece wear its irony more lightly. But by changing the prayer to "tear their soldiers to bloody shreds" rather than "tear their Christian soldiers to bloody shreds," Twain made "The War-Prayer" much more universal. By leaving the religion of the dead soldiers unspecified, Twain greatly broadened the potential impact of "The War-Prayer." Twain's decision to replace "their dead" with "their patriot dead" was equally important. This change serves to jolt the reader into recognizing that the soldiers they hope to kill are probably patriots themselves—patriots devoted to a different cause, but patriots nonetheless. This sentiment echoes comments Twain made eight years earlier in *Following the Equator* about a "war-monument" he saw in Wanganui, New Zealand erected

in honor of white men "who fell in defence of law and order against fanaticism and bar-

barism.” Fanaticism. We Americans are English in blood, English in speech, English in religion, English in the essentials of our governmental system, English in the essentials of our civilization; and so, let us hope, for the honor of the blend, for the honor of the blood, for the honor of the race, that that word got there through lack of heedfulness, and will not be suffered to remain. If you carve it . . . upon Bunker Hill monument, and read it again—“who fell in defence of law and order against fanaticism”—you will perceive what the word means, and how mischosen it is. Patriotism is Patriotism. Calling it Fanaticism cannot degrade it; nothing can degrade it. Even though it be a political mistake, and a thousand times a political mistake, that does not affect it; it is honorable—always honorable, always noble—and privileged to hold its head up and look the nations in the face. It is right to praise these brave white men who fell in the Maori war—they deserve it; but the presence of that word detracts from the dignity of their cause and their deeds, and makes them appear to have spilt their blood in a conflict with ignoble men, men not worthy of that costly sacrifice. But the men *were* worthy. It was no shame to fight them. They fought for their homes, they fought for their country; they bravely fought and bravely fell; and it would take nothing from the honor of the brave Englishmen who lie under the monument, but *add* to it, to say that they died in defense of English laws and English homes against men worthy of the sacrifice—the Maori patriots.¹⁹

Twain’s modification of “their dead” to “their patriot dead” in “The War-Prayer” makes the same point that his eloquent homage to “the Maori patriots” of Waganui did.

Twain made a number of changes in the final section of “The War-Prayer” (page 10 of the manuscript), all of which intensified the pain and trauma suffered by the “unoffending widows” and “their little children.” Instead of having them wander “their desolate land” he had them wander “the wastes of their desolate land.” Instead of having them endure “the snows and storms of winter” and saying that they were “mendicants, beggars,” Twain subjected them to “the icy winds of winter, broken in spirit, worn with travail.” Recognizing that sometimes less is more, Twain changed “heavy their tired steps” to “heavy their steps.” He inserted, “stain the white snow with the blood of their wounded feet!” after “water their way with their tears.”

A sentence that Twain included in the manuscript but deleted in the typescript before the final “Amen” was: “Grant our prayer, O Lord, & Thine shall be the praise & honor & glory, now & ever.” The choice made sense: the more concise version has more power.

Where did “The War-Prayer” come from? What prompted Twain to write it? In what ways did it reprise themes that Twain addressed in earlier work? How did it respond to the actual chauvinistic rhetoric of his day? What political, literary and religious sources may have influenced it? What impact has it had over the last hundred years? And what does it say to us today? These are some of the questions explored by the twenty-six essays that

follow.

The Forum begins with a contribution from Makoto Nagawara, dean of Japanese Twain scholars, who demonstrates how two passages in Twain's first travel book, *The Innocents Abroad*, prefigure key aspects of "The War-Prayer," written nearly forty years later. Nagawara then jumps ahead in time to gloss the historical and political context of the Philippine-American War that informs "The War-Prayer," and concludes by suggesting what the differences between these early and late variations on a theme tell us about the growth of Twain's moral awareness over the course of his career. We then move to a contribution from Twain's most recent biographer, Ron Powers, that probes the place of "The War-Prayer" in Twain's life and career, and its relevance to our own time. Twain's sentences, Powers writes, "burn like acid through the layers of received wisdom, partisan pleading, and distilled, industrialized non-language that have sabotaged critical thinking—'Support Our Troops' being the supreme, and ubiquitous, soporific."

Nagawara's consideration of Twain's earliest explorations of ideas that he would develop in "The War-Prayer" and Powers' look at the import of "The War-Prayer" for contemporary political discourse book-end, if you will, the essays that follow, which set "The War-Prayer" in a range of historical and literary contexts and explore the ways in which Twain's lapidary sentences resonate today. Some essays focus on the period in which "The War-Prayer" was written, some focus on its impact in the century that followed, and some move back and forth between the two time-frames, allowing "The War-Prayer" to illuminate what these two eras have in common.

A number of contributors look at how "The War-Prayer" addresses the role of religion in shaping U.S. foreign policy in Twain's day and in our own. Christopher Vaughn, for example, explores the ways in which "The muscular Christianity rising with the new century depended upon maintenance of the tight linkage between national and religious aims." And Edward J. Blum notes that at the turn of the twentieth century both the imperialists and anti-imperialists framed their arguments with religious rhetoric. "Both sides invoked God; both sides invoked biblical scriptures. In the process, a host of church leaders, politicians, and writers demonstrated that ideas about the sacred were a central feature of the rise of the American empire." Blum writes that "With his passionate anti-imperialist writings, epitomized by 'The War-Prayer,' Twain signified on the importance of religion in American culture and sought to turn its power to the side of peace and universal fellowship. Sadly, he and the other anti-imperialists were defeated by a jingoistic wave that associated American national interests with God, an association that has yet to be severed."²⁰ Several essays situate "The War-Prayer" in the context of Twain's personal encounters

with religion, responding to his readings of the Bible, or to his lifelong interrogation of his own religious beliefs. Wesley Britton, for example, traces the rhetoric of “The War-Prayer” to the Bible, while Dwayne Eutsey relates “The War-Prayer” to Twain’s theological views during his later years.

Other essays discuss “The War-Prayer” in the context of related political and imaginative writing by Twain’s precursors (Britton sees echoes of Tom Paine), and by his peers. For example, Patrick Dooley compares Twain’s anti-imperialism to that of William James, while Adrian Gaskins compares it to that of West-Indian-born anti-imperialist Hubert Harrison. Kevin Mac Donnell finds intriguing resonances between “The War-Prayer” and writing by Gensai Murai. Christopher Capozzola looks at “The War-Prayer” through the lens of the sermons of Thomas Dixon, while Tim Edwards compares Twain’s efforts to counter the romanticization of war to analogous literary efforts by William Dean Howells (in “Editha”) and Ambrose Bierce (in “Chickamauga”). The remaining essays draw comparisons between “The War-Prayer” and anti-war writing by others, including Henry David Thoreau (Michael Kiskis), Ernest Hemingway (Hideo Tsuji), Erich Maria Remarque (Martin Zehr), and John Dos Passos and I. F. Stone (John Han).

Some contributors focus on the theme of how Twain developed a transnational empathy that crossed borders. Hua Hsu, for example, addresses the importance of Twain’s travels to the development of the perspective that allowed him to write “The War-Prayer.” He argues that “‘The War-Prayer’ is rooted in the lessons one learns looking beyond borders, studying the dynamics of international power and politics and noting the hypocrisy of spreading ideas like freedom, liberty and salvation by force. It isn’t merely the creation of a great humorist or social critic; it is the creation of one of American culture’s great travelers. Roughing it on the road, Twain achieved insights into the human condition and the tenuousness of national affiliations that were unavailable to his more provincial peers. The success of ‘The War-Prayer’ as a cogent and prescient piece of criticism calls for a reappraisal of Twain as a trans-Pacific traveler, an American with a consciously *global* viewpoint.” In a related vein, Martin Zehr explores “the transformative power of the ability to adopt the perspective of the other,” while Michio Arimitsu relates that “global viewpoint” to a hypothesis about how transnational constructions of race and racism may have shaped Twain’s response to the treatment of the Filipinos during the Philippine-American War.

Like Nagawara, who finds seeds of “The War-Prayer” in *The Innocents Abroad*, other contributors relate aspects of “The War-Prayer” to other works by Twain, increasing our understanding of Twain’s efforts to explore key themes over time and from multiple perspectives. Amanda Claybaugh and Maggie Oran compare it with “The Private History

of a Campaign That Failed" while Nancy Von Rosk and Dwayne Eutsey relate it to "The Mysterious Stranger" manuscripts. Helen Lock and Martin Zehr relate it to *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*; Lock draws comparisons, as well, to *The Tragedy of Pudd'nhead Wilson* and "The Man That Corrupted Hadleyburg" while Zehr brings in Twain's early journalism and *Roughing It*. Michael Kiskis draws connections to "As Regards Patriotism" and "Corn-Pone Opinions." Mark Donig cites a related passage in *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*, and a number of essays invoke "King Leopold's Soliloquy" and "To The Person Sitting In Darkness."²¹

Several contributors address the impact that "The War-Prayer" had on them personally at different moments in time. For example, Mark Hulsether addresses the role "The War-Prayer" played in helping him develop an oppositional consciousness growing up in the Midwest in the 1960s, and explores the role it played in getting him to re-evaluate what has been left out of most histories of the Left in the U.S. Vietnam-born poet and artist Mong-Lan, ponders resonances between "The War-Prayer" and images of the Vietnam War reflected in her own recollections, in her father's stories of the war, and in a recent exhibit of Vietnam War photographs in Tokyo.

A number of contributors (including Han, Britton, and Powers) describe the place of "The War-Prayer" in 20th-century popular culture—film, music, television, and the internet. And two creators of popular culture today—novelist Darryl Brock and stand-up political satirist Barry Crimmins—discuss the influence of "The War-Prayer" on their work.

It is appropriate in a special issue of *Mark Twain Studies* on Twain in Asia to close with a final look at how the U.S.'s first protracted war in Asia shaped Twain's thinking about war. Jim Zwick reminds us, that

To this day, the total number of Filipinos killed during the war is hotly debated. Some 16,000 to 20,000 Filipino soldiers were killed from 1899-1902. Estimates of the number of civilians who died from famine, disease and other war-related causes during these years range from 200,000 to 600,000. These figures do not include the number of Filipinos who died during the warfare in the southern Philippines that continued until 1914. Of the nearly 200,000 U.S. soldiers who served in the Philippines from 1898 to 1902, only about 5,000 were killed. Highlighting a similarly glaring difference in casualty figures in a speech given in 1902, Twain exclaimed: "This is not battle, for only one side is engaged—it has another name. It is massacre."²²

As Twain well knew, many at the time argued that even if a war "be wrong we are in it and must fight it out: *we cannot retire from it without dishonor.*" Zwick tells us that Twain

had a sharp rejoinder to that argument: “*An inglorious peace is better than a dishonorable war.*”²³

Perhaps the reconsideration of “The War-Prayer” in this issue of *Mark Twain Studies* will help prompt a reconsideration of other posthumously published, late pieces by Twain—including, perhaps, his “Outlines of History (suppressed),” which offers these sobering comments on an imaginary “Great Republic” at some time long in the future:

. . . it was impossible to save the Great Republic. She was rotten to the heart. Lust of conquest had long ago done its work; trampling upon the helpless abroad had taught her, by a natural process, to endure with apathy the like at home; multitudes who had applauded the crushing of other people’s liberties, lived to suffer for their mistake in their own persons. The government was irrevocably in the hands of the prodigiously rich and their hangers-on; the suffrage had become a mere machine, which they used as they chose. There was no principle but commercialism, no patriotism but of the pocket.²⁴

Mark Twain may have been right when he asserted that “none but the dead are permitted to tell the truth.”²⁵ Speaking from the grave a hundred years after his death, Mark Twain still has a lot to say to us. The essays that follow may help us learn how to listen.

Notes

¹ Laurie Goodstein, “Disowning Conservative Politics, Evangelical Pastor Rattles Flock,” *New York Times*, July 30, 2006, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/30/us/30pastor.html?hp&ex=1154318400&en=f0cf63e262a9a896&ei=5094&partner=homepage>>.

² Rep. John Murtha, email to Shelley Fisher Fishkin [via Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee], July 13, 2006 (signed “Jack Murtha, Member of Congress, Pennsylvania’s 12th District”).

³ Twain, Mark. “Patriots and Traitors: Lotos Club Dinner Speech.” In *Mark Twain’s Weapons of Satire: Anti-Imperialist Writings on the Philippine-American War*, ed. Jim Zwick (Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1992). <http://www.boondocksnet.com/ai/twain/mtws_lotos010323.html>. In Jim Zwick, ed., *Anti-Imperialism in the United States, 1898-1935*. <<http://www.boondocksnet.com/ai/>>. Aug. 1, 2006.

⁴ Laurie Goodstein, “Disowning Conservative Politics, Evangelical Pastor Rattles Flock,” *New York Times*, July 30, 2006, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/30/us/30pastor.html?hp&ex=1154318400&en=f0cf63e262a9a896&ei=5094&partner=homepage>>.

⁵ As Jim Zwick notes in his introduction to “The War-Prayer” in *Mark Twain’s Weapons of Satire*, around the time Twain wrote “The War-Prayer” his “primary international concerns” included, in addition to the Philippines, “the Russian Revolution, and King Leopold’s rule of the Belgian Congo.” (156)

⁶ *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, 5th Ed., edited by Paul Lauter, Richard Yarborough and Jackson Bryer, et al was the first of the current leading American literature anthologies used in American high schools and colleges to reprint “The War-Prayer.” “The War-Prayer” has just been added to the 9th edition of the Prentice-Hall *Anthology of American Literature*, the first edition of that anthology to be edited by George McMichael, James S. Leonard, Shelley Fisher Fishkin, David Bradley, Dana D. Nelson and Joseph Csicsila (forthcoming, November 2006). By the end of 2006, “The War-Prayer” will

thus be present in two of the four American literature anthologies most widely taught in the U.S.

- ⁷ This talk was published in China in 2005. See Shelley Fisher Fishkin, "Wars of Words: American Writers and War" in Zhou Baodi, ed., *The United States in Times of War and Peace* (Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 2005) 1-26.
- ⁸ Writers discussed in the talk included Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos, e.e. cummings, Dalton Trumbo, William Wantling, Keith Wilson, Langston Hughes, Tim O'Brien, Sam Hazo, Robert Dana, Bob Dylan, and Calvin Trillin.
- ⁹ The conference was sponsored by the English Literary Society of Japan. The paper was presented at a panel on "Culture, Nation and Terror in the U.S." Other members of the panel, in addition to Prof. Tatsumi, were Keiko Nitta (Hitotsubashi University), Susan Napier (UT-Austin), and Satoshi Ukai (Hitotsubashi University). Prof. Tatsumi's paper, entitled "Catastrophilia" (a term coined by Mark Svensold in *Big Weather: Chasing Tornadoes in the Heart of America* (2005)), followed a discussion of "The War-Prayer" with quotations from books including E. M. Bounds, *Prayer and Spiritual Warfare* (1984) and Elizabeth Alves, *Becoming a Prayer Warrior* (1998). The paper (which was presented in Japanese and has not yet been translated into English) applied Svensold's "intriguing concept of 'catastrophilia' not only to the seekers of natural disasters like tornadoes as Svensold sketches in his book," but also to the perpetrators of "man-made disasters like terrorism." He noted that "in the post-9/11 and post-Katrina age it is getting more and more difficult to distinguish between natural and man-made disasters; natural disaster is always rumored to have been caused by human technology, while man-made disaster has been naturalized very easily and often secretly." This is exactly "why a number of eco-terrorist novels written by major writers such as J. G. Ballard, Kim Stanley Robinson, and Michael Crichton have consistently questioned the difference between nature and culture." Tatsumi then discussed a series of eco-terrorist novels and black humor films in terms of how they explored contemporary responses to "the sublime of catastrophe, whether natural or man-made." The quotations here come from an abstract by Prof. Tatsumi.
- ¹⁰ This phrase is Jim Zwick's. See introduction to *Mark Twain's Weapons of Satire: Anti-Imperialist Writings on the Philippine-American War*; and <http://www.boondocksnet.com/ai/twain/mtws_intro.html>.
- ¹¹ See Zwick, Jim. "Mark Twain's Anti-Imperialist Writings in the 'American Century.'" In *Vestiges of War: The Philippine-American War and the Aftermath of an Imperial Dream, 1899-1999*, ed. Angel Velasco Shaw and Luis H. Francia (New York: New York UP, 2002); Zwick, Jim, "Mark Twain and Imperialism" in *Historical Guide to Mark Twain*, ed. Shelley Fisher Fishkin. (New York: Oxford UP, 2002; <<http://www.boondocksnet.com/ai/twain/contested.html>>; and Zwick, *Mark Twain's Weapons of Satire*.
- ¹² Andrews, William S. "The Source of 'The War Prayer.'" *The Mark Twain Journal*. 17.4; 1975, 8-9.
- ¹³ Mark Twain, "The War-Prayer" manuscript, 1 (in the Mark Twain Papers).
- ¹⁴ Mark Twain, "The War-Prayer" typescript, 2.
- ¹⁵ Twain, "The War-Prayer" manuscript, 2.
- ¹⁶ He replaced the supplication "that the ever-merciful & benignant Father of us all would watch over our noble young soldiers, & aid them, comforting, encouraging them in their patriotic work," with the more parallel "watch over our noble young soldiers, & aid them, comfort and encourage them in their patriotic work" (ms page 3). He changed the plea that "the Father of us all" "hold them in His mighty favor" to "bear them in his mighty hand" (ms. page 3).
- ¹⁷ Twain also adds a phrase to the start of the Stranger's version of the prayer. He changes the original, "we also go forth from beloved firesides to smite the foe," to "we often go forth from *the sweet peace of our* beloved firesides to smite the foe" (italics added). The addition of this phrase helps emphasize the contrast that the Stranger is about to limn between these peaceful firesides and the homeless wander-

ings of the widows and orphans of the “foe” (ms. page 8).

- ¹⁸ For more on the publication history of “What is Man?” and on the genesis of the text, see Paul Baender, ed. *What Is Man? And Other Philosophical Writings* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1973). There is not time or space here to pursue the challenge of determining with any certainty where pages 9 and 10 of the manuscript of “The War-Prayer” might have come in “What Is Man?,” if, indeed, we are correct in our hypothesis that Twain originally conceived of “The War-Prayer” as part of this longer dialogue. The reference to “Y.M.” and “O.M.” strongly suggests that it was, as does the difference in the way the paper was used (Pages 9 and 10 have the short portion of the page at top and bottom, while the other pages have the short ends of the page at the sides). As Paul Baender has observed, Twain wrote with the short ends of the page at the sides only in 1905 (499). According to Robert H. Hirst, Louis J. Budd’s unpublished notes in the Twain papers indicate that he recognized the likelihood of this possible relationship between the two texts, and Budd also observed that John Tuckey “says SLC still tinkering with *What is Man* in 1905” (Robert H. Hirst, Personal communication, July 31, 2006). Paul Baender, the textual editor who spent the most time with “What Is Man?” does not mention “The War-Prayer” or these passages in the volume he edited that reprints the text of “What is Man?” and also analyzes fragments that did not make it into the final text (these possible fragments are not printed in the section that reprints other fragments). A close examination of Baender’s text, fragments, and commentary, reveals no clues as to where “The War-Prayer” passages may have “fit.” But the tone of the “Y.M.” and “O.M.” comments in the manuscript are in keeping with the “characters” as Twain constructed them in this philosophical dialogue.
- ¹⁹ Mark Twain, *Following the Equator*. 1897. *The Oxford Mark Twain*. Ed. Shelley Fisher Fishkin. (New York: Oxford UP, 1996) 321.
- ²⁰ Blum addresses these issues in greater depth in Edward J. Blum, *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism, 1865-1898* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2005).
- ²¹ Readers interested in exploring potential links to other work by Twain will find Jim Zwick’s compendium of primary texts by Twain on his anti-imperialism website invaluable. Zwick, Jim, ed. *Anti-Imperialism in the United States, 1898-1935*. <<http://www.boondocksnet.com/ai/>>. (Aug. 1, 2006). The site includes extensive sections devoted to “The History of Anti-Imperialism,” “Anti-Imperialist Literature,” “Anti-Imperialist Essays, Speeches and Pamphlets,” “Anti-Imperialist Organizational Platforms and Petitions,” and “People in the Anti-Imperialist Movement,” as well as lengthy discussions of Twain’s own involvement in the anti-imperialist cause and other texts by Twain on imperialism, patriotism, and other related issues.
- ²² Zwick, Jim. “Sitting in Darkness: An Unheeded Message About U.S. Militarism.” *Baltimore Sun* (April 23, 1995), at <http://www.boondocksnet.com/ai/ail/baltsun.html> In Jim Zwick, ed., *Anti-Imperialism in the United States, 1898-1935*. <<http://www.boondocksnet.com/ai/>>. (Aug. 1, 2006).
- ²³ Mark Twain, “Passage from ‘Glances at History’ (suppressed.) Date, 9th century” (1906) in *Mark Twain’s Fables of Man*, Edited with an introduction by John S. Tuckey. Text established by Kenneth M. Sanderson and Bernard L. Stein. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972, 393.
- ²⁴ Mark Twain, “Passage from ‘Outlines of History’ (suppressed.) Date, 9th century,” in *Mark Twain’s Fables of Man*, Edited with an introduction by John S. Tuckey. Text established by Kenneth M. Sanderson and Bernard L. Stein (Berkeley: U of California P, 1972) 395.
- ²⁵ Samuel L. Clemens [SLC] to Dan Beard, March 30, 1905, Beard Papers, MTF, quoted in Zwick, *Mark Twain’s Weapons of Satire*, 156.