10-1-1998

Mark Twain in the Holy Land: Us and the "Other"—Clemens the Racist?

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Mosques are plenty, churches are plenty, graveyards are plenty, but words and whisky are scarce. The Koran does not permit Mohammedans to drink. Their natural instincts do not permit them to be moral. They say the Sultan has eight hundred wives.... It makes our cheeks burn with shame to see such a thing permitted here in Turkey. We do not mind it so much in Salt Lake, however.

The passage is from *Innocents Abroad*, Mark Twain's first novel, which resulted from the compendium of dispatches he sent to his employer, the *Daily Alta California*, in San Francisco. In 1867, the year of the voyages described in *Innocents*, Twain, not quite thirty-two, already had achieved a measure of success as a short story writer, a lecturer and as a travel correspondent to Hawaii for the *Alta California* and the *Sacramento Union* in late 1866. As we begin to read the above passage, the immediate perception is that Twain, nee Samuel Langhorne Clemens, has made a rather singular judgment about those who espouse the Islamic religion. The passage is one of several in *Innocents Abroad* which seems illustrative of the great dichotomy that is perceived by many to exist between this early novel and the very evident anti-racist polemics of his later works, e.g., *Huckleberry Finn*, "The Anglo-Saxon Race," etc. The judgment about those who are Muslims is abated somewhat by the ironic comparison with events in Salt Lake, but the passage is pointedly ethnocentric and anti-religious, and certainly open to a racist interpretation. At the same time, however, as the piece concludes we are brought to the realization that Twain is saying something about how flawed is our perception of the "other."

*Innocents Abroad*, according to its author, was a "record of a pleasure trip... [with its] purpose to suggest to the reader how he would be likely to see Europe and the Holy Land if he looked at them with his own eyes...," and was offered with "no apologies for any departures from the usual style of travel-writing that may be charged...." for we are assured that he has witnessed and
recorded "with impartial eyes," and "at least honestly, whether wisely or not." It was published in 1869.

Franklin Walker in Irreverent Pilgrims asserts that Mark Twain's first novel is one of the "three most important literary works to result from American visits to the Holy Land during the nineteenth century or, for that matter, up to the present time." The other two according to Walker are John Ross Browne's Yusef and Herman Melville's Clarel. Each of the works springs from their author's unique traveling experiences. Browne had come to Palestine "as one of the last adventurers, [who] could expect the unexpected as had the Englishman, William Kinglake of Eothen fame [and] Eliot Warburton of the Crescent and the Cross...." Melville, on the other hand, who came some five years later almost to the day after Browne's visit, arrived at Jaffa more as a pilgrim than as an adventurer. According to Walker, Melville's trip, ostensibly a vacation, came at a time of great personal distress for the author of Moby Dick, Typee, Omoo, etc. He was ill, and his reading public had condemned and rejected his most recent work. In addition, he traveled alone in a place where one did not ordinarily travel alone. The full title of the work which resulted from this voyage is Clarel: A Poem and Pilgrimage in the Holy Land and it speaks to the same purpose for Holy Land travelers such as Lamartine, Nerval, Chateaubriand, inter alia, who journeyed there for the not necessarily well-expressed purpose of seeking and finding spiritual and emotional growth and/or rebirth.

Mark Twain, however, "at the time [he] disembarked from the Quaker City," was one among some seventy people who were passengers on a ship which was the "first floating tour of Americans visiting Europe and the Near East that had ever taken place." It should be observed that the full title of the work, Innocents Abroad, or the New Pilgrim's Progress, is an example of Twain's ability to juxtapose successfully and ironically the new with the old. The United States was not even a hundred years old at the time, and certainly some of those abroad the Quaker City might have considered themselves innocents and pilgrims who were retracing the very footsteps and ocean voyages of their forebears. And, of course, there is the all-too-obvious reference to John Bunyan's religious allegory, Pilgrim's Progress, a book with which Twain was no doubt familiar.
It has been well-documented elsewhere the number and extent of Western pilgrims who "had been visiting the Holy Land [including] many of whom made the pilgrimage the principal journey of their lives as the Muslims did their journeys to Mecca..." Then there were those tourists who would come to be known as "Cookies" from their habit of following the advice and tour guidance and service of Thomas Cook of England, and who were, soon after the Quaker City excursion, to be as ubiquitous a sight in the Middle East and Asia as they were in Europe (Cook began tours of Europe as early as 1844). These and their predecessors, e.g., Kinglake, Thackeray, Flaubert, etc., from Europe, and others who preceded Twain from America such as John Lloyd Stevers, George W. Curtis, et al., had available to them enough information to know that they should not expect scenic or artistic beauty or the usual accoutrements of hospitality and comfort. As Walker notes, particularly at the time of Twain's voyage, "There was no shortage of books about the area which had cradled three of the world's great religions."

Primary among these books would be the Bible as the first source of information. As Reimer notes, Innocents Abroad has some "biblical references [which] simply provide factual, historical information." The astute reader, however, quickly becomes aware of Twain's utilization of the Bible to criticize man, his society, his customs and, particularly a favorite Clemens target, his religions. In fact, despite Reimer's assertions that "many of Twain's biblical allusions are primarily comic," these commentaries provide us an insight into Twain's skills as a reporter, travel writer and social commentator. In addition to the Bible, the Murray guide to Syria and Palestine had become available in 1858, some nine years before Twain's trip. One can speculate that if Twain had not read it himself, certainly there must have been one among the seventy tourists who would have had contact with it before the ship departed New York City.

Then there was William C. Prime's work Tent Life in the Holy Land; a work which Twain uses to good effect as a thinly-disguised source of satire behind the name Grimes (See below). We know that Twain had read some of Lamartine's work in translation, for there is in Volume 1 of Innocents a retelling of the tale of Abelard and Heloise with which Twain concludes by writing the
Such is the story of Abelard and Heloise. Such is the history that Lamartine has shed such cataracts of tears over. But that man never could come within the influence of a subject in the least pathetic without overflowing his banks.\textsuperscript{13}

Finally, there is this fact: Each of the passengers is advised that while “the ship’s library would afford a fair amount of reading matter, it would still be well if each passenger would provide himself with a few guide-books, a Bible, and some standard works of travel.”\textsuperscript{14} In addition, each of the passengers was sent a supplement to the original itinerary, which, in addition to outlining what clothing to bring, suggesting they should bring light musical instruments for entertainment on board the ship, and advising that saddles would be needed for travel in Syria, had appended to it a reading list, a

\ldots List... which consisted chiefly of books relating to the Holy Land, since the Holy Land was part of the excursion and seemed to be its main feature.\textsuperscript{15}

Twain and his companions were probably as well informed about the regions through which they would be traveling as one could expect at the time.

The problem for those familiar with Twain’s other works is that within this seminal travel novel there are passages that have been used to suggest that Twain was a racial/ethnic bigot as bad as any of those he portrayed in \textit{Huckleberry Finn} or those in some of his later works, e.g., \textit{King Leopold’s Soliloquy: A Defense of His Rule}. The former is a treatment of the issue of slavery in the American South; while the latter is an outspoken treatise on the perils of colonization and imperialism aimed at both the government of Belgium’s King Leopold for its exploitation of the Congo and the United States and European governments for the countenancing of that subjugation. The difficulty lies in reconciling the apparently racially motivated, epithetical writing of \textit{Innocents Abroad} with the human empathy and sympathy outlined in \textit{Huckleberry Finn} and \textit{King Leopold’s Defense}. Ironically, \textit{Huckleberry Finn}, perennially appears on lists of books which
groups try to have banned from school libraries as being racist for its use of Southern dialect. The principal, perplexing conundrum lies with the dual voices that we hear when we read Twain.

It was not until he wrote *Huckleberry Finn* that Samuel Clemens would find his literary voice as Mark Twain. It is a voice, however, which is very much in evidence in *Innocents Abroad*. In this early novel Mark Twain was still a man in search of himself; a man who may have believed he knew what he wanted to do; but a man not at all sure how best to accomplish that end. What is on the pages of *Innocents* for us to read is that continuing inner dialogue between Samuel Clemens, citizen of a small town on the Mississippi River, and Mark Twain, silver miner, newspaper reporter, well-known writer, *raconteur extraordinaire*, seasoned traveler. Twain, after all, was apprenticed at the age of twelve to a newspaper owner and spent the next ten years learning the newspaper reporting business from the best vantage point—the inside. By the time he was twenty-four, he was a licensed riverboat pilot and traversed the Mississippi many, many times. During his sojourn in California he had tried his public presentations and had been well-received after the publication of his first book of short stories. ("The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," originally written in 1865, became part of his first book of short works published in 1867.)

With these initial inner dialogues of *Innocents Abroad* we are privy to the beginnings of Mark Twain, the philosopher of *Which was the Dream?*, *The Mysterious Stranger*, *King Leopold's Soliloquy*, et al., who, in his acerbic and trenchant portrayals of that "damned human race," would garner for himself the label of misanthrope in his later years. This moniker was ill-deserved and one which I have discussed elsewhere in looking at the so-called "dark writings." Certainly, to many, if not most, readers, his seeming unremittingly despairing view of man and his propensity toward doing ill to himself and his fellows, often in the guise of sanctimonious religious morality or other "worthy" motivations, make Twain seen the ultimate pessimist. To judge him more fairly, however, in his not-yet fully realized skills as a satirist and an observer of the human condition, we must examine *Innocents Abroad* and its often caustic commentary in relation to those later works. From the early works to those which came
later, Twain was honing his skill as a philosopher and Socratic gad-fly; e.g., "Jumping Frog..." is an excellent piece of satire on the venality and gullibility of those who always look for something for nothing; "3000 Years Among the Microbes" places humanity in the form of microbes in a drop of water being observed through the lens of a microscope. Mark Twain became the human race's, particularly Americans, interlocutor.

There are two fundamental issues with which we must deal, first, his very evident and well-documented religious stance, and, second, the racism which rears its head on more than one occasion, especially during his visit to the Holy Land, videlicet the following: "Commend me to Fenimore Cooper to find beauty in the Indians and Grimes to find it in the Arabs."16 I will return to this statement below; although, elsewhere in the novel we are reminded that the Arabs are after all "only pagans." Twain's whiplash wit found no saints among Muslim Arabs, or for that matter, Christians, Jews and others, for as Raymond Hatton has observed, "He was especially wary of organized religions, believing them to be more man-made than divine...."17 The following passage, which records the Quaker City "pilgrims" arrival at Nain where Jesus Christ is said to have revived a widow's son from the dead, stands as an illustration of his view of his fellow "pilgrims" and Muslim Arabs, and yet, it provides a brief, revealing glimpse into his humanism:

A little mosque stands upon the spot which tradition says was occupied by the widow's dwelling.... We entered and the pilgrims broke specimens from the foundations walls, though they had to touch, and even step, upon the "praying carpets" to do it. It was almost the same as breaking pieces from the hearts of those old Arabs. To step rudely upon the sacred praying mats, with booted feet—a thing not done by any Arab—was to inflict pain upon men who had not offended us in any way."16 (Emphasis added.)

This passage is illustrative of Twain's remarkable skill with the use of the ironic, and of his talent as a humorist and satirist. At about the moment when you think he has gone all sentimental and melancholy by pontificating on the "poor, breaking hearts," he, like all good boxers, sets us up for the counterpunch of his final line:
Suppose a party of armed foreigners were to enter a village church in America and break ornaments from the altar railings for curiosities, and climb up and walk upon the Bible and pulpit cushions? However, the cases are different. One is the profanation of a temple of our faith—the other only the profanation of a pagan one." (Emphases added.)

Of particular note here is his use of the word "profanation" in making the comparison between us and the "other." He is not merely repeating himself. At the same time, however, the unsophisticated reader could make a surface interpretation, and come away with the conclusion that here was man who cared not one whit for humanity, especially "ay-rabs," or anyone else who was not American.

Twain's first contact with the Orient of Burton, Flaubert, etc., does not come, however, with his arrival in the Holy Land. Rather it is when the cruise ship docks at Gibraltar, and he and several companions decide to take a small steamer to Tangier, Morocco. "This is royal! Let those who went up through Spain make the best of it...." It is here in Tangier that he finally finds that:

[S]omething thoroughly and uncompromisingly foreign — foreign from top to bottom — foreign from inside and outside and all around — nothing anywhere about it to remind us of any other people or any other land under the sun.21

Throughout his description of Tangier and its inhabitants one gains a real sense of his excitement at being in a place of such antiquity (a feeling which manifests itself throughout Innocents Abroad almost constantly). And yet he lets the reader know how inadequate he feels to the task of relating that in "[t]he pictures used to seem exaggerations [for] they seemed too weird and fanciful for reality."22 And he tells us that "Only the stately phraseology and the measured speech of the sons of the Prophet are suited to a venerable antiquity like this."23 He then attempts to give a sense of what his mind's eye sees by speaking of genii, giants, enchanted castles, historical figures and places, etc. More important than this sense of awe, however, at being immersed in such a place of which Coleridge might have written, is the very real respect for the culture in which he finds himself. The language of
the Arabs, not English, is most capable of expressing the wonders with which he is confronted. The paean to Islam is also pointed.

At the same time as he had great respect for the history of the place, he was not sure of the motivations and the proclivities of its inhabitants or of its visitors. Foremost among the human predilections with which he had much more than average difficulty was religion.

We have already seen how he gives the back of his hand to his fellow “pilgrims” for their outrageous behavior in the mosque of Nain at the same time essaying an opinion that the users of the mosque are heathens. Despite this general sense of skepticism about religion, however, it appears Twain was impressed by the religiosity of the Muslims with whom he had the opportunity to interact as he makes remark several times on the willingness of the natives attendant to the party to pray anywhere and anytime as required by Muslim law. Echoes of this sentiment will be heard not many years later in the words of Amelia Edwards, who “could not but be impressed by their profound and unaffected devotion.”

Like many a visitor before and after him, Twain seems most disgusted with the decidedly commercial behavior of the many Christian groups which oversaw the upkeep of the many holy sites associated with the life of Jesus Christ. The following passage is illustrative of his skill with the ironic and revelatory of the little respect that he had for the competing religious sects. He and several others have toured the various chapels contained therein during which time he makes note of the fact that “two different congregations are not allowed to enter at the same time, because they always fight.” He continues:

And so I close my chapter on the Church of the Holy Sepulchre — the most sacred locality on earth to millions and millions of men, and women, and children [etc.].

He maintains his detached, almost genteel, reportorial tone.

In its history from the first, and its tremendous associations it is the most illustrious edifice in Christendom.

Then Twain the moralist speaks:
With all its clap-trap side-shows and unseemly postures of every kind, it is still grand, reverend, venerable — for a god died there.

After offering judgment vis-à-vis the "Christian" caretakers, he holds the mirror of irony in front of us:

... History is full of this old Church of Holy Sepulchre — full of blood that was shed because of the respect and the veneration in which men held the last resting-place of the meek and lowly, the mild and gentle Prince of Peace!  

As indicated he was especially wary of organized religion, and as we have seen neither Christianity nor Islam were spared the cudgel of his wit. But this man who had little use for religion for himself, recognized other men's apparent need for the kind of anchor that religious beliefs provide.

The cat's tail is only an encumbrance to her, yet she thinks it is the most precious thing she has got. Just so with man and his religion.

It seems safe to say that Mark Twain throughout his journey through the Holy Land, and Europe and Russia as well, was singularly impressed with the years and years of tradition and continuity that he observed, especially as he was aware of the extremes of his homeland. However, he never lets the scene overawe Mark Twain, reporter, humorist or gad-fly!

Picturesque Arabs sat upon the ground, in groups, and solemnly smoked their long-stemmed chilbouks.... Here was grand Oriental picture which I had worshipped a thousand times in soft, rich steel engravings!

He turns quickly to the differences between the two experiences:

But in the engravings there was no desolation, no dirt; no fleas; no ugly features; no sore eyes; no feasting flies; no besotted ignorance in the countenances...no disagreeable jabbering in unknown tongues....

Even more swiftly, his tone shifts again:
Alexander Kinglake in *Eothen* states that "all who write... all who lecture... all who preach... can hardly avoid chiming in with some tuneful cant!" The occasion of this commentary was his taking to task the Greek propensity toward a calendar year so filled with religious holiday at the behest of the Greek Church "as to practically shorten the lives of the people materially." Following the above, Kinglake apparently had second thoughts about what he had just written and would, perforce, remove it from the text. But then he feels compelled to let the words stand as "a humbling proof that [he is as] subject to that Law which compels a man with a pen in his hand to be uttering every now and then some sentiment not his own." The Egyptologist John A. Wilson in his excellent speculative examination of the ancient Egyptian culture's value of life noted that terms we use in any discussion will, of necessity, prejudice it "in terms of modern ethical judgments." He continues, however, "[A]ny generation has the right — nay, even the duty — of presenting the evidence objectively and then giving subjective valuation to the evidence." (Italics added)

As already described, then, Twain's function on this first ever journey undertaken by a boatload of American tourists is that of reporter, assuredly an occupation which is supposed to be noteworthy for the objectivity which it brings to the examination of people, places and events. And yet as we know, although Twain, who was no cub reporter, would know to what audience he was writing in order to maximize the sale of newspapers, the inescapable fact is that his subjective evaluations of what he saw would be blended into what he wrote. In this instance, of course, the evaluations would be expressed in words which, on their surface, would seem racist.

In many respects we are more able to accept his anti-religious sentiments than that he was an anti-racist of the first order from the beginning. The anti-religious sentiment would continue to manifest itself throughout his writings all his life; e.g., "Little
Bessie," from the *Fable of Man*, written in 1908, is an expostulation of Twain’s disgust with organized religions which used written (revealed) texts such as the Bible (*Qur’an*) as a springboard for moralizing. The piece concludes with Little Bessie remarking that she has been told that there is no “subject of a lower grade and less awful than theology (religion).” On the other hand, it is much more comfortable for us if we can see symptoms of racism in Twain. Religion for Americans has always been a matter of choice — either you do or you do not, but your neighbors, the Moral Majority notwithstanding, will generally leave you and your religion alone. Racism, however, is something that all of us will vehemently deny. Samuel Clemens may have been small town and may have had residual racist tendencies, but Mark Twain would spend his life writing and speaking against the sort of institutionalized racism which continues to permeate societies of every kind, even today.

There are, for me, two aspects of this charge of racism which is so often thrown at Clemens as a result of *Innocents Abroad*: First, his disgust with the prevalent image of the Romantic “noble savage,” particularly as portrayed in the writings of James Fenimore Cooper; second, the reality of the condition of the ordinary citizens of the Ottoman Empire during the period of the *Quaker City* voyage.

Earlier I noted his comparison of James Fenimore Cooper’s Indians with Grimes’ (read Prime) Arabs. Once you have read Twain’s marvelous satirical essay, “Fenimore Cooper’s Literary Offenses,” the genesis of the above comparison becomes immediately apparent. The aforementioned piece was published almost thirty years after Cooper’s being held up to ridicule in *Innocents*, remarkable in itself for it shows the depth of feeling Twain had about Cooper’s “crimes.” The major portion of the piece on Cooper is concerned with the portrait he paints of the American Indian as a “noble savage,” an image which did not fit that of Mark Twain, whose own experiences included contact with the Digger Indians of Central California, a tribe which ranked pretty low in the hierarchy of tribal supremacy.

Cooper’s view of the “noble savage” most likely had its beginnings, as Todorov suggests, with Christopher Columbus and the feeling of superiority arising from the explorer’s inability or...
"desire to know" anything other than the most observable "facts," e.g., the Indians with whom Columbus first has contact are remarked for their "generosity" because they exchange gold for bits of broken glass and crockery or cask-hoops "like beasts." What cannot be seen is that because the system of values is different, "a different system of exchange is [the] equivalent [of] the absence of a system, from which [is] inferred the bestial character of the Indians." Further, Todorov suggests, On the basis of [his] observations and these exchanges, Columbus will declare the Indians the most generous people in the world, ... making an important contribution to the myth of the noble savage.

A myth which would be perpetuated in the writings of authors such as Cooper and Prime to Mark Twain's disgust.

Twain's castigation of Cooper's treatment of the Indians in The Deerslayer foreshadows Todorov's examination of the West's inability to observe clearly the "other," whether natives of the New World or the "other" of the Orient. While the circumstances of their wait is too lengthy to detail here, Cooper's portrayal of the bestial (read: stupid and animal-like) Indians in The Deerslayer incensed Twain. First, Cooper has no respect for the intelligence of the Indian for "[i]n the matter of intellect, the difference between a Cooper Indian and the Indian that stands in front of the cigar store is not spacious." Twain continues the examination of Cooper's Indians in the scene from the novel:

[The ... episode is a sublime burst of invention; but it does not thrill because the inaccuracy of the details throws a sort of air of fictitiousness and general improbability over it. This comes of Cooper's inadequacy as an observer." (Emphasis added)

To return to Innocents Abroad, then, as already noted, Twain was familiar with Lamartine, and it is not difficult to assume some familiarity with perhaps Flaubert, Nerval, Thackeray, inter alia. Although Twain did in some of his later writings express his belief in the very Romantic notion of the "Good Spot" that exists in us all, see particularly "3000 Years Among the Microbes," and "Refuge of the Derelicts," his reportorial skills and his natural inclinations to observe and elucidate the reality of a scene more
often than not would prevent his being distracted for too long by
the Romantic view of the East.

In Three Victorian Travelers, Assad essays the notion that
“[t]he romantic attraction of the East has often distracted Western
writers and affected their judgments of Eastern matters,” especially
their evaluation of the inhabitants of the region. There were
those, however, who did come to the area with a clarity of vision
which is notable. In the nineteenth century there was one Charles
Doughty, whose work, Arabia Deserta, T. E. Lawrence called the
“first and indispensable work upon the Arabs of the desert.” The
Romantic view of the East which so often distorted the work of
writers such as Lamartine, Goethe, etc., was not the view of
Doughty.

For [him] Arabia had not and could not ever have the faintest tincture
of the picturesque, because he did not approach it with that part of his
nature in which the picturesque could exist.

John Ross Browne, Twain’s predecessor in years and perhaps
in sentiments as well, made light of this European proclivity to
sentimentalize the East with an unsubtle gibe at Lamartine as he
describes his own visit to the great cathedral of Saint Sophia in
Istanbul, seen by Lamartine as “a grand caravanserai of God.”
Browne wrote that he had not found a camel anywhere in sight
but was positive that there had been “an animal with long ears on
the premises.” As noted above, Twain’s first contact with the
Middle Eastern “other” is in Tangier, Morocco. However, by the
time his visit there is approaching its end, he is ready to depart for
he has seen enough of the poverty that existed, and he had seen
the wide disparity that existed between the poor and the wealthy,
with poverty being something which could be visited upon any-
one.

The Emperor of Morocco is a soulless despot, and the great officers
under him are despot on a smaller scale. There is no regular system
of taxation, but when the Emperor or the Bashaw want money, they
levy on some rich man, and he has to furnish the cash or go to prison.

Very obviously, Twain’s sense of the democratic ideal has
been affronted by the lese majesty he has seen. Although this will
not prevent the reporter Twain from explicating the facts as he has observed them.

The culmination of Twain’s years of thought on the issue of slavery is well-expressed in *Huckleberry Finn*, which had to have been written by him knowing what a stir it would cause. In fact, he would be proud to know that it remains the source of controversy today — its presence in school libraries or as a part of American literature curricula is continually being challenged — and not always in the American South where “tradition” would have us expect such actions. We also have made note of his position of European colonialism in and exploitation of Africa as portrayed in *King Leopold’s Soliloquy*, which, although only published four years before his death, shows a man whose skill with the ironic and satirical has not lessened one iota despite his advancing years. *In Which Was It?*, an unfinished novel about the retribution which lies in wait for the white world as a result of its exploitation of other races, Twain speaks to how the “other” is viewed:

> [I]t was merely custom, the habit of the time, in dealing with the colored man, and has less depth to it and feeling in it than a stranger to the country would have supposed. The whites imagined that the negroes did not mind it. They judged by the negroes’ outside, and forgot to inquire within.46

I cannot but return to the episode within the mosque at Nain and his word in re the feelings of the Arabs as the “pilgrims” temple over the prayer carpets and desecrate the holy place by breaking souvenirs from the walls.

He took a special delight in *Innocents Abroad* in satirizing the travel book of William C. Prime, whose *Tent Life in the Holy Land* was apparently one of the books which he carried with him aboard the *Quaker City*.47 In fact, he devotes a considerable amount of space to a review of it in the guise of William C. Grimes’ *Nomadic Life in Palestine*; but he reassures us,

> [I]t is proper and legitimate to speak of it, for “Nomadic Life in Palestine” is a representative book — the representative of a class of Palestine book — and a criticism upon it will serve for criticism upon them all.48
The genre is criticized generally for its too romantic view of the Holy Land, e.g., the following excerpt wherein Grimes describes his efforts to obtain one last glimpse of the women of Nazareth. The party rides to a spring and there a young Nazarene woman, whose movement "was graceful and queenly," offers a drink of water to a young man in the company. Grimes concludes, after waxing rhapsodic about her beauty, "I wish for a picture of her. A Madonna, whose face was a portrait of that beautiful Nazareth girl, would be a 'thing of beauty' and 'a joy forever'.”

Twain responds:

That is the kind of gruel which has been served out from Palestine for ages.

He continues:

I love to quote from Grimes, because he is so dramatic. And because he is so romantic. And because he seems to care but little whether he tells the truth or not, so he scares the reader or excites his envy or his admiration.

Finally, Grimes’ real feeling about those “others” who live in the Holy Land is revealed to us by Twain — they are clay pigeons!

He went through this peaceful land with one hand forever on his revolver, and the other on his pocket-handkerchief. Always, when he was not on the point of crying over a holy place, he was on the point of killing an Arab.

In 1870, only a year after Innocents was published, it came to Twain’s attention that a certain Reverend T. De Witt Talmage had ventured the notion that working men should not be allowed to attend church with their betters because they smelled of their common labors. Essential to our interest, however, are the words with which Twain opens his defense of blue-collar workers:

We have reason to believe that there will be laboring men in heaven; and also a number of Negroes, and Esquimaux, and Terra del Fuegans, and Arabs, and a few Indians, and possibly even some Spaniards and Portuguese. All things are possible with God.
To use a term apropos of Clemens’ time, to accuse Mark Twain of racism is to level him with a base canard that is all too easily refuted. If he is guilty of anything it is not what Todorov says was Columbus’ failure:

[H]e start[ed] from the difference, but the latter is immediately translated into terms of superiority and inferiority in [Columbus’] case; obviously, it is the Indians who are inferior.52

Rather for Twain it was thus:

[H]e conceive[d] of the Indians [and Arabs and Negroes, etc.] as human beings altogether, having the same rights as himself, but then he sees them not only as equals but also as identical, and this behavior leads to assimilationism, the projection of his own values on the others.53

Certainly, a case could be made as one reads Innocents Abroad that its author did project upon what and whom he saw his own American values; but who among us, East or West, North or South, has not done that at one time or another. But at the same time as he was doing this, he never lost sight of the fundamental humanity of those in the various places he visited during the voyages of the Quaker City. It serves us well to remember that here was an individual who had been born into a society built upon the labor of slaves, a slavery much more pernicious and evil in the view of some than that of the “Orient.” As an American child raised in the pre-Civil War South, he had imposed upon him the idea that anything other than white, Anglo-Saxon (see his “The Anglo-Saxon Race” for definitive word on the group) and Protestant (preferably some sort of American South orthodoxy) was closer to the bestial than to the human. His natural genius and life experiences as he matured told him otherwise.

Todorov in his examination of Columbus concludes that the man never understood the Indians because “he never ... escape[d] from himself.”54 The entire thrust of Samuel Clemens’ life was a continuing effort to divest himself of that coterie of societally-imposed cultural beliefs that he so abhorred; all this effort, of course, taking place while he reveled in some of the benefits of that very society: money, fame, etc. I am certain that he would
agree with Todorov that it is important that "we remember what can happen if we do not succeed in discovering the other ... for man is never alone, and would not be what he is without his social dimension."55 Or as Mark Twain said, "I am the whole human race without a detail lacking."56

NOTES
1. The Unabridged Mark Twain, (1976, Philadelphia), p. 211.
2. Ibid., p. 12.
4. Walker, p. 6
5. Ibid., p. 4. Ibid., p. 5.
6. Ibid., p. 5.
7. Ibid., p. 7
8. Ibid., p. 9.
9. Ibid., p. 23.
11. Ibid.
13. Twain, p. 84.
14. Ibid., p. 16.
15. Ibid., p. 17.
16. Twain, p. 311
18. Twain, p. 318.
19. Ibid.
20. Twain, p. 44.
21. Ibid.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., p. 46.
26. Ibid., p. 336
27. Hatton, p. 3.
28. Twain, p. 319.
30. Ibid., p. 58.
31. Ibid., p. 59.
35. Todorov, p. 38
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid., p. 39.
38. Twain, p. 1246.
39. Ibid. Briefly, all five Indians are sitting on a branch which overlooks a stream which empties into a major river and down which is coming a house-barge containing the whites whom they are going to slaughter. As the barge passes beneath the branch, Cooper has each of them wait until the barge is almost past before they attempt to jump aboard — with the inevitable result that they all wait too long and jump well astern and into the stream.
41. Ibid., p. 102.
42. Ibid., p. 103.
43. Walker, p. 59.
44. Twain, p. 48.
45. The Devil’s Racetrack, p. 139.
46. Twain, p. 311.
47. Ibid., p. 313
48. Twain, p. 311.
49. Ibid.
50. Ibid.
52. Todorov, p. 42.
53. Ibid.
54. Ibid., p. 41.
55. Ibid., p. 247.
56. Mark Twain and the Three R’s, p. 253.

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Hatton, Raymond D. Mark Twain’s Attitudes Toward Religion. Master’s thesis. 1971, Austin, The University of Texas.


